

# FIELD STUDY: JOURNAL AND CONCLUSION

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PTS 503 – PROFESSOR GARNER

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## FIELD STUDY – JOURNAL AND CONCLUSION PAPER

MAX CRITCHFIELD // 2011-11-16 // PTS 503

### JOURNAL:

SEPTEMBER 15<sup>TH</sup>, 2011

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- A. **HOW I'M PRAYING:** As this is my first journal entry, I will start by stating the name of the person that I am specifically interceding for and praying that they might become a disciple. His name is Joe and he and his family occupy the unit next to my wife and I's condominium. We have had the chance to talk with them and build up a certain level of relationship in the past year and a half, and we've been over to their house several times for dinner. At the outset of this exercise, my prayer is for the softening of Joe's heart to the message of the Gospel – he grew up through high school going to a youth group, and his best friend's parents were strong Christians, although both chose to live lives in radical dissonance with the life of following Jesus. Jesus often ended his parables by saying, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear," and my prayer is that Joe would have the ears to hear and eyes to see; taste and see both the reality of his need for a Savior, and the goodness of the Savior that gave His life for Him.
- B. **STEPS TO TAKE:** My relationship with Joe recently has been a "wave-from-a-distance" affair, and I feel the need to take more intentional steps to have significant conversation with Joe, and possibly seek out some times that we could do some kind of activity together. I think I need to seek out ways to serve him and his family as well, so as to "earn the right to be heard."
- C. **PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES:** I think that I have made significant progress in being the "light of the world" in Joe's life, but I sense in him an unwillingness at this time to hear the message of the Gospel. But that may just be my perception; I feel an urge to simply ask him if I could explain the Gospel to him, that he might know clearly the message of Christ. I think that the challenge ahead is to being sensitive to when God might bring Joe to a place of understanding his brokenness and seeing his need for a Savior.

SEPTEMBER 28<sup>TH</sup>, 2011

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- A. **HOW I'M PRAYING:** This week, I'm praying for some of the scars that Joe carries with him – he spent 18 months in Afganistan and Pakistan, and saw several of the members of his unit die. I sense a deep anxiety and restlessness in his spirit; one that he covers over with a "macho" attitude, but that is truly there. I'm praying that God would open his eyes to his identity as the "Prince of Peace," in whom we have nothing to anxious about – because if God is for us, who can be against us! I pray that God might open his eyes to see the peace that Jesus is holding out to him, that in the embrace of Jesus he has no reason to be afraid. He doesn't have to carry the weight of his family or his past

on his shoulders, but can cast those burdens at the feet of Jesus! This is the substance of my prayer this week.

- B. **STEPS TO TAKE:** I feel that engaging in a conversation with him and getting to a place where he felt comfortable to share some of his hurts with me might be an avenue for a gospel-centered conversation. He also let me know that his family is going to be moving in a few months, so making myself available to serve him and his family in any way possible may be a good way for me to live out the gospel of the one who came not to be served but to serve.
- C. **PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES:** Joe and I had a really good conversation just last evening, and that was when he shared with me about his recent experience at the VA (Veteran Affairs) Hospital, which then led to him share about some of his combat experiences. This was also when he told me that he is going to be moving soon – only about 5-10 minutes away, but we will regardless no longer be next-door neighbors. I was really encouraged by his openness with me, but feel that his moving away will present challenges for me in sharing the Gospel with him and living the Gospel around him.

OCTOBER 5<sup>TH</sup>, 2011

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- A. **HOW I'M PRAYING:** Not much has changed in our relationship since I last wrote – I'm continuing to pray that God would open his eyes to see that he no longer needs to depend on himself – he can depend on the one whose strength never fails. I sense that Joe has deep fears about living a life that really means something, and that is best for his family – I am praying that he sees that the answer to his fears is Jesus! I am praying too that he would that as long as he looks to *things* for happiness, he will never be satisfied; only when he drinks of the Living Water will he never thirst again.
- B. **STEPS TO TAKE:** I feel as though maybe having a conversation with him about where his joy and happiness comes from may yield some fruitful conversation. When I run into down in his garage, or make an effort to spend time with him, bringing up the idea of desire and happiness might lead to some gospel-focused conversations.
- C. **PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES:** I think that one of the biggest challenges on MY END is busyness – I am working, and he is working, and it's so easy for each day to just slip away. If I am going to have opportunity to share the hope I have in Jesus, we need to have time of just being together! I think that challenge of busyness is the most significant at this time – I need to make the time, make space to ask God to flow through me and into Joe's life. Help me, Jesus!

OCTOBER 12<sup>TH</sup>:

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- A. **HOW I'M PRAYING:** I'm continuing to pray for an opportunity for deeper conversation; after our assignment on presenting the Gospel to the person that we're praying for, I feel a deeper burden to share the hope of Jesus with Joe.
- B. **STEPS TO TAKE:** Look for ways to serve Joe and his family, and to spend meaningful time with Him.
- C. **PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES:** Time continues to be a problem – Joe works long hours, and my schedule is full as well. Lord Jesus, give me the grace to make space for this relationship, and to be open to what you want to do through it.

NOVEMBER 9<sup>TH</sup>, 2011

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- A. **HOW I'M PRAYING:** That Jesus would show Joe that there is so much more to life than simply the day to day – that the author of Life is longing for him to experience life and life to the fullest.
- B. **STEPS TO TAKE:** When I'm at home, to pop my head out and see if Joe is out in his garage – that is the best time for he and I to talk.
- C. **PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES:** There has not been much progress in the past few weeks – the times that I have found Joe in his garage, he has been on the phone talking with someone else, which hasn't been conducive for fruitful conversation.

NOVEMBER 16<sup>TH</sup>, 2011

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- A. **HOW I'M PRAYING:** For the last two weeks, I have been rising early every morning to spend time in the presence of God, and to pray – I have been praying for Joe by name every morning, and what has been on my heart recently has been that God would reveal to Joe just how deep his need is for someone to come to his rescue. In interceding for him I've also felt compelled to pray that he would see that there is some much more to life than the every day – there is a part of that yearns for something more, and my prayer has been that he would yield to that voice that tells him he was made for so much more – he was made for a relationship with the God that spoke the universe into being!
- B. **STEPS TO TAKE:** I need to get to a place where I feel I simply need to ask Joe if we can spend some time together – he hasn't been in his garage lately, and when he is, he's on the phone. If I'm going to create space for a significant conversation to take place, I need to take the initiative to carve out some time for us to get together.

- C. **PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES:** I haven't seen much progress in my relationship with Joe recently. It looks like he is getting into the full swing of a move, so he is busier even than normal. The pastor of our church has been ill recently, so I have had to step into the pulpit a handful of times, which has filled up my time even more. The challenge is to get to a place where we can talk openly – Lord, please take us there!

### **CONCLUSION:**

#### HOW I PRESENTED THE GOSPEL:

In my relationship with Joe, I have been attempting to “live a life for which the Gospel is the only answer.” Unfortunately, due to both of our busy schedules, it has not been possible to live much of that life with him. How ironic that we can be so busy going to seminary that we don't have time to live out the Gospel with our neighbors! I haven't sensed a good time to simply share with Joe the message of the Gospel, or even to use my Gospel presentation to share the Gospel with him. He has had some negative experiences with the church in the past, and I don't want him to tune me out or do injury to his spiritual life just so that I can check off a box for a class. That being said, I sensed the Spirit prompting me to at least *begin* the conversation by asking some spiritually searching questions, which I did this last Wednesday, November 16<sup>th</sup>.

#### HOW HE RESPONDED:

In this specific conversation, I started it by asking about the youth group that he used to attend as a high school student but stopped attending. As our conversation progressed, he basically shared that he believed this if there is a God, he is “up in heaven laughing at us” for how foolish we are, and that if we make at least a half-hearted effort at being a good person, then that is enough. I could sense that Joe was willing to talk, but he was also guarded, insinuating that religion gets ugly when it is shoved down someone's throat. I told him I agreed!

Outside of this specific conversation, Joe's response to my initiation of our relationship has been warm, but guarded, in the same way our conversation this week was. But his story isn't over, and I am hopeful.

#### WHAT DID I LEARN FROM THIS EXPERIENCE?

In praying specifically for a person that I am longing to believe the good news of the Gospel, I learned several things. First, that there is never a perfect moment to present the Gospel, but present the Gospel I must! I need the Lord's help to live out the Gospel to him in my every interaction, and as I think about doing the work of evangelism in my own life, that is my aim – to both live a life for which the Gospel is the only explanation, and then be so fluent in the Gospel that when that “softball moment” comes I am ready to speak the words of Gospel hope into whatever situation I find myself in. I can have all of the apologetic knowledge in the world, but as Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians, “If I have not love, I have nothing” – if I am going to be an agent of God's new creation in this world, I need to both be transformed by the Gospel myself, and be fluent in and passionate enough about it for it to pour out of every pore. This is my goal, and this is what I have learned through this experience.