



It's official. The Christmas season is here. This time of year, many voices remind us of what we celebrate. Isaiah says, *For a child is born to us, a son is given to us* (Is. 9:6). Luke shares with us the voices of the angels. *Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased* (Luke 2:14). John tells us, *So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness* (John 1:14).

Sadly, we are also bombarded with other voices that speak to us. "You need the perfect gift. The holiday meal must be special. Did you send a Christmas card to this person." If we're not careful, these peripheral voices will speak so loudly that the true meaning of Christmas gets drowned out. They can diminish the very meaning and heart of Christmas. It's during these times that we need to slow down, take a deep breath, and allow the Holy Spirit to give us a **fresh perspective**.

In his Gospel, Matthew provides us with that fresh perspective. Unlike Luke's account, Matthew doesn't provide many details about the actual birth of Jesus, but rather focuses on what the promised Messiah would accomplish. First, he summarizes some of the prophecies of Isaiah into one powerful declaration. *And she will have a son, and you are to name him, Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins* (v. 21). (Cont. p.4)

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Christmas Scripture From A Different Perspective

In the 80 verses that comprise chapter 1 of the Gospel of Luke, we are given an overview of events that led up to the birth of Jesus. Zechariah, his wife Elizabeth and their son John all play a pivotal role in these events. What stands out however, is a prophecy from Zechariah soon after John is born. We don't often quote these scriptures in relation to the birth of Christ, which occurs six months later, but they are definitely linked to the remarkable birth of our Lord - see if you agree:

Praise the Lord, the God of Israel, because He has visited and redeemed His people. He has sent us a mighty Savior from the royal line of His servant David. Because of God's tender mercy, the morning light from heaven is about to break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide us to the path of peace.

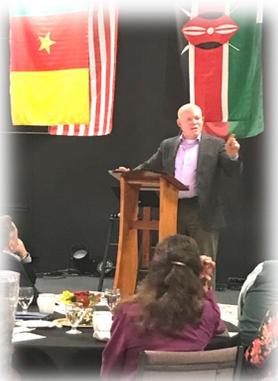
Luke 1: 68-69, 78-79

REJOICE - Dessert Banquet

Every table was full of guests, each of the desserts were amazing, the time of worship ministered to all of our hearts and the message from our speaker, Dr Julius Esunge was very impactful. These are just a few of the highlights from Evangel's 5th annual Dessert Banquet on Oct. 27th.

Each fall, Evangel hosts a Dessert Banquet to bring awareness to our call to train pastors and church leaders in developing nations and to help raise funds for this great work. This year was unique however, because September marked the start of Evangel Seminary's 40th year in ministry. (See related article on p. 3)

The theme for this year's Banquet, "Rejoice", was taken from Psalm 97:1 *The Lord is King! Let the earth REJOICE! Let the farthest coastlands be glad.* This scripture captures our hearts in two ways; first as we REJOICE over the faithfulness of God during the 40 years Evangel Seminary has had the privilege of educating and equipping men and women and second because every developing nation we have been in since 2009 has a coastline.



During the evening, Bob and Tom had a question and answer session where Bob was able to share some of the history of Evangel and then pivot to the beginnings of the School of Practical Ministry (SOPM) in 2007.

Taken from course syllabi written by Bob's father, Dr. Robert Reichard, the SOPM program was initially developed to train lay people here in the U.S. However, the School of Practical Ministry has now become the primary vehicle used to train pastors and church leaders in developing nations, where formal Biblical training is basically non-existent.

Dr. Julius Esunge, who leads Hope Outreach International, our ministry partner in Cameroon, spoke on the heart of the Gospel for everyone around the world, but then he shared more specifically on the impact of this SOPM training for Cameroon. The program is not only well received by those who take the School of Practical Ministry, but it is even highly thought of by government officials. This is truly God's grace at work!

Connect With Evangel



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Evangel Seminary

Celebrating 40 Years

The year was 1982 and Ronald Regan was in his 2nd year as President of the United States, the film “E.T. the Extra Terrestrial” was released that summer, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial was dedicated, Disney opened EPCOT, its newest theme park and Dr. Robert Reichard opened the doors to Evangel Theological Seminary for the first time.

From the outset, Dr. Reichard’s vision for Evangel was unique; he wanted to offer classes where “clusters” of students lived instead of having them come to a central campus location. In addition, from the beginning Evangel offered a Directed Study Program, allowing students to take classes from home, before the concept of “on-line learning” was even heard of. You could accurately say that Dr. Reichard was a transforming pioneer in the field of Seminary education.

The first classes were held in Northern VA. at the “Fairfax House” which was the headquarters for the Chinese Overseas Christian Mission. The first graduates included students from Argentina, Japan and one graduate who had ministered in various parts of the world through the organization, Youth With A Mission (YWAM).

Over these past 40 years, a large percentage of Evangel Seminary graduates have faithfully served in pastoral church ministry and there are many who continue to do so today. Both individually and corporately these students have had a tremendous Kingdom impact on the lives of their congregants as well as their communities and we are humbled to have been a part of their journey.

In the late 1980’s Dr. Reichard began to write comprehensive syllabi for the various courses taught at Evangel. This huge undertaking was a testament to Dr. Reichard’s love for the Word and his devotion to faithfully train the men and women who took classes with Evangel. These individuals often fell into the category of “non-traditional” students. They were usually older men and women who had families, careers or already established ministry obligations. Evangel was clearly meeting a need that wasn’t being fulfilled otherwise.

Around the same time the course syllabi were being written, the CORE Program at Evangel was established. This program was the forerunner of today’s School of Practical Ministry (SOPM) which has been used extensively since 2007. All of this material comes from the prolific writing that Dr. Reichard began in the late 80’s.

Although no one realized it at the time, all of this was establishing a “DNA” pattern for Evangel Seminary which ultimately culminated in answering the call to go train pastors and church leaders in developing nations. To date, utilizing the School of Practical Ministry material, Evangel has had the honor of training over 1,400 pastors and church leaders overseas. For these dear brothers and sisters, the SOPM certificate they receive, while not an Evangel Seminary degree, still holds a great deal of value. For most, it’s the only formal theological instruction they have ever had.

We thank God for His ever abundant grace and faithfulness during this 4 decade long journey on which He has taken Evangel. We are also extremely grateful for the faithfulness of our prayer and ministry partners who continue to provide covering and resources to help train this next generation of pastors and church leaders in developing nations. Together our impact is producing abundant fruit that is touching millions of lives in these countries and for that we are eternally grateful.

(Fresh Perspective cont. from p.1)

Up to this point, forgiveness was the word associated with sin. The people of Israel would offer a lamb without spot or blemish as a sacrifice for their sins and God would forgive. Now, sin would not only be forgiven, but Jesus would go beyond and save from, set free from, and break the hold of sin on his people.

Second, Matthew talks about God's presence. He again quotes Isaiah. *Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel, which means, "God is with us"* (v. 23). Throughout the Old Testament, God's presence was manifested in different ways to Israel. He had been present in the pillar of cloud or fire that led the people of Israel to the promised land. He was present on Mt. Sinai when He gave Moses the Ten Commandments. His presence filled the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle and later in the Temple.

Now, God's presence was going to be manifested in an entirely new, intimate way. The literal translation of the Hebrew name, Immanuel, is with us, God. It's as if Isaiah was asking a question, "Who is with us? Who is for us?" He then provides an emphatic answer, "God!" Now, God was going to be present with us individually. He would take on human form and walk and talk with us in the same way he did with Adam and Eve in the Garden.

Third, Matthew shares about the opportunity for a fresh start. The first 17 verses of Chapter 1 are a list of the genealogy of Jesus. Included in that list are several names that we probably wouldn't have included, but God did.

There's Rahab, the prostitute who was a citizen of the doomed city of Jericho. Next is Ruth, the Moabite woman, who was Naomi's daughter-in-law. Bathsheba, the woman against whom David sinned, is on the list. Finally, there is Zerubbabel, the man called by God to rebuild the Temple after the Babylonian captivity. When faced with opposition, he stopped the work and for 10 years nothing happened.

These individuals all have something in common. They reached out to God with a simple act of faith and God granted them a fresh start. Today they aren't remembered for their past life, but rather they are celebrated for the people they became.

In a very simple way, Matthew shares the essence of the Christmas message. In Jesus, the promised Messiah, there's freedom from sin, the ability to experience the intimate presence of God, and the opportunity to have a fresh start.

This year, when the combined noise of the season starts to overwhelm us, let's focus on the fresh perspective Matthew gives us. Let's not stop there. Let's take the opportunity to share with others who are struggling with their circumstances, that there's hope in Jesus. That's what Christmas is really about.

Grace & Peace,



Bob Reichard, III
President, E.T.S.