

X'ENT NEWS

PROVIDING EXCELLENCE IN LEADERSHIP
THROUGH QUALITY CHRISTIAN TRAINING

Volume 16 Issue 2

September 2008

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.



Growing in love, knowledge and discernment

One of my favorite pastimes is reading about World War II. My first in-depth exposure to a book about WWII was in sixth grade when I got a hold of William Shirer's *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich for Kids*. This book is an annotated, 100-page version, with lots of pictures, of Shirer's original 1300-page tome. After this first exposure, I did some more reading through junior high and was feeling that I was the local expert on WWII. One afternoon, I proclaimed my expertise and complete knowledge of WWII to my mom. She then proceeded to ask me about one of most important battles in the European Theatre, *The Battle of the Bulge*. This battle occurred in late 1944 and was the last major offensive attempted by the Germans against the Allies before their surrender in May of 1945. To

the shock and dismay of this so-called expert, I knew very little about this battle. I was greatly humbled...by my own mother of all people!...and realized that my "expertise" should be more rightly understood as "ignorance". Happily, through the intervening twenty-five years, I have read more and can discuss *The Battle of the Bulge* with a fair amount of lucidity. However, I have also realized that my knowledge of WWII, even after considerable reading over the years, is very limited and that I will never be an expert on this topic. Due to the fact that my reading is a pastime versus a pursuit, "ignorance" is still the proper designation of my understanding of WWII.

Several years ago, I had a similar situation occur, except this event was of a much more serious nature. A thirteen-year old young man, who was attending the youth ministry of which I was the pastor, didn't want to come anymore. His parents set up a meeting with me to discuss the issues and, as we talked with him, his chief complaint was that he was bored with my teaching. It wasn't that my style of teaching was boring, per se, but rather he already fully understood

what I was teaching. I found this rather surprising because, at that time, I was teaching through the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes. I had thought that I was being rather unique in teaching Ecclesiastes to a youth group. Also, in my years of ministry, I have taught through this book several times to different audiences and still feel that I have much to learn from this great discussion on the futility of life lived without acknowledgement of and obedience to God. Generally speaking, those that I have taught have also appreciated the lessons from this very sobering book. This young

This young man, however, was insistent. Not only did he understand Ecclesiastes, but also the other books of the Bible and topics I taught on were "old hat" to him. His parents must have agreed with him because he stopped attending youth group. More than likely, his parents simply gave in to his wish to not come anymore. In my remaining time in that ministry, I saw very little of this young man and found that he was not involved in any ministry.

Of course, this criticism of my teaching stung a bit. But God

graciously took me to His Word where I found encouragement and truth and was re-affirmed in what I already knew. None of us, no matter how diligent and determined, will ever be total experts in the Christian life. At the point of our death or the Rapture, we will then, and only then, be complete and our knowledge of God and our Savior will be filled. Paul affirms this truth in Philippians 3:12 where he states, “Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.” In the previous verses, he is speaking about being Christ-like and being found in Christ’s righteousness. Positionally, in the eyes of God, we are fully righteous and Christ-like due to the gift of salvation that is ours through faith in the finished work of the cross. But as we live this life, we are to “press on” in Christian growth and take hold of that which we have in Christ because we are not “already perfected.” The important question is how this greater Christ-likeness occurs.

In the first chapter of Philippians, Paul commends them for their love, faith and service and for their participation in the gospel. If I were one of the Philippians reading these first few verses, I might be tempted to say, “Hey, I have this Christian thing figured out. Paul is pretty impressed with me. I believe in Jesus. I love God. I love people. What else is there

to do?” But then I would read these words in 1:9 which are absolutely central to a right understanding of ourselves and the Christian life, “And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment...” We would all do well to memorize this prayer of Paul and constantly go before the Lord for ourselves and others with these words in mind. We are to be people who are constantly growing and developing into greater Christ-likeness. And the way this occurs is through growing in love, knowledge and discernment.

What Paul is saying here is that growing into greater Christ-likeness is a “entire life” process. These three aspects of growth are interrelated.

And if we will move to completeness in Christ, then we will strive to grow in all of these areas. We cannot love the way Christ loved if our understanding and knowledge of Christ isn’t accurate. Thus, our ability to love like

Christ is completely dependent upon our understanding of the Word. This is the case because it is the Word that reveals Christ’s and God’s love to us. As we come to understand God’s love as revealed in the Bible, we see it for the completely selfless love that it is. God’s love is not based upon the loveliness of the one loved, but rather God’s love is sourced in His nature. “God is love” 1 John 4:8 tells us. It is His nature to love and to love unconditionally. This unconditional love is most fully displayed in

God’s sending of Christ to die for undeserving sinners like you and me (1 John 4:10, John 3:16). We now are called to love with this same love and, as our knowledge of God’s love as revealed in His Word increases, our growth in this love will increase, too.

As we grow in this love and knowledge, our wisdom and discernment will grow also. Think about Psalm 119 which declares with clarity the wisdom and discernment aspects of the Word. We become wiser in regard to enemies, decisions, God’s will, teaching, etc. as we study and meditate upon the Word. God’s Word is a “lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (v. 105). But notice again, the thrust isn’t simply one of intellectual understanding. But rather it is a love for the Word and the God of the Word. Psalm 119:165 makes this awesome statement: “Great peace have those who love Your law, And nothing causes them to stumble.” Loving God and His Word grants to us great discernment as we walk through this life.

Due to personal choice of how I spend my time and energy, I will never be an expert on WWII. But for each Christian, we are called of God to continue to grow in love, knowledge and discernment, that we “may approve the things that are excellent” (Phil. 1:10). May we, in the strength and grace of God, press on to greater Christ-likeness as we grow in these areas. And may we make it our life’s ambition to never stop growing!

♦ Eric Ellis



The Synagogue at Capernaum

Scripture in HD

Our family typically does not watch a lot of television. Much of that is by choice, but some is simply because we only get about 8 channels, several of which are Spanish, and none of which are particularly clear. Sadly, our 15-year-old rabbit ears just don't pick up a signal like they used to. So, when I watch a sporting event, such as the Olympics or a Cowboys game, it's always a bit fuzzy. I get the general idea of what's going on but can't always catch the subtle details...you know, things like the ball being thrown, etc. That doesn't really bother me too much, unless I've recently watched something at someone else's house. You know, someone showing NBC HD on their HD 1080 PLCD (whatever that means). Fuzzy doesn't seem so bad until you see it in HD.

This past July, Christy and I had the opportunity to travel to Israel for an eight-day tour with a group from our church. It was an absolutely incredible experience! Words (and particularly those limited by space for a newsletter article) simply cannot describe it. Since we've

been back, people have constantly asked about its impact. They ask if it revolutionized my view of Scripture. That's a hard question. I hope my overall view of Scripture was pretty accurate before. And yet, it was hugely impactful. For me, I think the best way to describe its impact

is that it has helped me to see the Scriptures more in HD. What was previously fuzzy is now clearer.

This has not simply enhanced my viewing pleasure, but it has given me greater appreciation for the reality of the biblical accounts and the God they so magnificently reveal. Having stood where Gideon looked out over the Midianite army, I am that much more in awe of the God who could conquer them with but 300 men. Having walked into the cave where Jesus was born, I am that much more mindful of His humanity. And on and on I could go.

So, if you have the chance to go to Israel...go! But even if you never get that chance, do all you can to view the Scriptures in HD. Don't ignore the details. Be diligent as a student of the Word to sharpen the image you see on the pages of God's Word. The events recorded therein involved real people in real places and they put a real God on display. Not in a fuzzy, rabbit-ears sort of way, but in HD.

♦ Jonathan Anderson



Recent XL Intern Graduate, Jake Wyatt, is called to the Youth Pastorate at Mesa Hills Bible Church.

Congratulations to Jake, Candace and Caleb Wyatt on God's appointment of Jake to the youth pastorate of this Bible Church in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Jake began his ministry at MHBC in July and is thoroughly enjoying the work and praising the Lord for the privilege of serving Him. Be sure to pray for the Jake as he gets adjusted to this new work. If you would like to know more about MHBC, visit their website at www.mesahills.org. Also, please pray for Caleb in particular because he will soon be a big brother!



Time is Running Out



to register for the

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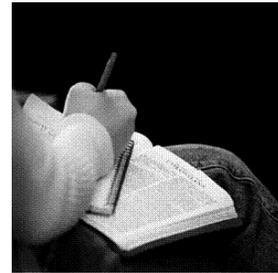
XL Ministries 2008 Conference:

Excel Still More

Registration deadline is October 1st. After that there is a \$10 per person late fee.

The dates are November 5th – 9th and we have a new location for the XL Conference! This year we will meet at the beautiful Glorieta Conference Center, just a few miles from the historic town of Santa Fe, in the Sangre De Cristo Mountains of New Mexico.

For online registration, go to the website at www.xlministries.org.



The theme this year is **Excel Still More**. Our text is 1 Thessalonians 4 and we will

address topics such as Excelling in Purity, Excelling in Teachability, Excelling in Evangelism, etc. Keep in mind that the believers in Thessalonica were actually walking with the Lord, but Paul's reminder is that we ought to never slow down – keep pressing on!

Web site: www.xlministries.org

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