

XL'ent News

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Be Still and Know that I Am God!

Time Management has been one of the many buzzwords of the 90's. I am inclined to think that our priorities are a much bigger issue than the issue of time. After all, the amount of time we all have is a constant. Understanding the limitations we face because of time restraints, we all must be very careful to establish priorities that allow us to accomplish things that are of eternal value.

It is amazing that in our fast-paced society, even our technology has not relieved the frantic pace. In fact, it seems to have intensified it. Now we can get more done, so we really pack it in! More activities, more camps, more meetings, more, more, more... We can even study faster! We can do a great deal of research on the computer and we can generate all of our notes the same way. Unfortunately for many, busyness does not necessarily translate into spiritual productivity.

How often the Bible says to "wait." Consider the following Scriptures:

(Stop, don't just skip over these verses!)

Psalm 25:3-5

Indeed, none of those who wait for Thee will be ashamed; those who deal treacherously without cause will be ashamed. Make me know Thy ways, O LORD; teach me Thy paths. Lead me in Thy truth and teach me, for Thou art the God of my salvation; for Thee I wait all the day.

Psalm 27:14

Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; yes, wait for the LORD.

Psalm 37:7

Rest in the LORD and wait patiently for Him; do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who carries out wicked schemes.

Psalm 62:5

My soul, wait in silence for God only, for my hope is from Him.

Psalm 69:6

May those who wait for Thee not be ashamed through me, O Lord GOD of hosts; may those who seek Thee not be dishonored through me, O God of Israel,

Psalm 119:74

May those who fear Thee see me and be glad, because I wait for Thy word.

Psalm 119:114

Thou art my hiding place and my shield; I wait for Thy word.

Psalm 119:147

I rise before dawn and cry for help; I wait for Thy words.

Psalm 130:5

I wait for the LORD, my soul does wait, and in His word do I hope.

Psalm 147:11

The LORD favors those who fear Him, those who wait for His lovingkindness.

Could I offer a word of encouragement to you? Stop! Slow down! Don't get caught on the fast track thinking that you must go 120 miles an hour to accomplish God's work. The Christian life requires a lot of waiting. You must not race through your personal time in the Word or become so efficient at lesson preparation that you do not allow the Lord to accomplish His work in your life. Enjoy God's Word, relish it, pray over it, love it, share it. You will never have more time than you have now, so adjust your schedule.

Arrange your priorities so that God does not quietly slip to second place as you frantically race to the next meeting or activity, striving to do the work of the Lord. Take time to meditate on the following verses.

Isaiah 40:27-31

Why do you say, O Jacob, and assert, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the LORD, and the justice due me escapes the notice of my God"? Do you not know? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable. He gives strength to the weary, and to {him who} lacks might He increases power. Though youths grow weary and tired, and vigorous young men stumble badly, Yet those who wait for the LORD will gain new strength; they will mount up {with} wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary.

Editor's Note

Let all who seek Thee rejoice and be glad in Thee;
let those who love Thy salvation say continually,
"The LORD be magnified!"

Psalm 40:16

I read this verse during the frenetic activity of a Colorado ski trip in late December. Feeling prompted by the Holy Spirit, I memorized it without really knowing why. Now I know! In His sovereign wisdom He knew this verse would be needed for the turmoil ahead. The next several months brought events which drove me to wrestle

with the underlying motivations for my life and ministry. During this process I began to realize that I was indifferent about my salvation. I was thankful for Christ's dying on the cross, but never related that to the actual fact that God foreknew, predestined, called, justified, sanctified and glorified me. Not simply mankind in general, but me personally. Before the beginning of time I had been chosen to have a love relationship with the Creator of the universe. However, instead of loving my salvation I had taken it for granted. This is very dangerous, for it is in our salvation that the glory, power and grace of Almighty God are most clearly realized.

A study through the book of Romans added to my conviction. The first five chapters lay out the beauty of salvation's plan and God's complete grace in granting me eternal life. We are told over and over how we deserved the wrath and condemnation of God, but received His unmerited favor in their place. If this does not cause us to rejoice, nothing will. I want to be labeled among those who love their salvation.

The key evidence that I love my salvation, however, is whether or not God is magnified. This is not something I do only with my lips. It is a reflection of the glory of God throughout my whole life. As I have been reading through the Bible for 1998, the glory of God has been evident everywhere. The foremost purpose of all of creation and every event of history is to bring glory to the God of the universe. He has done this by glorifying His Son and by providing a way for mankind to be restored to right relationship with Him.

So often we look at only the "good" things as bringing glory to God. His Word is clear that trials, tribulations and difficulty are also paramount in His magnification. Oft times, I envision the "trials" the Bible speaks of as short-term difficulties that are quickly solved. I am beginning to see that many of the greatest struggles of my life are ongoing battles with little hope for complete resolution in sight. These struggles are not to be viewed with despair or disdain, they are to be embraced with joy. The greater the difficulty, the more brightly God's glory shines when He resolves it.

It is my sincerest prayer that every area of my life will bring glory to my Savior and Lord. I want to magnify Him in difficulty and pain, just as much as when things are going smoothly. I desperately want Him to patch together the many ruined lives I see every day so that the world will gaze in awe at His power. I want to step out of my personal comfort zone and seek the "impossible" things so that my Savior will receive all the credit when they succeed. When I am at the limits of my strength and everything around me is crumbling, I want to be able to say "Let God be magnified!"

Surely nothing magnifies God more than to turn worthless clay into pure gold. May you learn the joy of your salvation and in the midst of the constant struggle of this life, may God be magnified in your every motive, thought and action.

Event Spotlight

Marbles, Salt, Rocks and Rivers, a Great Combination!

With great fear and trepidation, 20 students and leaders embarked on the trip of a lifetime. Our goal, to bond our Student Active Leadership Team (SALT) into a highly productive serving machine. Our destination, the Klamath River and the

Marble Mountains along the California and Oregon border (better known as God's country; I mean these are real mountains, not those puny little hills they have in Colorado).

The trip itself consisted of backpacking, rock climbing, rappelling, cliff jumping, fishing and wilderness training. All of these events were centered around building leadership and team-building skills and all tasks were followed up with a discussion about Biblical principles relating to the task. In almost 13 years of ministry, this was one of the best trips I've ever been on. There was a great balance between learning Scriptural principles and then applying them, sometimes under great stress; and isn't that life? Our team grew very close, they all did their jobs and God's Word was made very clear in a way that we had never known before.

Our students fully understood after seven days in the wilderness that they needed to work together and pay attention to what's going on around them. They learned to follow the "guidebook" if they wanted to survive out there. In short, they learned what ministry is all about. It's about honoring God and making a difference in people's lives. To do this takes a lot of hard work, sacrifice, diligence and a keen understanding of the "Book".

What a privilege it was to see our students discover these things for themselves in a practical and very relevant manner. Mission accomplished!

News from the World of XL

Update on Graduated Interns

1. Paul Sigrist continues to volunteer his time in youth ministry in Grand Junction, CO.
2. Perry Hazlewood is overseeing the Junior High Youth Ministry in Cape Girardeau, MO.
3. John Watson is presently attending Masters Seminary in Southern California.
4. Jeff Niles is the youth pastor of a church in Cozad, NE.
5. Joe Todd is working as a school teacher and is assisting in the youth ministry in Southlake, TX.
6. Eric Ellis is finishing at Dallas Theological Seminary and is in the midst of candidating.
7. Bryan Ryan is also in the process of candidating for a youth ministry position.

XL Board Meeting Update

XL Ministries held its annual Board Meeting in Cape Girardeau, Missouri this year on January 30-February 1. Rocky, Chris, Andrew and Brian met at the Riser's home and came away from the meeting very excited about XL's future.

Some of the highlights from their agenda were to plan and give out responsibilities for this fall's XL Conference at the Golden Bell Conference Center outside of Colorado Springs, Colorado. The Board also discussed updating the Youth

Ministry Training Manual. They assigned chapters to each other and will begin working on the updates very soon. They hope to have the entire manual updated within the next year. We'll keep you posted. Overall, the Board felt very positive about the direction of the ministry and its commitment to training youth leaders within the context of the local church.

XL Conference 1998

Don't forget to mark your calendars for our annual XL Conference which will be held at Golden Bell Retreat nestled in the beautiful Rocky Mountains above Colorado Springs. The conference dates are Wednesday, October 28 through Sunday, November 1. If you have questions about the conference please write XL Ministries or check out our Web site (xlministries.org). We would love to have you this year.

Some of the topics will include:

- The Purpose of the Church
- Suffering
- Psalms - A Love for God's Word
- and others

We will also have many practical youth ministry helps available. Hope to see you there!

Hitting the XL'erator

As we close this issue of XL'ent News I am reminded of how quickly time passes us by. Our world accelerates ever more quickly into a seemingly unknowable future. Many are without hope as the darkness appears overwhelming. As followers of Jesus, these days must prompt us to be diligent about the great work ahead. We know the future and we have the only hope for a world in despair. They must hear it! I exhort you in the Lord to be steadfast and "Let God be magnified!"

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