

X'ENT NEWS

PROVIDING EXCELLENCE IN LEADERSHIP
THROUGH QUALITY CHRISTIAN TRAINING

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Christy and I are thankful to be at the stage of parenting where we can leave our kids home alone. By God's grace, our five girls can typically coexist with relative peace in our absence, at least for a few hours at a time.

Often, when we are out by ourselves doing something exciting like going to the grocery store, one of my younger girls will find the phone and text, "Where are you?" and "When will you be home?" It may be that they simply love us and miss us. They may be sitting, staring longingly at the door, eagerly anticipating our return, which will restore their joy.

More likely, they want to know how much longer the cats will be

away, so the mice can play. They want to know precisely how long they can wait and still do what we've asked of them while we are gone. They are curious as to how long they can play and still return the house to something resembling its state when we left. And so, my typical response is, "Be back soon."

"Soon" can mean "We are sitting in the driveway but haven't come in yet because we are enjoying uninterrupted conversation." Or it can mean "We are having a great time and are planning to run sever-

al more errands and may even stop for coffee before we come back." But what soon always means is, "Live knowing we are coming back and it could be any time."

My hope is that knowing we are coming back soon will have a profound impact on my daughters' behavior while we are away. It will affect how they treat one another and how they clean up after themselves. It will affect how obedient they are to do what we've asked or not do what we've forbidden. One of the most basic truths of the Christian faith is that Jesus is coming back soon. And that truth should have a profound impact on how we live in His absence.

Jesus taught His disciples what we refer to as the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24 and 25 to help them and us think rightly about His coming. He explained that there would not be an immediate revelation of Messiah and His kingdom at that time. Rather He would return in glory to fully establish His kingdom at His second coming. And He charged them and us to live in light of the reality that He is coming again in glory.

He compared His coming to that

of a bridegroom coming for the wedding celebration (25:1-13) and so reminds us to be ready and waiting. For those who are in Christ, we are to be eagerly and joyfully anticipating His arrival, knowing we are ready for His return because of His work on our behalf. And we are to call others to be ready by responding to Christ in repentance and faith while there is yet time.

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And He compared His coming to that of a master returning after being away on a long journey (25:14-30). Like those who have been entrusted with the estate in his absence, we are to be faithful. We are to be busy about His work for His glory as faithful stewards of all He has entrusted to us—including our time, giftedness, financial resources, ministry opportunities and other re-

sponsibilities. Faithful such that we will hear at his return, “Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master (25:23).”

So, Lord, “Where are you? When will you return?”

“Be back soon.”

May we live in light of His return, as those who are ready, eagerly waiting, and faithful!

-Jonathan Anderson

Where Are They Now?

A Ministry Update from Joseph Bonura



Jessica and I got married in 1999, and, beginning in 2000, were involved with youth ministry in Bakersfield, California. During this time, I completed the XL internship with Brian Murphy. In July 2006, Jessica and I and our two sons (Daniel – 2004, David – 2006)

moved to Louisville so I could attend Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. While there, Joshua (2009) and Joy (2010) were born. The Lord used seminary classes and Clifton Baptist Church’s clear understanding of the gospel to do a good and necessary work in our hearts. We were preparing to go to Turkey with the Southern Baptist International Missions Board. After graduating in 2011, the Lord closed that door and opened up the opportunity to work with a new training school that was just starting in Tijuana, Mexico, called Radius International (radiusinternational.org).

Radius trains workers (missionaries) to plant churches among unreached language groups throughout the world. We love that Radius emphasizes the authority of the Word in our personal lives as well as in missiology and methods. Radius values clear communication of the gospel through language and culture fluency. And Radius desires that workers are equipped, by God’s grace, to walk through suffering, sacrifice and conflict to

see people come to Christ, new believers disciplined, leaders trained and a church established. These ministries are often in very difficult places that are influenced by Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists and/or Animists.

Currently there are 11 Radius staff members, with three more families joining this summer. Jessica and I serve as on-site staff, and our family lives on campus with the students in Tijuana. We (along with the rest of the Radius staff) mentor students, and I get to teach the Spiritual Foundations classes. I am also thankful to be a part of the Curriculum Development Team. Jessica is currently overseeing the Radius short-term staff and the childcare for students’ children.

We are incredibly thankful for the Lord’s faithfulness over the years. And we look forward, Lord willing, to Him bearing much fruit in the years to come as His name is proclaimed and His Word is taught throughout the world.

If you would like to support XL Ministries (a non-profit organization), you can send your tax-deductible donation to us at PO Box 1173, Roanoke, TX 76262. Thank you!



Book Nook

Book Review of *Flourishing Faith: A Baptist Primer on Work, Economics, and Civic Stewardship*
 By Chad Brand
 Reviewed by Brandon Caron

Those newer to the study of the Bible might be surprised as to how much the Word of God has to say about what types of employees believers should be, how they are to be stewards of money, and what role they should play in the overall functioning of society. People often fall into the error of thinking that the Bible is an antiquated book with little practical relevance to the modern world. In *Flourishing Faith*, Chad Brand does an excellent job of demonstrating that this could not be further from the truth. He effectively argues that the Bible provides extensive instruction to Christians on being productive members of society. Brand is professor of Christian theology at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and aptly applies his theological expertise to this everyday aspect of the Christian life.

Brand starts the discussion in Chapter 1 by asserting that the concept of working to provide for one's self and family is a biblical

principle. This natural principle is part of God's good creation. Prior to the fall and sin's introduction into the world system, Adam and Eve were commanded by God to work and subdue the earth. God demonstrated a pattern of work in His very act of creation. As creatures made in the image of God, men are to follow His example in being laborers. The trials and stresses that so often accompany man's labor did not come into play until after the Fall and are a direct result of the injection of sin into the natural order (Gen 3:17b-19a). Chapter 1 concludes by demonstrating that Christ and the apostles set an example of work as well.

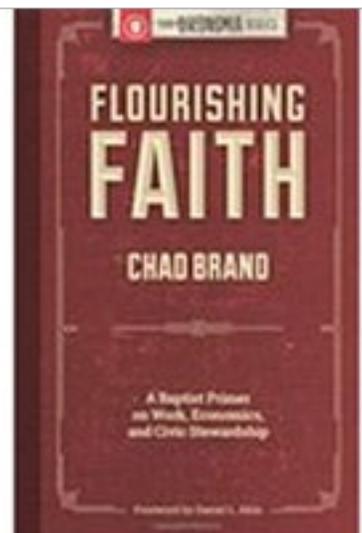
...all aspects of the Christian life must be lived out to the glory of Christ, including one's occupation.

Chapter 2 is used to drive home the legacy of the Christian work ethic by surveying attitudes toward work in the church from the times of the Roman Empire through the founding of the United States. The undercurrent flowing throughout the history of the church is the belief that all aspects of the Christian life must be lived out to the glory of Christ, including one's occupation.

Given that productivity has historically produced wealth, Chapter 3 explores biblical Christian attitudes towards prosperity. What becomes obvious when Scripture is allowed to speak is that wealth is morally neutral. It is how wealth is obtained and handled that moves this neutrality to either God-honoring righteousness or sin. From time to time government has been a vehicle through which money is confiscated from certain individ-

uals to be redistributed to others. Chapter 5 highlights that this is not a biblically legitimate means of financial gain. Chapter 4 puts significant effort into painting a picture of what biblical government should resemble: limited and dedicated to the service and protection of the people. To further enable the reader to discern the political and economic landscape, Chapter 6 gives an overview of political systems from the post-Roman European periods to today. In Chapter 7, specific attention is given to what a Christian position on these issues might look like.

Overall, this is a highly commendable and needed book for today's church. Too few are making the connection between being a disciple of Jesus Christ and how they live and work as members of a larger society. While it is true that a Christian's ultimate citizenship is in heaven (Phil 3:20), God leaves His people on this earth to be salt and light to the earthly kingdoms in which they live (Matt 5:13-16). The Bible has much to say about these very topics, and Brand has done a good job of helping people engage these issues in a biblically sound manner.



~ 2017 XL Training ~
February 9-10 at
Countryside Bible Church

Please plan on joining us on February 9th and 10th, 2017 at Countryside Bible Church for our annual training sessions and fellowship. Topics at the training sessions will include the following:

- ◆ Living by the Compass and Not by the Clock
- ◆ Pastoral Care
- ◆ Counseling Ministry
- ◆ Family Life and Ministry ~ several sessions including a Q/A

There will also be time to reconnect and encourage one another informally.

Of course, following the XL Training, Countryside will host the annual Essentials Conference on the 10th, 11th and 12th. The essential focus at this conference will be worship and both John MacArthur and Alistair Begg are scheduled to be keynote speakers.

Mark your calendars now and look for more information in the coming months. We would love to see you there.

