



November 1st, 2007

On a Personal Note . . .

I had a real treat this past weekend. On Thursday evening, Nicole and the girls headed to Austin for her cousin's wedding. I took the advantage of the opportunity to do some male bonding with Colton. It was our first extended "guy time" together. On Thursday evening, we swung by my father's house to pick him up, and the three generations of Lino's headed to this neat, private campground in Cut'N'Shoot, Texas, where we rented a little cabin for the night. This campground sits in the middle of nowhere and is the kind of place where one has to be lost to find it. Its one of the best kept outdoor secrets in north Houston. Our little cabin sat on a peninsula on a little manmade pond that is stocked with catfish, large mouth bass, and brim. It is guaranteed catching. The weather was perfect—clear sky full of twinkling stars, cold, and quiet. The campout was all about Colton. We roasted marshmallows, played with flashlights, scared the sleeping ducks, dug in the dirt, constantly engaged in sword fights with sticks, and wrestled. At 7:30pm he announced he was ready for bed, and he crashed hard. It gave dad and I lots of time to chat around the campfire. Dad is one of my closest friends, and I cherish the times we have together. Of course, since he is a pastor, we talk church a lot, but we also dream out loud about the future of our personal lives, share our burdens with each other, and there is almost always a heavy dose of laughing. Friday morning, Colton was up at 5am and we were all huddled around the campfire by 5:30am as it was a brisk 36 degrees. When the sun rose at 7am, it was time for fishing, more sword fighting, feeding the ducks, and more playing in the dirt.

Mid afternoon we were back at home for a nap before heading to Baytown for a high school football game. Colton has latched onto the Atascocita High School team and at three years old, he can't understand there are other teams in our district also, so for his sake we follow the Eagles. So, Friday night found Colton and I at Baytown Sterling's stadium where Colton had his weekly high school football fix. He definitely fits into the "rabid fan" category, and he spends much of the game yelling and shouting at the players, officials, and bands.

Saturday morning was the outdoor work day at NEHBC where we got in about an hour and half of work before Colton was done. He couldn't understand why the men kept reducing the size of the mounds of dirt. Colton thought the truck loads of dirt were for his playing pleasure. Then Saturday night we were in the ready position for the Aggie football game on ESPN2. We watched until the third quarter when Colton began crying because A&M couldn't score a touchdown, and then he was off to bed. I was reminded just how terrible the A&M football team is when Colton asked me, "Daddy, who is better, the Atascocita Eagles or the Aggies?" and because I can't lie to my son, I found myself telling him it was a toss up. Our football program is headed in the wrong direction.

Getting a three-year-old ready for church and getting in the frame of mind to preach is no joke, and so Sunday morning was quite a challenge. Thankfully, a family in our church had volunteered to take care of Colton once I got him to the church, and that was a big blessing for me. I was thrilled when Nicole and the girls returned on Sunday afternoon, but I have to admit I was disappointed that our “guy time” was over.

I find so much fulfillment in being with my son, teaching him things, and simply talking about a wide variety of subjects. We talk about the Lord Jesus and the Bible, church, fishing, guns, dogs, football, and about Mommy and the girls. I am constantly reminded how much sons look up to their fathers. Dad, whether you realize it or not, you are your young son’s hero. He will follow you wherever you lead. He is watching your life and wants to be like you. His understanding of the word “father” is defined by what he sees in you. When people talk to him about God the Father, he will understand “Father” based on his understanding of you. One of my greatest fears is that as Colton’s father, I will give him a distorted view of what the Father is like. I pray for wisdom and courage so that my relationship with Colton will paint for him a picture of what the Father is like instead of what the Father is not like. I want to be a catalyst in my son coming to know and love the Lord Jesus. I pray you will desire the same.

Dad, there are two things I want to encourage you to put into your son’s life: your time and the Bible. Simply put, those are the two greatest gifts you can give to him. Spend time with him and put him in places where he can be grounded in the Bible. There are no substitutes for these two ingredients. Buying your son big gifts will never make up for the absence of your time or God’s Word in his life. Giving your son his own way because you feel guilty for your absence or for not exposing him to the Lord Jesus is a sad attempt to make up for your absenteeism in his life. Dad, your career can wait. Your hobbies can wait. Your dreams can wait. You have just 18 years to pour yourself and God’s Word into your son’s life. If you do those two things, you will have no regrets when it comes to your relationship with your boy.

Building Blip

This past Sunday I was moved in the services by Randy Bentley’s exhortation regarding our building expansion project. He is exactly right. If all the Lord Jesus wants is for us is to have a new building, then He would just give us one big check and we would break ground. But, the building project is not just about building a building. It is about the lives of the people that make up NEHBC. The Lord wants to use this building project to sanctify us. He wants to use this building project to teach us that He must come first in everything, and that includes our finances. The only way this building will get built is if we all participate in sacrificially giving of our money. For us to make that kind of sacrifice, it means we will have to put God first in our lives. Thank you, Randy, for sharing with us this past Sunday. The Lord spoke to me through you. I do pray that through this building project we will all learn to put the Lord first in our lives.

Fall Festival

A cloudless fall evening at sunset, hayrides, hot chocolate, apple cider, games, bounce houses, hot dogs, too much candy, and laughter filling the air. The 2007 Fall Festival was a fantastic event.

A big thank you to April Rhines and her team of volunteers for their sacrificial service. Because of your hard work, believers were encouraged, lost people were presented with the Gospel, and the unchurched

were invited to our Sunday services. Thank you for advancing the work of the Kingdom.

Time Change

This is to remind you that the fall time change is this coming weekend. Before you go to sleep on Saturday night, don't forget to turn your clocks back one hour. If you forget to do so, you will be one hour early for worship on Sunday.

2008 Mission Trips Preview Service

It is hard to believe the time is already upon us, but one week from today, a team from NEHBC will go to Brazil to assist with a church planting venture. It often seems like a team from our church is either just returning from a mission trip or about to go on one, and that is the way I want it. My vision is for there to be a mission team from NEHBC heading out every single month of every year until the Lord Jesus Christ comes again. We are working our way toward that end. We have already announced six 2008 mission trips, and I am about to add a seventh and final trip for next year.

You may be wondering how we will be able to one day service 12 trips a year. The answer is easy. It is my prayer that 25% of the people in our church will get to where they go on a trip every single year and that another 25% of the people in our church will get to where they go on one every other year. That means every 24 months, 50% of our church will go on at least one mission trip, and 25% of our church will have been on two mission trips during that period. We have a long way to go, but we are making headway in realizing this vision. This year, we have had 121 people go on an NEHBC mission trip. Next year it will be even more.

I especially want to see our teenagers involved in missions. Each year, we have one youth mission trip, but starting in 2009, we are going to have two youth mission trips—one domestic and one international. Sure, the first international youth mission trip may just have two or three teenagers as it will be a major step of faith, but that number will grow. It is my vision that our youth ministry will get to a place where 50% of our teens go on an international mission trip off of our continent before they graduate from high school. What an impact it will have on their lives. It will give them a heart for the nations and a passion for reaching the world for Jesus Christ. If they can understand the importance of missions before they finish high school, they will go on mission trips on a regular basis for the rest of their lives. We need to plant that seed in them while they are still young.

On Sunday night, January 13, we are going to have a 2008 Mission Trips Preview Service, and I want to ask you to make plans to attend. In the lobby, there will be a booth set up for each of the 2008 trips with information, costs, and memorabilia. Attendees will be able to go through the exhibit area before the service. We will then have a 60-minute service during which I am going to give an overview of all of the 2008 trips. I will cover where each trip is going, the nature of the work, and the cost analysis of each. The service will culminate in attendees being asked to commit by faith to participate in one of the 2008 trips. I will ask people not to worry about where the money is going to come from but to simply commit to a trip by faith and then trust the Lord Jesus to provide the money for the trip. I hope you will make plans to attend; it is going to be a very moving service.