

Icthus News June 2009

Greetings to all in the name of our Great God & King, Jesus Christ! Much has happened since our last update in March so let me catch you up before we begin the summer marathon on Saturday.

April 6-10 we hosted a group of 17 students & adults from East Coast Believer's Church in Casselberry, FL. They arrived in the middle of a snow storm for their spring break... go figure. We had an accumulation of about six inches and would have had more if the ground had been colder. The temps went from the 80's to the 20's in one day! Our new friends enjoyed some beautiful hikes, snowball fights, teambuilding activities, Bible studies, worship, prayer, and even a whitewater rafting trip! I personally had some great fellowship and was especially encouraged by the relationship many of the students had with the Lord. Three of the students approached me privately the day of their departure to express how they would never be the same because of their experience in the Lord during the week. They also sowed financially into the ministry... it was very humbling & encouraging.

I spent April 20-23 & 27-29 employed by Educational Talent Search camping with middle school students in TN. It's one of those "I can't believe they pay me to do this" jobs where I get to fish, canoe, rock climb, rappel, mountain bike, and cave with kids from public schools in the six far western counties in NC. The program is designed to help keep kids in school & encourages them to continue their education after high school. The director, Mr. Todd, is a brother, good friend, & one of my heroes.

All the days in between hosting & employment were spent fine tuning the repairs on the retreat center, cutting/weed eating grass, repairing/maintaining equipment, being a husband, and daddy (not necessarily in that order).

In May we continued with all the usual repair/maintenance/husband/daddy stuff and discovered that the child that we're expecting in September is a boy. At the ultrasound we got some great pictures of little Elijah smiling & waving at the camera from Edith's womb. I wouldn't exaggerate, I'm a minister; I'm also a fisherman (aka liar). We also hosted a family from Charleston, SC at the Red (Redemption) House and a middle school group of 25 from Crossroads United Methodist Church in Concord, NC. The students & leaders from Crossroads helped us get the barn cleaned out & prepared for worship as well as some landscaping & sprucing up. We also squeezed in a river trip down the Nantahala along with daily devotions, Bible studies, prayer time & worship. One of the highlights for me was when an eleven year old boy came up to me and asked if he could pray for me because he really felt like God wanted him to. His prayer was on the mark for me, my family and Icthus! While I was reeling in the after glow of that God encounter, another 11-12 year old approached me, gave me some money, and said that it was for my family, not the ministry. I thanked him & put it in my pocket, later the Lord reminded me of it so I reached in my pocket & pulled out a dollar! I spent the next 30-40 minutes thanking God for those boys & the dollar. I was reminded how Jesus fed five thousand men (plus women & children) from the single lunch that a little boy provided! Jesus' response was not to look at what was lacking, only to give thanks in what He had... I want to be like Jesus! I'm wondering more & more if God is going to use boys & girls to build the new retreat center rather than adults... we'll see!

We had John Edwards and Bethany Cochran join us on staff in May. John formerly of Phenix City, AL, is not a former presidential candidate but did spend three tours in Iraq as a member of the US Army with the 101st Airborne division. He said that one of the things that he thought of often while deployed was coming back to Icthus to help out. John has been coming here since he was about six years old. He will be in & out

this summer while tying up loose ends with the Army and getting set up to attend school at App. State in Boone, NC. So far he has gotten to know the weedeater in a special way!

Bethany is also from Phenix City (it's really not a staff requirement) and a rising junior at Auburn University. She has been here several times as a camper over the years and is a huge blessing to Edith & I, as well as the last group we hosted, Auburn Heights Baptist. Edith & I are grateful for John & Bethany's service and are excited about the opportunity to pour into their lives over the next several weeks.

One of our former staff, Lonnie Grimes, returned with 25 middle schoolers and adults from Auburn Heights Baptist Church in Phenix City, AL May 31-June 4. Is anyone noticing a trend here? We had some wonderful worship in the barn each night. Six young people invited Jesus to be their Lord & Savior, several recommitted their lives to Him, and three were baptized in the creek... and we're just getting started!!!

Later today (its 2AM as I write), Peace Presbyterian from Cary, NC, will arrive with 29 middle school students and adults. For the next 49 days we will be hosting groups everyday except one (July 25), as well as families/individuals at the Red (Redemption) House. Often we will have a group checking out in the morning and another group checking in that afternoon... so **please pray for strength, stamina, and sensitivity. Also pray for protection.** My six year old, Reah, had a biking accident Monday night and broke her arm and got a pretty serious concussion. She is doing well but during the next 49 days life will happen with my children, my pregnant wife, as well as all the guest that will be coming to Icthus. We truly want to recognize every divine appointment Father has for us and impact lives for all eternity. Thanks for praying and standing with us during this season. I'll check back in next time I come up for air! Blessings!!!!!!

Trusting JESUS,
Bill
Prov.3:5-6
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