

EVANGEL Voice

December 13, 2007

Dear Friend:

This issue of the EVANGEL Voice looks quite a bit different than the others. Instead of our usual newsletter I wanted to write you a letter to let you know about some significant things that have taken place in the past few months. In the New Year, we will return to our more traditional format.

Leadership Transition

After months of prayer and seeking counsel, at the end of August I accepted an appointment from the Board of Trustees to succeed my Dad and become the 2nd president of Evangel Theological Seminary. The Board also appointed my Dad to the position of Chancellor. This new position frees him from daily administrative responsibilities and allows him to pursue his passion for teaching and writing. Currently, he is working on a book about John Wesley.

I haven't accepted this new position of service lightly. My Dad has established a remarkable foundation for EVANGEL. Because of his tireless efforts our curriculum was developed and an extensive course syllabus library written. That remarkable accomplishment allows us the creative flexibility to do what we do.

I know that God has called me to this new responsibility. He has given me a sense of excitement and passion for what He wants to do here. The future holds incredible opportunities for growth. Degree programs will be redesigned to give students the flexibility to customize their chosen program. The Directed Study program will be expanded to include an online experience. In the coming years the ministry of Evangel will expand beyond the Mid-Atlantic (Maryland, DC, Virginia) region and have both a national and international impact. The School of Practical Ministry, which opened Evangel to an entirely new group of students, will add additional levels of study. It will also have an international flavor with invitations to take the program to several nations. The EVANGEL Voice will have a new look with the opportunity for our readers to receive it electronically. We also want to integrate video and audio into its presentation for a more interactive experience. Technology advances will allow us to make podcasts and webcasts a reality. Just imagine, you could sit in the comfort of your home and watch a class session. Finally, we have an incredible opportunity to more aggressively communicate the mission of Evangel. We want to develop a promotional DVD that would allow individuals the ability to catch a quick glimpse of the Evangel experience and see the lives that are being changed.

While the future brings great excitement, Evangel faces great challenges that must be addressed quickly. We need to dramatically increase student enrollment, expand our donor base, identify new faculty members, add support staff, and integrate technological innovations into our teaching experience. Since becoming president I have spent considerable time reading and studying the story of Nehemiah. He faced the daunting task of rebuilding the ruined walls that surrounded Jerusalem. God gave him a supernatural strategy for accomplishing the project. Specific groups of people were responsible for rebuilding a small portion of the wall. This unique plan allowed the work to be completed in only 52 days. During the construction Nehemiah faced difficult opposition from outside the nation. However, he described those efforts this way. *They were all trying to frighten us, thinking, "Their hands will get too weak for the work, and it will not be completed." But I prayed, "Now strengthen my hands."* (Neh. 6:9 NIV). That now, is my prayer. "Lord, strengthen my hands!"

I humbly ask that you pray for me as I assume the mantle of leadership. Pray that I would have vision to see the future as God does, wisdom to know what needs to be done next, faith that sees things that are not as though they are, and the ability to creatively address each challenge. Together, let's believe that God will do immeasurably more than we could ask or imagine.

Mission Statement

Over the past 25 years EVANGEL has been described as the Seminary with a difference. For the past few months we have been looking at what we do and identifying what it is that makes us different. This work has led us to adopt a new mission statement that concisely communicates what we do. That statement is:

EVANGEL:

Teaching – Biblically & practically.

Ministering – Spirit empowered refreshment.

Serving – the Church worldwide.

Teaching. This statement again confirms our immovable stand on the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture. Our entire curriculum is based on that absolute. However, it is not enough to communicate Biblical content if we don't provide students opportunities to practically integrate that material into their ministries, careers, families, and personal lives.

Ministering. Merely communicating information within an academic setting is an incomplete action. We want each course to be an opportunity for students to encounter God more intimately and powerfully. We also want students to have the freedom to share their pressing needs and know that they will receive encouragement, support, and ministry from the professor and fellow students. To that end, a portion of each class session will be set aside to allow for ministry as the Holy Spirit leads.

Serving. Evangel doesn't operate within a vacuum. If we aren't serving the Church we are wasting our time. In addition to providing training for ministry we also want to become a resource center for local churches to use. Currently, one of the ways we are doing that is by providing Bibles and New Testaments for churches in Saltillo, Mexico. We have partnered with Mike and Marilyn Hughes, the directors of the Saltillo Training Center, who distribute the Word of God to pastors to use in their ministries. In 2007 we have been able to send over one thousand copies of the Scriptures to our fellow believers in Mexico. We will continue to look for other opportunities to serve.

2008 Spring Semester

The schedule for the 2008 Spring Semester has been released. Four courses are being offered on either Monday evenings or Weekends. The courses being offered are listed below.

- T-103 Basic Christian Doctrines III
- O-101 Old Testament Introduction
- C-301 Supernatural Ministry of the Church
- N-101 New Testament Introduction
- Several Directed Study Courses

To see the complete schedule including the Semester calendar visit our website: www.ets.edu

The **EVANGEL School of Practical Ministry** will also be starting a new group on Tuesday, January 8, 2008. Students participate in a learning journey where they encounter God, explore the unique person they've been created to be and become equipped for service. For the complete schedule visit the website: www.esopm.org

Since this will be your only opportunity to be part of this program until September you need to act quickly and enroll now.

Prayer Ministry

Over the years it has been on our heart to establish an organized prayer ministry. So many of our readers send requests for prayer and we want to faithfully respond to those. Starting in 2008 we will be having an Evangel prayer group that will pray specifically for your requests. To assist this group a special email address has been set up. Now you can email your prayer requests to prayer@ets.edu and know that dedicated ministers will pray for you. Stay tuned for further details

Alumni Update

Evangel's first ever Homecoming was held on Saturday, November 3, 2007 in Harrisonburg. In attendance were representatives from the 1st class (Dr. David Steenson, 1986), the last class (Rusty Haws, Jim Eckard, 2007), and a mixture of the remaining classes. We had a great time fellowshiping, sharing, praying, and

discussing some significant things about the future of Evangel. To see photographs of those who attended visit the Evangel website: www.ets.edu

We are in the process of putting together an alumni directory. You can help us by sending your current contact information (address, phone numbers, email) to the Seminary office. Just drop us an email to info@ets.edu Also include a brief description of what you're doing (work, ministry, family). As soon as we receive this info we will compile it and get it into your hands.

We are also planning another Alumni event this spring. Stay tuned for details!

Website

In the coming months our website will be undergoing a makeover. It is going to become more of an information outlet for Evangel. It will include video, audio, class schedules, calendars, an alumni page, the latest issue of the EVANGEL Voice, and some other innovative additions. Keep checking back to see what's new.

End of Year Gifts

At this time of year it seems that our mailboxes are continually filled with all kinds of requests for financial assistance. If you're like me, it's hard to know which ones to respond to and which ones should find their way to the trash. Now I'm going to add to this dilemma. At this time of year we could really use some additional financial resources. Won't you please prayerfully consider sending a special gift? Your gift will help us finish the year on a high note and prepare for the new semester. As always, your gift is tax deductible. We have included an envelope for your convenience.

Coming in 2008, we will be presenting you with an exciting opportunity to become a member of Gideon's 300 and financially support the work of Evangel. Future issues of the Voice will provide additional details.

Christmas Thoughts

Right now, I'm struggling with the realization that Christmas is just a few short days away. It seems with all the activity of the season that we sometimes forget the significant message of the season. Isaiah describes our predicament before Jesus came. *Then they will look toward the earth and see only distress and darkness and fearful gloom, and they will be thrust into utter darkness.* (8:22). Sin had robbed us of hope and made our lives a shell of what they were intended to be. God, however, had other ideas. Isaiah goes on to say, *Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. The people walking in darkness have seen a great light;* (9:1,2). Jesus came to take our gloom and bring joy; to exchange darkness for light. Finally, Isaiah says, *For as in the day of Midian's defeat, you have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor.* (9:4). Jesus came to totally destroy the works of the enemy and to bring freedom for the captives.

Through His life, death, and resurrection Jesus obliterated the things that kept us from fulfilling our destiny. That baby in the manger was a source of light unlike any other. He was a liberating force that crossed cultural, racial, and socio-economic barriers. His simple message was, "I came for you. All you have to do is believe in Me."

In the following centuries we've made this message so complicated. We've added our prejudices, preferences, political positions, and personalities until it doesn't look anything like it was intended. The result is that we've lost our sense of wonder at what Jesus did. The shepherds were different. They watched in amazement as the angels declared the birth of Jesus. They left their sheep and quickly went to Bethlehem to see the baby, Jesus. After witnessing these events they left with excitement and told everyone they could about what they had seen.

This Christmas let's ask the Holy Spirit to restore our sense of wonder at the events we celebrate. Let's ask Him to help us throw off the false things we have substituted for what is genuine and authentic. Let's allow Him to mold us into instruments through which the clear, clarion message of Christmas rings out, *For to us a child is born, to us a son is given.* (Isaiah 9:6). Like the shepherds, let's tell others about what we've seen and heard. Let's ask that the Christmas story would change us.

On behalf of the entire Evangel staff I want to wish you and your family a most joyous, blessed, Merry Christmas and a prosperous, Happy New Year.

Grace & peace,

Bob Reichard, III
President