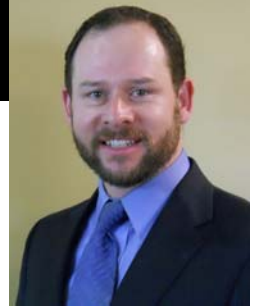


THE COMMUNITY BUILDER

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE EVANGELICAL COMMUNITY CHURCH

Pastor to the People



Looking Forward To 2012

To begin, I am very thankful for a challenging and full year of ministry at ECC in 2011. God continues to be gracious to us, especially in bringing gifted and godly people into our fellowship with a passion to serve for the good of the church and the glory of God. As I look out on the coming year, 2012 is shaping up to be one of the more eventful years in our church's short history.

The elders will be holding their annual planning weekend on January 13-14. We have titled our weekend, "Community, Connecting, and Communication." One of our priorities for the coming year will be to strengthen the quality of our community together. We will be working on a shepherding structure that we hope is both realistic and effective in increasing the oversight, prayer, and care of our membership.

We will also be looking at the need for small group opportunities, and this will include the possibility of small-group educational opportunities as part of our adult Sunday school. Flowing out of the need for additional adult Sunday school offerings is the need for additional classroom space. I have to think that 2012 is the year that we develop a plan for additional space and a possible capital campaign to that end.

In terms of communication, the elders will be looking at how we can do a better job of crystalizing what it is we are to be about as a church and then imparting that calling and vision with better clarity through multiple media and outlets on a regular basis. One way that you can pray for us as elders is that God would crystallize in our own hearts a shared vision for ECC.

2012 will be an eventful year for other reasons as well. After having pioneered our first Christianity Explored class in the fall of 2011 (which included doing some canvassing of the streets around ECC), we are looking forward to our next round of classes for our unchurched friends beginning on January 17 at the church office and continuing for the next six Tuesdays. One of the goals that I am fully confident we can achieve is to communicate to our neighbors, specifically our unchurched neighbors, that even if they are not interested in God or Christianity, that we nevertheless care about their souls.

We now have 10 individuals at ECC who have finished the first level of training to be 'Biblical Counselors.' Now under the leadership of Dan McCabe, we hope to begin to make weekly counseling relationships available to those who feel they would benefit from a relationship with someone trained in applying Biblical truth to the difficult places in our lives. Those who find themselves struggling in their marriage, or in a challenging parent/child relationship, struggling with an addiction, or who simply find themselves 'stuck' in their spiritual growth may find the help they need from one of our newly-trained counselors.

Continued on p. 2

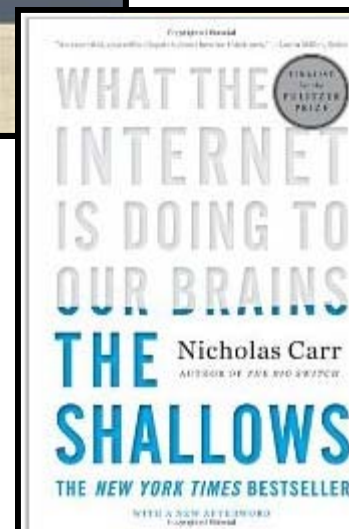
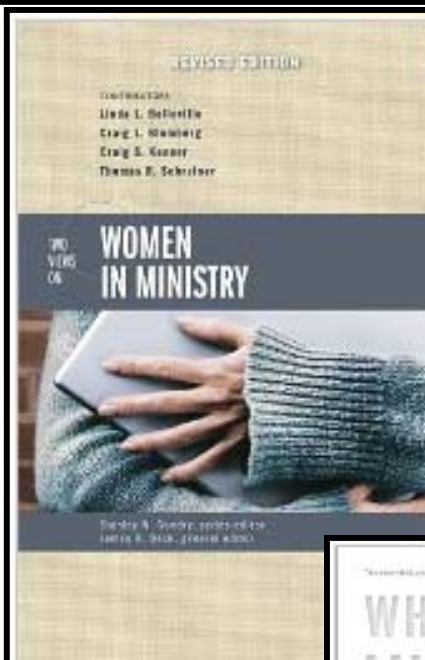


In light of the work that is being done by our commissioned study group on the issue of women's ordination, the elders have chosen *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, edited by James Beck and Craig Blomberg for our next book study.

Personally, I am reading a fabulous book that explains, in part, why I get so easily distracted when I am trying to do something that requires sustained attention, *The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to our Brains*, by Nicholas Carr.

As I write this (which I am doing at Starbucks and I can't believe how busy they are in the middle of the afternoon), I am feeling very bullish on what the Lord is going to do through ECC in 2012.

Soli Deo Gloria,
Pastor Rich



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Questions and comments may be directed to John Wood at jdwood79@cinci.rr.com.

Editors' Note:

This month is a mixture of articles. Our pastor looks back at 2011 and looks forward to some exciting and challenging items for 2012. Three of our writers explore the theme of "I Am Not Who I Once Was" and how their life of faith has changed over the years. Isaac begins a series looking at the power of hymns. The McCabes share more on the Biblical foundation for Biblical counseling, and Pam Dollard shares the scripture that the Study Committee on Women Elders has studied. As always, we enjoy your comments and questions. We hope to introduce some other regular features for the Community Builder in 2012, including "Heroes of the Faith" and book reviews. We look forward to serving the ECC community.

The Power Of The Gospel

By Rick Schatz

Recently, I had the privilege of meeting a man who was born in India and was being raised as a Hindu priest. As part of God's sovereign plan, he came to the United States and was introduced to Jesus by a loving Christian family in Columbus, Ohio. He made a commitment to Christ and is now an elder in an evangelical church here in Cincinnati. These are the kinds of conversion stories that we often talk about, but it is not like my story.

I was not raised in a Christian home. We would go to church on Christmas and Easter whether we needed to or not. However, I never doubted that Jesus was the Son of God, that He did all the miracles described in the Bible (even though I didn't know many of the stories), and I never doubted that He was crucified, dead and buried, and was raised back to life. The issue for me was one of relevance, as all of this truth meant nothing to me personally.

I had all the worldly trappings of righteousness. I didn't smoke, drink, or use pornography, and the only girl I dated was my high school sweetheart, whom I eventually married, praise the Lord! But my issue was, who was the king of my life? Who made up the rules? And it was me. What was important was doing the right things, but with the end gain being popularity, a good education and financial security. This was the road of my life, and I was well on the way to arriving there by attending the University of Cincinnati, studying chemical engineering, and then going to the Harvard Business School.

However, in God's providence, I was blessed by the reality that my high school sweetheart, Sharon, was a believer. And between our two years at Harvard, she suggested we needed to start going to church, which translated from the Greek meant, "Rick, you heathen, you need to come to know my Jesus." At Sharon's suggestion, we started attending the Newton Presbyterian Church, which was within walking distance of where we were living. The people were incredibly friendly, and the pastor talked about this

Jesus like He was alive and well and he talked to Him every day. I had never heard anything like that. And then they began to talk about a renewal weekend they were going to have, and they were going to bring a group of people from Cincinnati, our hometown, to speak and share. The pastor for that weekend was Jerry Kirk. He preached on Friday and Saturday nights, Sunday morning and Sunday night. He gave an invitation to anyone who wanted to give their lives to Christ to come forward. And I did.

What changed in me was who the Lord of my life was. I got off the throne and gave decision-making power to Christ. As I have grown in Him, His glory, honor and praise have become the focus of how I live rather than my own desires and goals. My change was not as dramatic as the ex-prostitute or drug addict or the person studying to be a Hindu priest, but it is a real change, and it changes everything.

The good news is that God continues to change us. It is a lifelong process of becoming more like Jesus, and it is only by His grace and mercy. I am thankful that Jesus came into my life and has changed me. I am also thankful that He's not done with me yet!



Sing With Understanding: The Love Of Christ Is Rich And Free

By Isaac Gould

There has been a resurgence of interest in old hymns in recent years, and we have the delight of singing many such gems at ECC. Some fine work has been done



giving new life to melodies that sound dated to modern ears, but the lyrics can still seem forbidding. It can be helpful to revisit these songs after worship services and ponder the words more deeply. Furthermore, 1 Corinthians 14:15 urges singing praise with our spirit and with our mind.

To that end, I would like to present a brief “exegesis” (or textual study) of the hymn, “The Love of Christ Is Rich and Free,” written by William Gadsby in the 19th century and set to the tune we sing by Sandra McCracken (2001). The hymn itself is a sermon on divine love.

*The love of Christ is rich and free;
Fixed on his own eternally;
Nor earth, nor hell, can it remove;
Long as he lives, his own he'll love.*

In Christ we experience the love of God as *rich*, in that it is dispensed lavishly on unworthy recipients (Eph 2:4), and *free*, in that it is uncoerced. On the second point, *free* probably describes God's freedom in loving, not man's freely obtaining it (which is also true), in that the next line speaks of election—*his own*. The hymn has in view the *electing* love of God, by which Paul concludes, “[H]e has mercy on whomever he wills” (Rom 9:18 ESV). In other words, we must not congratulate ourselves for being recipients of God's love as though we were especially lovable. The opposite was (and continues to be) true (Rom 5:6–8)! We take comfort, then, in knowing

that this rich, free, electing love is eternal. Inasmuch as God chose to love us for no reason outside of Himself (Isa 43:21), so also will nothing outside of Himself sever our connection to His loving heart (John 10:27–30). Jesus called His disciples “His own” (John 13:1), and so too are we who believe their message about Him (John 10:14).

*His loving heart engaged to be
Their everlasting Surety;
'Twas love that took their cause in hand,
And love maintains it to the end.*

*Love cannot from its post withdraw;
Nor death, nor hell, nor sin, nor law,
Can turn the Surety's heart away;
He'll love his own to endless day.*

Gadsby expands on the theme of the unshakable nature of God's love for His people, using the now-archaic term *Surety*, meaning guarantee or guarantor, based on Heb 7:22 (KJV). God's own *loving heart* binds Him to us and ensures that He will pursue what is best for the objects of His love. This recalls the final line of the first verse, in which God's love is tied to His own unending life. God's love appears as a sentry at its post, unmoved by the mightiest foes: *death, hell, sin, and law*, echoing Paul's words in 1 Cor 15:56.

*Love has redeemed his sheep with blood;
And love will bring them safe to God;
Love calls them all from death to life;
And love will finish all their strife.*

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New Every Morning

By Pam Dollard



There is some truth in the idea that each of us awakes each morning a new and different person. The very fact that we lived and experienced the previous day implies that we were impacted and therefore changed, however small and

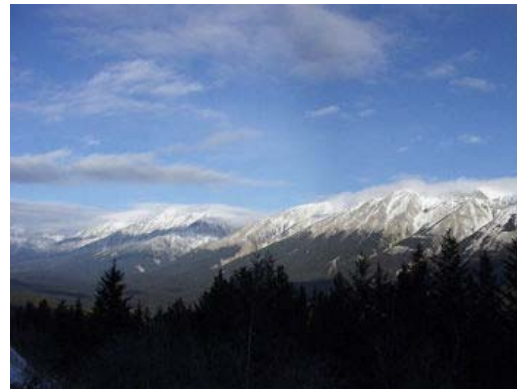
unnoticed that change might be.

Over the course of months and years, the changes we undergo become more noticeable. The “highlight” gives way to undisputed gray. The preference for green vegetables over red ones eventually transforms itself into a settled refusal to eat beets. For various reasons, we are sometimes surprised to find even long-standing inclinations shifting unexpectedly. Who knew that one day I would begin to plant orange flowers, a color that used to be banned from my garden? Or that I would become a coffee drinker at 50?

Dramatic events make changes more expected. The emotional impact of either tragedy or great blessing can leave us altered drastically and instantly, and we can easily point to that event as the beginning of something different in our lives. The death or birth of a child. A relocation. A word of forgiveness from or to someone long estranged. War.

In my faith walk, I have undergone changes of both types. A few seminal experiences stand out as moments when my heart and mind were suddenly and permanently reoriented. Standing on a mountain top in British Columbia, looking out on a seemingly endless range of snow-covered peaks, I heard God speak so clearly of His love for me that at that moment His love became a prized possession rather than an intellectual con-

struct. I had not doubted that He loved *us*. I just hadn't realized that it was so personal. He has been building on that foundation for almost 40 years.



An experience in prayer of being overwhelmed by the glory of God left me with a deepened understanding of what it means to fear Him. My walk of faith became colored by the tension between longing and fear - the knowledge that in His presence is both my safest and my most dangerous place, the place of both dying and becoming. Refining indeed.

Gradual changes, on the other hand, seem more paradoxical to me. How is that I can wake up so many mornings feeling just the same, even stagnant, only to realize one day that I don't see my life, or God, or faith, as I once did?

There may be some identifiable inputs along the way – a sermon or teaching here or there that connected previously unconnected dots in my understanding. But gradual change seems to sneak up on me unawares through the slow but steady cumulative effect of living each day in a world where reality continually bumps up against my expectations. After this happens long enough, I may realize that an idea that has been rumbling around in my head for decades has now solidified into conviction. Or I may one day acknowledge the unavoidable fact that things have not turned out exactly as I thought they would. (Not necessarily worse, but definitely different.)

Continued on p. 10

Study Committee On Women Elders Update

The Study Committee on Women Elders has now been meeting for about a year. Although the committee continues in its study, a general overview of the issue, Scripture passages that we have studied, and other resources we have used will be presented during the adult education hour on January 29.

It is important to stress that our work is not finished – therefore we will not be presenting any conclusions from our study so far. Rather, our purpose is to bring the congregation up to speed on the ground we've covered and what still remains to be discussed before we issue a final report to Session. We are happy to answer questions related to our methods and process, if time allows, but will not presently engage in a group discussion around theology or interpretation.

At the conclusion of the morning, we hope that many in the congregation will have a more complete picture of the range of perspectives and complexity that attends this issue. For your consideration, we are including here a list of Scriptures that we have used to date. We invite you to study with us!

OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURE THEMES: Creation, Fall and Punishment of Man & Woman

Genesis 1-3
Genesis 4:7

Priests, Priesthood

Leviticus 19:2
Numbers 6:22-27; 27:18-21; 31:6; 31:21-31
Deuteronomy 10:8; 17:8-13; 19:16-17;
21:1-5; 33:8
Joshua 6
Judges 20:26-28
1 Samuel 4
2 Samuel 11:11

OT Laws Related to Women

Numbers 27:1-8; 36:1-13
Numbers 30

Leadership under Moses

Exodus 18:18-27

Miriam, Deborah, Esther as Leaders

Exodus 2:4, 15:20
Numbers 12:1,10,15; 20:1
Deuteronomy 24:9
Micah 6:3-4
Judges 4-5
Esther 1-10

OT Prophetesses

II Kings 22:14
Nehemiah 6:14
Isaiah 8:3 – Isaiah's wife

Commended Women in the OT

Ruth 1-4
Proverbs 31

NEW TESTAMENT SCRIPTURE THEMES: Women Witness and Proclaim the Resurrection

Matthew 28:1-10; Mark 16:1ff; John 20:1-23

Fatherhood of God/Sonship of Believers

Matthew 6:9
John 1:12-13; Romans 8:14-17; Galatians 4:1-7
Romans 8:29
Galatians 3:23-29

The Family of God

Ephesians 5:1
Philippians 3:17
Ephesians 5:17-33; 6:4
1 Peter 1:14-17
Colossians 3:18-21
1 Timothy 5:1ff

Slaves, Slavery

Colossians 1:22-24; Ephesians 6:5-7;
1 Timothy 6:1-2; 1 Peter 2:18-20

Continued on next page

Spiritual Gifts & the Body of Christ

1 Corinthians 12:4-31
1 Corinthians 14:1-25
Ephesians 4:11-13
Luke 2:36
Acts 21:8

Orderly Worship / Conduct in Worship

1 Corinthians 14:26-40
1 Corinthians 11:1-16
1 Timothy 2:8-15

Christian Living

Titus 2:1-10

Shepherding the Flock

John 10:11-18
Hebrews 13:17
1 Peter 5:1-5

Qualifications of Elders

1 Timothy 3:1-7
Titus 1:5-9

Paul's Female Coworkers in the Gospel

Romans 16
Philippians 4:2-3
Acts 18:26

Receiving the Holy Spirit/Set apart for Service

Acts 2:14-18; 6:1-6; 8:14-17; 9:17; 13:1-3; 14:23-29; 19:6
1 Timothy 4:11-16

Future Themes to be Discussed (List not necessarily exhaustive):

Priesthood of All Believers

1 Peter 2:5-9
Hebrews 7:11-19
Revelation 1:6; 5:10; 20:6

Relationships within the Trinity

TBD

Sing With Understanding: The Love Of Christ Is Rich And Free

Continued from p. 4

Full with Scriptural language (e.g., John 10:15; Acts 20:28; 1 John 3:14), the hymn observes God's loving motive in our redemption. We are again assured of the power of God's love to see us through all our *strife* (struggles).

*He loves through every changing scene,
Nor aught can him from Zion wean;
Not all the wanderings of her heart
Can make his love from her depart.*

Here Gadsby draws attention to the doctrine of perseverance. Not only is God's love enduring despite changing circumstances, but our response to that love is equally assured! Nothing is able to *wean* us from Him. The weaned child finds sustenance apart from its mother, but Christians are never weaned from our source of life. Even if we wander in unbelief and sin, God's love never ceases to supply us with grace and draw us back (2 Tim 2:13).

*At death, beyond the grave, he'll love;
In endless bliss, his own shall prove
The blazing glory of that love
Which never could from them remove.*

The hymn concludes, as many do, with a look toward eternity. Death, rather than being a time of fear, separation, and harm, is described as a time when God loves. This life alone is insufficient to display the *blazing glory of that love*, so God yearns to *prove* His love to us *in endless bliss*. God literally cannot stop loving us. Amazing!

I Am Not Who I Once Was

By Dave Matre



After my father passed away a few years ago, I came across a cassette tape while going through his things. It was songs I had recorded a quarter of a century earlier to give to family members, all of whom no longer lived in the area. After

listening to the tape, I was horrified. I e-mailed both sisters and asked them to destroy their tapes. They have denied my request.

I'm not who I once was. Over the years, my playing and singing style have changed, hopefully matured. In the intervening years, I've recorded two cds, and my current fear is that a quarter of a century from now I will be horrified at their existence.

In his letter to the Romans, Paul refers to the life lived prior to coming to Christ as *...the things you are now ashamed of.* (6:21) While we affirm that Christ breaks the bonds of sin, it is often the case (at least with me) that shaking off the fetters can take some time. Prior to the convicting work of the Holy Spirit, we are ignorant of just how ensnared we are by sin. We don't know the strength of a current when we float downstream. It's when we attempt to row against it that we begin to realize the weight of the task.

In a similar way, part of the early work of sanctification is a growing awareness of the work to be done. With me, some habits were easily broken. Others I'm still working on. I'm not who I once was, but I'm not yet who I should be.

This side of heaven, we are all on the long and winding road of sanctification (yes, a shameless Beatles reference). We share the same Guide and goal, though at different stages. The years have brought a wisdom that helps me guard against the tendency to universalize my experience. Just because I was able to shed certain habits fairly quickly doesn't mean that someone

who struggles with those habits isn't trying or doesn't care. If a certain sin holds no temptation for me, it doesn't mean I'm more spiritual than those who wrestle with that temptation. If I think that it does, I'm yielding to the temptation of spiritual arrogance. We are all unique, something our adversary knows well.

That is one danger, but there's a ditch on the other side of the road as well. When we see others handle a certain temptation



better than we do, we can give into a kind of despair that we aren't making any progress or we'd be like the "good" people. In sharing this frustration with a former pastor, he advised that sensing the struggle is good, because to not struggle is to give in.

One of the blessings of the covenant community is the encouragement, mentoring, and drawing from the well of collective wisdom. This can be undercut, however, if we compare rather than connect with our brothers and sisters in the faith.

I'm not who I once was. The Spirit is at work in me. Praise God. I'm not yet who I should be. Is the Spirit asking you to help me?



ECC Biblical Discipleship/ Counseling

By Dan and Jodee McCabe

What is Biblical Discipleship/Counseling?

Biblical discipleship/counseling is based on principles found in God's Word, the Bible. Bible-



based discipleship/counseling differs a great deal from other popular or

secular counseling (heavenly wisdom vs. human wisdom, James 3:13-18). The primary goal is to search God's Word for the principles and methods that God has provided. The premise of Biblical discipleship/counseling is that God's instruction is always needed immediately, consistently, and without contradiction in the discipleship/counseling process. The Bible provides all that we need for life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3). God's Word is needed to guide people through their problems in a God-honoring manner and on to a healthy walk with the Lord Jesus Christ (John 17:17; Rom. 8:28-29; Rom. 12: 1-2; Eph. 4:17-5:20). Biblical discipleship/counseling acknowledges that people may be confused, ill-adjusted, defeated, and hopeless relative to the issues of life. This may result in or be caused by a crisis situation, the sin of others, lack of Biblical understanding, their own personal sin, and/or sometimes an organic (medically proven) illness.

What is the Goal of Biblical Discipleship/Counseling?

Biblical discipleship/counseling has as its primary goal to help a person or family become "God's kind of person." The goal is not necessarily to make the person feel better or simply to remove the problem. This will hopefully take place, but the goal is bigger than that. 2 Cor. 5:9 says *So we can make it our goal to please Him (God), whether we are at home in the body or away from it.* The goal in Biblical discipleship/counseling is to come alongside a person who is struggling and

seek to apply the principles in God's Word in such a way that the person (and his/her church family) responds in an obedient and godly manner to the problems they are facing.

What are the tools used in Biblical Discipleship/Counseling?

Biblical discipleship/counseling uses: thorough data gathering (Prov. 18:13), health considerations (James 5:13-16), Biblical instruction with application (2 Tim. 2:15; 1 Pet. 2:1-3), accountability with help from other believers in the church (Phil. 4:2-3; Heb.10:24-25), prayer, and practical homework (Mt. 19:21; Mk. 5:19).

What makes Biblical Discipleship/Counseling effective?

Biblical discipleship/counseling relies upon the power of the principles that God provided in His Word (Heb. 4:12; Psalm 19), the work of the Holy Spirit (Phil. 2:13), the faithfulness of God to answer prayer (Mt. 7:7-12; James 5:17-18), the mutual encouragement and exhortation of the Body of Christ (Heb. 10:24-25), and the disciplined effort of the counselee (1 Tim. 4:7).

We hope that gives you a better idea of what this is about and gets you excited to learn more about it and how it can help our body grow in many new ways.





New Members

Mary Anne Hartraker
Don Hartraker

Sherrill Puckett
Norma Puckett

Sherman Hartley
Carol Hartley

New Every Morning

Continued from p. 5

When I was younger, I supposed that I would grow up into mature faith and then be more or less static for the rest of my adult life. Imagine my surprise to find that spiritual and emotional change have not only continued into middle age, but in some ways seem more significant now than when I was in my 20's and 30's. The trend toward more thoughtfulness and less simplistic thinking has contributed to continued growth. I am more able and willing to see complexity in things than I once was.

Perhaps because this continual shifting can leave me feeling unbalanced and uncertain, I find myself clinging to fewer "truths" than I used to, but clinging tighter to those few. I may not hold with confidence to a rigid system of theology, but I

would bet *everything* on God's sovereignty, goodness and love, with the incarnation of Christ as their most dramatic proof. Without these characteristics, I would find no solid footing for relationship with Him.

Tomorrow I will once again awake as a new person, but that newness is rooted in the ancient truth of the person and character of God, as He has revealed Himself, and as I have experienced Him. I am not who I once was – none of us are – but ideally we are all growing still into the people He always meant us to be, albeit with painful slowness at times. As with the natural world around us, our souls either grow or die; there is no standing still.

The Kid's Community

CHURCH
COMMUNITY
COVENANT
CHRISTIAN
COMMITTEE
COUNSELING
CASSETTE
COLOR
CONNECTING
Hidden:
(How do you get
to church?)

C	U	J	Y	B	R	O	L	O	C	J	N
A	O	Y	P	T	Q	W	T	O	G	L	A
S	G	V	I	M	I	E	N	H	C	Y	I
S	U	F	E	M	S	N	A	H	E	X	T
E	R	L	G	N	E	V	U	W	F	C	S
T	X	W	X	C	A	R	C	M	A	M	I
T	L	L	T	J	C	N	R	I	M	T	R
E	T	I	X	H	C	X	T	V	A	O	H
G	N	I	L	E	S	N	U	O	C	W	C
G	C	O	M	M	I	T	T	E	E	O	P

2012 ECC Men's Retreat

Living for Christ in an Impure World

At the 2012 ECC Men's Retreat, we will be addressing a critically important issue for God's people; namely, sexual purity. This is an issue that impacts all of us, with somewhere between 40% and 60% of Christian men struggling with Internet pornography and now about 20% of Christian women. Our youth in America are the most sexually active in the industrialized world. The American teenager leads the world in sexual activity, unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, and the problem is not only in the world but in the pew.

We will address this issue through a series of teachings, some small group sharing time, and personal times of reflection. Our first session will focus on God's design for sexuality, its beauty and its goodness. The second session will focus on the sexualization of the culture and how as Christian men we are to address this issue. Our last session will focus on the role of prayer and pure living. If you are breathing and have a pulse, this men's retreat is for you.

February 17 (6:00 PM) to 18 (3:00PM)
Higher Ground Conference and Retreat Center
\$75
Registration begins January 22 after service in the foyer
For more information, contact John Wood



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WE HOPE YOU ENJOY READING THE COMMUNITY BUILDER, THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE EVANGELICAL COMMUNITY CHURCH. IF YOU DO NOT WISH TO RECEIVE MAILINGS FROM ECC, PLEASE NOTIFY THE CHURCH OFFICE AT 542-9025. THANK YOU!



Our Missionary of the Month



**ALEXANDER
Anne**

**Mission Field:
Discipleship, Teaching**

WE PRAY FOR:

- The success of StorySeed to train Bible Story tellers, that God will raise up an army of volunteers, prayer warriors & supporters to see that the stories of God's grace get into every village and home in Taiwan.
- Grace, wisdom and diligence for Anne to regularly write StorySeed prayer letters, design trainings, strategize for future workshops, and encourage those trained.
- People in Singapore, Australia, Hong Kong and China who have expressed interest in StorySeed's Chinese materials.
- Volunteers or salaried help to do translation, subtitling of DVD's, and production of promotional AV material to take to churches and seminaries.
- Anne's health and PhD. studies.

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