



January 24, 2008

YOUTH MINISTRY (TEENS)

Last Friday night our youth gathered at The Gym in Atascocita for a night of fun. As I interacted with the teens by visiting in the bleachers and playing dodge ball and basketball with them, I was reminded what a great group of teenagers we have. There is a sense of unity in our youth group. Yes, they are dealing with normal teenage relationships, but they love the Lord and they love each other. There were lost teens there that had been invited by our teens, and it reminded me of the stories I hear of our teens putting the Gospel in the paths of their peers in the community. Some of our fantastic and faithful adults that mentor, disciple and teach our teens were there, and it reminded me that three times each week our teens receive large doses of Bible teaching in addition to any they receive at home. I'd certainly be happy for my children to be in our current youth group if my kids were old enough. Pastor Wes and his team are doing a great job of doing everything they can to ground the young people in the Word of God.

Speaking of his team, our youth workers are very effective. The reason I know that is by watching the way our teens interact with their leaders. The teens have fun with the workers and there is back and forth teasing and such, but there is a clear respect for their leadership. The respect our teens have for their leadership is telling. Our teens have seen in their teachers and leaders notable character worth respecting.

Join me in praying regularly for Pastor Wes, our youth workers, and our teens. The teens are at a time in their lives where they are able to learn so much. Their minds are so alert, active, and hungry. I pray that out of our youth group will come men and women who are Christlike and responsible lay people as young adults as well as teens who have surrendered to ministry and missions.

Sunday Evening Ministries

I've said it before right here and I happily say again, Sunday evenings at NEHBC are special. This past Sunday evening, our spring semester kicked off and I spent the evening walking around. I sat in on each of the adult Christian Life University (CLU) classes, spent time observing AWANA, mingled with teenagers, and walked the preschool hallway a couple of times. Everywhere I went, I sensed the work of the Lord being done. I found adults earnestly learning how to share their faith, defend their faith, or better understand marriage. I found teenagers doing physical labor working on a church project. But the highlight for me was when I turned the corner in the children's wing and literally almost ran into a group of excited workers in the hallway. There was much excited chatter and clapping going on. What was

happening? They were celebrating an addition to the family of God. We had just gained another sister in Christ. A third grade girl was reciting John 3:16 to a listener who asked the girl if she knew what the verse actually meant. A conversation took place, and finally the girl insisted that she wanted to give her life to the Lord Jesus. It simply doesn't get any better than that. I was thrilled to see the workers huddled together celebrating. That is indeed what it is about. They were used by the Lord to lead someone to salvation and then were sincerely celebrating the spiritual victory. They weren't alone in the celebration. A bigger and better one was taking place in the spiritual realm. It seems over the last few months, AWANA has become a conduit of regular spiritual breakthrough for not a few children. I'm regularly hearing accounts of children being saved, requesting baptism, and bringing their lost families to worship services. AWANA workers, I'm so proud of you. Thank you for your love for the Lord Jesus. If you are looking for a meaningful place of service at NEHBC, you ought to give serious consideration to AWANA. The Lord is moving there.

If you don't come on Sunday evenings, you are missing out.

SPORTSMEN'S BANQUET

By the way, this past Sunday night I stumbled upon the leadership team for the May 17 Sportsmen's Banquet hard at work. They've been meeting since September. You will not believe what is in store for the 2008 version. Let me just put it this way, they had to reserve the high school parking lot across the street for all the cars because so many companies are coming to set up exhibits that the parking lot is all taken up by the reserved displays. The big meeting will take place outside under a 1,000 person tent. The room in which we have our worship services will be transformed into the mother of all mounted animal exhibits. I'm talking wall-to-wall mounted animals. Last year's wild animal display was minor league compared to the 2008 version. I understand the shotgun/skeet range will be bigger this year as well as the bow course. Rumor has it that there will be a large tank in which the little kids can try to catch real fish. I'm really looking forward to the hunting dog demonstrations and the 4-wheeler tests.

When I left the planning meeting, I gave thanks to the Lord. You know I'm not a big believer in big event evangelism nor am I willing for NEHBC to be big event driven. But after what I saw last year, if eating kangaroo and giving away shotguns and having professional bass fishermen on hand to teach someone how to walk a lure is going to draw lost adult men in such great numbers, then order the kangaroo. So many lost men came last year and the number that indicated a desire to surrender to Christ shocked me. I am a firm believer that the church's primary ministry is life change through systematic, regular, and meaty teaching of the Bible. According to 1 Corinthians 14:24-25, solid expository preaching and teaching makes the lost very aware of their need for a Savior and causes the saved to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus. Yet, I remain very concerned that too great a percentage of today's churches are women and children. While I deeply value women and children, at least as much as the men, the absence in the church house of the biblical head of the home is disconcerting. We have to do something to reach men. If the "fish" will bite on kangaroo, I say bait the hook. The Sportsmen's Banquet is a "can't miss" event. Mark your calendar. May 17, 2008.

PEDICURE PARTIES

Isaiah 52:7: How lovely on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who announces peace and brings good news of happiness, who announces salvation, and says to Zion, "Your God reigns!"

If you want to see some beautiful feet, you should come to one of our mission team orientations. On Sunday night, January 13th, we had our 2008 Missions Fair at which I challenged our church family to sign up for mission trips. The next step in the process was to hold an orientation meeting for each team – for the purposes of building a sense of “team”, providing initial instruction, and prayer. These orientation meetings are taking place this week and next. The Vidor and Estonian teams met in our home on Monday and Tuesday respectively of this week. Tonight, the Virginia team meets at Pastor Sonny’s home, and next Tuesday the Thailand team meets at Bill Campbell’s home. At the Estonian meeting, our team got to hear from Tom Thompson in Estonia live on the phone. That was a special time. A sense of expectation and excitement has marked the meetings thus far. Personally, I am as excited about the trip to minister to Hurricane Rita victims through rebuilding homes in southeast Texas as I am the trip to Estonia to distribute Bibles. I feel the same way about the Virginia, New Orleans, Arkansas, and Thailand trips. In every case we are going to lost people to announce to them and show them the good news of Jesus Christ.

If you have not yet committed to a trip and yet you are still praying along those lines, I want to strongly encourage you to make a decision. The teams are already beginning to meet. It will be so helpful to you to belong to the team for encouragement, prayer, instruction, and training.

THAILAND TRIP CLOSED

I’m sad and happy to announce the Thailand trip is full. We cannot accept any more commitments. I’m sad because nobody else can sign up. I’m happy because we filled all the spots on the team. The IMB is the host of this trip, and they set the cap on how many people can participate. I never in my wildest dreams thought we’d max out the trip, but you did it. I shouldn’t be surprised.

NEW ORLEANS TRIP IS CLOSED

The deadline for the New Orleans trip was this past Monday so no more people can participate in the trip. We have to set a deadline due to hotel reservations and training for the trip. Our team leaves for Mardi Gras a week from Saturday. It is hard to believe the first trip of the year is upon us. We’ll be praying for our New Orleans team this coming Sunday in all the services.