

# Loving Jesus as more than just a Savior

December 11, 2007 | Whoever is wise, let him attend to these things; let them consider the steadfast love of the LORD. Ps. 107:43

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Matt, Karen, me, and Chris near Chadron State's "C Hill."

## | Prayer Requests |

- For the two people, and so many others every day worldwide, who received Christ as their Treasure on November 14 at Chadron State College.
- For me as I will be giving a seminar at Denver Christmas Conference (DCC) about how to study the Bible. Pray for wisdom, clarity, passion, and Christ-centeredness.
- For DCC! This is a huge conference with speakers and worship bands for students all over our region. It's a tremendous time of growth, community, and faith-building for students. It costs \$225 for a student to attend. If you would like to sponsor a student in part or in full so they can attend DCC, please let me know ASAP. They will most definitely be blessed!

## | Up Next... |

- Christmas Break, Dec. 22-Jan. 13.
- DCC, Jan. 2-7. (This is when I will be given my *Summer Project* destination.)
- Launching new campus-wide outreaches as soon as the second semester starts.

## | Christmas Reflection |

When I think back on the past few months, it really has been a blur. The semester is almost over with! I hope that at the end of another year, you can reflect on what God has done in your life, how he has satisfied you, and met your needs.

As I meditated on the verse at the top of this letter earlier this month, I thought about how wonderful the love of God is. It is steadfast! That means it is unwavering! It is deeply sufficient for us. O, how often I don't realize it though. This month, I think, God's love is magnified when we look back to that first Christmas. That day, God sent his Son to us, that he might seek and save what was lost, namely sinners like me and you. God's steadfast love is described in Matthew 1:21,

*She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.*

Jesus was born to save us from sin. How great is the God we serve! I pray that God's steadfast love gives you joy this Christmas.

## Chadron or Bust: Trip to northwest Nebraska turns out to be one of a kind

Back on November 14 and 15, three friends and I went to Chadron, Nebraska, to minister to college students at Chadron State College. The trip itself was unforgettable. Random stops in the middle of nowhere at the Nebraska National Forest, small towns with no post office, and bathroom breaks at places where animals might not stop to relieve themselves.

It was so refreshing to spend so many hours in a vehicle with people that I love so much, people I work with, and people who share the same vision of reaching students for Jesus. Karen Sharp, Matt Meschke, and Chris Hruska all work with me on staff with Crusade (Matt and Chris are two of my roommates) and we went to minister to students in Chadron, Nebraska. We had fun—probably too much fun. We almost hit a deer (or two) we almost had our car destroyed by an ancient tractor, and we sat on a roof of an old stable, relishing the stillness of the Nebraska Sandhills and praising the Lord for his awesome creation.

Despite all the fun, we still had a job to do—a job that is, by definition, fun and exciting. I was invited to speak at Chadron's weekly Campus Crusade meeting. It is very difficult to speak passionately and with conviction to people whom I do not know. God was merciful and gracious, however, to ignite a desire to see students love Jesus, not just because he saves them from sin and death and hell, but because he will satisfy their deepest longings for love, peace, and hope.

The message was from Matthew 13:44 and how a man found a glorious treasure in a field and sold all he had, simply to buy the field that contained the treasure. I challenged the students—about 90 in all, with a dozen who were non-Christian—to treasure Jesus enough to be willing to sell it all to follow him. I mentioned Paul's description of himself in Philippians 3, when he wrote that he counts everything as loss because of Christ and it is by faith alone that he is saved—not by works of righteousness. Then, I said something that caught the attention of everyone in the room. Regarding works and good deeds, I said, "Trying to be good enough so you can get out of hell is a good way to get yourself into hell." By that, I mean that if people try to be legalistic and worried about actions, we will never see the real Jesus and treasure him

like he deserves to be. Thank God that we are incapable of doing anything good on our own.

In the days leading up to speaking at Chadron, I was over the railing with the Lord, getting walloped for the times I do not treasure him. I love that about teaching and preaching. I am convicted of my own sins and because of that, I can be vulnerable and not talk down to people. I hope the students saw my sorrow and grief over the cheap substitutes that steal my attention away from Jesus and that it brought them to their knees to repent.

I found out two days after the meeting that there were a couple of students who received Christ—not just as their Savior—but as their Treasure that night. God prepared their hearts and used his effectual call and beautiful love to draw them to himself. I never ceased to be amazed at how God uses me for his glory. I am such a sinner, such a broken, jar of frail clay that cannot hold any kind of weight without crumbling. Second Corinthians 4:7 says, "But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not us." How glorious is it that the love of God lets me keep the treasure of Jesus in a vessel that so often cheats on him and runs away from his grace!

Toward the end of his life, John Newton said: "I remember two things, that I am a great sinner and Christ is a great Savior." In Philippians 3:12, after Paul talked about losing everything to know Jesus, he said, "Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own." He was vulnerable with the people he was writing to. "I don't have it all figured out yet! I still sin; I'm still crooked! I still need a Savior!" How incredible are those words from the world's greatest preacher and evangelist.

Knowing that when I speak is comforting: I'm a great sinner and Christ is a great Savior.

I wouldn't have it any other way.



## | News: Applying to Seminary for Fall '08 |

A few months back, I wrote that there was a possibility of going to Africa for a year with Crusade. That has changed just a bit. I'm confident that the Lord is pointing me toward pursuing a Master of Divinity at seminary. I will be studying to be a preaching pastor and depending on which seminary I attend, the specific tracks I would focus on would range from pastoral studies to urban ministry to church planting. My preference would be a combination such as urban church planting. I have a heart to help build spiritual movements in the inner cities of America.

I am not sure which school I will enroll in, so be praying that the Lord provides financially for my education. Be praying for the many scholarships opportunities that seminaries provide for their students. The top two schools I am applying to are Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando and Covenant Seminary in St. Louis. I love the sunshine in Florida, but my Cardinals are in St. Louis! Oh well, I'm sure God will work it out. Nevertheless, wherever I end up, I'm excited to continue my education for God's glory!

**Merry Christmas because of our Lord Jesus Christ,**

*James*