

HIGHLIGHTS

PUBLISHED BY THE INTERNATIONAL BAPTIST CONVENTION



Volume 61 | Issue 2
SEPTEMBER 2023

Euroventure 2023

Living LIFE Abundantly

Naty Tully

When All is Cracked and Dried

Tom Griffin

Bringing Scripture to Life

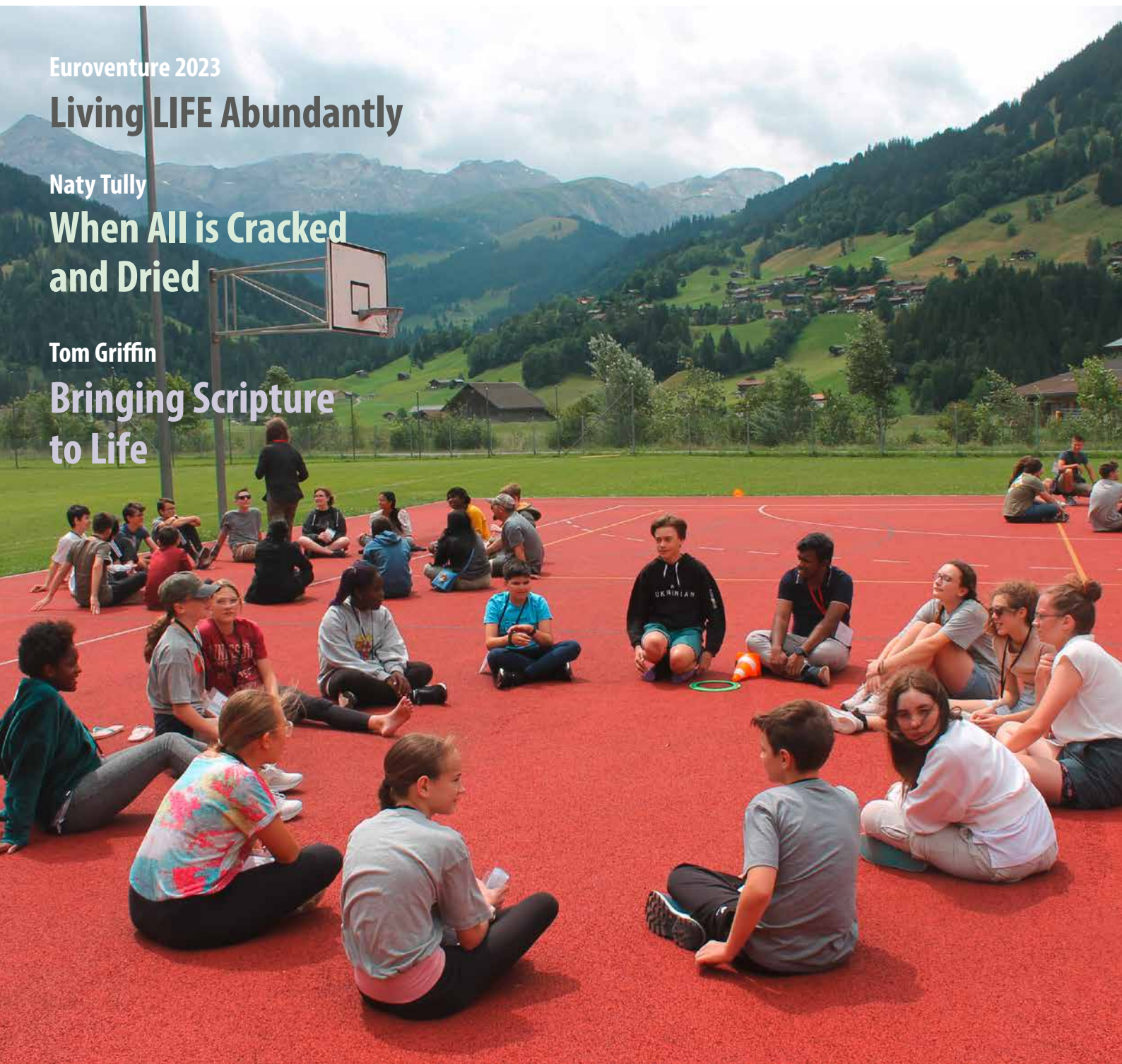




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Life ...



When I was graduating from high school, the yearbook staff asked each senior to submit a quote to go with their picture. Mine was “Life is like a piano ... what you get out of it depends on how you play it.” Years later, I found a cross-stitch pattern with the same quote.

As a pianist, I know that you can play a piece of music *adagio* (slow) or *allegro* (lively) or even *andante* (walking pace – not too fast or slow). You can play a piece *legato* (smoothly) or *staccato* (short and separated). Whichever way you choose affects you as a pianist and affects those listening to the music.

While there is no biblical record of Jesus being a musician,

I’m sure He was one. So what musical instruction would He have written on the piece of music that we call “life”? I think He might have used the term *più*. This term means “more” and usually precedes another instruction such as *più lento*, meaning “more slow.” I think that Jesus might have simply used it by itself – *più*. In John 10:10b, Jesus says, “I came so they can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of” (MSG, emphasis added).

We’ve adopted the theme of LIFE from our Euroventure 2023 youth camp for this edition of *Highlights*. You’ll discover articles on how students were challenged to live LIFE to the fullest, how we should seek life in work and money, how we can react when life becomes cracked and dried, and how we can bring Scripture to life in our own lives.

We hope you will be renewed and challenged by this edition of *Highlights*.

Judith Lynn Maxwell
Highlights Editor

IMPRINT

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Cover photo: Team building is part of Euroventure 2023 in Lenk, Switzerland by Judith Lynn Maxwell

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I Have Come that You May Have LIFE

Jesus came that we might have LIFE and have it abundantly (John 10:10). And that is what 118 youth and adult leaders did during Euroventure 2023, 31 July – 5 August in Lenk, Switzerland.

After four long years without an in-person camp, it was great to return to Switzerland and experience all that Euroventure has to offer – Bible teaching, group learning, seminars, devotions, team challenges, and fun in the Swiss alps.

Jody and Hannah Esguerra were the speakers for the week. With Jody from the Philippines and Hannah from Northern Ireland and having met in Singapore, they brought an international flavor and dynamic to their teaching and interaction with the students. The camp motto for the week was “With life there must be light. Light reveals our identity. Knowing our identity gives us freedom. Freedom in Christ is everlasting.” Each day they broke down an element of living LIFE to the fullest – Light, Identity, Freedom, and Everlasting. They challenged the students to dig deep into the Word of God and discover for themselves what living the Christian life was all about. The week closed with a time for students to commit or re-commit their lives to Christ and seeking to serve Him on a daily basis.

Each day students also had the opportunity to explore other topics through seminars that were offered. These seminars included Christian Meditation, Am I Good Enough?, Calling All Guys, Worship through Creating, Outdoor Skills, Anxious about Nothing, Cultivating Your Story, and IDENTITY in Christ > Identity Crisis.

During the Worship through Creating workshop, the students combined their talents to write a song during the week (each of the four daily sessions contributed a part). The final song was performed on Friday evening as part of the closing of camp.

Afternoons were free for students to experience some of the recreational activities the Simmental Valley had to offer, including swimming, hiking, bouldering, bowling, trotti-biking, and zip-lining.

Being in a new location, we were also able to enjoy a bonfire one evening (complete with s’mores) as well as a dance party on a different evening.

Worship times were led by Martin Mahares and a group from Hannibal-LaGrange University in Hannibal, Missouri. A group from HLGU has been coming to assist with the camp for more than 20 years. [Globe icon](#)

Photo impressions on next 2 pages



Photo by Judith Lynn Maxwell

118 youth and adult leaders experience LIFE at Euroventure.



Camp Motto

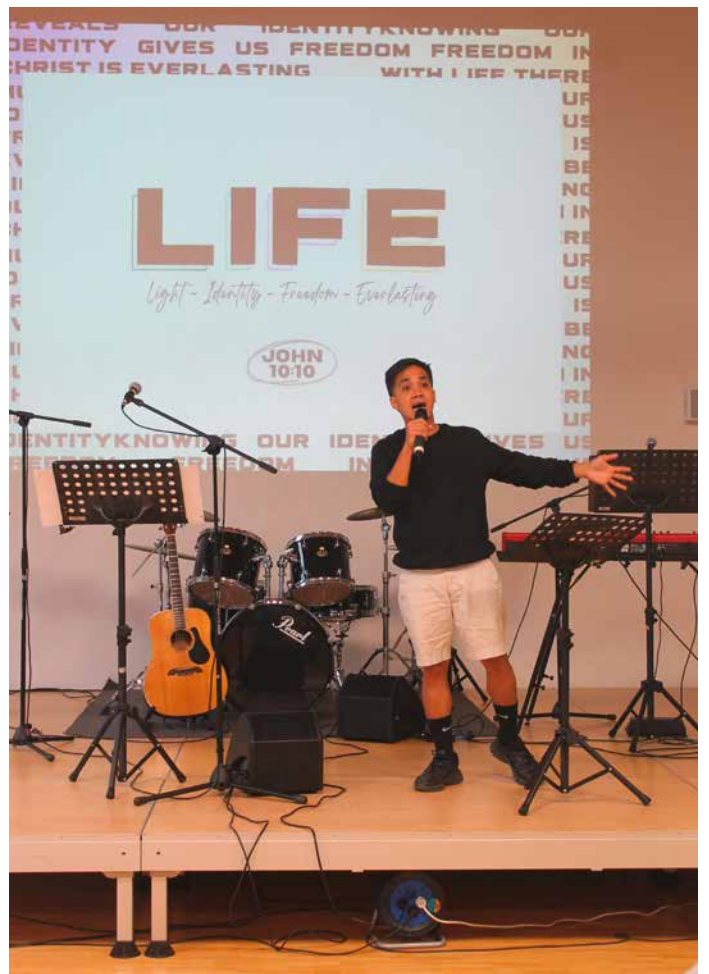
WITH LIFE THERE MUST BE LIGHT
LIGHT REVEALS OUR IDENTITY
KNOWING OUR IDENTITY GIVES US FREEDOM
FREEDOM IN CHRIST IS EVERLASTING



Photos by Judith Lynn Maxwell



Students created flags representing their teams and the theme of the week.



Consumption or Enjoyment? – Looking for life in work and money



by Tim Faulkner
General Secretary

When Ryan, Janay, and Camryn were teenagers, we started a Christmas family tradition of puzzle-making. One we worked was a 5,000-piece Ravensburger puzzle of the Sistine Chapel. Each year, we would make progress and then put it away in sections. Finally, we completed the puzzle and decided to frame it, even though it was missing a piece.

A puzzle with a missing piece is a good analogy for understanding the book of Ecclesiastes. The writer (identified in 1:1 and typically understood to be Solomon) looks at life “under the sun,” a phrase used 33 times and meaning something like life lived “apart from the revelation of God.” Thankfully, God through Solomon opens up our perspective, and we are privileged to see what God sees. The missing piece answers the question of how to enjoy wealth. In order to discover this piece, we must consider work and money “under the sun,” and work and money from God’s view.

LIFE UNDER THE SUN: THE VANITY OF WORK AND MONEY

Regarding work:

I hated all my toil in which I toil under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to the man who will come after me, and who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will be master of all for which I toiled and used my wisdom under the sun. This also is vanity. (Ecclesiastes 2:18-19)

Regarding money:

He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income; this also is vanity. (5:10)

Work and money produce wealth. Solomon definitely knew about wealth. 1 Kings 10:25-29 (MSG) describes him: “King Solomon was wiser and richer than all the kings of the earth – he surpassed them all. People came from all over the world to be with Solomon and drink in the wisdom God had given him. And everyone who came brought gifts – artifacts of gold and silver, fashionable robes and gowns, the latest in weapons, exotic spices, and horses and mules – parades of visitors, year after year. Solomon collected chariots and horses: fourteen hundred chariots and twelve thousand horses! He stabled them in the special chariot cities as well as in Jerusalem. The king made silver as common as rocks and cedar as common as the fig trees in the lowland hills.”

We might conclude that Solomon had experi-

enced the best that work and money had to offer, yet he remained disappointed. We know that work, in and of itself, is not the problem. In Proverbs 6:6-11, Solomon discussed the reward for hard work and the suffering of the lazy. In Genesis 2, God gave Adam work to do in the garden. The problem is not work but in trying to obtain from it something it cannot provide.

Money presents an even greater challenge. The pursuit of both work and money result in vanity, “chasing after the wind” (Ecclesiastes 2:17). A life invested in work and money eventually ends, and both must be left behind. Death is the great equalizer of those who have or do not have work and money. That leads to the next observation from an earthly perspective.

LIFE UNDER THE SUN: THE INABILITY TO ENJOY WEALTH

In Ecclesiastes 6:1, Solomon observes that there is more rest for a stillborn baby than the man lacking nothing but incapable of enjoying what he has. This is “a man to whom God gives wealth, possessions, and honor, so that he lacks nothing of all that he desires, yet God does not give him power to enjoy them, but a stranger enjoys them. This is vanity” (6:2).

Commentators explain the expression “yet God does not give power to enjoy them” as an introduction to grace. D.A. Garrett writes, “The ability to enjoy...is itself a gift of God. Those who belong to God should above all others have a capacity to enjoy life.”* The problem, explains M.A. Eaton, is that “secular-minded men may assume the two [wealth combined with the power to enjoy it] invariably go together; the Preacher regards them as distinct.”* Why is this important? Because a true glimpse at the earthly reality leads us to the missing piece.

LIFE UNDER THE SUN: THE MISSING PIECE

Solomon asks, “For apart from him who can eat or who can have enjoyment?” (2:25). He concludes that apart from God we cannot enjoy wealth; God Himself is the missing piece. We’ll look at what that means practically later, but first let’s consider the heavenly perspective. It’s about grace, but perhaps not in a way that we might have expected!

LIFE FROM GOD’S VIEW: THE GRACE OF CRAVING

Regarding work:

Because sometimes a person who has toiled with

wisdom and knowledge and skill must leave everything to be enjoyed by someone who did not toil for it. This also is vanity and a great evil. What has a man from all the toil and striving of heart with which he toils beneath the sun? (2:21-22)

Regarding money:

He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income; this also is vanity. When goods increase, they increase who eat them, and what advantage has their owner but to see them with his eyes? Sweet is the sleep of a laborer, whether he eats little or much, but the full stomach of the rich will not let him sleep. (5:10-12)

In 6:7, Solomon adds, “All the toil of man is for his mouth, yet his appetite is not satisfied.” He also points out that both work and money lead to sleepless nights—whether you cannot stop thinking about work (see 2:23) or you have a lot of money and you are awake thinking about how to keep it (see 5:12). Is Solomon contradicting his optimism in Proverbs 6:6-11? No, but he has understood the irony of work and money, specifically that they will consume us while we seek to consume them!

Craving is grace! God placed a desire for work and money in man. D. Kidner observes that work is a joyful gift of God “if only he had had the grace to take it as such.”* Here in Ecclesiastes, God alerts us to the vanity of pursuing what work and money can never provide. Jesus underlined this in Matthew 6:24, saying you cannot serve both God and mammon (literally a rival god). If you are feeling frustrated, then Ecclesiastes is achieving its purpose, as further illustrated in the second heavenly perspective.

LIFE FROM GOD’S VIEW: THE GRACE OF CRASHING

So I turned about and gave my heart up to despair over all the toil of my labors under the sun. (2:20)

There is a grievous evil that I have seen under the sun: riches were kept by their owner to his hurt, and those riches were lost in a bad venture. And he is father of a son, but he has nothing in his hand. As he came from his mother’s womb he shall go again, naked as he came, and shall take nothing for his toil that he may carry away in his hand. (5:13-15)

Commenting on 2:20, D.A. Garrett says, “He does not despair but decides to disillusion himself.”* This



Photo by Juan Carlos Rodriguez Casmarillo from Pixabay

disillusionment or crash is what we need to prepare our heart to respond. Here is what we have discovered about the power to enjoy wealth:

- We are incapable.
- We cannot face its demands.
- We cannot take it with us.
- We cannot control what happens to it after we’re gone.
- Whatever lasts belongs to the eternal realm.

So there is power to enjoy wealth, but it is connected to the missing piece! This is the third heavenly perspective.



>> LIFE FROM GOD'S VIEW:
THE GRACE OF CONTENTMENT

Everyone also to whom God has given wealth and possessions and power to enjoy them, and to accept his lot and rejoice in his toil—this is the gift of God. For he will not much remember the days of his life because God keeps him occupied with joy in his heart. (5:19-20)

A funny story shared on the internet illustrates our struggle to be content. “Bring the goat into the house,” said the rabbi. Now that wasn’t the response the man had expected when he went to the rabbi for advice. He and his eight friends had decided to pool their money and share the expenses of a common living arrangement. After trying it for a while, the frustrations were many, and it no longer seemed like a good idea. So the man went to the rabbi and said, “I’m miserable. Nine people in one house. What should I do?” The rabbi replied, “Do you have a goat?” “Yes,” said the man. “Then bring the goat in the house and come back in a week.” A week later the man returned, looking more distraught than before. “We can’t stand it,” he told the rabbi. “The goat is filthy. It stinks. It ate my shoes!” The rabbi said, “Go home and let the goat out and come back in a week.” A week later the man returned, radiant, exclaiming, “Life is beautiful. We enjoy every minute of it now that there’s no goat – only the nine of us.”

The need to be content demonstrates that God in His grace offers the power to enjoy wealth:

- We have to do it according to His view and not as it seems to us.
- God begins by dismantling our false hope of obtaining out of work and money what we most desire.
- God reveals Himself as the true fulfillment of our desires. Not only did God’s Son Jesus set aside all the glory of heaven and live a very simple life, He died the death of a pauper on a Roman cross so that we could obtain the glorious riches of God.
- If God did not withhold His own Son, why would He not also give us all good things?

So what does this look like practically in our lives? I encourage you to pick two of the following insights and opportunities to put into practice and discuss with someone else for accountability.

- Christ’s perfect, costly work on our behalf offers the true wealth we so crave (2 Corinthians 8:9). Receive God’s gift of eternal life (John 3:16).
- Work demands your life without offering life in return, but Jesus offers an easy yoke (Matthew

11:30). If you are feeling burdened, consider how much you are attempting to do in your own strength.

- Failure to practice “Sabbath” is like using credit to delay payment (for example, it may lead to burnout). Show confidence in God’s work by taking a Sabbath break from your efforts (Exodus 20:11).

- Work done for the Lord is not in vain (1 Corinthians 15:58).

• As we consume money, it can consume us. Jesus said that you cannot serve both God and money. Find ways to your make money serve your Master (Matthew 6:24).

- Consider what God offers when you put His Kingdom first (Matthew 6:33).

- Get-rich schemes can grow roots and make demands on us (1 Timothy 6:10). These include things like sports betting, lottery, and investments that exploit others. Stop before you lose control.

- Your wallet reveals what you desire (Matthew 6:21). Monitor purchases. Also, give away something you love (not just something that you don’t want anymore).

- Some investments pay eternal dividends – wisdom tells us to invest our riches in those (1 Timothy 6:17f).

• Ingratitude dishonors the Giver of all good things. Count your blessings! Bring the goat into the house!



***Commentaries to consult:**

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When All is Cracked and Dry



by Naty Tully
Pastor's Wife, International
Church of Bucharest,
Romania

One day I shared my testimony with Diana, a stranger sitting next to me in the airplane. She claimed to be an atheist. Then she attributed all my suffering to my attracting negative energy around me. I don't see problems as bad luck, a punishment from the Almighty. Otherwise, the Apostle Paul really hit the jackpot of bad luck (persecuted, suffered hunger, cold, shipwrecked, jailed, loneliness, no marriage). Yet, he says in Romans 5:3: "We glory in our suffering."

Can I rejoice in my suffering? Can I bear fresh fruit in a season of drought? Do you feel cracked and dry because of pain from a loss, criticism from outsiders, tension in the home, wrestling through loneliness, or dreading where the world is heading?

Jeremiah 17 challenged me recently in church. A Christ-follower ought to produce fruit even in times of drought. *"But blessed are those who trust in the Lord and have made the Lord their hope and confidence. They are like trees planted along a riverbank, with roots that reach deep into the water. Such trees are not bothered by the heat or worried by long months of drought. Their leaves stay green, and they never stop producing fruit"* (Jeremiah 17:7-8, NLT, emphasis added).

I want to be that tree – my leaves to give shade, my fruit to be satisfying, my roots to be grounded, ... even in the drought. I want to be that Christian – my response to problems to give comfort, my words to be satisfying, my convictions to be grounded in truth and not the latest cultural trend, ... even in my drought-like circumstances.

But how?

INVEST IN MY ROOTS (THE INVISIBLE PART OF ME)

"Victories don't come by accident." My best days are when I set my alarm for 5:00 and start my day with my nose in the Bible and my knees planted in

prayer. But, not every day turns out like that ...

Here's what I wrote in my journal 19 November 2020: "It's 1:00 p.m. By now I'd be knee-deep in errands, cooking, schooling, editing, meeting others ... anything on my long to-do list. Not today. Today our family paused. We turned our cozy, crackling fire on YouTube with gentle piano music and declared it a Sabbath Hour. We paused. We read our Bibles. We prayed. We stopped the earthly chase, to invest in the heavenly race."

"I say to the Lord, 'You are my Lord; apart from you I have no good thing'" (Psalm 16:2, NIV).

CLEAN MY BRANCHES (THE VISIBLE PART OF ME)

I heard someone say that we each have three lives: a public life, a private life, and a secret life. We may be able to impress and even fool others of our "godliness," yet God knows our most hidden sins. Is the godliness others see in me genuine fruit or plastic apples taped on trees?

A famous preacher with a respected name was found out to have a sinful secret life after his death. Our secret life will sooner or later spill into our private and public lives. *"Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy"* (Proverbs 28:13, NIV)


"Let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us" (Hebrews 12:1, NLT).

There are some sins that come to us very easily. Some of us are more prone to anger, some to gossip, some to worry. What is the sin that easily entangles you? I get easily discouraged, so I am on the watch to not let my emotions wrap me up easily like melted cheese on a burger. As Lisa Terkeurst says, "Emotions should be indicators, not dictators."

EXPECT FRUIT (THE INVISIBLE MADE VISIBLE)

I am a struggler just like you. I am often tempted to shrink my world to the size of my struggle, forgetting that I have a faithful God on my side. Healthy roots will bring about healthy fruit.

I can, and I should bear fresh fruit even in my wait (six-year-long adoption process), in my pain (frequent hospital trips), in my unknown (in so many areas of my life), even in my drought.

"But blessed are those who TRUST in the Lord Such trees are NOT BOTHERED by the heat or worried by long months of drought. Their leaves stay green, and they NEVER STOP PRODUCING fruit" (Jeremiah 17:7-8, NLT, emphasis added). 



Bringing Scripture to Life



by Tom Griffin

In the delivery room, awaiting the arrival of our second child, the nurse asked if I would like to deliver the baby. Calmly and deliberately, I told her, “No. That is what we pay you to do.” I wanted an expert for this important task. Later, the midwife convinced me that it would be good, with her hands behind mine, for me to deliver the baby (I was reminded that my wife was also in the room). We did so without problem, but I stand by my first instinct: I want an expert.

If I’m interested in getting a dog, I talk to dog-lovers; if I’m interested in airplanes, I talk to a pilot; if a computer, I talk to a nerd (they’re my best friends, anyway). So, when I wanted to understand how the Bible wants to be communicated, I turned to the author, and He wrote very clearly His intent. Whereas 49 times the Bible mentions *reading* the Word, 71 times it mentions *hearing* the Word. And when you look again at the 49 mentions of reading, 29 of those are in the context of reading *so that people could hear it*. That makes the revised numbers 20 for reading and 100 for hearing the Word. For every one mention of reading, there are five mentions of hearing the Word. There is a huge bias in the Bible that we should hear the Word. But, to paraphrase Romans 10:14: “How can they hear if no one speaks it?”

I’m convinced that to understand a passage of Scripture you must be able to speak it aloud because that is how it was meant to be communicated. And to speak it aloud, it is best if it’s memorized. When

a Bible passage is spoken from memory, with its tone of voice and pacing consistent with the original intent, then the message comes to life. And, as it breathes the air, we understand its meaning and feel its weight, we hear its cries and embrace its warmth.

The practice of Scripture recitation – the purposeful study, memorization, and spoken presentation of a portion of the Bible – conveys the sense of a passage, bringing it alive. It can animate a congregation to participate in corporate worship and interact in disciple-building activities. Scripture recitation “raises the bar” to the study and understanding of the Bible, progressing from clarity in understanding the Word to clarity in communicating it. It is a natural bridge to evangelism. Life wants to be shared.

Study in preparation for a recitation of Scripture focuses on the context in which the passage was written: the life-relationships between people, the cultural setting and biases, idioms, and the over-arching context of the writing. Understanding the intent of the passage determines how it will be presented. There are many variables to consider when deciding how to present a passage of Scripture. A recitation will focus on just one tone, one meaning, one tempo, and one volume. Although it is intellectually interesting to consider all the variations, a recitation must bring them to a single presentation. Whereas pastors recommend that you memorize a passage of Scripture, a recitation gives the



Charity Jacobs recites a passage of Scripture.



Recitation allows every member of the congregation to contribute to the church family.

date and time at which you will be put to the test! It is very motivating.


This motivation prompts careful study to understand the meaning of a passage, and that meaning goes beyond the text. Simply reading the words results in some of the meaning being left behind, flat on the page. One must spend time with the passage, to become intimate with it.

When a passage is dwelt upon for an extended period, and its intent understood, it is possible to “feel” the passage, to experience it in a way for which there are no Words. That feeling, however, is not always warm and cozy. My feel for Ecclesiastes chapters 1 and 2 was one of honest struggle and longing to know. I found it both beautiful and agonizing. It broke my heart to speak the words – words that I hadn’t just memorized in the right order; I felt them in the pit of my stomach. This is what the preparation to recite a passage does to you; it makes you feel the message of Scripture and, in doing so, unveils its heart. But I would like to be clear about the order of events in this progression. We do not simply try to “feel” a passage and then present it without study. Study comes first – analysis, research, comparison, prayerful consideration, and being open to and led by the teaching of the Holy Spirit (John 14:6).

My own experience with Scripture recitation has given me a glimpse into the working of the Holy Spirit, not only while studying to understand a passage, but also when presenting it. When speaking God’s Word to His people, occasionally I have felt myself to be transparent – to have lost myself in the transaction. The Word flowed through me to “correct, rebuke, and encourage” (2 Timothy 4:2), and I

felt as if I was a witness to the message being delivered. The feeling was one of communion and empathy, an encounter with the Holy Spirit. It is certainly worth the investment of preparation.

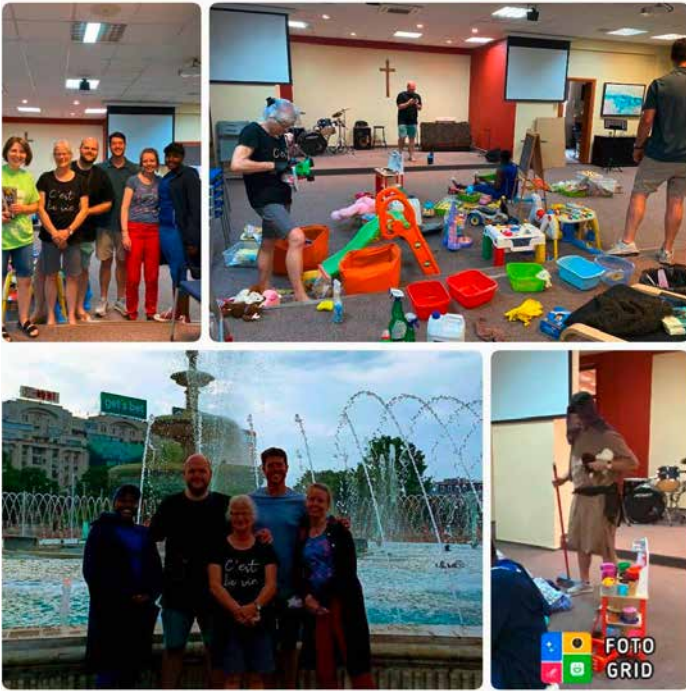
When the passage is spoken aloud, the clarity of such expression projects a vitality and understanding that is witness to the study and practice that brought it into being. It is a rich, dense morsel and goes by quickly. Normal conversational pace is 150 words per minute. At this pace, all of Isaiah 53 takes two and a half minutes, all of 1 Corinthians 13 is under two minutes, and Psalm 23 is 45 seconds.

If you would like more information about beginning the ministry in your church, *By Heart Ministry* can help. Learn more at byheart.org and see examples of Scripture recited on the *By Heart YouTube channel*. 



Steve Gibbons

Bonn, Germany



IN JUNE, Pastor Stephen Campbell and four other members of IBC Bonn embarked on a journey to support the ministry of the International Church of Bucharest. Planning for the trip began shortly after the IBC's Ministry Leadership Conference in Lisbon at which Bill and Naty Tully shared of the continuing needs at their church due to the ongoing war and the diminishing donations.

Along the way, several other IBC churches got involved, including Hamburg, Darmstadt, Wiesbaden, Bratislava, and Budapest. In total, six IBC churches contributed gifts, letters, and finances to support our sister church in Bucharest. The team felt that it was only able to do a very little. "It was only a drop in the bucket of what is needed," one team member said. But we should praise God that, according to Naty, "It was the right drop in the right bucket at the right time." There is still much to do, but God has always proven Himself faithful to supply our needs when we need them. God was very gracious to all.

Stephen Campbell

Bucharest, Romania

SUMMERTIME AT the International Church of Bucharest means that some things are a little different but many things remain the same. This summer they were able to host guests who had been serving on the frontlines in Ukraine. "We are glad the Lord can use us to give a small respite to Ukrainians who have seen what we only see in a war movie," writes Naty Tully. "We continue to pray for the war to end. Our lives go on, and so does the war."

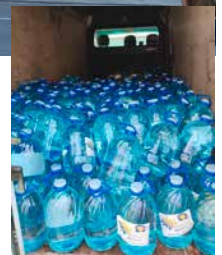
ICB helps in other ways as well – providing clean drinking water to a village with none, relocating a family who showed up unexpectedly, helping provide hearing aids to a caregiver, and simply celebrating the birthday of a seven-year-old girl.

And in the midst of all this, ICB is praying for a new location for their church building. They have found a perfect location, at a great price for an in-city building with parking. Please join them in praying for this new worship and outreach space. It would initially be used to help with housing Ukrainian refugees who are losing their current places in Bucharest.

From Bill and Naty Tully's ministry reports



Possible new site for ICB's worship and outreach center.



Clean drinking water for a village in Ukraine.

1958 **65** 2023
years
CELEBRATING
what matters most

**ANNUAL CONVENTION
MEETING 2023**

23 - 25 OCTOBER
International Baptist Church of Stuttgart