

March 3, 2010

Dear Members & Friends of Immanuel,

ENCOURAGEMENT

Encouragement is a precious commodity in the midst of a discouraging world. Monday is the most challenging day of my week. This is not a complaint, simply a matter of fact. Following about thirty six hours of adrenalin flow and a long Lord's Day of intense spiritual investment, I wake up on Monday rather drained. This challenge was heightened today. At mid-afternoon a rather serious migraine showed up and sent me home early. As part of my routine to help dig myself out of the Monday slump, I think back over the previous week, trying to recall various specific ways in which I was encouraged. As I write this, it is Monday evening and I am sitting here in my study at home, listening to some quiet worship music. I can honestly say that I am encouraged.

- I am encouraged because on Sunday, as I spotted Sue in the foyer after the service, I realized that she was witnessing to a man who had visited the church for the first time. She relocated to the back of the worship center where it was a little quieter, and shared the entire Gospel with Brad. He listened intently and responded by receiving Christ as his Savior and Lord. As Sue and I enjoyed dinner together following this event, I had the dual encouragement of the knowledge that Brad's name is now written in the Lamb's book of life and of witnessing her joy and enthusiasm.
- I am encouraged because on Sunday morning a woman thanked me for my continued emphasis on the importance of memorizing sections of Scripture. Uncertain if she could be successful memorizing larger chunks of the Bible, she began haltingly. She kept at it, and it has become a habit. Now, on her fifth Scripture section, she testified as to how this discipline has been used of the Lord to cause spiritual growth in her life.
- I am encouraged because last week I sat with a man who has just experienced a major family tragedy. He expressed his deep conviction in the sovereignty of God in his life. Through the emotion and deep pathos, there was a profound display of the strong foundation that the Gospel provides.
- I am encouraged because this past week three separate communications expressing appreciation for the ministry of the Word came my way. I was assured that I am being prayed for diligently and regularly.
- I am encouraged because I continue to hear testimonies of love and concern being expressed in acts of kindness. Behind the scenes this informal ministry is being undertaken from person to person and family to family.
- I am encouraged because the Lord has provided to me the privilege of being the pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church. Since this is the Lord's Church and that we, as aliens and strangers in this world, are on a pilgrimage together, we know that Christ will continue to work in and through us for the building of His Church and the furtherance of His Kingdom!

I could list more, but it is bed time. I am going to bed Monday night greatly encouraged, determined to resist the spirit of discouragement that is a major weapon in the enemy's arsenal. "Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing" (1 Thessalonians 5:11).

EQUIPPING FOR EFFECTIVE EVANGELISM (E3)

It is one of the vitally important and clear commands of the Bible.

*"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you;
and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem,
and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*

Acts 1:8

These words from our Lord are for all Christians in all times and in all places. There are no exceptions.

We will continue to offer the necessary equipping to deal with the two major reasons why Christians do not actively share the Gospel. Reason #1: "I don't know how." Reason #2: "I find that fear gets in the way." If this is where you find yourself when it comes to personal witnessing, I can guarantee you that the E3 ministry will be liberating and life-changing.

I am grateful to the growing number of people who serve as E3 trainers and the growing number who have been trained and are seeking to actively share their faith. On the other hand, I am disappointed that in a church the size of Immanuel and in a church that claims the Gospel is of highest importance, that only eighteen of us were involved in the past E3 training semester. This ministry is now part of the fabric of Immanuel, and I will continue to be there on Tuesday evenings, even if there are only three of us! I am not committed to this ministry based upon numbers. I am committed to the ministry because Jesus is both my Savior and my Lord...and my Lord commanded me, as a pastor, to equip Christians to evangelize.

E3 begins again on Tuesday, March 16 at 6:30 in the Fireside Room at church. I encourage you to make this commitment and to be there. The spiritual joy and the sense of personal satisfaction will be significant, and growth in the Lord will take place.

UPCOMING MISSION TRIP

Evangelism Explosion International is hosting a Congress of Nations conference in Kuala Lumpur later this month. Each nation represented at this Congress has an indigenous, self-sustaining and vitally growing EE ministry within its borders. The Lord has raised up pastors and lay leaders who have caught the vision and have the passion to equip Christians to share the Gospel. People are being saved, and the number of personal evangelists is multiplying. As a member of the EE Board of Directors, I have been invited to take part in this Congress. This provides a vivid reminder that our little E3 ministry is part of a worldwide movement in the church and is being used significantly in reaching people with the Gospel.

When I realized that Kuala Lumpur is in the same region of the world where two of our missionary couples are ministering, I have added a few days to my itinerary in order to visit them. Prior to the Congress of Nations, I will visit Ken & Stephanie Springsteen in Singapore and Sid and Mary Thornton in Indonesia.

I will be leaving on Wednesday, March 17 and returning on Monday, March 29. Please pray for the EE Congress and these missionary visits.

MARCH – THE END OF IMMANUEL'S FISCAL YEAR

The Lord has blessed Immanuel with sustained and stable stewardship, even in these economically challenging times. Understanding that stewardship is a spiritual matter first, and an economic issue second, is evident by the level of faithful giving week-in and week-out at Immanuel. Thank you! The Deacon Board is preparing the budget and financial plan for the coming year.

The Lord has assembled a tremendous church staff and a dedicated group of lay people ministering with an ever-growing commitment to excellence. It is a tremendous privilege and an awesome responsibility to serve among you.

Partnering with you in the proclamation of the Gospel,

Dr. James F. Engle
Senior Pastor