

X'ENT NEWS

PROVIDING EXCELLENCE IN LEADERSHIP
THROUGH QUALITY CHRISTIAN TRAINING

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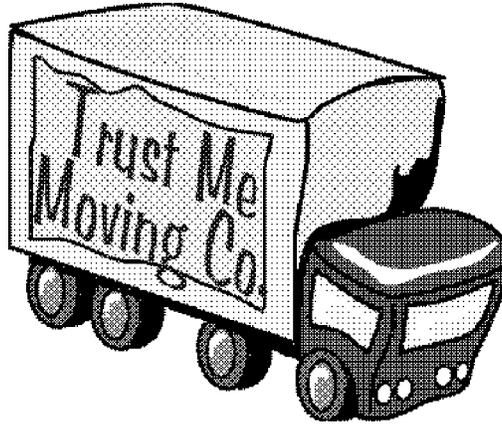
2 Timothy 2:2

And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.

David could have remembered the days of his youth when God defeated the wicked giant in the valley of Elah. From his own mouth had come the words, "The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of the Philistine" (1 Samuel 17:37). And God did.

David could have remembered how God rescued his life twice from the point of Saul's spear and was warned to flee by the king's own son. Jonathan, himself, said that he would send him away if it pleased his father to do harm to David, and would make it known to him, "that you may go in safety. And may the Lord be with you as He has been with my father" (1 Samuel 20:13). And the Lord was.

David could have remembered how, though he was pursued by Saul, God twice delivered the king into David's hands. Even Saul, whom David had spared, confessed to David, "You are more righteous than I; for you have dealt well with me, while I have dealt wickedly with you. . . . And now behold, I know that you shall surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hand" (1 Samuel 24:17, 20), and "Blessed are you, my son David; you will both accomplish much and surely prevail" (1 Samuel 26:25). David himself had just said to the king, "And the Lord will repay each man for his righteousness and his



faithfulness; for the Lord delivered you into my hand today, but I refused to stretch out my hand against the Lord's anointed. Now behold, as your life was highly valued in my sight this day, *so may my life be highly valued in the sight of the Lord, and may He deliver me from all distress*" (1 Samuel 26:23-24, emphasis mine). And God did.

But in the very next paragraph, David said to himself, "Now I will perish one day by the hand of Saul. There is nothing better for me than to escape into the land of the Philistines" (1 Samuel 27:1). So rather than remembering the promises of God's word and the Lord's faithfulness in the past, David took things into his own hands and fled to a foreign country. It is interesting to note that God is only mentioned one time in reference to David over the next three chapters (and that comes from the lips of a pagan). God is not mentioned again until it is said that "David strengthened himself in the Lord his God" (1 Samuel 30:6).

In January of 1999, I found myself leaving the church where I had been

a youth pastor for almost a year and a half. Everything we owned was packed in a U-Haul truck and, on a cold Sunday, our family headed west to live with my in-laws until God directed us further as to where to go and what to do. I had a wife, a two-year old, a three month old baby, no job, and limited finances. Many questions went through my mind as to what God wanted me to do. Where should we move? Where should I work? Is the church we are hoping to serve at where God wants us? Will it be a full-time position? How are we going to pay the hospital bills? Is this all my fault? Am I even supposed to be a youth pastor?

But God calls us to trust Him in the midst of trials. Throughout His word, he demonstrated that He always provides for His people, and throughout my life, He always provided for our needs and directed in the path we should go. So the answer to all my questions was quite simple. "Trust Me." Just as God directed David and was working in his life out in the wilderness, God had been directing us and taking us where He wanted us to be. Doubting God's faithfulness and taking things into my own hands would only bring confusion and disaster.

So, we come back to the basics and strengthen ourselves in the Lord our God. Are you spending time in God's word? Are you humbling yourself before God in prayer? Are you seeking and taking the opportunities that God presents to you daily for ministry? I could plan out my whole life as I had often done before, but it had to be God who would direct my steps (Proverbs

This Issue...

*Trust Me
Book Nook —*

*The Gospel According to Jesus
Youth Bummer: Nightmare at the Airport*

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16:9). And He would do so a little bit at a time.

A week later, I began a “temporary” job serving tables at Village Inn, we immediately involved our family at Grace Bible Church where Angie’s parents had been attending for several months, and we joined a Bible study in our new home with Angie’s parents and several couples from the church. God continued to move from there.

Ample opportunities came to share the gospel at the restaurant, and to minister to many people with deep hurts in their lives. And God provided financially beyond what I ever expected. The Bible study turned into a wonderful chance to teach God’s word. By May, God had provided for me to begin working part time at Grace Bible Church as the youth pastor. Someone anonymously provided a new house for us to live in until I start full time at the church, and God provided everything we needed to pay all our bills.

Cross Current, our middle school youth group, began in June and has continued to grow. Our high school youth group continued meeting for Sunday School through the year and started youth nights in January. Teens have trusted Christ for salvation, have been growing, reading their Bibles, studying, memorizing, sharing their faith, and ministering to those around them. God continues to work in their lives and continues to amaze me with the incredible opportunity to be their pastor. God said He would be faithful, and He was.

At this time I still work at Village Inn three days a week and I continue to work with the middle schoolers and high schoolers, as well as assist Pastor Mark. God provides for our needs and continues to give us opportunities to minister to many. The church is in the process of building a new building on Battlement Mesa and God has again provided in ways unfathomable. We

laid the foundation this month (April), and hope to be in the building by next year. At that time, I will become a full-time staff member.

A year ago, I never would have imagined all that has occurred, and my mind would have made many plans that would have failed, but God is faithful. I thank Him for how He directed, and how He continues to do so.

So the answer to all my questions was quite simple. “Trust Me.”

“Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth. Serve the Lord with gladness; come before Him with joyful

singing. Know that the Lord Himself is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture. Enter His gates with thanksgiving, and His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him; bless His name. *For the Lord is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting, and His faithfulness to all generations*” (Psalm 100, emphasis mine).

✍️ Jeff Niles



Book Nook

The Gospel According to Jesus
Author: John MacArthur, Jr.

The gospel that is so often preached today is unfortunately not the gospel that Christ preached. Our society is under the influence of an easy-believism religion where you can believe and then live according to your desire. In his book *The Gospel According to Jesus*, John MacArthur, Jr. examines this issue much more closely. He looks at what the world

proclaims to be the gospel and compares it to what Christ taught, or perhaps what Christ has called us to. MacArthur divides his book into five main categories. He begins by looking at the overall issues in general. Then he looks at what Christ has called us to. Next, MacArthur takes a different route by looking at some of the parables Christ told. He then takes time to look at how Christ explained His gospel and finally he looks at how the gospel was fulfilled.

As I began reading this book, I found it interesting to learn that some of the famous cliches I am so accustomed to hearing are not biblical. MacArthur referred to them as “products of a diluted gospel.” He went right from there to hit on a key point of the gospel that Jesus preached: discipleship. The Lord has not given us the option to

believe and continue to live according to our sinful desires. He has called us to believe and live in complete submission to Him. As MacArthur mentioned quite often, a person’s relationship with the Lord can be measured by the degree of obedience in their life. The Lord desires to disciple us, to see joyful obedience, and He calls us to make disciples. Along the same lines of obedience, we are called to produce fruit. This is another primary way that people see we are of Christ. “The Bible teaches clearly that the evidence of God’s work in a life is the inevitable fruit of transformed behavior.” The only way we can display that obedience or produce that fruit, however, is out of a genuine faith placed in our heart by the Lord as we recognize His grace amidst our inadequacy.

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MacArthur continues by looking at what Christ has called us to. It has already been established that He has called us to be His disciples. As He calls us to be disciples, He is calling us to put aside all that remains of our old self. In other words, He is calling for a new birth. He is calling for a regeneration, a renewing by the Holy Spirit. To do that, as MacArthur points out, we must first recognize our sin before the Holy God. Our hearts must be continually filled with repentance, aware of the evil that works within. We cannot come to Him with proud hearts expecting Him to hear us; we must come humbly in light of His worthiness. We must realize our need to turn from sin and our need to be transformed. Only through Christ can we receive that transformation, that “miracle of grace” as MacArthur often refers to it.

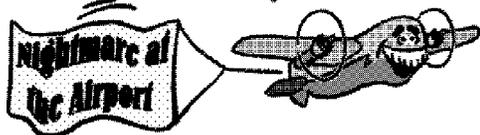
Further along in the book MacArthur examines the fact that we can't follow Christ with extra baggage weighing us down. We can't just give part of our lives for Christ; we must give it all. “Extra baggage — such as self-righteousness, selfishness, sin, and materialism — will not make it through intact.” These ideas must go if we are to follow Christ completely because as we focus on these things Christ is taken off the throne in our heart. Christ asked us to give it all and we must act upon that in obedience. MacArthur also mentions that Christ can't just be added onto our lives. He must replace the worldly desires of our old life. The key is that we cease living for self and start living for Him.

MacArthur closes by looking at how Jesus fulfilled His gospel through His death on the cross and His rising on the third day. Jesus had come to do the work of His Father and He did it perfectly. The work was done. There is nothing we can do to improve upon that already perfect work. The price for our sin has been paid; we must now recognize the salvation that is at hand because of that. As I read through this book, I was especially challenged with what lifestyle I have been called to. I have not been called to a life of easy-believism; I have been called to a life of complete obedience to the One who extended His grace to me when I didn't deserve it. Why should that indeed not be considered a great joy.

... we can't follow Christ with extra baggage weighing us down.

✍ Jeff Miller

Youth Ministry Bummer



It seemed like a simple enough assignment: pick up my brother at the St. Louis airport and bring him back to my home for the annual XL Board Meeting. With me, however, even the simplest task can be fraught with peril.

Oh, everything started off innocently enough: Rocky arrived from Dallas and we hopped in my Buick and headed for St. Louis. Entering the parking garage, I punched the button on the little parking ticket machine and nodded toward the sign warning people not to lose their ticket. I remember saying something along the lines of, “Why do they even bother with that sign, what sort of moron would lose their parking ticket?” (At this point you would do well to remember that the literary device I use most often to spice up these little bummers is called “foreshadowing.”)

We walked into the terminal with half an hour to spare and began randomly scanning the various airlines for a flight

number matching the one I had brilliantly remembered to jot down from my brother's notoriously short e-mail. (Andy is the kind of person who takes great pleasure in reducing his correspondence to one or two choice words which he gleefully places in the subject line. Several times I have actually clicked on the body of the e-mail, supposing that it might contain additional information...how foolish of me!) This time, however, his penchant for brevity backfired — he had not included the name of the airline! “No problem,” I had told Rock on the road, “St. Louis only has one main terminal and we know the city he's flying from.” It soon became clear, however, that the “only main terminal” didn't have any flights even vaguely resembling the number I had copied. (You may ask why I bothered to copy the number when I could have printed the e-mail — actually, you may not ask; it's embarrassing!) It seemed that either the number was wrong, no planes were arriving from Cleveland at all, or St. Louis had sprouted another terminal. Thirty minutes later, various credit card phone calls had made it apparent that all three were true! I had left one digit off the flight number, Andy's plane was still

grounded in Cleveland, and it was scheduled to arrive at St. Louis' remote south terminal.

Just to make sure this information from home coincided with the airline in question, we decided to take a shuttle to the south terminal and check on the status of the plane. After waiting in sub-arctic temperatures for ten minutes, we finally dragged our hypothermic bodies onto the bus and headed south. (Only in St. Louis do they put the waiting area for the terminal shuttle in a spot where absolutely no warmth or comfort can possibly be obtained.) Upon arriving we discovered that my brother's plane was not doing anything which even vaguely resembled flying, and would probably not arrive until 11:00 pm. Since it was only eight-thirty, the best thing to do was take the shuttle back to the car and go in search of some ice-cream. The stress from my many mistakes of the evening could then be drowned in a large M&M Blizzard!

Arriving back at the north terminal I casually reached for my wallet to retrieve the carefully stored parking ticket. To my horror, I felt, not leather, but only the rough material of the back

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pocket of my jeans. Trying not to panic, I casually suggested that we check the car to see if I had left my wallet on the seat. By this time Rocky was trying very hard not to be condescending (and failing miserably). We raced to the car; no wallet. We ran all over the north terminal—to each of the many different phones we had used—still no wallet. In desperation, we forced ourselves outside to wait for yet another terminal shuttle in the drop off zone now fondly dubbed “The Arctic Circle.” To our amazement (and the grace of God) the next shuttle was able to locate and radio the driver of our previous bus, who identified the wallet, and promised to bring it by on his next run. Wonderful! This, however, meant another ten minutes of bone-chilling cold at the Arctic Circle and small talk like, “So, can you think of any other fun mistakes you might make?” “Exactly how has an idiot like you survived all these years, Chris?” And, “You say your occupation involves organizing large numbers of teenagers

and taking them on trips all over the country? How interesting.” To Rocky’s credit, he was being very polite, but I could tell it was a struggle! Finally the wallet was shoved into my cold, lifeless hand and I knew the ordeal was finally over. We stumbled to the car. Reaching into my wallet to retrieve the parking ticket, I felt a wave of panic sweep through my barely heated body. You know the feeling – okay, maybe you don’t – I’d explain, but it’s too humiliating. No ticket, nada, nein, nyet, nope! “This can’t be happening,” I thought, “only a moron could lose his parking tic-” I stopped short as the familiarity of those words (remember the foreshadowing!) hit home. We turned the Buick inside out (Rocky still struggling to be sympathetic) as car after car left in disgust when we didn’t pull out of our parking space. With no recourse, I drove to the little exit booth and threw myself upon the mercy of the barely conscious attendant. After firing me a glance that pityingly summed up my IQ as roughly equivalent to boiled

cabbage, the attendant spent roughly ten minutes making what appeared to be an identity check, security clearance, and police report all rolled into one. Meanwhile, Rocky sank lower and lower in the passenger seat as the line behind us began to back up with alarming speed. Soon people everywhere were craning their heads to see what was wrong with the idiots in the Buick. After checking with the FBI, MI6, the NRA, and the IRS, the little arm thingy lifted. The fine? Ten times what I usually pay for the convenience of their parking garage.

Well, I did manage to drown my sorrows in a Blizzard, even though, by that time, the sum total of our cash amounted to less than \$2. Andy’s plane arrived and after he and Rocky voted this the next Uth Bummer, the three of us pulled into my driveway around 1:30 am. Sighing with relief, I reached into my pocket for the house key and...

✍Chris Riser

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