

December 1, 2012

Dear [Friends & Family](#),

I'M DOWN' WITH THE DOWN & OUTERS

(11/7) A few Sunday nights ago, I had the privilege to be asked to minister at our own city's downtown mission. I had not done so since I was on staff at our church about 14 years ago. I expected a small group of men. I was wrong. The room was filled with young & old, black, Hispanic, & white, some well-dressed, others not so. The expectant odors of such a place, given its constituents, were present. Some were incredibly polite, full of grace & joy, & others looked like they were either drunk or near eternity. Once, they were all little boys, playing with Tonka trucks (like me) in the dirt. Here they sat, many eaten-up by the ravages & hostility of sin. I'm sure many sat there because that was the requirement of the mission for them to receive a hot meal & a bed for the night [an understandable requirement!]. I brought lots of object lessons, which I have learned over the years, are highly effective, with both young & old, & I'd guess especially so with some of these men, given what they've been through. I didn't have a wireless lapel mic [a must for me, as I must have my hands free to lift up &/or operate the object lessons], so I did what I've done a number of times in the past in such situations, often in inner-city settings: I procured a string, tied it around a hand-held wireless mic, & then tied it around my neck. I had no tables for object lessons, so I used two bookshelves nearby, & an altar table with one of my bins on top for visibility's sake. I was so very tired when I arrived. While the worship team ministered in song, I was out in the hallway, sitting on a bench entreating the Lord for His Spirit's enabling & anointing to do the impossible: to bring the eternal Word of God to needy, lost souls. One of the men saw me as he passed by & asked another if I was one of the residents! J. I'm sure I looked like it. I had taken off my Sunday morning shirt before I went to the mission. I preached in my undershirt. I can't recollect doing so before-anywhere-but I wanted to be as down to earth as possible to these dear souls. All of the sudden, the music stopped, & I heard my name called. As has happened so many times in the past, when I stood up to preach, all of the sudden, it, rather, He was there. I felt like a horse let out of the starting gate. Unction, boldness, & power just *burst* out of me. Just seconds before, as I told you, I was sitting on a bench out in the

hallway, weak, tired, & unfocused. The Lord surely does ensure that He fills His servants whose sole desire [also a gift from Him!] with His Spirit the power to declare the glories of the Person & work of His Son. As I preached the gospel of grace to them, expounding on man's depravity & my own [one of them interrupted me & couldn't believe I did a certain sin I confessed before them that I committed during my teenage years], our faithful God began to move upon hearts. I told him, "Yeah, I was bad". The mission leader told me later it was one of the best messages he had ever heard there. This is what is so funny, well, actually, amazing re: our Lord. As I've said twice now, I was out in the hallway, sitting on a bench, looking like a resident, fighting fatigue & lack of focus, entreating the Lord for His help. As I've often said, "If Jesus doesn't give it, I don't get it! The longer I live & minister, the more I'm convinced God wants His men weak. If you're not, He will make you so! Praise His Name. Remember! It is not your *weaknesses* that get in His way! it is your *strengths*! I *loved* going to this mission. I wrote my host later that week & told him I'd come anytime.

THE LOWS & HIGHS OF JUNIOR-HIGHERS

I returned home yesterday from a 2-day ministry trip to PA. I preached twice to two different groups of junior-high teens in two different places in 1 day. I had never been to the first group. It was a Christian school in Lancaster. After setting up in the gymnasium, here they came, the whole lot of about 80 of them. They were typical junior-highers: in need of guidance & goading just to get them to sit down in a quick & orderly manner. The first one in that day asked, upon seeing my object lesson tables, Is this an auction? I've never been asked that one before! garage sale, yes, but auction, No. It has been said & I believe it's true: Junior Highers: You either love 'em, or hate 'em!. There is probably a lot of truth in that statement. I happen to be of the former group. This is an age group on the precipice of adulthood, w/hormones racing & insecurities abounding. As I proceeded to preach re: Creation, The Fall, The Law, God's necessary wrath & curse upon unforgiven lawbreakers, etc., the tone of the auditorium became much more quiet & somber. Initially, & considerably throughout the early portion of the message, I had to stop & snap my fingers at some of the boys (something I've done for years, particularly in children's services). With one I said as I snapped my fingers & shook my head from side to side, Hey Bud? This is *my* time. Often in the past in such situations, I've said the same thing, but added: If I was

reading a comic book to you, it'd be different, but this is The Word of God. Just as with the down & outers above, the sobering effect of the preached Word of God began to silence & still these young teenagers. It is an amazing thing to behold. O God, please give me many more years of doing this. I marvel as I watch You move upon old & young.

(11/21) FROM AGE TO AGE THE SAME

This past weekend, I conducted my 4th youth retreat since September. This one happened to be my own local church's youth group, which was an honor & treat for me. They were sobered at the outset as I was sobered in receiving from the Lord what I gave them from Matthew's gospel re: the two gates & roads. This sobering statement from the lips of the Son of God are some of the most weighted in all of Scripture, as He indicates that the majority of the entire human race, from Adam & Eve to the last human soul conceived, are on the wide road to destruction. I told the kids Jesus knew what "destruction" was, as HE was The One Who created it for the Devil & his angels. O, how terrifying & horrible it must be, if it was designed to be intense enough to cause torment to the most powerful evil spirit-being in the universe! I then proceeded to tell them *Jesus'* way to get off that very wide road: self-denial, daily cross-bearing, & a lifelong pursuit of Him. The next meeting involved the widespread human process (from Gen.3's account of Adam & Eve) of going from iniquity (The Fall), to insecurity (nakedness, shame, hiding) to identification (fig leaves, labels, etc.), to idolatry. It begins when we're very young, from identifying ourselves with superheroes on TV to nationalism that leads to war. Saturday evening's message, preceded by a Time Machine drama, was a detailed teaching re: Judgment Day. This platinum doctrine from the Word of God did what our God designed it to do: it sobered & motivated hearts to yield to Him. After praying for some boys who were on the floor prostrate before the Lord in an understandable response to such a message, I then laid on the floor myself, as God's presence was deep, thick, rich, & sweet. The kids eventually went to a bonfire to share testimonies re: the weekend. When they did, I proceeded to pack up & load up my mountain of ministry equipment (see attached pic). I drove home, arrived at 11:30 p.m. I then unloaded the entire rig into my garage. Why then? I had to reload it the next morning for a Sun. a.m. service at a small Baptist church on the other side of Wilmington, filled mostly with senior citizens. They heard a verse by verse expository (& illustrated!) teaching re: Jesus' deity from the 1st chapter of Hebrews. Two vastly different age

groups one message, one Lord yet, I used the same method with both: object lessons & visual aids. I love what I do.

END OF YEAR INVENTORY, or, PIPE DOWN!

This past Monday, the day after all of this ministry, I, along with a very dear brother/friend, a.k.a., Paul Neiger, who also happens to be one of our elders, proceeded to remove the 60 year-old drain pipes that led from underneath my kitchen sink into the main four-inch sewer line in the basement. Using both a circular saw with a special metal-cutting blade, followed by a reciprocating saw, I cut the line in three different places [see attached pics]. Upon doing so, black, gooey, putrid, odorous muck was exposed that had been there for decades. It stained & transferred its odor to whatever it came in contact with. Needless to say, Paul & I tried our best to keep it off of us. At least two people whom I related this to, said it made them wonder what our arteries looked like inside! However, while lying in bed this morning pondering many things, a sobering thought came to me re: this, surely from the Spirit of the Lord. How much muck is inside of *me*, a channel & conduit of the Lord's Word—a pipe if you will? Ugh. As the Lord's Word & presence flow through me to others in the ministry He graces me with, both saints & sinners, how much of my personal "muck", i.e., attitudes, opinions, criticisms, judgments, etc., toward other individuals &/or groups of God's people stain what I say? Oh, it's so very easy to build a ministry on what's wrong with everybody else. So many cults operate this way. Some very prominent ones demean, belittle, & put-down the Lord Jesus, saying He was less than the Scriptures declare He is. They also say He failed in His mission. In order for the cults to get you to receive what they have, they must needs have you reject what *you* have. This is exactly what Satan did in the Garden of Eden with Eve. He first had to put down God, besmear His stainless character, & get Eve to doubt & question His motives, before he could get her to accept what he was saying. I've seen some ministries thrive on a constant barrage of critiquing other ministries. This is par for the course for so-called Emergent churches. This appeals to human insecurity & pride, as it make its followers & adherents feel good about themselves. And yet, I must follow this indictment with a qualification: as Christians & ministers of the word, we *are* to espouse, love, & expound sound doctrine! The Word of God is profitable for teaching, reproof, rebuke, correction, & training in righteousness. The key & challenge in presenting it is to let *it* do the aforesaid work, & to keep our own personal grudges, biases, & criticisms out of it.

O, this is so much easier said than done! And, I continue to marvel how much our God uses cluttered pipes to get His work done! Otherwise, His work would not get done, as that is all He has to work with! The goal & challenge is to be as Roto-Rootered as possible, by that same Word & Spirit Who inspired & empowers it! May it be so, may it be so, so that our listeners hear & see as much of Him & as little of us as possible. O dear Lord, do it, for Jesus' sake. Amen. Thank you for reading, & thank you for supporting this work as Jesus leads.

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*[Michael is an ordained Elim Fellowship itinerant home missionary & is also licensed to preach the gospel by the local church he attends, Immanuel Church. Caboose! is also an affiliate ministry of the Hopewell Network of Churches. For 14 years he served on various local church staffs full-time. Since 2000, he & Kim have lived by faith, having no salary, retirement, or health insurance-yet this is their calling at this season of their lives. Michael preaches God's Word & systematic theology, using both visual aids & drama, to all age groups either separately or combined, as the Lord opens doors. To help support this work, please make all tax-deductible gifts payable to: Elim Fellowship, 1703 Dalton Rd, Lima, NY 14485].

*Ministry/events for DECEMBER & those not listed in last month's newsletter:

Nov. 4: Immanuel Church, Wilmington, DE: Warehouse youth group: worship leader

Nov. 15: Bible Fellowship Church, Newark, DE: EMF pastors' mtg.

Dec. 2: Immanuel Church, Wilmington, DE: Father's House children's ministry worship leader; drama actor

Dec. 4: a.m.: Petra Christian Fellowship, New Holland, PA: camp board mtg.//noon: Network Christmas luncheon

Dec. 7: home fellowship group, Hockessin, DE

Dec. 9: Immanuel Church, Wilmington, DE: Warehouse youth group: talent show M.C.

Dec. 14: Immanuel Church leadership Christmas gathering: Landenburg, PA

Dec. 19: Jesus is Lord Ministries, Cashtown, PA: 2 services, 2 & 7 p.m.

*[televised via internet] www.jilmi.org