

# THE BOZEMAN REPORT

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*Then Jesus said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men." (Mark 1:17)*

I keep being told that as you get older, time passes more quickly. If that is the case, I am going to be in trouble in the coming years, as time has seemed to fly by over the last couple of months! We have certainly had our hands full over the last several weeks, and it appears that there will be no let up moving forward.

As many of you already know, we were able to take some time to visit family at the end of last year. However, we ended up being gone a little longer than we intended to be. We had sickness hit our family which caused us to delay leaving Alabama as we had planned. On the way home, I came down with a stomach virus that meant staying in a motel for an extra night. We were about 6 days longer getting home than we anticipated. Thankfully, Justin and his family were able to keep everything running smoothly, so we knew the work was just fine while we were away!

## **Contacts and Studies...**

Justin and I have been working on trying to figure out the best way for advertising. We obviously have limited funds, so we are trying to find the most economical way of getting our presence known in the community. We have decided to follow a similar process to what we began at the end of last year. We are trying to use social media (which is either free or very inexpensive) to advertise study opportunities.

Over the last couple of months, we have used the social networking site MeetUp.com to advertise various opportunities for study outside our typical assembly periods. We have done some studies at various cafes and restaurants around Bozeman. These studies have been predominantly focused on first principles. While we have not had anyone join us directly, we have seen some interest. We have had some contact through the MeetUp site, and continue to pray that we might be able to have some more solid contacts. We also have used our Facebook page to

advertise these studies, and have had some interaction through that venue as well.

Recently, we started a study at the local library on the topic of Bible authority. We have been trying to broadcast this study with our teleconferencing software, and we are also using the software to record the study with the hopes that we can eventually put it on our website. One thing we are excited about with this study is that we have had the preacher from the local institutional church visiting with us. He has been to one study, and though he missed the second one, we met him in the lobby of the library and were able to talk with him some. He and his wife met my wife through homeschooling events here in town, and she invited him to join our study. He seemed to be very "standoffish" at first, but as soon as he was able to see that we were not intending to just pounce on him, he loosened up and participated in good discussion. We are hopeful that he will continue to study with us, even when we start getting to topics that we clearly disagree on. If you would like to see the material that we are using for this study, it is available (as I get each lesson written) on our website!

We have another family that lives in Whitehall, Montana (about an hour and a half from Bozeman) that has contacted us. They have been meeting in their home for several years now, evidently because they could not find a local church that they approved of. At first, this sounded like the very kind of folks that we had hoped to discover here, and seemed like it could be some strong contacts. We have discovered, however, over the last several weeks that there are some pretty significant problems within the family itself. Though we have tried to be of help to salvage what may be left of a marriage, it seems that our efforts in that area will be for naught. There will be some issues that we have to work through if a part of the family (the wife and 3 kids--which includes 2 daughters over

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### **Average Attendance:**

*Sunday: 9*

*Wednesday: 10*

18) want to be a part of the group here. We cannot, at this point, guess what might happen with this family, nor how they might respond moving forward. While I certainly cannot reveal much of the specifics of their circumstances, we are very concerned about some of the tendencies we have seen, and know that they are very much in need of prayers. Trying to help with these circumstances has consumed a huge amount of our time in the last 3 or 4 weeks. We are hopeful that a resolution one way or another will present itself shortly, as this seems to be hampering our work in other areas.

A more promising couple from Billings has also contacted us recently. James and Jonna Winburn have been working in Billings for a few years, and have been meeting with one of the groups in that area. They were never happy with the practices of the church there and have been trying to study with whomever would listen to them. Recently I was communicating with a gentleman I met while working in Huntington, who lives in Oregon but travels all over the country. He happened to know these folks, and let them know about our new work here in Bozeman. They were very excited to hear about us and immediately contacted me. They assured me they would be over to visit as soon as James recovered from his recent knee replacement surgery. They were able to make it in yesterday (March 6th) to visit with us. They travel all over Montana and North Dakota for their work, so traveling the 150 miles from their home to Bozeman was not significant to them! We are finding that because things are so spread out in this part of the country, people are used to driving farther to do

things. All indications are that the Winburns are planning to meet with us on a regular basis, so we look forward to that! They have also started contacting a few other people that they know in the general area (within 150 miles or so in various directions) whom they think are of the same type of mindset and who might be interested in looking into our work here. We are anxious to see where this might lead. We know there is potential for having a lot of work ahead studying about institutional and social issues. But, we also see some great potential for a lot of good things ahead. Only time will tell, and we covet your prayers for all of these efforts.

### **Personal notes...**

We have started the process of trying to purchase a home in this area. As many of you know, housing is quite expensive here. In fact, most of the increase in support we requested to make the move to Bozeman was so that we could cover the cost of housing in this area. We are looking for a place that is a little ways out of Bozeman, as buyers can get more for their money (in both size of house and size of property) the further from Bozeman they go. It has been a little frustrating trying to get everything arranged financially (many banks don't like the way that our income is provided) and then find a house that we think will fit our needs. We have found a good realtor that has been very helpful in the whole process.

I have also strained my back again, which has slowed me down a bit. I've tried hard not to let it interfere with the work that we have to do, but there have been a couple of days that it has kept me down and out. It seems that a bit of rest has done it well, and I've been able to get back at it in short order.

My oldest son turned 13 on February 18th. It is so hard for us to believe that he is already a teenager. He continues to grow into a young man that we are very proud of. We are, however, entering into a new area of parenting as we work with a teenager!

Thank you for your continued prayers and support of our work here. We believe there is much good happening right now, and pray that it will continue and that the kingdom here will continue to grow in the Lord!