

The Open Mouth

Ezekiel 2:8

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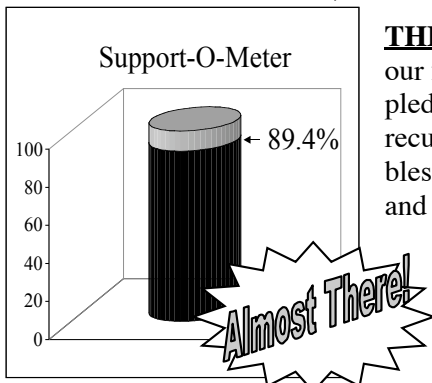


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RECENT NEWS: A RESPITE AND MORE RAMBLING After fifteen weeks on the road and in and out of various homes, we were really ready for a little quiet time to ourselves during the month of April. We were able to find a one-month rental in a small bungalow in Newport, Rhode Island and deeply enjoyed settling into a stable routine, even for just a few weeks. This brief cessation of chaos was probably instrumental in helping Joe finally learn how to sleep through the night at age nine months, which further added to our relief. After a month of resting, reconnecting with our church family at First Presbyterian, and catching up on many of life's administrative realities (such as filing our taxes), our batteries were fully recharged to hit the road again. Beginning April 26th, we visited friends and family in Long Island, New Jersey, Maryland, Washington DC, Virginia, and North and South Carolina. As always, it has been a blessing to spend time with old and new friends and share our passion for serving military teens with MCYM. We spent a couple more weeks in Norfolk living in Ryan's (our future brother-in-law) condo before leaving the East Coast. Ryan is a Navy SEAL currently deployed to Iraq and has thankfully had a safe, though very busy, tour thus far. Thanks God! We have spent the first two weeks of June in San Diego visiting our immediate families and other supporters and preparing for the final leg of our long road show: a trip up the West Coast for Young Life New Staff Training in Oregon for the month of July. Our final destination in Europe is still unknown!!!



STUFF After an extremely hectic two days wrapping up our time in Norfolk, I was finally able to relax on the long flight from Baltimore to San Diego. I reflected on how much of our time has been taken up dealing with all our "stuff" – packing it, moving it, storing it, shipping it, getting rid of it, or carrying it with us. I thought about how scattered our belongings are. Most of our household goods are packed in a warehouse in Rhode Island. A big suitcase full of clothes is in Illinois. Three boxes full of winter and dress clothes are in a garage in Newport. Our van (full of files, photographs, kitchen tools, kid's toys and outgrown baby clothes) is in another garage in Virginia. A box of various odds and ends is at Shannon's parents house. Two weeks worth of clothes were in the plane's cargo hold. Computer, diaper bag, checkbooks, critical personal documents and a few books were under the seats in front of us. How complicated "stuff" makes one's life! Jesus exhorted a rich young man to sell all his possessions and "follow me." In applying this passage to my life, I tend to take the challenge figuratively – Jesus is testing the man's willingness (and mine) to sacrifice everything for a life of pursuing God, I'll say. Maybe so, but perhaps Jesus is also presenting a literal blueprint for effective service. It could be a lot easier to follow Jesus without all these possessions weighing us down! I have been convicted recently by his words in John 6: "The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing." How backwards we always have things when we are wrapped up in the "stuff" of flesh. Lord, let us be filled instead with your Spirit and life!



THE FINAL PUSH TO DEPLOYMENT We are now about 90% of the way to our financial support goal! Praise God! Seven months ago as we began raising pledges and gifts to provide for our departure expenses and three years worth of our recurring monthly budget, the task seemed overwhelming. It has been an amazing blessing to watch the support team God has planned for us come together – quickly and steadily enough to keep us enthusiastic yet slowly and fitfully enough to keep us dependent on Him. We are so thankful for all of you who have been a part of this growth experience for us. We are thrilled to be so close to leaving, however Young Life will not release us to the field until our support level is at least 100%. As of June 15, we are still short by about \$400 per month in pledged gifts (or \$15,000 in a lump sum) before we can depart. We are praying

we will be able to deploy by August 1 so that we can attend the MCYM Europe new staff welcome conference in Germany August 3-7 and then get settled into a house in our new community before school starts in September. In order to depart for Europe in August, we must have all our support in or pledged by **July 15**. If you have been

meaning to partner with us financially in reaching out to military teens stationed overseas but have not yet done so for whatever reason, please prayerfully consider helping us meet this deadline. You may send any contributions directly to Young Life or to us, but please let us know via email, phone or letter if you intend to make a monthly or annual pledge (see header for contact info). **THANK-YOU!**

I HAVE HOMEWORK? I have been busy over the past month preparing for Young Life New Staff Training and Cross-cultural Orientation, which will be held at Multnomah College in Portland, Oregon, July 5-30. Before the class begins, I have to read four books, write a paper on the Gospel of John, poll six teens for a youth culture survey, and prepare an oral presentation on the culture in which we will be ministering. It's been a balancing act staying on top of those tasks as well as focusing on support raising, all while leading our family as we continue to live the nomadic lifestyle. However, I have enjoyed adding some academic exercise to my routine; it's actually been fun to have homework again! The paper I am writing will consist of twenty-one paragraphs, one for each chapter in John's gospel. Each paragraph is an analysis of one verse and its significance to its chapter, to the whole gospel, and to my own life. The amount of writing is by no means overwhelming; in fact the challenge has been distilling all the thoughts and ideas into a few sentences. Here is a sample of the paper:

***John 10:11 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."** Jesus' audience was very familiar with the elements of the extended figure of speech he uses in this chapter, but did not understand its meaning, so Jesus explains it. Verse eleven is significant to the flow of the chapter in explicitly stating the second of Jesus' two roles in the sheep metaphor. He is the gate, through which the sheep come and go, and he is also the shepherd who guides these sheep through the gate. This verse is very familiar to the modern Christian, but these words must have been either perplexing or astounding (or both) at the time he spoke them, for they really do not fit the metaphor. Presumably, a contemporary shepherd who was a "good" (competent, successful, principled) one would have, like David, risked danger to defend his sheep. However, it is unlikely that a shepherd would willingly die for a sheep – it just would not be worth the cost. Shepherd's lives were certainly more valuable than sheep, especially to the shepherd himself! In fact, these realities fit the metaphor perfectly; how unexpectedly preposterous it is that God would die for man. This truth is central to the Gospel: Jesus, perfect and all-powerful, willingly chooses to die for mankind, his sheep, whom he loves even though they are weak and fallen. I find this idea continually humbles me and drives me to worship and thankfulness.*



Shannon cheers Steve at the San Diego Rock and Roll Marathon. Finish Time: 4 hrs, 1 min, 28 sec

TANKER TUG – TANKED!



Unfortunately, due to a shortage of tuggers, we were not able to participate in the "Tanker Tug" fundraiser at the Langley Air Force Base air show on Saturday, May 22. We were able to attend the show with some good friends from Norfolk – a hot, hot day on the tarmac. The boys loved all the planes, and especially the jet-propelled semi-truck cab. ("Black truck has fire comin' out! Burn Caleb!" he said for days afterward). Thank-you to all who made a pledge for the tanker tug – wish we had some results to report.

Praises

- A reasonable quote for shipping cars out of Norfolk and a place to leave both cars for free while we wait to ship them
- Good health for whole family – quick recovery from a one-day fever for Steve and the boys and Shannon didn't get it
- Joseph is sleeping better and starting to walk
- Caleb has been very attentive to and interested in worship songs and Bible stories lately

Prayer Requests

- Continued safety for Ryan in Iraq and peace for Shannon's sister Carrie as she awaits his return
- An open and attentive mind and heart for Steve as he attends Young Life's Cross-cultural Orientation and New Staff Training July 5 – 30. Pray this would be a time of growth, renewal, and special preparation before we leave for Europe.
- Successful completion of our support raising by July 15
- Safe travels and fruitful visits during our trip up the West Coast.



Joseph and Steve on a KC-10 wheel, enjoying the air show at Langley Air Force Base, Virginia.

In Christ,