

October-November Newsletter

Greetings

Hi! I hope this letter finds you and you doing well. As we come into the holiday season, I've already been constantly reminded of the great blessings God has given me and continues to each day. He has truly shown His love, generosity, and providence in so many ways, and hopefully, I can discuss a few of those in this newsletter.

Campaign

Immediately following the end of the first quarter, as mentioned in the previous newsletter, every current Bear Valley student participated in one of six campaigns across America. On October 5-9, I went along with three other students (Scott, Jacob, and Matthew) on the campaign to Twin Falls, Idaho. I do want to emphasize this trip because it was the first time many of us got to put our training to use and it was a major success! We students and the congregation we visited were able to greatly benefit from this trip, and the same is true of all the campaigns.

Originally, we were given the impression our campaign would focus on community outreach and evangelism. Bear Valley does not organize these trips, but rather the individual congregation, and the Magic Valley Church of Christ communicated that we would be hanging tracts on doors in the community. In addition, three speaking opportunities were given. Scott taught the Sunday morning Bible Class, I delivered the sermon, and Matthew gave a short devo after the potluck lunch.

Here's where things took a turn. Upon getting to know the brothers and sisters in Twin Falls, we came to realize, although extremely warm and friendly, this was a struggling church. Their numbers were down, and it was told there were some conflicts among the brethren. Although not specifically tied to unity, the Bible class and sermon on Sunday morning seemed to positively address some of these issues. The devo after the potluck (led by Matthew), however, tactfully hit the topic of unity within the church which sparked an amazing conversation in which the church began to discuss several areas of weakness and how to fix them. This would set an underlying theme of focusing on inward growth for the rest of the campaign.

Monday morning, we set out to distribute tracts as planned, then after some touristy meandering, we had a congregation-wide supper and devo at one of the member's homes. I should mention, Jacob did not plan to speak, nor was he scheduled to, but after seeing a need he took the initiative to write an entire lesson also on unity in the little time he had Sunday night and Monday afternoon. Once again, this was very well received, and another productive conversation took place on repairing some internal issues and brainstorming evangelistic ideas.

Tuesday was our last day, and this time we started by seeing some of the sights. In the early evening, the church once again met, this time at the preacher's house, for a grill out. After many laughs, games, and songs, Scott ended our time at Twin Falls with a devo around the campfire. This time, he took the theme of unity and tied it into our original goal of evangelism. Not only did he deliver an outstanding and challenging devotional, but he began by asking each individual member what some of their strengths were that could be used for evangelism, to which the church responded beautifully. All-in-all, it was a great end to a great campaign, and I truly believe the Magic Valley Church of Christ made many steps in direction of growth.

Side note: I could talk about this campaign for hours, but one of the greatest gifts was getting to spend so much one-on-one time with my fellow Bear Valley students. The camaraderie we built on that trip and memories we now share brought us closer to each other and I believe strengthened each of us. Just one more example of the amazing family I have at Bear Valley.

Short Course

With the campaign officially ending the first quarter, we had a week-long break, then it was back to school! Each new quarter begins with a short course, and this class was special to me. Growing up on the mission field, missions has always had a special place in my heart, so you can imagine my joy when we started the week-long *Introduction to Missions*. Donnie Bates did an outstanding job of presenting the material in a way that was practical, yet exciting. I can't say for sure what type of ministry I will be involved in immediately following school, but I'd be lying if I said this class didn't spark the flame again for missions.

Beginning of Second Quarter

Beginning the new quarter of full courses, we had an exciting lineup. Our Monday classes include *Greek I* which teaches us the basics of biblical Greek, follow by the *Gospel Mark*, then our first preaching class: *Homiletics I*. Our Tuesday classes include *Biblical Exegesis*, which explains how to break down the text to understand it as intended by the original author, then finally the book of *Acts*. Each one of these classes, I've found to be very practical and a valuable tool for ministry, and despite the heavier workload compared to quarter one, I continue to enjoy the education and experience I've gotten along the way. (Prayers are appreciated on behalf of all BV students to stay strong through midterm and finals weeks.)

Bear Valley Family Retreat

At the beginning of November, the Bear Valley congregation scheduled a (Christian) family retreat which was attended by close to 200 members. This provided a way to create bonds

with my BV family in a way I hadn't yet been able to and strengthened relationships I already had. There was singing, devotionals, games, sports, and team building exercises to name a few of the activities we got into. It was a highly encouraging weekend which came to a close by worshipping together Sunday morning. Being an annual event, I cannot wait to attend the 2025 Bear Valley retreat!

Preaching and Research Week

November 23 officially started research week: a week set aside to focus on getting caught up on papers and other homework that may have accumulated. I was privileged with taking this opportunity to preach out for the first time since starting school. With many congregations reaching out to Bear Valley to help with preaching, one of the upper-class students keeps a signup sheet to preach out to these churches. I was blessed by getting to teach Bible class and preach on the 24th for the Sidney Church of Christ in Sidney, Nebraska. It is a great joy to know you have so much family across the world, and even greater when provided with an opportunity to worship with the saints wherever you go! They are a lovely church and I look forward to worshipping again with them soon.

Following services that Sunday, Evan (a fellow classmate who had been my professional chauffeur for the weekend) then drove me to my brother's house where I would spend the week, but not before worshipping together at the Brighton Church. Ending research week, the Brighton Church of Christ, where my brother is the full-time minister, allowed me to preach for them the evening of the 1st before I returned home to resume classes. I've mentioned Brighton in my letters before, but truly, they are one of the friendliest and most encouraging assemblies I have ever been blessed to worship with. I thank them for the opportunities to serve and for the love they have shown me over the past several months.

Prayer Request

It is not easy to bring up, but a fellow classmate, Scott Busbee, suffered a massive heart attack recently. Scott is an older gentleman, yet he brought a refreshing energy to the classroom everyday through his wit and humor, and his earnest desire to pursue the truth. Scott and his wife, Lavonda, also became somewhat of grandparents to me over the past several months, as did they to all the students at BV. As of now, the heart attack caused several health issues including brain damage beyond recovery, so the family had decided to remove his life-support on Wednesday. This has been an extremely difficult time at Bear Valley, especially for Lavonda and the family. I earnestly ask for your prayers that God's will be done in this situation and that the family be comforted in this time. Thank you.

Closing

All things considered; I am doing well. God continues to bless me every day and in so many ways. I am reminded constantly of how fortunate I am to be at this school, and it's only

possible because of the generosity of congregations and individuals as yourselves. From the bottom of my heart thank you!