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## Ministry Update, September 7, 2023

### “Don’t Waste Your Life”

The title of this edition of our newsletter is appropriate given the content found herein. The ministry of Mourning Dove began with an evangelistic, discipleship counseling, and addiction placement focus. This part of our journey caused us to begin seeking to understand the spiritual struggles of the next generation, and we began praying and speaking about the need for education reform. Along these lines, we highly recommend the book, ***Battle for the American Mind: Uprooting a Century of Miseducation*** by Pete Hegseth with David Goodwin from Association of Classical Christian Schools. We continue to pray and speak about all of these issues, and for God’s rightful place in our lives and His will for us in each of these areas. With that said, Heath and I (Barbara) are serving at Bethel Colony of Mercy in Lenoir, North Carolina, where we are privileged to pastor, teach, and counsel with *hundreds* of individual men and women. We are also privileged to counsel couples to continue to walk in the way of the Lord. For those of you who know my testimony, that is a miracle within itself, that God would restore me to the point of marriage counseling with others!

Our discipleship goes beyond Bethel’s 65-day program. With those who have a sincere desire to grow in Christian maturity, we open our home for regular fellowship and teaching. I think of Paul when he was on house arrest, and how those who came to him wanted to know more about *this Jesus* and about following Him. While we are not on “house arrest,” we are, like Paul, bondservants of Jesus Christ. We have seen the love of God’s word grow with those we’ve counseled, and the way we’ve seen this happen is that we have purchased a Life Application Study Bible for those who did not own one. They have started studying their Bibles more because they say they can better understand it by having a “built-in teacher.” Just so you know, they do understand that the Holy Spirit guides and teaches!

In John Piper’s book, *Don’t Waste Your Life*, he says, “We waste our lives when we do not pray and think and dream and plan and work toward magnifying God in all spheres of our life.” This is what Heath and I are striving for, and trying to teach others to do as well. We are diligent in our study of God’s word, and we do not believe we will reach the absolute height of this ordained ministry unless we continue to grow along with our students in discipleship. To

*...becoming who you were created to be...*

quote what I consider to be the thesis of Piper's book, in a section titled, "The Only Road that Leads to Lasting Joy,"

*This is the promise that empowers us to take risks for the sake of Christ. It is not the impulse of heroism, or the lust for adventure, or the courage of self-reliance, or the need to earn God's favor. It is simple trust in Christ – that in Him God will do everything necessary so that we can enjoy making much of Him forever. Every good poised to bless us, and evil arrayed against us, will in the end help us boast only in the cross, magnify Christ, and glorify our Creator. Faith in these promises frees us to risk and to find in our own experience that it is better to lose our life than to waste it.*

*Therefore, it is right to risk for the cause of Christ. It is right to engage the enemy and say, "May the Lord do what seems good to Him." It is right to serve the people of God, and say, "If I perish, I perish." It is right to stand before the fiery furnace of affliction and refuse to bow down to the gods of this world. This is the road that leads to fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore. And the end of every other road – [supposedly] secure and risk-free [by our own efforts] – we will put our hands in our face and say, "I've wasted it."*

Let us not waste our lives. May we point people to Jesus and help them grow in their knowledge of God through one-on-one discipleship, helping them walk out what God has called them to do. If you feel the urge, please consider either donating the money for more **Life Application Study Bibles** or purchasing them yourselves and sending them our way. Again, our heart's cry is to point people to Jesus and the Word of God, that they may continue to, "be not conformed to this world: but be transformed by the renewing of [their] mind, that [they] may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:2 KJV).

Thank you, and please continue to pray for all whose paths cross ours, that we may – one and all - continue to bow at the foot of the cross.

May we continue to love through Christ Jesus,

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PS / Be on the lookout for the book, **52 Apologetics: 52 Faith-Building Devotions Defending Christianity (I am set to defend the gospel, given an answer for my hope, and fight for the faith: Philippians 1:17; 1 Peter 3:15; Jude 3), by Michael D Finney** - to be on the shelves soon. It would be a wonderful Christmas and birthday gift for all!

*...becoming who you were created to be...*