

May 21, 2009

Dear Members & Friends of Immanuel,

Although it is happening less and less, every so often I am still the 'younger generation.' It is usually because of a current need that I find myself in a hospital room, or at the Hospice House or a nursing home. In my capacity, I am there to minister to an older person who is part of the Immanuel family. Invariably, I leave being the recipient of ministry from the person who was the focus of my pastoral visit. The spiritual lessons that are often reinforced to me are worth passing on to others in the 'younger generation.'

First, those who know Christ as Savior can experience 'good old age.' In our current culture, youth and newness are two idols often worshipped. Thus the atmosphere exists where old age seems to be a curse, a disease, or an unfortunate inevitable happening. If someone would just invent a pill that would allow us to age without getting old! The phrase 'old age' appears fifteen times in the Bible. Four of those times the phrase is preceded by a descriptive word. All four times the word is a positive word. Three times we read of 'good old age' and one time 'ripe old age.' That is exactly what the Bible says will happen to the righteous as they grow older.

"The righteous flourish like the palm tree and grow like the cedar in Lebanon.
They are planted in the house of the Lord; they flourish in the courts of our God.
They still bear fruit in old age; they are ever full of sap and green,
to declare that the Lord is upright; He is my Rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him."
Psalm 92:12-15

The second lesson is that followers of Christ can (and should) begin well, live well and die well. These saints who have reached a 'good old age' provide proof to us that faith in Christ works over the long haul of life, with its triumph and turmoil, with its delights and discouragements. It is as though with the weakening of the physical eyes there is a sharpening of spiritual vision.

What a joy to listen to Jane Evans, at the good old age of 87, explain to the nurse who is taking her vital signs, just how wonderful it is to know that Jesus Christ lives in her heart and that she is looking forward to soon being with Him in heaven. What confidence is expressed when Frank Gering, at the good old age of 96, said to his wife Polly, as she visited him in the Hospice House, "Polly, don't worry about me, I am marching to Zion." What a testimony they present. Still bearing fruit in old age, they are declaring that the Lord is their Rock! We are indeed surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses!

Family Bible Week

What a great way to kick off the summer at Immanuel! We are the recipients of a rich tradition handed down to us from previous generations. ***Family Bible Week*** provides a concentrated four evenings of solid Biblical teaching for all ages. The conference kicks off on Sunday morning, June 7. Then, as the family of God, we will meet on Sunday, Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday evenings from 7:00 to 8:30 to be nourished, encouraged and challenged from the Word of God.

John Sorensen, President of Evangelism Explosion International, will teach the adults. He will be concentrating on the kind of life the follower of Christ is to be living that would cause Jesus to say, "Well done, good and faithful servant!"

Andy Giessman from Baptist Bible College will lead the Student Ministries group. Matt Hoffland and John & Diane Windle will round out the roster of those coming from outside of Immanuel. They will be supported by a great number of lay staff from among the family at Immanuel.

Everyone, from the youngest baby to the oldest adult will have a place at **Family Bible Week**. I hope that you will make **Family Bible Week** a spiritual priority and take advantage of the great opportunity provided for you. Our website contains additional information.

Pastor's Forum

Getting to know one another in a church takes some effort. There are people attending Immanuel that I do not yet know, other than maybe a passing introduction in the foyer before or after a worship service. It would be good for me to get to know them and for them to get to know me.

That is one of the main purposes of the **Pastor's Forum** at Immanuel. I lead these sessions, allowing for questions and interaction in a small group setting. The **Pastor's Forum** has four sessions and takes place during the Sunday School hour from 8:45 to 9:45. The dates of the four sessions for the next **Pastor's Forum** are June 14, 21 & 28 and July 12.

Another purpose of this **Pastor's Forum** is to present the information necessary for those who are considering membership at Immanuel. Every follower of Christ needs a church home. If the Lord is leading you to make Immanuel your church home, it is important for you to attend.

Equipping for Effective Evangelism (E3)

We are relentlessly pursuing the Biblical mandate to take the Gospel to the world in which the Lord has placed each of us. We are relentlessly in pursuit of ending the silence which has debilitated the church for far too long. The purpose of **E3** is to equip you to present a Biblically complete Gospel presentation with confidence and boldness to people that the Lord has already prepared to listen to the Gospel.

E3 is a seven session training cycle during which you will memorize a Gospel presentation and Scripture verses, as well as learn illustrations that provide windows into the truth presented. You will go with a three member team into the community and witness first hand the power of the Gospel in the lives of people that we meet during our 'divine appointments.'

Here are the dates for the seven sessions this summer:

June 23 July 7, 21, 28 August 4, 18 September 1

It is time for many of you to take the step of obedience and faith by becoming involved in the **Equipping for Effective Evangelism** training ministry. You will have the opportunity to sign up for E3 on the "R" Card in the coming weeks.

Summer R & R

The Bible's command for us to rest is grounded in the activity of God at creation. That's right, rest is a command that God has given us. Summer is often the time period when breaks in our schedules allow us to enjoy some longer time periods for relaxation and recuperation. I hope that you will take advantage of any of these breaks that the Lord provides for you.

These episodes can help rejuvenate us, as we can enjoy more time for the spiritual disciplines of Bible reading and prayer. Our bodies, our emotions, our relationships and our spiritual lives can benefit from the proper enjoyment of our rest as we grow in our personal relationship with Christ. I hope and pray that each of us have a spiritually profitable summer.

Partnering with you in the work of the Gospel,

Dr. James F. Engle
Senior Pastor