



The Way

August 2014

NEWSLETTER OF THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF HOMESTEAD, FL

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

I have always loved reading about Hezekiah. Hezekiah was king of Judah during a critical time in Israel's history. He was one of the "good kings." Second Chronicles 29:2 says, "He did what was right in the Lord's sight just as his ancestor David had done." Perhaps one reason why this biblical character resonates with me is that the struggles he faced and how he responded to them are more comparable to what many of us experience today. I have never been thrown into a lion's den, for example! I can, however, see myself more easily in some episodes of Hezekiah's life.

One test Hezekiah faced is recorded for us in 2 Chronicles 32. This chapter is a practical roller coaster. It begins with an invasion from the Assyrian army. It proceeds to tell us of how God delivered His people by sending just one angel to wipe out the army that threatened them. Hezekiah then discovers that he is ill, prays to God, and is miraculously healed, given fifteen more years of life. This led to an additional period of blessings and prosperity from the Lord.

Finally, in Second Chronicles 32:31, "When the ambassadors of Babylon's rulers were sent to him to inquire about the miraculous sign that happened in the land, *God left him to test him* and discover what was in his heart." (emphasis added) Think about those words. "God left him to test him." God did not "leave" Hezekiah in the sense of abandoning Him. But there was some sense in which God stepped back from Hezekiah for a time. Perhaps Hezekiah no longer heard God speak through His Word. Perhaps Hezekiah lost the sense of God's presence in his time of prayer. Maybe Hezekiah couldn't see God working as he had previously. However it happened, God "left" Hezekiah, not because Hezekiah had rebelled against Him. God left him to test him. The purpose of the distance God allowed Hezekiah to experience was to allow Hezekiah to be tested.

Sometimes, this is how God works in our lives. Maybe you have gone through a season in which God seemed strangely absent. You had not stopped praying or worshipping. You could not find any unusual, unconfessed sin in your life. And yet, God did not seem as near as He once did. Sometimes, God allows us to go through such times because the "test" that is produced will reveal to us what God already sees. God already knew what was in Hezekiah's life. In this

case, there was pride that needed to be exposed. It had probably been there all along, but Hezekiah needed to see it. God's sudden withdrawal from Hezekiah provided the opportunity to bring it to light. During this time, a Babylonian envoy arrived. Hezekiah foolishly showed off the treasures God had blessed them with. Isaiah then confronted him and told him that all of the treasures of which he arrogantly boasted would be carried off to Babylon one day. (2 Kings 20:17)

Sometimes, God tests us this way individually. Sometimes, God tests us this way corporately. God can step back from a church for a time to allow that church to be tested. I honestly believe our church has experienced just that in the past month. A few days before I read these texts about Hezekiah in my own devotional time, something strange happened at our church. The trusses for the new building arrived, all 154 of them. Being 90 feet long, it was an impressive sight to see them put atop our new building. For the first time, it was really starting to take shape. People who had driven by on Krome Avenue and not noticed before could not help but notice now. Many of you were commenting on Facebook and social media. There was a buzz of excitement...and maybe a tinge of pride. On Saturday, July 5, a number

of men stood inside of the new building and prayed. A few hours later, almost all of those trusses came crashing down in an afternoon storm. Just one failed, creating a domino effect. All of that lumber was on the ground.

I said to the church on the following day that I was grateful that the trusses fell a few hours later and *not* when the men of the church were praying beneath them. I am glad that no one was hurt. I am grateful that the rest of the structure was unhurt by the storm. But there is no denying that this is a setback. It will take us longer and cost us more as a result. I believed then and I believe now that this is one of those tests. No, it's not nearly as devastating a test as the one this church faced in 1992 with Hurricane Andrew, but it is a test nevertheless. God controls the winds. Every puff of air is under His sovereign control. He allowed this to happen.

I believe that part of the test was to see if this would harm the unity of First Baptist Church. As your pastor, I am not as concerned about lumber falling as I am about our unity falling. We have been blessed with a great sense of unity for over a decade. It would be easy in this case to point fingers. Hindsight is 20/20. Fingers could be pointed at the builders, at committees and at the pastor. This *could* have happened, but as far as I know, it has not. I especially want to thank you for the spirit in which our last business meeting was conducted. Other churches would have responded with anger. Instead, we heard comments such as, "God is in control." "Let's learn from any mistakes that have been made and move forward." "This will happen in God's time, not ours." "Are we praying for this project as we should?" This is EXACTLY how we should be responding to this setback.

Another response is to make sure that when progress is made, God gets

all of the glory. If we allow ourselves to become proud because we are building, we forget that everything we do is by God's grace. This building is not the tower of Babel. It is not a monument to the pastor or the membership. It is a tool to perform ministry. It is about doing more evangelism and discipleship and ministry than we could have done otherwise. And besides, anything we build on this side of eternity is going to be temporary. Soon, the new trusses will arrive. Once again, drivers on Krome Avenue will see the beautiful structure taking shape. And yet, one day, even if it's a thousand years from now, it will once again fall. It's not a matter of if, but when. This should lead us to a sense of humility. We should be reminded that the only thing on earth that is eternal is the Kingdom of God. And in God's Kingdom, God alone gets the glory. Perhaps this was a test to keep us dependent upon the Lord. Maybe we needed to be reminded how easily God can bring us down if we allow ourselves to get self reliant. Either way, the test at hand should motivate us to pray more, give more, and seek God's face more. I honestly believe that God will turn this trial into a testimony in His time.

As a result of this setback, we have postponed our 105th anniversary celebration scheduled for August 31. The pavilion will not be completed as planned and this will enable us to focus our energy on other matters related to the building. More than likely, this will wind up becoming a ribbon cutting celebration when the building is eventually done and we will celebrate our 110th anniversary, Lord willing, in a few years. I hope that this does not inconvenience anyone, especially those who are out of town who might have made plans to attend. But I know everyone will understand.

As I write these words, I am on the outskirts of Shickshinny, Pennsylvania. Shickshinny itself is not found on most

maps, so being on the *outskirts* of town tells you something! I am preaching at a camp called "Patterson Grove." This has been around for about a century and a half. It is owned by our United Methodist friends, but people from many denominations attend. I wasn't sure how a Southern Baptist preacher like myself would be received but the reception has been wonderful. There are many precious brothers and sisters in Christ here who love the Lord and who love hearing God's Word. It has been a pleasure to preach to them. I especially want to thank Benny and Pam Helms for coming along and leading the music. It really says something about them that they would be willing to travel 2,600 miles to help out with this camp meeting. The music has been wonderful (of course) and I think the folks here will miss them more than me (of course, again)!

I'll be back on August 9 and ready to resume our study of Revelation the following day. This Sunday, you will be blessed by David Stockment in the morning services and Alberto Guzman in the evening service. Both men are faithful expositors who will preach the text and feed you the Word of God. So come expecting to be blessed.

As summer comes to a close and many of you have been away, let's get ready to hit the ground running in the next few weeks.

Thank you for the privilege of being your pastor. See you soon!

Pastor Howard



Happy Birthday!

3/02 - Richard McCann	8/10 - Lisa Powell	8/22 - Guodong Liu	8/29 - Sherry Ader
3/03 - Craig Kossuth	8/11 - Zoe Friman	8/23 - Lillian Kobyra	8/30 - David Alvarez
8/03 - Jessica Rodriguez	8/11 - Clara Ziegler	8/23 - Ashley Whitney	8/20 - Amanda Powell
8/03 - Sharon Shellhouse	8/12 - Esther Blaedow	8/24 - Anthony Francis	8/30 - Anthony Quiles
8/03 - Sue Smith	8/12 - Margaret Terry	8/24 - Delia Rodriguez	8/30 - Sheila Rives
8/03 - Jacquelyn Stevenson	8/15 - Vertilus Alteme	8/25 - Danny Gonzalez	8/30- Rick Rogers
8/03 - Mary Van Ryn	8/15 - Lillian Hudson	8/25 - Vanessa Hawkins	8/31 - Hector Padron
8/05 - Levi Drury	8/15 - Ava Nowicki	8/25 - Wanda Hodge	8/31 - Naomi Smith
8/05 - David DvVarney	8/15 - Randall Quick	8/26 - Dylan Breivogel	
8/05 - Katherine Jordan	8/16 - Joel Silva	8/26 - Joe Cordova	
8/06 - Bettie Cason	8/18 - Lauren Smith	8/26 - Katie Davis	
8/06 - Michele Catlin	8/19 - Pat Blake	8/27 - Nick Jimenez	
8/06 - A. J. Ohlsen	8/19 - Maria Ferreira	8/27 - Steven Osuna	
8/07 - Jaden Dixon	8/19 - Eryn Melton	8/27 - Wally Williams	
8/07 - Jodie Powell	8/19 - Anthony Rodriguez	8/28 - Cole Davis	
8/07 - Sadie Powell	8/21 - Cassie Tompkins	8/28 - Rodney Davis	
8/09 - Lori Scott	8/22 - Eva Godinez	8/28 - Troy Terry	



Music Ministry



This month, Benny and I, along with the Harden family, had the pleasure of being the guests at Patterson Grove Camp in Shickshinny, Pennsylvania. Our pastor was the evangelist and I led the music. While there, we celebrated Christmas in July. This truly put me in the Christmas spirit. I started thinking about what our choir will present the first week in December. The end of August is usually when our sanctuary choir hits the ground running with Christmas rehearsals. I want to offer an invitation to

any and all individuals who would like to share your gift during this special season. I thank the faithful ones who support our ministry year. Not many have a choir like ours. Traditional choirs are becoming extinct. Thank you for not letting this be true in our area! God has plans for FBC as we continue letting Him lead and provide.

All children's choirs will begin August 24 at 5:30 pm. Mrs. Doris Philpot and Mrs. Lori Diehl are our faithful leaders who love the Lord with all of

their hearts. It shows in their music. I thank these two women and their devoted helpers, for leading our little ones. The excitement of young ages shows and grows as the halls resonate His sweet melodies.

It is a pleasure to serve and minister in my "home grown" church.

Singing for Him,
Pam



Stewardship

July 2014

Contributions for July 2014:	\$ 43,200.88
Monthly budget requirements:	\$ 46,227.68
YTD Contributions:	\$ 494,354.67
YTD Budget:	\$ 496,947.56

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

SCHOOL SUPPLIES DONATIONS



Women on Mission

We are collecting school supplies for needy children in our community.

We are in need of backpacks, and all school supplies.

We have boxes set up around the church for your donations.

Thank you for your generosity.



All men are invited to join us
Saturday, August 2, 8:00 a.m.



All Cubbies®, Sparks®, and T & Ters are invited to join us Wednesday, August 20th. This includes everyone 3 years old through 6th grade. The fun begins at 6:30 p.m. You don't want to miss this night that will mark the beginning of our AWANA year.



Pray for our Student Ministry Mission Team as they serve in Queens, New York.
August 3 - August 9.

CHAPMAN PARTNERSHIP FOR THE HOMELESS

28205 SW 124th Ave



Tuesday, August 12,
11:30-1:00 p.m.



Our 105th Anniversary Celebration has been postponed until further notice.



Sunday School Promotion

Sunday, August 31st, 9:45 - 10:15 a.m. in the sanctuary. Sunday School will follow.

ONLINE:
WWW.FBCHOMESTEAD.ORG

NEWSLETTER OF THE
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**Building bridges...empowering
people...changing lives!**



The arrival of August signals the beginning of the end of summer. Later this month, students and teachers all across our county will head back for another year of school. For our Student Ministry, the summer of 2014 is one we'll remember for quite some time. From VBS to Mission NOLA and Epic ENCOUNTER Excursions, God moved in, among and through us in some pretty exciting ways! As we look ahead to August and the fall season of ministry, here are some things to keep on your radar.

While **E3** was a tremendous success and blessing and we had some great worship services at some pretty neat locations, the month of August sees our ENCOUNTER services head back to the Student Ministry room. This month we'll be continuing our message series called **Connected**. With this series we've been taking a look at worship and painting a biblical picture of a lifestyle of worship. I'd love to encourage all of our students to join us as we gather together on Wednesday nights!

Last month we had 16 students and 6 adults travel to New Orleans, LA to en-

gage that city with the gospel of Jesus Christ. We had 5 fantastic days of ministry working with every age group in the city of New Orleans. While we didn't see anyone place their faith in Jesus for salvation while we were there, I **KNOW** our team planted the seeds of the gospel through their life and lips. What a blessing it was to be able to show the love of God to the people of New Orleans!

Our second mission team will leave on Saturday, August 2 to head to Queens, NY for a week of ministry. We will be partnering with a church planter that I went to college with back in Alabama. Nathan and his wife, Kim, planted City Life Church in Queens this past January. New York is similar to Miami in many ways—diversity, marginally evangelical Christian, etc. We are excited to partner with Pastor Nathan and City Life Church to do what we can to penetrate the darkness and lostness of the city with the gospel of Jesus. Please pray for us as we travel and as we seek to be a visible and verbal witness of the gospel. I look forward to reporting all that God does while we are in NY.

August also means it's time for our Back to School Bash! This year we're heading up to Rapids Water Park in

West Palm Beach to send the summer of 2014 out with a bang! Information packets are available in the Student Ministry room or on our Student Ministry website(www.633students.org) under the Upcoming Events tab. Deadline to sign up for the Back to School Bash is Sunday, August 10!

Finally, let me just remind you that one of the core values of our Student Ministry is **Diverse Fellowship**. This core value highlights the truth that Christ has destroyed the walls that once separated us and has made us into a family. Our ministry is a ministry to and for **ALL** students and their family regardless of any characteristics that this world insists must divide us. We believe that diversity in the membership of our student ministry is a reflection of the diversity we will see in heaven and we welcome and celebrate any and all students that have surrendered to the Lordship of Christ no matter what their background.

As always, thank you for the opportunity to serve you and to serve with you for the glory of God!

For His Glory,
Joe