



July 19th, 2007

Parking Lot Basketball Courts, Being Good Neighbors, and Protecting Our Property

You may have noticed that the rims have been taken down off all four goals on our two basketball courts. Three recent developments have led to this.

First, the sheriff's office notified me that in the last few weeks, long after the parking lot lights have gone off and often into the wee hours of morning, folks are hanging out in our north parking lot. This unauthorized and undesirable loitering is posing a potential security hazard for our campus. Secondly, on some nights folks are pulling up their vehicles alongside the two basketball courts and playing by headlights long after the parking lot lights have turned off. The Sheriff's office has received phone calls from some of our neighbors complaining about folks playing basketball as late as 2:00 am and 3:00 am. I can certainly understand the frustration and anger of our neighbors. The third issue is that after two years of faithfully leading our basketball outreach ministry on Thursday nights, the leader of the ministry has decided to step down and get involved in another area of our church.

Due to the security risk, causing headaches for our neighbors, and the fact that we no longer have an organized effort to intentionally deliver the Gospel to the basketball players, we have taken down the rims until we can solve the problems.

Here is the proposed solution. First, we are going to install gates across both entrances to the parking lot that will be closed after church hours when there is no scheduled event at the church. This will bar cars from coming onto our property after hours. Secondly, we are going to adjust the timer on the parking lot lights to go off at 9 pm instead of 11 pm. Without parking lot lights or headlights, nobody will be able to play basketball after 9 pm in the evening. Once the gates are installed, we will reinstall the basketball rims.

As for finding a new leader for the basketball ministry, we will follow our normal routine. NEHBC doesn't start ministries and look for people to lead them; we wait for someone to say they have a passion to use a certain skill to spread the Gospel, and we try to find a way to make it happen. When a church starts a ministry and then tries to find a leader to take the ministry, the leader often requires extensive oversight and motivation to keep leading in that area. But, when it is a person's God-given passion, they are dedicated, motivated, and faithful. So, we will wait for someone to come and tell us they have a passion for using basketball as a way to create opportunities to share the Gospel, and we will let them lead our basketball ministry. If the Lord sees fit to continue this basketball evangelism ministry, He will provide a new leader.

By the way, this is how our basketball ministry got started. The man who led it the past two years

approached a staff member and said he had a passion and a vision, and after visiting with him, it was obvious this would fit nicely with the vision of our church and we just said "sic 'em". Then for two years he faithfully and energetically led the ministry, and countless men prayed to receive Christ right there in our church parking lot.

Empty Nesters Beehive Musical

Tuesday night of this week found our empty nesters at the Beehive Musical. Our empty nesters regularly eat together, attend Astros games, gather in each others' homes, and always find a way to have a great time. These kinds of events provide opportunities for empty nesters to bond outside of the church walls and to develop a sense of community. During gatherings like these, Christ-honoring relationships are forged and strengthened. Our empty nesters ministry is rooted in their Sunday morning Bible Study class that meets at the 10 am hour and taught by our Church Administrator, Bill Campbell. Their next event is an Opry outing on Saturday, August 4th. If you are interested in the Opry outing or knowing more about our empty nesters, email Barbara Probandt at protexan@entouch.net.

Teenager's 2007 Mission Trip Report And A Look Ahead To The Summer 2008 Trip

Last night during the midweek service, the teenagers brought a report on their mission trip to Tennessee. It is so encouraging to see a new generation of Christians catching a vision for the lost outside of the community in which they live. I am so proud of our teenagers who qualified for this year's mission trip. I hope more qualify to go on mission in the summer of 2008.

While I am talking about the youth mission trip, let me explain how and why the kids have to qualify to go. First, the why. Their annual summer trip is not youth camp; it is a mission trip. The teenagers get plenty of opportunities to go on out of town, vacation type trips with their families, schools, and extracurricular activities. The local church is not charged with entertaining teenagers, but with winning them to Christ and then discipling them. The purpose of the trip is to disciple them with Acts 1:8. They are charged by Christ to take the Gospel not only to their local community, but across our nation and around the world. The purpose of the mission trip is to teach them to share their faith, to teach them that using vacation days and money for spreading the Gospel is what a Christian does, and to give them a heart for missions. So, the reason why kids have to qualify for the trip is because it is not camp/vacation; it is a mission trip. Though the trip is always a lot of fun, they have to prove they are going to work hard on the mission trip and take their assignments on the trip seriously.

Here is how they will qualify for the summer 2008 mission trip. In September, each teenager in the youth group will receive a three ring binder. It is the mission trip qualification binder that will contain and explain all the expectations. There are Scripture memory requirements, Bible reading requirements, Sunday School attendance requirements, and activity participation requirements. While the requirements are not ridiculously impossible at all, they do require effort and self-discipline on the part of the teenagers. Throughout the 2007-2008 school year, we will have many teenagers qualify for the trip, but some will not qualify. It is their choice. We want them to take their walk with the Lord seriously.

A Word About the Word

In case you missed it, this past Sunday morning I preached from 1 Corinthians 10:23-33. The passage deals with the issue of maturing spiritually. It first offers an easy to understand explanation of the difference between spiritual immaturity and maturity, then it provides examples of mature Christian thinking, and then the passage closes with a guide for achieving mature Christian thinking. I'd encourage you to set aside 25 minutes, get out your Bible, and listen to the sermon on-line.

Sunday's sermon is available on cd for purchase at the sermon booth in the church lobby. You can also find it in MP3 format on our church website [here](#) or via podcast at www.itunes.com. Simply search for "Nathan Lino" in the search box of the iTunes store.

Dirt Work Update

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Youth Ministry (6th-12th grade)

I believe that the vision for our youth ministry is going to pay dividends in winning the lost and discipling the saved among teenagers for years to come. I want you to know about the vision for our ministry to teenagers. Besides giving teens a thorough understanding of the way to salvation, we want to do three things for them: ground them in the Bible, give them a heart for our lost world, and teach them to share their faith. Together, the three weekly gatherings of our youth ministry form a comprehensive plan to fulfill this vision.

Our youth ministry gathers on Sunday mornings at 10 am for Sunday School. Through age-graded small groups, our teenagers learn key biblical principles and truths that are foundational to a proper understanding of Jesus Christ, humanity, and biblical decision making. We want our teenagers to have a biblical worldview.

Our youth ministry gathers on Sunday evenings, August-May, from 5-6 pm for Roundtables. Teens are taught the belief system of many false religions (ie: Mormonism, Jehovah's Witness, Wicca, the Occult, Islam, Atheism, New Age, etc) and how to both witness to people bound in these religions as well as how to defend the faith against attacks by these false religions. Once a month, the teens are divided into small groups to go door-to-door to share the gospel to put into practice what they learn in the roundtable discussions. We not only want our teens to have a heart for winning the lost; we want them to be competent in the discipline of evangelism.

Our youth ministry gathers on Wednesday nights at 6:45 pm for SWAT. This is a full-blown worship service for our teenagers. Out Front, our youth band, leads the praise and worship time, Wes preaches through books of the Bible, there is an invitation at the end for the teens to respond to the message, and from time to time, there is special music in the worship service to boot. Through expository preaching and teaching, our teenagers learn to interpret the Word of God and grow in their biblical literacy. SWAT also serves as a midweek, large group rally to encourage our teens to stand courageously in their schools for the Lord Jesus and for biblical standards of morality.

Together, the three weekly gatherings of our youth ministry form a comprehensive plan to ground them in the Bible, give them a heart for our lost world, and teach them to share their faith. Thus, it is so crucial that your teenager participate in all three weekly components if they are to experience the full effect of our youth ministry. I cannot urge you strongly enough to ensure their participation on Sunday morning, Sunday evening, and Wednesday evening each week. Your teen's spiritual formation is so much more important than any of their extracurricular activities.