



## **Merry Christmas!**

We are so thankful for the many opportunities we have had this past month to minister. We have had a new student arrive, parents come for Thanksgiving and family counseling, a group of Maranatha Baptist University students join us for another weekend of ministry, and Mark Hawkins from Hands on Deck instruct our students in the basics of leathercraft. God continues to bless us at Victory Academy as He brings in everything we need. Every opportunity, every dollar, and every volunteer are divine gifts. He is faithful!

## **Thanksgiving: A Time to Grow**

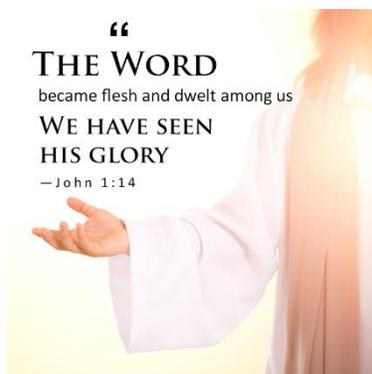


Last month, we had 63 people gathered together in our Lodge to celebrate Thanksgiving. We ate too much, played hard on the football field, laughed at Charlie Brown's excuse of a Christmas tree, and cheered on Josh B.'s grandma as she bench-pressed 45 lbs! Needless to say, there is much fun to be had when you cram that many people into one building.

Although we love the festivities, the focus quickly transitions on Friday morning. The two days after Thanksgiving are spent in general sessions and personal family counseling. What a blessing it is to be a part of what God is doing in the lives of each of these families! The dynamics of every parent gathering is different. Not only do you have personality differences, but you also have differing levels of commitment and buy-in. God was working in our midst this Thanksgiving, as we answered many great questions from the parents. The questions that these families were asking were coming from a thirst and hunger for Biblical answers. This fostered an environment of growth that motivated each family to be transparent in their needs. Each family desired to take the truths given in the sessions and work to implement them into their homes.

A truth that God impresses on my heart every time I counsel families is that I am a broken person. I may be a counselor, but that just means that I am a professionally broken person. These counseling sessions challenge Aaron and I to be the parents that we need to be. We have the same struggles; we are just in a different place of our journey as parents. We need these truths as much as the families with whom we work. Continue to pray for the young men, their families, and for us as we all seek to be conformed to the image of God's Son.

## FEATURED ARTICLE from PARENT POINT!



For the Christian, Christmas is the grand celebration of the Glory of God coming down to earth. While it is quite natural to focus in on the humble baby in the manger, the grace of God displayed in the Creator humbling Himself to take on human flesh for the sake of a world of sinners like us should overwhelm the manger scene. The irony of the Splendor of Heaven leaving His throne to take on the confines of human flesh drive us to exalt (glorify) the God of all for His amazing grace.

That said, the glory of God is one of the most challenging concepts for us mere mortals to comprehend. Throughout the Old Testament Scriptures we see snapshots of God's glory in relationship to His physical splendor and righteous character. Those glimpses of God compel us trust and obey. Yet in those Old Testament accounts of do's and don'ts it is easy for us to lose focus on the core character of God.

God is more than just the things He does. However, when we look at the motivations behind what He does, we get a glimpse of His nature, who He really is. The Apostle John lived with Jesus and watched Him build relationships and minister truth to people, and he recorded in 1 John 4:8 that "God is love." In a very real way, the more we understand His love for us, the more we are driven to love Him. That is a foundational truth that can compel us to keep the Great Command to "love the Lord your God with all your heart...." Sharing our hearts is how we build strong relationships. It is super valuable to clearly understand who God is in His core nature. That is a concept that, given our broken mess of a darkened spiritual condition, can only be grappled with by looking at the Light of Life, Jesus of Nazareth.

Though before Jesus was born into human flesh, the Incarnation, we had record of how God acted and what He felt, it was Jesus becoming the Living Word in the flesh that opened the door, bringing the Light of Truth to our darkened understanding of who God is and gave us an *in the flesh* example of the loving nature of God Himself. As we look at Jesus' life and how He handled the mundane judgments and decisions of daily life, we see the amazing grace of God's heart. We literally got to see how God would live life as a human.

The Gospels record Jesus' teachings on a number of daily life issues and His teachings are hard, counter-intuitive in some ways, yet starkly revealing God's heart as He deals with man. His first sign miracle was recorded in John 2; he turned the water into wine at the wedding party. In that act, God in the flesh showed grace in the mundane daily needs at a family party. He cared about the simple things that his mother thought were important. So, how does God respond to our mundane daily needs? It appears that He cares enough to do something about them.

In John 4 we have another great picture as Jesus heals the official's son. After listening to the official's heartache over the imminent loss of his son, in an act of God's amazing grace, Jesus heals him. Jesus is gracious to us in the heartaches and losses of life. That is great news for each of us as we have heartache and loss scattered throughout our lives.

The third picture is of Jesus's glorious grace is found in John 8, where the scribes and Pharisees bring an adulteress woman to Jesus to try to trick Him into breaking Roman law and proclaiming that she should be killed (according to Jewish law), thus

also showing him to be harsh and condemning. The game backfired on them as Jesus merely squats down and writes something in the sand. One by one the accusers leave and Jesus tells the woman to go on with life and stay out of sin. This record reveals that, even in the face of sinful people caught up in sinful situations, Jesus came to earth not to condemn, but to save (John 3:17). In this account we also see that Jesus came to deal with heart issues. Obviously Jesus was also concerned that the sinner turn away from the physical sin, but His focus was on the heart needs of the men that brought the woman to him. They were willing to sacrifice the woman to “get” Jesus. Two great truths can be gleaned here. God reads our hearts and convicts us on to make righteous choices.

Jesus’ glorious grace, displayed in human form, was the ultimate act of God’s gracious love for us. We rejoice in His birth, His life, His death, and His resurrection. His grace is displayed in our salvation and our sanctification. Someday we will be the ultimate display of His grace in our glorification (Eph. 1-3) in Heaven! Praise our glorious God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who came to show us His grace in the mundane, daily struggles of life. He came to show us how to glorify Him through the heartaches of loss. In the ultimate revelation of His grace, on the cross He was glorified to take on our sin and pay the price of our condemnation so we could glorify God with freedom from the bondage of sin.

How then, like the Apostle Paul, will we “live Christ” in our interactions with those we love? Will we meet out grace in our correction of sin in our children? Will we respond with humble grace in that relationship that has, so far, evoked anger and bitterness or disappointment? Will we reflect the Light of Life by graciously loving those around us, thus provoking them to see the glorious grace of our loving Lord?

Soli Deo Gloria! *Glory to God Alone!*

## 2018 Capital Campaigns



It is amazing to see how God has provided for our needs this past year! Some years, God sees fit to provide only the bare necessities. Other years, He allows us to pursue the advancement of our property and program to better equip us to minister to our students and campers.

We had some big goals and subsequent prayer requests for 2017. We wanted to raise \$2,000 to replace the roof on our workshop. God provided the money and the work team from Wausau Bible Church to accomplish this project! God also allowed us to raise \$40,000 to renovate our school ball field and improve our roads! While those two things were very important to the improvement and stewardship of our physical property, we are probably most excited about the addition of a \$15,000 mountain bike fleet to our outdoor programs! Not only did God provide the funds for all of these projects, but each one also represents an individual, family, church, or company that sacrificially gave of their time, effort, and money. We are so thankful for the investment that they have poured into our ministry with these young men!

Outside of the normal needs of meeting budget and sponsoring financially struggling families, we also have some capital improvement goals for 2018 that, if God permits, we would like to see come to fruition.

The windows in our lodge are outdated and allow heat to escape. It is very difficult to keep warm in the winter months. Being the hub of activity for Victory Family Ministries, we are eager to see this long-awaited project to be completed. It will take about \$9,000 to replace all of the windows.

We are at a place of need for three pieces of equipment to be replaced. The 1976 F650 dump truck is difficult to keep running and we have trouble getting it where we need it for trail building (without getting stuck). Our plow truck is a 1991 model that is pretty much in "recycle" condition. We would sell our current work truck for our about \$4,000 and then use those funds towards purchasing a later model 1-ton dump pickup truck for about \$29,000. That would allow us to operate and maintain one truck for all three tasks, saving us time and money every year.

If God would call you to help, you can go to [www.vafb.org/donate](http://www.vafb.org/donate) to make an online donation or contact Ben Barrick at [ben.barrick@vafb.org](mailto:ben.barrick@vafb.org) to schedule an individual or group work day. If God provides the funds for the windows, it would be a blessing and an honor to have you help us with their installation! If you have no experience in installing windows and would like to serve in another way, we have plenty of things that need to be done on campus. Most importantly, we covet your prayers. We want to be the best stewards we can be with the things which God has so abundantly given us!



salsa®

## Donor Communications: A New Look

You may have noticed that we have completely changed the way we send out our Victory Update emails. Over the last few years, we have become burdened that we have been doing a poor job at keeping up with our donors and prayer warriors. At the end of September, we took a huge step and purchased a large and comprehensive donor management system. This has given us the ability to keep all of our supporters' contact information together in one place, which enables us to handle mass mailings and email correspondence with greater ease. It also has given us a platform with which to create designed emails, sign up forms, and other online communications.

## The Search Continues...

We have had good traction this year with making connections with potential interns. We have made some updates to our internship program and are making greater effort in keeping in touch with them throughout the school year. We are already seeing fruit from these efforts, but our greatest source of leads continues to be our previous interns! We praise God for the college men that have served with us and encourage their friends to consider serving at Victory. Even this week, we have had two potential interns inquire about applications! Be in prayer as we work through applicants. Our biggest need right now is for someone to join us in January. If you know of any single men that would be interested in serving with us, refer them to [www.vafb.org/internship](http://www.vafb.org/internship) to fill out our online interest form!



Faithfully Serving,