

#11

the VILLAGE BIBLE COURIER



@ www.vbccv.org



Dec 2018



Cherokee Village, AR

Village Bible Church

What Do You Mean, Prayer "Fellowship"?

-By Pastor Phil

December 2018



Every first Wednesday of the month people from VBC gather in someone's home to pray. We call this prayer "fellowship," not because it is mostly "fellowship" where everyone sits around and talks about prayer requests then stops for a few minutes to pray. Rather, we fellowship in prayer, intentionally giving little or no time to share prayer requests before praying. Prayer requests are "shared" as we pray together. Too often, prayer meetings are derailed by well-meaning people who share



prayer requests leaving little time to actually pray. Why not just pray the requests? Some folks are intimidated by the thought of praying in a group (no matter how small it is), but as we put ourselves

in these meetings, the Lord can gradually change our hearts and actually even move in hearts and direct in prayer. This kind of fellowship as we gather with other believers praying in Jesus' name guided by the Holy Spirit is the height of church fellowship as He is actually in our midst (Mat. 18:19-20)!

"Living in Covenant" to "Living in Expectation"

On December 31, 2017, we embarked together on a journey through the book of Exodus in a series entitled "Living in Covenant." We observed God working in surprising ways through unexpected twists and turns even in this fairly familiar account. His faithfulness was evident as He offered a covenant under which the Hebrew slaves could live in obedience to Him as He led them and prepared them to be a nation with Him as their relational God and benevolent King. By September 30, we had completed the series. All thirty-six sermons are online along with sermon notes. As of December 10, 2018, these materials had been downloaded 3,309 times from VBCcv.org! We pray they will continue to impact people well into the future.



We transitioned from that into a short series following the ministry of Paul from his conversion through his ministry in Thessalonica. This tenacious missionary set the bar high for following the Lord's leading boldly into difficult circumstances. He unapologetically proclaimed to religious Jews and Pagans alike the way to the One True God through faith in Jesus' death alone. He was chased out of more than one town, including Thessalonica, the city where he worked for a few weeks winning converts, and to whom he later wrote two letters of encouragement and exhortation to the believers there. From these letters, we are learning how to live as Christians in expectation of the return of Jesus. Following a brief pause for Christmas, we will pick this series back up and dig into the final chapters of 1 Thessalonians followed by 2 Thessalonians. Although, the sermons' audio will be online there is a significant visual aspect that is not available except in person. Please plan to attend so you can see what you are missing.

VBC T-shirts

Thanks to previous fundraising efforts spear-headed by the VBC Women's Ministry, they were able to purchase T-shirts for all the people of the church. These are primarily intended for us to wear when we engage in ministries together as a church. Our

first such opportunity was December 8 when we sang Christmas carols in area nursing homes and Fountain Place. As we continue to serve in the community in various ways, the aim of these shirts is to identify the service as something that followers of Jesus are doing together as His church.



More Than Just Church "Activities"

VBC's Activities/Calendar Planning Committee can easily be seen as having little more purpose than to ensure the social life of the church by keeping the calendar full of activities in which people can choose to participate. Surely we look for people to serve on this committee who have a good sense of fun activities that appeal to people's varied interests. This committee has always done a great job of meeting that objective. As a church, though, our real objective is something much bigger than having fun or creating lasting memories – as valuable as that is.

Operating in the background of everything on the church calendar are two major objectives that drive us as followers of Jesus. One objective is to build unity through spending time together. There may not be anything inherently "spiritual" about going shopping, but the time doing an activity together strengthens the friendships that build trust so we are more inclined to share the deeper things.



Having a game night at church may miss an opportunity to teach the Bible to an audience, but it provides a setting where non-believers can spend time with believers in the church building. Our prayer through all of these activities is that we will (1) be intentional about sharing the Gospel with the unbeliever and (2) edify believers by our time together. When these remain ulterior motives behind everything on the church calendar (and off the calendar, too), they are more than just "activities," they are Gospel opportunities that we should not neglect!

Children's Education at VBC

Faithful volunteers continue to serve every week at VBC to make children's educational ministries possible. Our "flagship" outreach ministry happens on Friday nights. Parents are usually happy to drop their children off for an hour and half or two of free time on a Friday evening. Some parents opt to hang around with their kids, which is also fine. Though we have in the past offered some level of transportation, which automatically increases attendance, we no longer have the vehicle or the manpower to accomplish this. It leaves us with a much smaller group, but also gives us better opportunity



Area homeschool moms watch babies during their monthly meeting at VBC.



Isabelle and Journey eat before youth group/kids' club Bible study time.

to interact with parents who bring and pickup kids. Visiting with parents at the door to their home while kids are in a vehicle, is much more difficult than doing so at church while there are plenty of other adults to supervise. As these children are getting older and new younger ones become

involved, we have been able to maintain two segments of teaching ministry, with the older ones (ages 12 and up) going through an overview of each book of the Bible, while the younger ones learn from the engaging teaching of Phil Vischer (Veggie Tales creator). This ministry provides an excellent way to reach families in the community as well as offer activities to homeschool families. This also results in friendships being made between homeschooled children and public schooled children and their families.



Fall Family Fun Day provided a great opportunity for regular VBC folks to get to know parents of kid's club children.

Are Church Business Meetings Biblical?

People generally don't look forward to church business meetings... no matter how creatively we try to name or describe them. VBC is a congregationally governed church, meaning that the congregation has the ultimate decision making authority (under the headship of Jesus). There is a general board along with other boards and committees that are set up to handle the ongoing decisions of the church, but the congregation has the final say. That means the congregation must meet occasionally to approve certain things and to be kept abreast of what is happening.



VBC does this once a quarter, with a final annual meeting in October in which an annual budget is approved, people are elected into certain positions, and other critical direction is decided. On one hand, we look back on the things accomplished since the last meeting, which is always exciting to consider the activity of the Lord in and through His church since the last meeting. On the other hand, we look forward to things we believe the Lord is leading us to do in the future. This combination is what makes church "business" meetings much more than just "business" in the sense we may usually associate with that word. We must regularly and prayerfully evaluate the life of the church and the direction the Lord is taking us.

Operation Christmas Child

In addition to VBC's contribution of 79 shoe boxes of gifts to the efforts of Operation Christmas Child (OCC), VBC was also, once again, the collection point for the Sharp County area. Churches from the area brought



to VBC the boxes they had collected, where VBC volunteers put those shoeboxes into cartons in preparation for shipping.

On the final drop-off day, VBC volunteers loaded the 56 cartons containing 812 shoeboxes full of gifts and took them to Mountain Home. From there the boxes were shipped to OCC's distribution center in Dallas where they were sent around the world to locations identified by Samaritan's Purse Ministries as strategic to the Gospel work where these gifts would have the most impact. Churches in these areas distribute the gifts to the children most in need of the Gospel. Statistically, the return on this is two children coming to Christ for every three boxes given. The churches in these areas continue to teach the children from the Bible using materials OCC includes with the gifts. The results are life-changing and testimonies of lives of children saved who are now adults living for Christ abound. VBC is thrilled to have the role in this that we do.



"Holiday" Lights on a "Christmas" Tree?

It seems impossible that the word "Christmas" has become so offensive to people in America. For many generations, the event has been so commercialized that we have come to have a day called "black Friday" when many retail businesses go from operating at a loss for the year to operating at a profit ("in the black") because of the massive sales traffic they see between Thanksgiving and Christmas. At the same time, it has become natural for people to refer to things that long ago would have been preceded with the word "Christmas" now as "holiday."

Our own Cherokee Village had a lighting of the Christmas tree in the Town Center, but the lights were "holiday" lights. It was refreshing, nonetheless, to hear a prayer offered to God and in Jesus' name. As disheartening as it is to watch American culture become so hateful toward its former Christian influence, it should not surprise us. The world is currently subject to the rule of the "prince of the air," Satan. That puts Christians at odds with the world because we have chosen to side with Satan's enemy, Jesus.



We must remember, though the world may be against us, the individual unbelievers who comprise the world cannot be viewed as enemies. They are people, just like us, who have been blinded by Satan's lies. With blind eyes and hard hearts, sharing the truth with them is challenging, and it may take many attempts over long periods of time. We must not give up, praying and believing that the Holy Spirit will eventually draw them and they will respond to our efforts.

Our efforts must be done in obvious love, and even at that, they may be rejected. The more we are rejected the more we must demonstrate love; this is how the unbeliever will be convinced that there is something real about Jesus. Even if "Christmas" disappears from the world's vocabulary – and "holiday" won't be far behind that as it is a form of "holy" day – it won't change our drive to tell them about the Christ of Christmas. It may change the opportunities afforded by the cultures' interest in Christmas related outreaches like our upcoming *Christmas Eve Service* (7 p.m.).



Men's Breakfast - Sat. Jan. 5th @ 8:00 am

VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH
 22 Caxambas Drive
 Cherokee Village, AR 72525
 Church: 870-257-2769
www.VBCev.org
 For information on ministries and activities of VBC call:

Pastor Phil-620-664-8008
 Melissa P-620-664-8087
 Sharon M-870-847-1832
 Debbie K- 870-844-5164
 Howard L-407-797-8557