

FREE  
JANUARY 2010

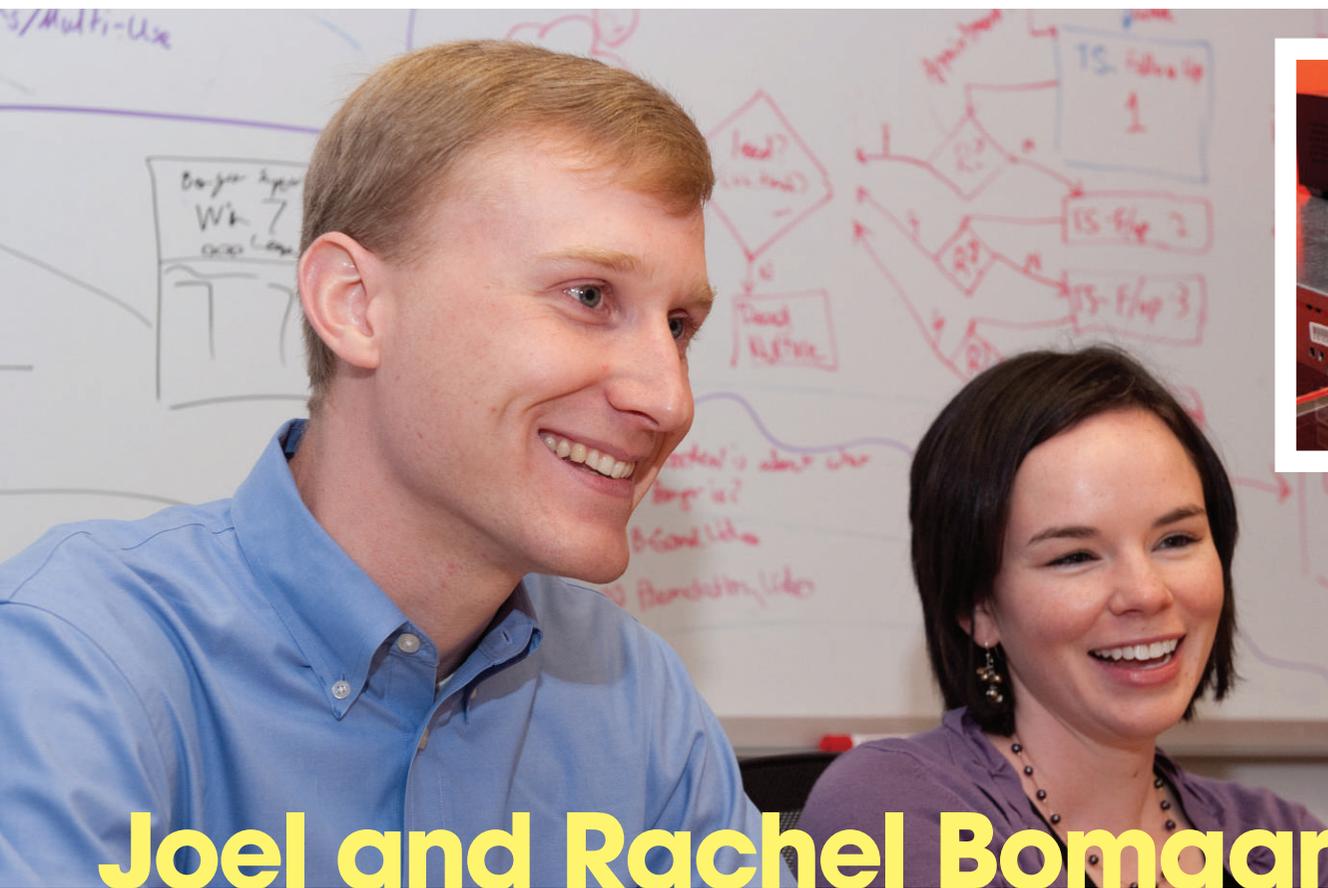
# Metro Christian Living

SOUPS  
FOR THE  
NEW YEAR

@ HOME  
FITNESS

Joel and Rachel Bomgar  
*Beyond the Box*

BOMGAR™



## Joel and Rachel Bomgar *Beyond the Box*

**Bomgar's Core Values Statement:** To honor God by applying biblical principles in relation to employees, customers, and financial dealings.

**N**ecessity, as Plato said, is the mother of invention. And that was exactly the impetus that prompted 23-year-old Belhaven student Joel Bomgar to design the remote control piece of software that made his job as an information technology assistant a lot easier and more productive. In 2003, while completing his studies at Belhaven and holding down a job, he was constantly frustrated at the amount of “windshield time” required as he drove all over Mississippi diagnosing and curing ailing computers. His billable time involved only those hours in front of the computer itself. He knew if he could figure out a way to sit in his office and connect remotely to another computer in another location, his time and productivity would be greatly enhanced. Was the idea outrageous and impossible? He thought not.

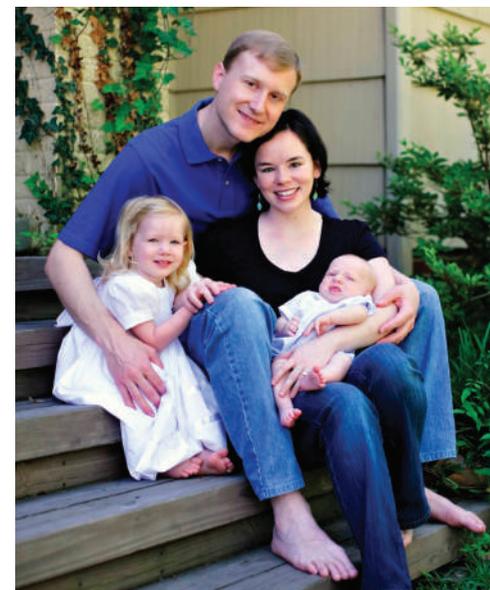
Joel, who had been fascinated by computers since the first moment his family purchased one, had spent a year in extensive computer training via his enlistment in the Air National Guard. He knew a lot even though his expertise was more in systems than in the more technical aspects of computers. He says he “hacked” something together over a period of about six months and in the beginning never thought of his invention in terms of a company, a new technology, or something that would be in such

demand. Within six years, his Bomgar Corporation would be bringing in annual revenues of over \$20,000,000 and growing. And it is all about the Bomgar box that allows IT folks to fix everyone’s gone astray computer without leaving their desk.

The plaques lining the wall at the Bomgar office tell of awards and recognition in business and tech publications all over the globe. Not surprising since many of Bomgar’s clients are international. Most know if they have done the slightest bit of checking on the website, that his company is unapologetically Christian in its mission statement, ethics, and core values. Even though Bomgar and his early partners made the decision that they would not “market” Christianity, they met the challenge of how to make it clear without “using” Christianity in a manipulative way.

Joel’s favorite Bible verse is everywhere displayed in the halls of Bomgar. Psalm 127 begins “Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain.”

“Everything we build here,” says Joel, “has to be glorifying to God. If we somehow manage to build a house and it is not glorifying to Him, it is really not worth much in the ways that matter most.”



Joel is also very clear when he speaks of being the best. He believes excellence should be a hallmark of every Christian. He explains that striving to be the best has to do with glorifying God and that he wants his product to be the best because that is what Christians aspire to do. “I want customers to buy our product because it is the best.”

Now and then, he hears from a client, “You know, this does not offend me, but could you tone it down?” Joel’s answer, delivered in his can’t-help-but-like-him tone and confident, yet humble demeanor is always, “No. We can’t.” But the easy going and quite comfortable-in-his-own-skin CEO adds, “But we would be happy to tell anyone who is offended that we do know everyone is not a Christian, that we sell our product to all sorts of people and it is developed and marketed by people of all different faiths. We

just happen to be very open about what the founders believe and what most of our team—but not all—believe. However, all employees have to ascribe to our core values which are based on biblical principles.” Joel prays before every company meeting. With a wide smile, he shrugs his shoulders, “That is just the way we are going to live.” He adds that most of his clients find Bomgar’s transparency “refreshing.”

## Where the Core Began

Joel Bomgar was the second of four siblings born to Dennis and Sharon Bomgar. Three sons and one daughter, stair steps in age lived together in an 800 square foot rented house at 125 Loden Place, a cul-de-sac in close proximity to Reformed Theological Seminary (RTS) where Dennis studied Christian Education. Three boys shared the living room as a bedroom, a school room, and a family room. Joel’s younger sister and his parents filled the two small bedrooms and everyone shared one bathroom. Even today, Joel sees such an arrangement as a plus—laughing that his parents told them, “Nothing teaches us all to get along like being all together.”

Sharon Bomgar was, in her children’s eyes, the quintessential mother. Ironically, it seems, considering her husband had two masters degrees in Christian Education, she chose to home school their four children—not because she thought traditional school was bad—but she wanted to be near them and to be involved in their lives. A very creative woman who had an insatiable thirst for knowledge and a rich overflowing enthusiasm for life and for God, she wanted to instill the same passions in her children.

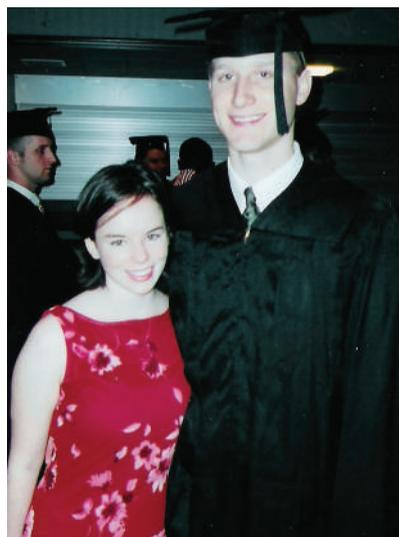
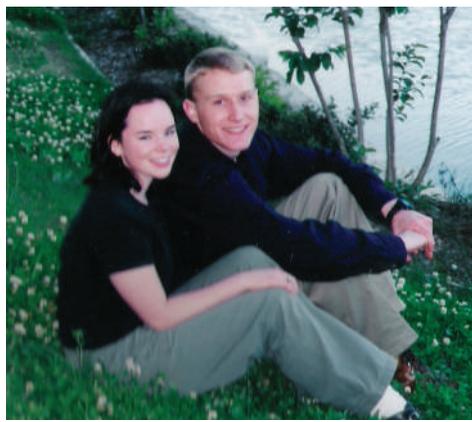
A typical Bomgar day involved playing outdoors most of the daylight hours. Acres of old pasture, complete with a deserted barn, stood just beyond their back door. Dennis Bomgar had a tool shed filled with most everything anyone would need should he yearn to build something. For Joel and his siblings, the tool shed was a repository of limitless possibilities, and with much free time, they managed to run electricity and plumbing lines to the old barn. The barn became a clubhouse where the Bomgar kids made years of memories together. Joel is sure that this particular creative project contributed to his “can-do-it-tive-ness” in building his company and in his older brother’s success as senior producer for Billy Graham ministries. Joel says, “None of that would have happened had we not had time to build our specialties.”

Joel’s specialty was unusually frustrating for his family, however. He exulted in taking the family computer apart and putting it together again. His siblings were constantly complaining about Joel’s inconvenient talent. His learning curve was filled with moments when the computer would not even turn on or its parts lay scattered on the table while the “mad genius” figured it all out, and everyone else was waiting for a turn at the keyboard.

Evenings involved schoolwork. Sharon’s curriculum was broad. She prepared her children well for life

intuitively nurturing their gifts and demonstrating what it meant to serve God and others. When Joel describes his mother, he seems to be describing “Superwoman.” She was every bit that.

Sharon lost her battle with ovarian cancer in 2002. She was only 46 years old. But even then, she prepared her children for it and faced it as she did everything—like a champ. Dennis Bomgar died in 2006 of lung cancer. Joel says, “The experience with them both—the way they dealt with illness was, like everything else they ever taught us, so positive. They looked at it as ‘Hey, we’re Christians and God is calling us



who fight till the end. Not that they weren’t fighting because they did the chemo, they did everything they could do, but with an understanding that God can heal, or He can choose not to. But if He chooses not to, that is completely fine, too. Some people get called to heaven early. We continue to miss them very much, but we understand that we will see them again in heaven.”

In retrospect Joel sees his parents’ marriage as “the

closest thing to an ideal marriage this fallen world has.” Their influence over their children’s attitude, values, and approach to the world is evident every single day, and the memories of a mom and dad who were constantly demonstrating what real love is, keeps them focused on what makes life worthwhile.

## Joel and Rachel

When Joel finished high school, he enlisted with the Air National Guard. He spent a year training in their computer department at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, but stayed in the Guard for his entire enlistment, spending a weekend a month in drills. When he enrolled at Belhaven as a freshman in 1999, he embraced college as he does everything—with exuberant energy!

Freshman Rachel Roberts of Fort Worth, Texas, had come to Belhaven because she was looking for a small Christian college. She recalls the first day of orientation when this 6’4” blonde boy wearing a Dr. Seuss hat stood out in the crowd. She says she just “noticed” him—that was all.

His initial memory of Rachel was that she made the highest grade in the entire Freshman Class on the first World History test under Dr. Paul Waibel. Joel laughs that his first score was a disappointment. He thought he would ask Rachel Roberts about her study strategy.

As the year progressed, the two became part of the same group of friends. By the end of second semester, they were officially a couple. They married at Christmas break during their junior year.

Rachel is a pediatric nurse who still does some part time fill-in work at Baptist Medical Center, but her days are more than busy with Amelia who is 2 and Simon, who is 7 months old.

Their goals and values are very much in sync with each other—“to raise well-adjusted kids who love God and find their place in the world,” and “to not let the success of the Bomgar Company change their lifestyle.”

## The Bomgar Philosophy

The Bomgar Company organized itself in March 2003. Its revenue that first year was slightly over \$100,000. The second year it surpassed \$1,000,000, continued to double most years, finishing 2008 in excess of \$20,000,000.

And yet, as Rachel says, “Joel has not let anything go to his head.” No Porsches in the driveway, no colossal mansions on the horizon. The Bomgars are Dave Ramsey fans. With the first wave of profits, the Bomgars paid off their school loans. With the second wave they paid off their home. Even today when they are fortunate enough to have no debt, their goal is to live far below their income. Rachel and Joel live in a modest home and drive used cars.

Joel explains that once they realized they could give beyond what both considered expected, the obligatory 10 percent tithe, they set goals—to give 20 percent, then 30 percent. The enthusiasm they share for their stewardship is, in their eyes, one the biggest

blessings of their life together.

However, tales of Joel's cars are the stuff of legends!

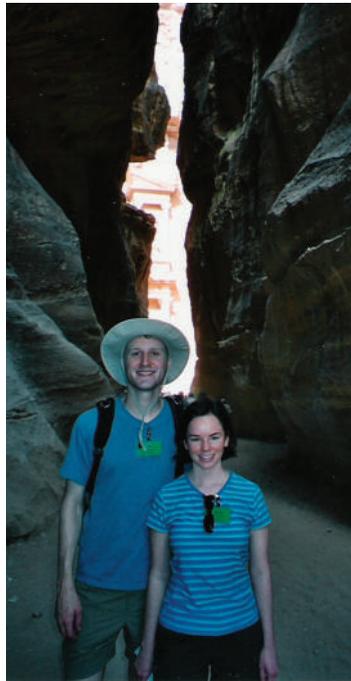
Joel's purchased his first car, a 1979 Buick for \$500 when he started school at Belhaven in 2000 and drove it until early 2007. He viewed it as a "work taxi" and only relinquished it when the exhaust fumes were horrendous enough to prevent him from inviting anyone else to ride with him! Even then, however, Joel parked the car at Bomgar, kept the keys in his desk drawer freely available to anyone who needed a temporary car. Eventually he donated it to RTS where it was used as an on campus maintenance vehicle transporting lawn mowers and other things from one part of the campus to another.



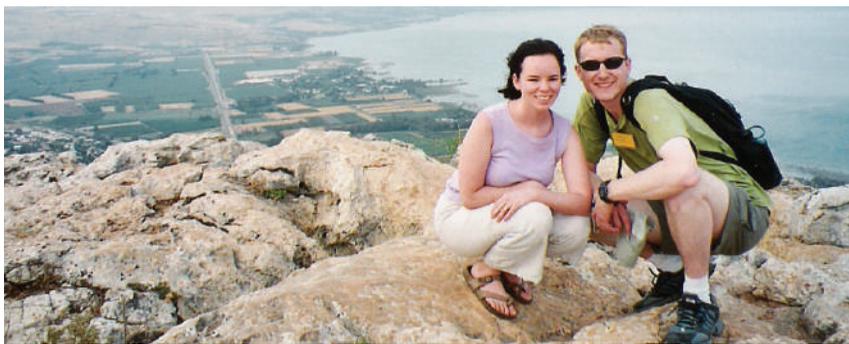
Egypt in 2006



Jerusalem in 2006



Petra in 2006



The Sea of Galilee in 2006

In 2003, the Bomgar's bought a used 1996 Geo Prizm for Rachel to drive to nursing school. Over its lifetime it was "totaled" three times, and yet the Bomgar's managed to get it patched up and drive it a while longer. When damage from Jackson's 2008 tornado left it without a trunk lid, Joel simply drilled holes in the trunk so that water could drain. He called it his "Prizm-El Camino," and it finally retired in early 2009. Today, Joel drives a 1999 Toyota Corolla which he purchased "cheap" from his dad's estate, and Rachel drives a used mini-van.

Rachel says, "The car thing kind of drives home the point that Joel's stuff does not define him. He has no issues with driving the cars he drives."

Rachel says that one of the things she admires most about her husband is the fact that in most ways, monetary achievement has not changed him at all. She speaks of the car issues in between giggles. She also speaks of her husband as one who is "at home when

he is at home, and at work when he is at work." He comes home by 5:30 every evening, plays with the children and pitches in with the bedtime routine.

Even when Rachel brags on his patience with their children, it is noticeable that he deflects the praise, giving Rachel credit for the daily demands. As far as his great abilities as a dad go, Joel just says, "It's an acquired skill."

This very young couple speaks of a primary goal to raise well adjusted children who love the Lord and who live a lifestyle that is consistent with their Christian faith.

The Bomgar Corporation brings in Dave Ramsey Financial Peace University certified instructors at least once a year. They make the seminar available to their

entire employee force encouraging them to pay off debt and live modestly and generously. It is a big thing in Joel's mind that the example begins at the top—and so he continues to live a very middle class lifestyle so that everyone can see the head of the company practices what he preaches.

"We try to be very intentional about how we spend money," Rachel says.

Joel shares, "It makes it mean more when I go in front of my employees and announce that we had a record quarter and there will be bonuses and I say, 'pay off debt. If you want a model, go look in the parking lot. If you think you need something brand new and have credit card debt...go look at what we did.'"

### Tracing God's Hand

Generally speaking, successful entrepreneurs look back and realize how many happenstance things had to line up to produce successful outcomes. In the midst of creating a company it is not always immediately clear, simply because there are a million pressing things to do and a very short handed number of workers with which to accomplish the goals. For a guy like Joel Bomgar, whose faith and

motives were so out of the box (pardon the pun) he was forever mindful of his talents in contrast to God's "beyond all that you could ask or think" (Ephesians 3:20) capabilities.

Looking back he considers it amazing that things have turned out as they have. After he enlisted two close friends (Nathan McNeill and Patrick Norman) to join this uncertain enterprise the journey has been incredibly surprising in a way that could never come together without God's unusual way of working in their midst.

Joel tells the story of how he and his partners realized early on the potential of what they were doing. Selling the "box" rather than renting software was quite appealing to huge entities where security was an issue. The challenge with the three very young entrepreneurs was how to get outside funding through investors so that they could begin to do what they knew could be done. How could that happen? They were young and unknown.

They made contact with an out-of-state traditional venture capital firm who looked quite promising. In the meantime there cropped up employees at Bomgar who knew people who knew people, etc. Joel calls them "random connections" which proved to be absolutely phenomenal in what Bomgar was able to arrange. They were put in touch with John Palmer, who was well respected in the telecommunications industry and Southern Farm Bureau Life Insurance Company who also invested in ventures like Bomgar. Palmer and Southern Farm Bureau Life Insurance had partnered before. They were both interested in investing in this brand new company.

Over a three year period they provided significant capital to elevate Bomgar to one of the three top companies in the world who do what they do. Joel sees their involvement as God's intervention from start to finish.

He says, "In retrospect had we taken the original funding from the original source, we would have erred. There would not have been a partner anywhere like the amazing partners we have had. But there were an incredible number of events that had to line up perfectly for us to even find out that the two individuals we were talking to were both interested in us and that they had put together deals before in conjunction with each other. We were very open with our staff about that, in that we had a plan and God had a plan. There is absolutely no way we could have orchestrated what happened apart from God. We were going down one path, and it was not the right one. We ended up doing the right thing strategically, but it was all God."

### What else?

The Bomgars attend Redeemer Church on Northside Drive in Jackson. It is a PCA church that has chosen to operate in a transitioning neighborhood. "I love the vision of a community church," says Joel. "I think the church on earth ought to look like the church in heaven is going to look, and it will be racially mixed and there will be no socio-economic stratifications. We have solid preaching and are very involved in community. We just love our church."

Bomgar modestly states that "Our company's footprint in Mississippi is not nearly as big as our footprint elsewhere." Being the complete opposite of an ego driven guy, he does not stress over that too much. He says, "When you are little, you just have to stand out." I think that must have something to do with the burnt orange color behind the Bomgar label. Just like Rachel said in describing her first encounter with the tall, lean, gregarious Joel Bomgar, "He would have been hard not to notice."

People are hard not to notice for a variety of reasons. When it comes to Joel Bomgar, he is hard to miss for the most part—not because he is tall or good looking or friendly. But because he is a prime example of what it means to be Salt and Light in a world that loves to say to Christians, "You don't really believe that, do you? No way you are going anywhere with those ideas."

Meet the Bomgar Corporation and get excited... informed...educated...surprised. You don't want to miss the ride. ☺

*For much more on the Bomgar Corporation visit their website at [www.Bomgar.com](http://www.Bomgar.com).*