

The FAITH BUILDER

May/June
2008

2008
2007
2006
2005
2004

THIS ISSUE:
"You Can't
Out-give God"



"Dear friends, **BUILD** yourselves up in your most holy **FAITH...**" -Jude 1:20

Do Hard Things

Nick McGuire

This is twice in just over a week that I've wondered if at 3:00 A.M. it is more appropriate to say "Good Morning" or "Good Evening."

This time it is because I seem to be suffering from a new, rare disease. The main symptom is that your mind is full of intense thoughts at 3:00 A.M. and can't go back to sleep until you capture them somehow. Typically I just make a few notes in a notebook and can then fall back to sleep, but tonight (uh, this morning) I was inspired to write to you.

The previous time I was up at 3:00 was a week ago, Friday night, with a van full of young people, on a mountain side, in the dark, in the fog and rain, driving down a steep, winding road that repeatedly turned back on itself more than 180 degrees in opposite directions. At times the road turned so sharply that the headlights lit the area exactly in the opposite direction the van needed to go.

I was driving the church youth to Karin Guthrie's place in North Carolina so that we could stay the night and head

out to a "Do Hard Things" conference in the morning. (6:00 A.M. to be exact!) After being in the car 17 hours (Yes, 10:00 A.M. to 3:00 A.M.), we were all a bit "out of it" and the fact that the last few miles were so intense got the best of us. The whole van was laughing hysterically at our dilemma. We were convinced we were descending into hell—I know it doesn't sound funny now—but trust me, it did then.

In addition to the crazy road conditions, we were also appreciating the



The Rebelution
"Do Hard Things"
Conference



irony of how we got into this predicament. In planning for our journey we only brought a rough map (actually found in the car after the fact, thanks Steve!) and a GPS navigation system. For those who have never used a GPS for driving, it has its pros and cons. The con being that it considers the road we were on to be better than the straight road that we should have taken that would have been just slightly longer (in miles, that is).



To make matters worse, our map was not detailed enough to be of use at this point and our wonderful GPS had run out of power. Luckily for us, we had a power adaptor. Unlucky for us, when the GPS is plugged in to recharge, it automatically turns off. So, we're on this road to hell, so to speak, and the only thing in the car that has a clue where we are is shut off. We could only turn it on occasionally to confirm we were still on the road she (the navigation system we named 'Eve') thought we should be on. Anyway, we arrived safely and enjoyed the conference. In fact, that is why I'm writing—well, sort of.



The conference was great. It was by teens, for teens (and everybody else). The conference was called "Do Hard Things" and it challenged young people to make use of this window of opportunity between 13 and 19 years of age, when you have the same assets that most adults use everyday (knowledge, understanding and skill) *and* something most adults don't have—time and energy.



The speakers, a couple of 19-year-olds, pointed out that most teens are held back by the low expectations of society. Society expects most teens to do little more than get in trouble

during these key years of opportunity. Many teens struggle with drinking, drugs, sex and the like during this time. However, what if much more was expected of teens? What if they were expected to begin to behave like mature adults — given real responsibilities?

Examples were given of George Washington using his skills at geometry, trigonometry, and calculus working as the official surveyor in the wilderness of Virginia at age 17; David Farragut captaining a war ship at age 12; and Clara Barton caring for her ill brother at age 11, becoming a nurse by 14, and a teacher by 17. What a far cry from struggling to get a teen to make his bed. I don't suppose Clara was tempted to promiscuity, she was way too busy!

Most of the young people in our church are familiar with this concept, but the conference called them to even higher levels of expectations—not of society's expectations, not of their own expectations, but of God's expectations for them.

For example, most teens spend a lot of time with entertainments. However, how much time does a mature adult spend with entertainment? Usually there are only two reasons a mature adult will spend time for entertainment—using the entertainment to build a relationship with someone, or if the entertainment has a primary function of education or strengthening a talent (such as reading a book or playing an instrument). Otherwise, the adult has more important things to do with the talents and time God has given them. Teens, are you using your talents and time wisely?



So that is just a taste of what I personally got out of the conference. Ask one of the teens what they got from it—then ask again. But the real reason I am writing is to say thanks. First, thanks to the Fergusons for letting us take your new van to South Carolina and back. Thanks to Karin Guthrie for letting us sleep (briefly) there. And to David for organizing the trip—continue doing hard things.

Also, last night was the 15th anniversary of the church, and during the worship I had to return to the kitchen area. There I found the same women who had spent much of the past month—and I'm sure all of Saturday—working on the celebration, still working. When I asked about how their efforts were going, they all agreed that the work needed to be done. I agreed that the work needed to be done, but didn't see much I could do, so I returned to the service.

But now it's 3:00 A.M. and I'm thinking about you. Although I am often the guy in the background munching on a snack, seemingly oblivious to how that snack got to me, I think I can speak for the rest of those like me in saying, Thanks!!!! Your

work does not go unnoticed.

I also wanted to say thanks to the young people who went on the road trip to the conference. You see, I function in a self-sufficient mindset; I take care of my needs myself. (No, I'm not necessarily endorsing this; yes, I depend on God; and yes, there are many who have done much for me and I appreciate them.) But on the return trip we had church in the van with worship, teaching and testimonies, during which a love offering was taken (in a sock) and the young people gave the offering to me.

Me. Why me? I don't need their money. These are young people with little funds; I make lots of money. I thanked them and promised to do something nice for my wife with it. There were 10 young people, without jobs for the most part, so I was expecting about \$8, and that would have been great. It would help pay to take my wife to lunch. But no, it was way more. Why? Why so much? I'm not sure I know the answer to these questions. I do know that I thought about it every day since...

(There is a liquid substance forming in my optical region as I write this, so moving on...)

In addition, about two days after we returned I received a hand-crafted thank-you card from one of the teens, thanking me for the effort with specific comments of appreciation. How cool.

To each of you on that trip—Thank you. Well, I think I can get back to sleep now, but first I wanted to say thanks to one other group of people—the whole church. There are many reasons, but especially thanks for giving me the best job there—Sunday School Teacher. I know it sounds like “flannelgraphs and sing-alongs”, but somehow my class has morphed into all teen-aged boys and let me assure you, it is everything but “flannelgraphs and sing-alongs”. It's way cool. While I regularly encourage the boys to talk about the topics covered in Sunday school with their families, I'm not sure they do because I've yet to get a phone call from a parent asking what zombies have to do with Sunday school (Matt 27:52-53 if you're curious... and I know you are). Thanks!

P.S. Girls are always welcome in my Sunday school class. (I can't imagine what they wouldn't find interesting about zombies.) ☩



In This Issue...

Volume 5, Number 3: May & June 2008

1 Do Hard Things

Looking back at our trip together and the conference in North Carolina | Nick McGuire

4 The Only Church I Have Ever Experienced

Hope Church has given much to me, but the most important thing has been opportunities to serve others | Ruth Hoppe

5 You Can't Out-give God

When we started Hope Church, I thought it would be a sacrifice; Now I know I can't out-give God | William Boyer

7 People of Hope

New congregation location, new baby, baby dedications, a youth conference, and travel updates

8 Photos of Hope

Photos from our service on April 6, 2008

9 Bible Reading Guide

For May & June 2008 | Pastor Paul Manwiler

THE MORE
You Can't
Out-give God

The FAITH BUILDER

"Dear friends, BUILD yourselves up in your most holy FAITH" (Jude 1:20)

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The Only Church I Have Ever Experienced

You

Transcribed from Ruth Hoppe's testimony at our 15th anniversary event

Hi, everybody. I was asked to speak tonight because I was born right at the time my parents were helping to start this church. So when Hope Community Church met for the first time on Sunday morning, I was there. But I was only a few days old. There isn't really anything I could say about the early years of this church, because I don't remember. But I can say that this is the only church I have ever experienced, and it's been really wonderful.

GRACE'S QUESTION

In preparing to give this talk, I was talking with my sister Grace and she asked me this question, "What role has Hope Church played in your spiritual life?" I went on to tell her about:

- 1) Our strong church leaders and their wives who have taught me so much.
- 2) Having Bible studies in our home, and watching as my parents show hospitality and disciple and teach other families, and being able to help my parents in their ministry.
- 3) All the young families that I have gotten to know, and how I see their children grow.
- 4) Being a part of the worship team, and serving in that way. It's great to have a sense of responsibility and know that other people want your help.
- 5) Praying with the people on the worship team, and learning how to not only prepare

musically, but spiritually.

6) Being part of the youth group, and watching all of us grow and mature in the Lord. The relationships I have with them are so wonderful, especially because they are Christ-centered. It's so encouraging to get together with other godly teens and pray, worship and study our Bibles together. It's a blessing to know that I'm not the only one moving in the direction I am.

7) Through being a part of iFire, I'm learning to reach out to people through Jesus, and welcome them. I've seen people receive Christ, right in my own home.

A UNIQUE ANSWER

These are many of the things I mentioned to my sister the other day. After I was done, she commented that my answer was unique in that most people she's spoken to about their churches answer about how much their church GIVES to them. But Grace said that I was talking about ways that I could give to my church.

So I realized that the only way I could do this, is that God has placed me in a church that teaches its members to contribute and be an important part of its body. Everyone has a purpose and an opportunity to serve, and everyone is important in their own way. So my church does give to me, but the most important thing they have given me is teaching me to give back to them. ☩

Iwant to tell you my thesis at the very beginning: You can't out-give God. And you can't, by your own power, make a church. First, I want to describe our vision of what we wanted to be distinctive about Hope. And then some of what God did as He brought things to life.

I. THE ACTS 2 PATTERN OF ESSENTIAL CHURCH PRIORITIES

A. FELLOWSHIP

There are some convictions that we had, that we knew were essential for a church. We find some of these essentials described in Acts 2:46-47: "*Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*"

When the original leaders of the church were young people, God blessed us with biblical instruction, training, fellowship, and lasting friendships. A lot of that started when we were college students, involved with Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship. Because of the things we had learned (we had had this passage from Acts chapter 2 expounded to us), we were eager for Hope to have small groups with real fellowship. We desired to see people interacting with one another for accountability and prayer, for evangelism, for meeting one another's needs in practical ways, too. As well as for doing discipleship. We made a lot of decisions about how the Hope Group structure would work so that that could really be met.

Let me mention a couple of proverbs. Proverbs 27:17: "*As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.*" That shows the importance and possible value of fellowship. Of sharpening one another, knocking off the rough edges, and forming us into better instruments for God's purposes.

A couple of verses before that, in Proverbs 27:8, we find: "*Perfume and incense bring joy to the heart, and the pleasantness of one's friend springs from his earnest counsel.*" When you have friends, like Ruth described, who are going the same direction with Jesus, that's a pleasant friend. We wanted everyone in the church to contribute and to be involved. Ruth's testimony gives me such joy because that was our priority, our conviction of what



Can't Out-give God

Transcribed from William Boyer's testimony at our 15th anniversary event

Hope ought to be about.

We are pleased that there are so many of you that someone can go to for prayer on Sunday mornings. Or when we point out a need in our Hope Group that is too big for any one person or family, many help. And I don't think our Hope Group is unique in that. That's what they are about.

B. WORSHIP

Consider what the early church experienced as seen in Acts 2:47: *"Praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people."* Worship is a priority. Praising God. We worshipped together and started to learn that you can't out-give God. When you set aside a focus on yourself to focus on God, and His worthiness—His worthiness of our focus and praise, His goodness, He renews our faith and brings us refreshing. You can't out-give God. Focus on Him. Let yourself go. And you'll see refreshment for your souls. So we knew worship needed to be a priority.

C. EVANGELISM

And then it says here in Acts that the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. Church planting and evangelism is why we started. But why was that so important? It is sort of a big project; it's not just a little hobby. We did not go into church planting because we wanted a church we liked better. We did it because we know that God wants there to be more churches. You might look around and see one on every street corner, but that's irrelevant because we know that there are lots of people who do not go to any of those churches. Even in a so-called "evangelized" country like ours, there are still lots of people living their lives with no immediate

neighbor to tell them about Jesus. There are children growing up never hearing the basic Bible stories of hope, love, power, and faithfulness. It ought to move our hearts, and it moves God's heart.

That's how things started, by God calling Pastor Paul, but then we started thinking about why God was calling us to this. We didn't start with as good a heart as God has. God told us what He wanted to do. Then we started to figure out why. I need to mention that church planting (and missions to the end of the earth) isn't just in the great commission as an afterthought—Jesus going back to heaven saying, "Oh, I forgot! All power has been given unto Me. Go and make disciples of all nations. Gotta go!" No, it wasn't His parting thought. This is throughout the whole Bible, throughout the Old Testament.

Pastor Paul has shared a testimony before about an Inter-Varsity speaker who expounded on the Biblical basis of missions from the book of Jonah. It's there in the Old Testament. When God called Abraham, He said, *"I will bless you. And through your seed all nations on earth will be blessed."* How is that true? Through Jesus. He is the fulfillment of this. Jesus. So we could go on and on. But I want you to know that missions and evangelism is not an afterthought, it's our primary thought.

We are pleased to see so many members of our church building up the body. For example, our teens (when I say that, I think of the ones who used to be teens, who are now many of the young marrieds with little children). Our teens, then and now—you have witnessed to your friends and challenged them to grow in the Lord. It's been delightful. What's the chapter called in our Remember Book? "The Beautiful Harvest." And it has been.

D. MISSIONS

From the beginning, we've had a desire to see God use our church to reach the nations. On the surface, it looked unlikely. We are neither large nor rich. We're just not that spectacular, especially as we just got started. But God brought people who were committed to going as missionaries. We waited on God's timing and preparing. And now we rejoice in the many different works and many different nations that God has generously allowed us to participate in. We hope for many more in the future.

What a privilege to consider how many friends we have all over the world. How many of your friends and neighbors have that kind of perspective on the world? God has that kind of perspective on the world. It's a privilege that we can know brothers and sisters in China. And Malaysia. And all those other countries that I can't take time to mention. It's so cool to have them come back and visit us.

II. THE 1 COR. 12 PATTERN FOR BUILDING A CHURCH BODY

A. CALLING

So, after praying through the vision of what we felt God wanted Hope Church to be about, how did God do it? What happened next? We watched God build a church. So that's what we said about how we can't do it ourselves. First, God gave Paul a calling. Paul shared it with us. We thought, "sure that sounds fine, but it doesn't sound very practical." We lived in Ohio. The Hoppes lived in Pennsylvania. And the Manwillers lived in Alaska. Sounds like the "ideal" making of a team. But when we started to pray about it, we saw that it was the right thing to do.

God started assembling the team. We started moving back here from our different parts of the country. Around the same time we became committed to starting this new church, God called us away from our current churches. Again, not because we didn't like them, but because we were called to a different people group. We left the



comfortable for the unknown. You can't out-give God. When you leave the comfortable you think you're making a sacrifice. But how richly God blesses in return.

B. FAITH

In building a church, God also provided for the Manwillers. When we started, the Manwillers were still in Alaska. We jokingly said to Paul, "We hope you know we trust you, calling you to be the pastor without ever having heard you preach." We had been together in college. Then Paul and Nora got married, went to Wayne State, then on to Chicago for seminary. Wayde and I finished at U of M and went other directions, and we had never heard Paul preach. Paul responded "I have to trust too, since you're not offering me any salary."

I think the biggest step of faith was on Paul's part. And God provided. When they came they were able to get a house mortgage based on potential salary from a theoretical church. God allowed them to buy a house. And they got it furnished for the price of a rental truck to go pick up the furniture. God provides for those who are about His business. You can't out-give God.

C. UNITY

Also, God had to bring the people. When Nora called and invited them, did they come because Nora was so charismatic? Because they didn't have anything else to do? No. They came because God brought them. But then even once they came, it was God who formed the people into a body, not just a group. What we have

is very different from a club. Very different from even a committed, really great club. It's nothing like it. It's a body. And the way you know it's a body, instead of a club, is the people have love for one another. They have unity with the Head, that is Jesus. I really like what Ruth had to say about the unity we have going the direction that Jesus calls us to.

1 Corinthians 12:24 describes it: "God combined the members of the body so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other." That's one of the things that has really delighted me. It's been beautiful and awe inspiring to see God do that, and He did that right from the beginning. It didn't take a long time for the people to come and to know Pastor Paul and how wonderful and warm and caring he and Nora are. God did it. We couldn't do that ourselves. God saved and matured the people.

I think about those who came as teens. Look at them now. God built families, in more than one way. In some cases, it was from the teens growing up and having children. And in other cases, it was by having grown children and their parents reconciled to each other. And then the restored or newly formed families began to work together. God restored families to what they were supposed to be. He taught us to value things He values: children, our parents, the elderly.

D. BLESSINGS

So, my wife and I left where we were comfortable, and He gave us more. We were comfortable at our previous church. When we came to Hope, we thought we were making a sacrifice, but he blessed us with

rich relationships, with people to love and to love us. You have prayed for us to have children and grieved with us over losing children. You have rejoiced with us over the birth of Sarah and Aiden. Lauren and Rachel and Rosie and Amy and Grace, and maybe some others I have forgotten about, have helped regularly babysit Sarah and Aiden while Debbie works part time.

You have helped care for our children and provide good examples for them. We want our church to be a place where our children know they are loved, as they are instructed through words and examples about God's things. They should learn about God's things while knowing their worth. And I praise God that's true. Thank you, leaders of the church, for my children knowing the pastor loves them. The elders know them and love them. That's not common among churches, to even be known, much less known you are loved. So this is true, you can't out-give God. And you can't just make a church.

How blessed we are that our children have so many adult friends, in addition to the other children. And we prayed for Sarah and Aiden to be able to see how our culture blinds us about things we never think about or notice because we are used to them. God has different ideas about some of these things. He's been answering our prayer by showing us some of those things, and showing our church body, too.

I want to close by sharing something from 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24: "May God Himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and He will do it." †

FOR KIDS



GUESS WHO I AM



Hello, I am captain of the guard for Pharaoh. A few years back I went to buy myself a slave. I picked out a handsome one whose name was Joseph, and bought him from the Ishmaelites. Joseph lived with me and became my attendant. He did such a good job, I began giving him more and more responsibilities. Eventually I let him manage all my affairs. Everything. I did not concern myself with anything except the food I ate. I thought Joseph was a pretty good guy. Until that one day. I didn't know it, but my wife was seducing Joseph. He resisted, and my wife took his cloak. She lied to me saying, "That Hebrew slave you brought us came to me to make sport of me. But as soon as I screamed for help, he left his cloak beside me and ran out of the house." I threw Joseph into my own prison. Later I heard he showed talent even in prison, and was given responsibility over all the prisoners. Today Joseph is now ruler of all Egypt, second to no one but Pharaoh himself. I'm quite ashamed and embarrassed for what I did to Joseph now that I know the truth and now that Joseph is in charge of me, instead of the other way around. Can you guess who I am? †



A REBELUTION: On the weekend of April 4-6, some of the older teens and college students from our church traveled to North Carolina to be a part of a movement called *The Rebellion*. The conference instructed young people on how to rebel against the low expectations of our culture and how to, instead, do hard things for the glory of God. Those from our church who attended were Grace Hoppe, Rachel Evans, David Manwiller, Peter Manwiller, Mark McGuire, John Verhines, Elizabeth Delcamp, Tariho Lula, Benjamin Lula, and Joshua Hunt. The teens filmed their trip and are planning to use footage of the conference in a film they're producing, to be shown at the San Antonio Independent Christian Film Festival next summer. ☩

NEW BABY: Brandon and Rosie Zylstra are happy to announce the birth of a baby boy. God has blessed their family with a son named Caleb Fin Ross Zylstra, born Monday, March 24. Baby Caleb was born at the University of Michigan Medical Center in Ann Arbor. He was 9 lb, 4 oz and 21 ½ inches at birth. He is welcomed by his sister, Lily, and brother, Gabriel. ☩

NEW LOCATION: Hope Church's Livonia congregation is meeting at a new location on Sunday evenings. For three years we had used the building of Riverside Park Church of God on Newburgh Road. In March, we learned that it would be necessary to find another site to rent for our services. Pam Hicks, a member of our church who is also a realtor, helped us locate a vacant church building. The property is being offered for sale. Until it is sold, we are renting it and enjoying worshipping there. The building we are renting is called Praise Chapel. It is located half a block east of the Westland Mall at 34645 Cowan Road, in Westland. Our first worship service in the new building was Sunday evening, April 6. ☩

BABY DEDICATIONS:

The first evening our church used the new location in Westland, on April 6, we held a baby dedication service. Brion and Lyndsay Arbenowske dedicated their daughter, Leona, to the Lord. Josh and Jackie Bell dedicated their daughter, Glory. Also, Brian and Kelly Fair dedicated their two youngest daughters, Hosanna and Esther. ☩

EVANGELISM:

In March, Pastor Paul and David traveled to the Billy Graham Training Center to attend their School of Evangelism. The three-day event emphasized principles on how to reach people for Christ. Among the most important principles is that only a tiny fraction of new Christians were drawn to know Jesus through radio, television, internet, books, recordings, tracts, or large evangelistic meetings. The vast majority of Christians are introduced to Jesus through the witness of a Christian friend, relative, or co-worker. With the help of God, our church members seek to become those kind of witnesses. We are putting into action a tool that Billy Graham recommends, the *Operation Andrew Prayer List*, with names of specific people we know, and that we will pray for. Our prayers are being patterned after what the Billy Graham team calls the "Three Open Prayer": Lord, open a door; Lord open their heart; Lord, open my mouth. ☩

EASTER:

Easter came early this year, on March 23. We had snow. But the Easter season was a joyful time of celebration of our Risen Lord. Early Sunday morning we had an Empty Tomb praise service. The church youth led the praises, and many of the teens formed a beautiful, well-rehearsed youth choir. Pastor Paul posed two apologetics questions: 1) How do we know Jesus rose from the dead? And 2) What difference does it make that Jesus rose from the dead? The members of the congregation responded by sharing many well-reasoned evidences for the resurrection and implications of the resurrection. It was spiritually and intellectually invigorating.

After the Empty Tomb service we enjoyed an Easter Breakfast together, coordinated by Rose Paterson, Betty Tessmer and Girlie Pascua.

Finally, there was the main Easter morning worship service. Karl Thuemmel led the worship team. We sang praises like "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today" and "In Christ Alone". We saw a short video with man-on-the-street interview questions, asking people if they knew how to go to Heaven. There were many confused, mostly man-

focused answers. "Try to be a good person...Try not to get too out of control... Have faith in something." Pastor Paul preached that morning about the biblical description of Heaven, and how we can have assurance about going there. ☩

ANNIVERSARY:

On Saturday, April 12, our church celebrated its fifteenth anniversary. That evening we had a dinner together at the Ypsilanti Evangelical Friends Church building. Most of our church members were present, along with a few former church members who returned to visit. After the dinner, we had a worship service focused on thanksgiving and testimonies. There were testimonies by Wayne Hoppe, Ruth Hoppe, William Boyer, and Ryan Landt.

The following morning, Sunday, April 13, we had more testimonies of thanksgiving in celebration of the church's anniversary. LaiLeng Hoi, who was visiting from Malaysia, shared about her experience of beginning to follow Jesus as a Christian at Hope Church. ☩

TRAVELS:

Our church has enjoyed sending and receiving Christian friends in recent months. Karl and Jeanne Thuemmel, with their children, spent the months of January and February at the International House of Prayer in Kansas City. They learned about intercessory prayer in preparation for their future ministry in Central Asia. Leah Ransom spent the month of March at the House of Prayer. She has returned to Michigan, and is exploring opportunities for ministry in Northern Ireland. In early April, our church enjoyed a visit from Chi-Ying Luo who lives in Taiwan. A few days later, LaiLing Hoi came from Malaysia to visit our church. ☩

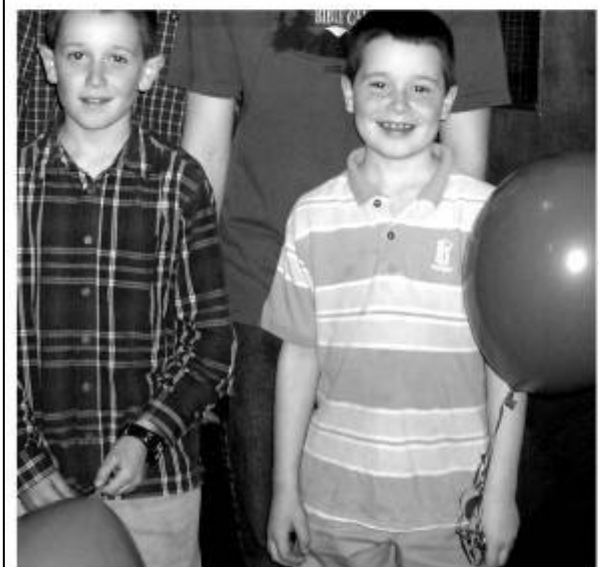
SUMMER TRIPS:

Hope Church members are looking forward to taking part in missions trips this summer. One group, led by Pastor Bill Marinelli, will go to Mexico in late July. Daniel and Katie Jones are leading prayer meetings in their home for those who are planning to go on the Mexico trip. Another, smaller, group is headed for South Asia. That group met for an informational meeting with LaiLeng in April when she was in Michigan. Alice Berry plans to return to Romania this summer to serve with NetWorks Ministry, and Betty Tessmer hopes to serve with her. And Tariho Lula has applied for a summer-long mission program with SEND International, bringing the gospel to Native Alaskan villages. ☩

Sunday, April 6, 2008



First Service in Our New Westland Location,



Glory Bell



Hosanna & Esther Fair

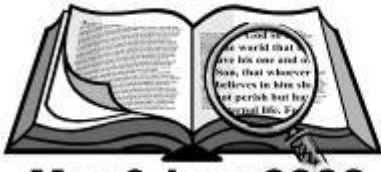


Leona Arbenowske

A Baby Dedication Service,



And Our 15th Birthday Celebration!



May & June 2008

BIBLE READING GUIDE

The Life & Writings of Jeremiah

Thursday, May 1: Jeremiah 1

When did God first know Jeremiah? When did God consecrate Jeremiah to be a prophet? How did Jeremiah respond when God called him? If Jeremiah's authority to speak to the people did not come from his age, where did it come from? What has God called you to do? How do you know you will be able to do it? God tells Jeremiah He is going to judge Judah; what reason does He give for His judgment?

Friday, May 2: Jeremiah 2

Here is Jeremiah's first recorded prophecy. How would you summarize his message? What analogies does God use to describe Israel? What two evils does God specifically point out to Israel? (v13) What does it mean that the cisterns they make can hold no water? Forsaking God for false gods was Israel's main problem; look for this theme throughout Jeremiah. What do you think is the Church's main problem today?

Saturday, May 3: Jeremiah 3

God compares Israel to an unfaithful wife, but says Judah was even worse since she was treacherous. How was Judah treacherous? What is God's message to "faithless Israel"? (v12ff) God says He will give Israel shepherds after His own heart when Israel repents. What is God's heart for Israel? (see for example v19)

Sunday, May 4: Jeremiah 4

What specific things does the Lord call Israel to do as acts of repentance? How is this kind of repentance different than Judah's treachery in chapter 3? (see 3:10) What can we learn about true repentance from these chapters? What will happen if Israel does not repent? What happens if we do not repent of our sin?

Monday, May 5: Jeremiah 5

The Lord says, "Do you not fear Me?" (v22) Here is another major theme of Jeremiah. Why do you think the Israelites didn't fear God? Man's tendency is to lose faith in God - to stop fearing Him, and eventually to stop believing in Him altogether. This is why prophets can prophecy falsely, and priests rule on their own authority and the people love it. (v31) How much do you live your life in the fear of the Lord, and how much do you live it as if "He will do nothing"? (v12)

Tuesday, May 6: Jeremiah 6

The Lord says judgment is coming to the people because of their sin. What are some of the sins He mentions? God says they will not listen to His word, and that it is offensive to them. (v10) Have you heard people call God's word offensive? Why do you think they say that? What kind of judgment does Jeremiah foretell? Do you see those kinds of things happening today?

Wednesday, May 7: Jeremiah 7

What does God tell Jeremiah to do at the beginning of the chapter? Do you think that would make him popular with the people? It is important for Jeremiah to remember his calling. (see 1:17-19) What are you called to? What has God promised you? What do you think verse 4 means? Some people thought they were o.k. with God because they had the temple in their midst; but God wants personal obedience rather than empty religion. (see vv21-23)

Thursday, May 8: Jeremiah 8

God says His people "cling to deceit". (v5) In what ways do they do that? They pretend there is nothing wrong and they sin boldly - "they have no shame at all" (vv11-12) Do you see this behavior today? How does Jeremiah respond to the sin of his nation? (see vv18-22) How should we respond to the sin of our nation?

Friday, May 9: Jeremiah 9

The Lord says His people are deceivers that "weary themselves with sinning". (v5) Has sin ever made you weary? What reason does the Lord give for His judgment against Israel? (v12ff) What should a man boast in, according to the Lord? It is better to know God than to be great in the sight of men. What does God mean when He says Israel is "uncircumcised in heart"? (v26)

Saturday, May 10: Jeremiah 10

Jeremiah responds to the prophecy he receives from the Lord by praising God. (vv6-10) This is a sign of true prophecy - it glorifies God and moves His people to worship Him. What is the relationship between the prophecy and Jeremiah's praise? It seems silly to modern people that the Israelites would trust in gold-plated wooden statues; what do modern people trust in? What is the difference between these things and wooden statues?

Sunday, May 11: Jeremiah 11

Why does God want His people to obey Him? (v4) Obedience is about identity - you belong to whom or what you obey. God wants us to obey Him so that we will be His people. What does God say His people will do when He brings disaster on them? (v12) He is letting them have what they want - false gods - and teaching them the hard lesson that those gods are powerless to help them. Have you ever been let down by the false gods of money, or education, or any other thing people trust in?

Monday, May 12: Jeremiah 12

Jeremiah prays for justice and God answers with His judgment. What is His judgment against Israel? (v7) Israel has forsaken the Lord and worshipped false gods, so the Lord forsakes Israel, giving them what they think they want. What does God plan to do after He gives Israel over to their enemies? (v15) This judgment is God's last resort to win back the hearts of His people. He will sometimes do extreme things to shake us out of our stubborn rebellion or complacency. Do you have any hardness in your heart toward God that you need to be shaken out of?

Tuesday, May 13: Jeremiah 13

What does God tell Jeremiah to do? How is the belt a symbol of Israel? The Lord sometimes uses physical symbols to emphasize a prophetic word and make it more memorable. What is God's answer if Israel asks, "Why has this happened to me?" (v22) Under the old covenant God mainly used prophecy and judgment to convict His people of sin. What does He mainly use under the new covenant? (hint: Pentecost)

Wednesday, May 14: Jeremiah 14

What do the false prophets say to Israel? (v13) How do you think they can get away with saying there will be no famine when the crops and animals are dying because of the drought? They are following the way of the Accuser who is the "father of lies". Satan's tactic is to contradict the truth and accuse anyone telling the truth of lying. Remember what he told Eve in the garden? Where do you see this behavior today?

Thursday, May 15: Jeremiah 15

What 4 destinies does the Lord have for His rebellious people? What did Manasseh do in Jerusalem (v4; read 2 Ki 21:1-16) Jeremiah prays for himself in view of God's severe

judgment. What does God say in response to him? (v19ff) Jeremiah needed a renewal of vision and a reinforcement of his calling; do you ever feel like that? What should you do about it?

Friday, May 16: Jeremiah 16

Why is Jeremiah not supposed to marry and have children? What sin have God's people committed to bring God's judgment upon them? God says He will throw His people out of the Promised Land into a land they have not known. How will they refer to God in the future? (v15) The Lord says He will deliver them from their exile just like He delivered them from Egypt. What lesson is the Lord going to teach them through this? (v21)

Saturday, May 17: Jeremiah 17

Who is cursed in this chapter? Who is blessed? What happens to those who are cursed? What happens to those who are blessed? Do you know people today who trust in mankind? Are they more like a bush in the dry desert or a tree by a stream? What about people that trust in the Lord - are they more like dry bushes or trees by a stream? Extra Credit: what psalm do these verses recall?

Sunday, May 18: Jeremiah 18

What lesson does Jeremiah learn from the potter? How do you think God wants His people to apply this lesson? (v11) God tells Jeremiah that they will not repent, but He has Jeremiah prophecy to them anyway. Why do you think He does that? Who else benefits from Jeremiah's prophecy? The Lord tells Jeremiah that the people will knowingly reject the Lord and follow their stubborn, rebellious hearts. (v12) Have you ever done this? It is astonishing that anyone would do this, but Jer. 17:9 tells us why (look it up).

Monday, May 19: Jeremiah 19

Jeremiah goes back to the potter, this time for another prophetic symbol - a clay jar. What does the jar symbolize? What does God tell Jeremiah to do with it? What is the significance of the fact that a broken clay jar could not be repaired?



Tuesday, May 20: Jeremiah 20

Who is Pashhur? What did he do to Jeremiah? What name does Jeremiah call him and what does it mean? How does Jeremiah feel after being beaten and put in the stocks? What did he do about it? What do

you do when you feel that way? Jeremiah is not perfect - he goes back and forth from faith to despair; but he never gives up on the Lord.

Wednesday, May 21: Jeremiah 21

Who comes to see Jeremiah? Why do they come? What were the visitors hoping for? What is the Lord's word to them instead? What does the Lord advise the people of Jerusalem to do? (v9) What reason does the Lord give for his punishment? (v14) Things are not looking good for God's rebellious people.

Thursday, May 22: Jeremiah 22

What does the Lord expect of the king of Judah? (v3ff) What does the Lord promise if the king obeys Him? What will happen if the king disobeys the Lord? How will God be glorified in His judgment against Judah? (vv8-9) What kinds of things did the bad kings of Judah do? (vv13-17) What is the ultimate judgment for these bad kings? (v30) Is there no hope for God's people after this judgment? What hope is there?

Friday, May 23: Jeremiah 23

Who are the shepherds mentioned in verse 1? What is God going to do to them? What is He going to do with His people? Who is the king that will make things right in Judah and Israel? (v5ff) Why is God displeased with the prophets? (v16) What does verse 36 mean? The prophets were making up prophecy based on their own ideas about the way things are. What role did the prophets have in their society, and who has a similar role in ours? Do our modern "prophets" act the same as the prophets of Jeremiah's time, or do they speak the truth?

Saturday, May 24: Jeremiah 24

What vision does Jeremiah see? Who are the good figs? Who are the bad figs? What will happen to the bad figs? What will happen to the good figs? What does God seem to be most concerned about regarding His people? (v7) Many in the Church today need to receive a heart to know God and turn to Him with their whole hearts. Do you pursue knowing God with all your heart, or do you mostly go through the motions of following Him?

Sunday, May 25: Jeremiah 25

How long had Jeremiah prophesied to Judah? How had Judah responded all these years? What does the Lord say He will do as a result? How long will the captivity last? What will happen then? How far will God's judgment reach? This is the pattern for God's judgment: it starts with His own people, then spreads out to the whole world.

Monday, May 26: Jeremiah 26

What does Jeremiah prophecy to Judah? The Lord again offers mercy if they will repent; do they? They may have mistaken the Lord's patience for indifference - thinking He doesn't really care about sin because He doesn't do anything about it. Do you ever do this? How do the people respond to Jeremiah's prophecy? What underlying assumption is revealed in this response? (v11) Jeremiah had to remind them that he was not making his prophecy up, as they seemed to expect prophets to do, but that he was only speaking the words of the Lord.

Tuesday, May 27: Jeremiah 27

What does God tell Jeremiah to do? What does it symbolize? God is in control of all nations and he even uses pagan kings as His servants. Are there unbelieving foreign leaders today that God may be using as His servants? Who might they be? What are the false prophets prophesying? Does their message sound similar to anything you hear today?

Wednesday, May 28: Jeremiah 28

What does Hananiah prophecy? How does Jeremiah respond? Jeremiah gives Hananiah the benefit of the doubt that he has truly heard from the Lord, but he cautions the people to test the prophecy. How are they to test it? This is a good model for dealing with prophecy today. Jeremiah gets more knowledge of the truth or falseness of Hananiah's prophecy - where does that knowledge come from? This is another good way to judge prophecy; against the Word of the Lord.

Thursday, May 29: Jeremiah 29

Who does Jeremiah write to? What does his letter say? In the midst of their exile, the Lord gives His people words of hope and encouragement. What does He say? (vv10-14) What good, if any, do you think could come of God's people being captive in a foreign land? They would be less likely to think that "everything is ok" with them and God, and the distinction between God's ways and the ways of the people around them may be clearer. How do churches generally do under persecution in hostile countries today?

Friday, May 30: Jeremiah 30

What does God tell Jeremiah to do? What things does God promise His people in this chapter? What does God want from His people? (vv21-22) How would you summarize the message of this chapter? Of the book of Jeremiah so far? God's plan from the Fall onward has been to woo the hearts of His people back to Him; but their hearts are incurably sick. It takes something greater than exile or punishment to change someone's heart.

Saturday, May 31: Jeremiah 31

Verse 1 says the Lord will be the God of Israel and they will be His people. This is a main theme in Jeremiah and throughout the Bible. This is God's plan for His people. What does it mean that the Lord is their God? What does it mean that they are His people? How will the Lord accomplish this? What will the new covenant be like? (vv33-34) When will the new covenant be established?

Sunday, June 2: Jeremiah 32

What is happening in Jerusalem? Where is Jeremiah? Why is he there? What does the Lord tell him to do? Why? Again we see the Lord's promise that "they will be my people and I will be their God". (v38) What will characterize them as God's people? (v39) What does it mean to have "singleness of heart" toward something? Do you have that toward God? Do you "fear God for your own good"?

Monday, June 3: Jeremiah 33

What does God say will happen to Jerusalem? (vv4-8) Then what will happen? (v9) Verse 9 is a good definition of what it means to glorify God. Do you think it is ok for God to destroy Jerusalem and rebuild it in order to get glory? God's main purpose is to glorify Himself – not to save mankind or have a relationship with us; though He wants those things too. How is God getting glory in your life?

Tuesday, June 4: Jeremiah 34

What cities are still fighting against Babylon? What does the Lord promise Zedekiah? How did Zedekiah repent? How did he un-repent? What does the Lord say about this? Have you ever repented of something and then turned back to it? Why did you do that? When you have repented of something and not turned back to it, why didn't you?

Wednesday, June 5: Jeremiah 35

What does God tell Jeremiah to do? Why? Why don't the Recabites drink wine? What does God think of the fact that they don't drink wine? How does God use the Recabites as an example? Who is a good example to you of obedience? Who is a bad example? Who are you an example to? What kind of example are you?

Thursday, June 6: Jeremiah 36

What does God tell Jeremiah to do? Who helps Jeremiah write the scroll? What does Baruch do after he writes it? How do the king's officials respond to the prophecy on the scroll? How does the king respond? What is the significance of the king burning the scroll? Do you ever scorn the Word of God in your heart like king Jehoiakim did – wishing



it said something different, or getting angry at what it says?

Friday, June 7: Jeremiah 37

How does Zedekiah become king? After many of Jeremiah's prophecies have come true, does Zedekiah listen to the word of God spoken through Jeremiah? What does Zedekiah do instead? (v3) Zedekiah is hoping to be saved by someone else's relationship with God (Jeremiah's) instead of having a right relationship with God himself. Do you have a right relationship with God?

Saturday, June 8: Jeremiah 38

What happens to Jeremiah in this chapter? What do Shephatiah and his buddies accuse Jeremiah of? (v4) What assumption underlies their accusation? It is the same assumption we saw before; that Jeremiah is not really speaking the word of the Lord, but making up his own prophecy. Do you see a similar assumption underlying dialogue in society today? Most of what we see and hear from the world is based on the assumption that God either doesn't exist, or is not interested in human society.

Sunday, June 9: Jeremiah 39

Jeremiah's main prophecy about the fall of Jerusalem comes true. What happens to king Zedekiah? Why did this happen to him? What happens to Jeremiah? Why was he treated the way he was? Jeremiah trusted the Lord and obeyed Him, even though the his circumstances and his people were against him. Are you ready to trust God in the face of persecution and uncertainty?

Monday, June 10: Jeremiah 40

Who comes to find Jeremiah after the fall of Jerusalem? What does Nebuzaradan say to Jeremiah? How does Nebuzaradan glorify God? Who is Gedaliah? What does he tell the remnant of Jews who are not in Babylon?

Tuesday, June 11: Jeremiah 41

Who is Ishmael son of Nethaniah? What does he do? Who is Johanan son of Kareah? What does he do? Why does Johanan lead all the survivors to Egypt? God's judgment against Judah was terrible; who responded to it in repentance? Who kept doing whatever he wanted? When you face the consequences of

your sin, are you tempted to get angry at God and rebel some more? Who's example from this chapter should you follow?

Thursday, June 12: Jeremiah 42

Who comes to talk to Jeremiah? What do they say to him? They appear to have repented; they say they will obey whatever the Lord tells them now. What message does Jeremiah come back with from the Lord? It sounds like God does not expect them to obey Him, as He sternly warns them not to go to Egypt. What do you think they will do? Stay tuned for the rest of the story in chapter 43...

Friday, June 13: Jeremiah 43

How do Johanan and the people with him respond to Jeremiah's word from the Lord? It's the same old story: they think Jeremiah is making up his prophecy. How should they have discerned whether Jeremiah's prophecy was from the Lord? How many false prophecies had Jeremiah given up to that point? How many true prophecies? It is pretty clear that they were not truly repentant and only planned to obey God if He told them what they wanted to hear.

Saturday, June 14: Jeremiah 44

Things go from incredibly bad to unbelievably bad for the Jews. What does Jeremiah prophecy to the Jews in Egypt? How do they respond? (v16ff) What does their response reveal about what they think of God? What are they trusting in? How are they like people in the world today? They trust in false gods when things are going well, and they blame God when things go badly.

Sunday, June 15: Jeremiah 45

Jeremiah has a personal prophecy for Baruch; what does he say? How would you describe Baruch's attitude? The Lord's response to him is a bit of a rebuke; what is He saying in effect? Baruch was focused on himself and not on God. When we start to think that life is about us, we are one step away from being grumpy and bitter like Baruch.

Monday, June 16: Jeremiah 46

Who is the first prophecy in this chapter for? Why do you think God would send His word to a pagan nation if He doesn't expect them to be His people like Israel? What is the message of his word to Egypt? Do unbelievers give God glory today? Can you think of examples?

Tuesday, June 17: Jeremiah 47

Who is this prophecy intended for? Who are the attackers in this prophecy? The last chapter describes Egypt being overpowered by Babylon; here Egypt is overpowering Gaza (the Philistines). The Lord is sovereign over all nations, and can lift them up or break them down as He sees fit. Can you think of a

modern nation that has gone from a superpower to small and struggling to survive? How about from small and struggling to a superpower?

Wednesday, June 18: Jeremiah 48

What country is this prophecy directed to? Where is Moab? What is Moab's sin? They are arrogant and trust in false gods. Does that describe anyone you can think of today? What do you trust in? What is the Lord's last word to Moab? (v47) After a 46 verse prophecy of doom and destruction, the Lord speaks one hopeful verse. Why do you think that is?

Thursday, June 19: Jeremiah 49

What nations are prophesied to in this chapter? These are all nations surrounding Israel, many of whom have been used by the Lord to punish Israel through military attacks. Now the Lord appears be back on Israel's side and against these pagan nations. Why do you think that is? As the commander of the army Lord told Joshua (Josh. 5:14), the Lord is neither on the side of Israel nor Israel's enemies; the Lord is on the Lord's side. Who's side are you on?

Friday, June 20: Jeremiah 50

Here is the first of two long chapters of prophecy against Babylon. How is Babylon characterized in this chapter? How are Israel and Judah characterized? Babylon is against God, and Israel and Judah are back on God's side. How are Israel and Judah on God's side? How is Babylon against God? What does God say will ultimately happen to Babylon? (v. 39)

Saturday, June 21: Jeremiah 51

The Babylonians did not deal rightly with the Lord when they conquered Jerusalem. What did they do wrong according to this prophecy? They treated God like any of their false gods, but He says, "He who is the portion of Jacob is not like these". When God uses us for His purposes, we must not assume that signifies we are in right relationship with Him. Why are you in a right relationship with God? Jesus will always be the only reason we can be right before God.

Sunday, June 22: Jeremiah 52

How old was Zedekiah when he became king? How old was he when he was captured and taken to Babylon? What happened to him in Babylon? Why do you think he was put in prison for the rest of his life instead of being executed along with the other leaders of Jerusalem? What would you say were the main lessons of the book of Jeremiah? How will you apply those things in your life?

Monday, June 23:

1 Thessalonians 1

A letter to the Christians in Thessalonica. How can Paul be sure that the people he is writing to are truly born again, truly "chosen by God"? (vv. 4-5) Do you have the same evidences of salvation in your life? Everyone in the whole region knows these people are Christians. (v. 8) Does everyone know you are a Christian?

Tuesday, June 24:

1 Thessalonians 2

Paul reminds the people that he really loves them. How did Paul care for the new Christians like a mother? (vv. 7-9) How did he care for the new Christians like a father? (vv. 11-12) How are these Christians like a hope, a joy and a crown for Paul? (vv. 18-20) How do you think your pastor feels toward you?

Wednesday, June 25:

1 Thessalonians 3

In spite of his own severe need, Paul sent Timothy to go and find out how the Christians in Thessalonica were doing. What news did Paul fear he might hear? (v. 5) What news did Timothy actually bring? (v. 6) Why is Paul so happy that they are "standing firm in the Lord"? (v. 8) What does the Apostle John say in 3 John v. 3-4?

Thursday, June 26:

1 Thessalonians 4

In this chapter, what commands does God give concerning sexual immorality? (vv. 3-6) Notice that this instruction is from God, not man. (v. 8) Concerning the second coming of Jesus, (vv. 15-18) what will Jesus do? What will the angel do? What will the dead in Christ do? And those still alive? Who will we meet? What shall we do about this truth? (v. 18)

Friday, June 27: 1 Thessalonians 5

More about the Second Coming. When will it in the night, or like labor pains? (v. 2) Some people are spiritually asleep. What does it mean take place? How is the second coming like a thief for us to be spiritually awake? (vv. 6-8) Paul gives final instructions in verses 12-22. Which one of these instructions do you need to apply?

Saturday, June 28:

2 Thessalonians 1

Paul writes a second letter to the church at Thessalonica. Chapter 1 lists several promises about what God will do in the future. How do these promises encourage a Christian? Paul says he is constantly praying for the people (v. 11). What things does Paul specifically pray for them about? Why does he pray this? (v. 12). Today, pray for these things for yourself and the people of your church.

Sunday, June 29:

2 Thessalonians 2

Paul speaks of Christ's second coming. He says it will not happen until the Antichrist, known here as the "Man of Lawlessness," is revealed. What will the Antichrist do? How will most people react to the Antichrist? (vv. 9-12). How should Christians respond to End Times trials? (v. 15). Notice how Paul prays in vv. 16-17. Today, pray this for yourself and the people of your church.

Monday, June 30:

2 Thessalonians 3

Now Paul gives some teaching about living off the generosity of others (vv. 6-15). What example did Paul demonstrate with his own life? What commands does he give concerning idle believers? What should be done in the case of someone who will not obey? (vv. 14-15). Notice how Paul prays in vv. 1-2. Today pray this for yourself and the people of your church. ☩

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May/June 2008

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