



February 14, 2008

THE BLISS OF BOREDOM

This past Monday morning, our two year old, Campbell, was admitted to Kingwood Hospital. She was released Wednesday. Non-contagious lung issues that have been ongoing for a few weeks were unsolved by prescribed meds. The official cause for admittance was “failure of outpatient treatment”. Her small body in the big hospital bed was a sad sight. But, not as sad as the IV they put in her arms or the oxygen tubes that were put in her nose. Needless to say, juggling sermon prep, attending necessary meetings, and rescheduling other meetings while trying to be at the hospital as much as possible was a little more hectic than usual. Finding daytime childcare for the other kids is stressful. Even when your four-month-old daughter has a place to spend the night with a great family, it is still sad. We are deeply grateful for the family in our church that immediately took in our oldest and youngest for the first night and kept Cassidy both nights. As Tuesday night turned into the early hours of Wednesday, I was earnestly trying to finish up Wednesday night’s sermon so I could take Wednesday off to take care of our son. I was tired from studying, my mind was at the hospital with Nicole and Campbell, and I was worried about how Cassidy was doing separated from her mom while at the home of our friends over in Kingwood.

I had new found gratitude for the Lord. The statements of complaint regarding some “boring” evenings that I’ve made to Nicole came prancing through my head. Most evenings at our home are pretty uneventful. We eat dinner as a family and the kids go to bed by 7pm. Nicole and I have most evenings together, and we pass the time reading, watching a ball game on TV, writing, doing chores, and sometimes we’ll take advantage of the movies on demand feature. Night after night of this and things can become monotonous. After Monday and Tuesday night of this week, all I can say is, “Bring on the uneventful evening.” Uneventful evenings are bliss. They are much better than my family sleeping in three different locations at night. Much better than my two-year-old princess in a hospital bed with tubes sticking out of her body. Much better than spending the night alone in bed.

Sometimes the uneventful can become monotonous and boring to us. If we are not careful, what is actually an act of kindness from the Lord--lack of tragedy, emergency, or trials—can begin to seem like monotonous boredom to us. Sometimes we are so busy looking for the Lord to bless us by giving us something we don’t have that we don’t notice that He has blessed us by withholding something from us—a tragedy or an emergency that turns one’s life upside down. Thank you, Lord, for the many things you withhold from us that we don’t even notice because we are so busy looking to get things from You. You are truly a good God. Your lovingkindness is indescribable.

STORY OF LIFE CHANGE

My favorite story of life change this week comes from NEHBC's empty nesters' group. This past Saturday night, Nicole and I attended NEHBC's empty nesters' valentine party. They reserved the private room at a local Mexican restaurant and dined on fajitas. A chapter of Scripture was read to set the tone for the evening and much meaningful conversation ensued around the dinner tables. It was great to see that the class had worked hard to invite lost people to their event and it had paid off.

I want to share with you a meaningful conversation I had with a couple. I can't recall how long they have been coming to NEHBC, but it has been for some time. Saturday night they told me that NEHBC's faithful teaching of the Bible has changed their lives. They told me that every week when they come to their worship service we simply preach the Bible, then they go to Sunday School where they are taught the Bible book by book, and when they go to our Center for Biblical Counseling they are simply told what the Bible says about their situation. When they first came to NEHBC, their marriage was tenuous at best. By the grace of God, today they are truly in love with each other and genuinely enjoy spending time together. The husband remarked that falling in love with each other has caused them to rethink their lifestyle, even down to what they eat, because they want to do what they can to have a long life together. Their testimony warmed my soul. That is the business the Lord is in—the business of life change—and the Lord is changing lives through NEHBC, one family at a time and one individual at a time.

By the way, Nicole and I have never had a bad time hanging out with our empty nesters. Though they are large in number and diverse in nature, there is a sweet spirit that pervades the group. They have quite the active calendar with dinners, musicals, trips, cruises, and Astros games. Most importantly, they do a very effective job of ministering to people in their class when someone is in need. If you are an empty nester, I'd strongly encourage you to visit Bill Campbell's Sunday School class. It meets at 10am on Sundays in room A218.

GREATEST GIFT TO JESUS

In years past, we have collected a special December offering, in honor of the birth of our Lord Jesus, to enable our church family to more rapidly influence the world for Jesus Christ via the Acts 1:8 strategy. Through the offering, lost people at every level of Acts 1:8 have been able to hear the Gospel and receive Bibles.

This past December of 2007, we were in the midst of a financial full court press to make as much progress toward our building plan goal as possible. We are still praying and trusting the Lord, by faith, for the financial provision for our building expansion and yet, the enterprise of taking the Gospel to the lost world must still continue. People all around our communities, throughout our state, across our nation, and around the world are dying and going to Hell, and their opportunity to hear the Gospel is in the hands of believers like you and I, everyday people with a sense of urgency to take the Gospel to the world.

As a result, we will be collecting our Greatest Gift to Jesus offering on Easter Sunday, March 23.

Nicole and I have already begun to pray and ask the Lord what He would have us give. No doubt the amount will require personal sacrifice on our part, but as always, sacrificing for the advancement of the Kingdom is such a privilege. The joy of knowing that more people will hear the Gospel and be given the opportunity to make their eternal reservation in Heaven is indescribable.

This has always been a very successful offering for us in the past. The greatest aspect of the success of

this offering has been the number of people who contribute. This offering has not necessarily been built on the backs of a few large gifts, but everybody coming together to give an amount that requires personal sacrifice. For some it has been \$50 and for others \$1,000, but when the vast majority of people in a church our size seek the face of the Lord and give sacrificially, it starts adding up quickly. I want to encourage you to participate in this offering. Together, let's get the Gospel to the world.

EASTER IS COMING

Easter is just six Sundays from now. What are you going to do in memory of the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection? The time to start thinking about it is now. Here is what I have in mind for my family this year. First, we will give what the Lord tells us to give to the Greatest Gift to Jesus Offering which will enable the Gospel to spread around the world faster. Second, we are going to participate in the Wednesday night Easter blitz to invite as many people in the community as possible to hear the Gospel at NEHBC on Easter Sunday. Third, we are going to find three unchurched family units that we know that we can personally invite to church with us on Easter Sunday.

TRUSTEES

I'd like to welcome two men into their new roles as trustees of NEHBC: Terry Driver and Wade Smith, and say a fond farewell to Bill Campbell as one of our trustees. The board of trustees is now made up of myself, Terry, Wade, and Jim Hamilton.

A few changes to the board have been in order. Bill was the chairman of our finance team and a member of my informal Advisory Counsel when we first launched NEHBC and then became a member of the Board of Trustees when we formalized their function by putting them in our by-laws in 2005. As such, he has been in on all business, system, structure, construction, financial issues, personnel issues, etc, from day one. He knows what decisions were made and why. Coupled with his strong qualifications as an administrator, it only made sense that I would bring him on board as our Church Administrator last summer when I created a full time position. That put things in a bit of a weird situation. I am accountable to our Board of Trustees, but our Church Administrator is accountable to me. Bill was in both positions. I decided to give it a few months before replacing him on the board to make sure he wanted to stick around as my administrator after trying on the position for a little while. Now that he is settling into his position nicely, it is time to replace him on the board. The replacement had to be done before the trustees did my annual performance review in the May-June time frame.

Additionally I wanted to expand our board from three to four trustees. The by-laws call for our board to have a minimum of three members and a maximum of seven. For those of you who have been around NEHBC long, you know we don't do anything just to do it. We do things as they are needed, and when they are no longer needed we don't do them anymore. Until now, our church has been of a size where three trustees could handle the tasks and functions of the board. With the additional growth of our church and the imminent construction project, the need to add another position has arisen. Thus the decision to not only replace Bill, but add another position as well.

By way of reminder, per our by-laws, here is the 10,000 foot view of the responsibilities of the trustees. In the area of personnel, they are responsible for the Senior Pastor—recommending to the congregation the hiring and firing of the position as necessary, his annual performance review, and any compensation adjustments. In the area of membership, the trustees vote on new members once candidates have

satisfied the requirements of our membership process, and they remove members as church discipline is necessary. In the business office arena, they approve any large expenditures by the staff, they select our church's bank, they have a heavy hand in our annual budget, they oversee our annual audit process, and they select attorneys and other professional advisors for our church as necessary. However, the trustees are not involved in the day to day operations of the church. The trustees' involvement in the day to day operations of the church is limited to the evaluation of the overall performance of the Senior Pastor. As a result, in carrying out my responsibilities, I work closely with three groups. In the big picture decision making of our church, I work with the trustees. In the day to day operations of our church, I work with my staff. And in leading the ministries of the church, I work with our leadership team made up of our staff and lay ministry leaders to equip the saints to do the work of the ministry.

Here is how someone becomes a trustee at NEHBC. Per our by-laws, the Senior Pastor nominates the trustee candidates, but the board votes on the candidates. So, I nominate people to the board, but they do not become a trustee until they get a majority of the vote of our board. They then serve a 12-month term. They are able to serve an unlimited number of terms as long as I keep re-nominating them and they want to come back for another term.

I like our board because it ensures that laymen are involved at the highest level of decision making in our church. I'm uncomfortable with church structures where only paid staff are at the highest level of decision making. In our organizational structure, only one paid staff member, me, is involved in the highest level of decision making. The rest are all lay people—the trustees when our board makes decisions and the congregation when it comes to the biggest decisions in our church. So, when I stand up on Sunday mornings and make announcements about big issues, such as building buildings, the annual budget, bank construction loans, etc., the trustees have already thoroughly done their research and met with all the necessary parties to ensure everything is in order and a sound decision for our church.

I'm thankful for our trustees. They are faithful men of integrity. I love them and enjoy working with them. I appreciate their wisdom, insight, and deep seated convictions. I'd like to encourage you to pray for them on a regular basis. May the Lord's will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.