

# Summer 2023 Update

The halfway point of the year provides an opportunity to perform a number of assessments regarding the goals, offerings, budgets, and direction of the church. While we understand it is ultimately God who gives the increase, these times are helpful in answering the question, *are we growing in and moving forward for Christ?* It's always humbling to look back and see how God continues to use the steady diet of His Word to shape people's lives, one family at a time.

One couple that has been so exciting to watch grow this year is a couple named Steve and Lorraine. Lorraine came to our church about three years ago because someone came to her door and invited her. She had previously spent time in different religious circles, including some time with Jehovah's Witnesses, and as a result had a lot of theological "weeds" to wade through. When she started coming she also invited her boyfriend, Steve, who has had some bad experiences with church and was very guarded. After a few weeks of them initially visiting I asked Steve if he would be interested in meeting me for coffee or lunch, and received a prompt "No."

A few weeks later he came out the door following a service and said "I think I'm ready for that lunch now," but at the lunch proceeded to tell me, "I'm only here for Lorraine. I'll probably never be much involved in your church." Sometimes as a pastor you're surprised that anybody would come to your church, then you're more surprised when they come back! Yet Steve and Lorraine did. Fast forward three years to March of this year, when both approached me separately and said they were both certain of their salvation, but through the preaching had recognized they had not been Scripturally baptized and wanted to make that right. We were able to baptize them using the baptistry of our sending church.

The next month was Easter, and on that day Steve invited his niece and her boyfriend. While the niece was skeptical and rolled her eyes during the sermon, her boyfriend, Samuel, was listening intently. During the invitation he raised his hand wanting someone to speak with him about salvation, and a little while later one of our men were able to lead Samuel to the Lord! While Samuel lives in Prescott (about 65 miles north of the church) Steve has taken the onus on follow up and discipleship, requesting materials to send and correspond with Samuel. We were also able to put him in contact with a good church in that area.

Following these blessings came the month of May, which could be summarized with the word "transition." That month we saw three faithful families move to a different part of the Valley or across the country. None were disgruntled or upset at the church, it was simply the difficult reality in ministry that sometimes God sees fit to move people. Our family moved across town

ourselves during that time, purchasing our first house! At the beginning of June, after a difficult month of transition, Steve and Lorraine pulled me aside again after a service. They were going on a cruise and had only booked one room, but not yet being married, they didn't think it was right for them to share a room. "We want to do it right" they said, and then asked me to marry them. We then had the privilege of having their wedding ceremony right at the school where we meet, following a Sunday evening service.

Only God can take someone and change their heart from a position of, "I'll never be involved in your church" to "the Bible says we're not doing this right and so let's do it right!" That's God! And people like Steve and Lorraine are great reminders as to why we need more Bible preaching churches started in our world and why your investment matters so much. Thank you for your support!

Mitchell Crittenden