



THE COMPASS

DANGEROUS

Pastor Joe Johnson

Julian became emperor of the Romans in the year of our Lord three hundred and sixty one. He had his university degree from Athens and a heart for the Greek gods. When he took the throne he began a campaign against Christianity, but not a campaign of persecution. Persecution had been tried for 300 some years and Christianity was as strong as ever. No, Julian implemented a more sophisticated attack.

Julian began by taking tax exemption and any other privileges away from the churches. *(Of course the Bible doesn't teach that Churches should expect or get any such exemptions in the first place.)* Then he started imposing regulations on Christian assemblies, one particular regulation said you couldn't have men and women in the same building because of the possibility of immorality. But the master stroke was two-fold. He endorsed and forced schools to teach anti-Christian works that attacked the origins of Christianity. Secondly he said that anyone who taught the Greek classics *(the foundation of higher education)* had to believe in the Greek gods. Julian wanted to basically remove Christians from higher education and Jesus from consideration. At the same time, Julian pushed his form of paganism to replace Christianity. Julian failed. He only ruled until 363 and his ideas passed from the scene for a time.

Joseph Stalin, who actually attended seminary at one time, followed in Julian's footsteps *(although there were others before*

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WORTH CONSIDERING by Mark "the Shark" Zondag

Why is Jesus worth considering? As I thought about this question I found myself staring at the wall behind my computer wondering what I should write. Then I remembered the words of Isaiah 41:13- For I am the LORD your God, who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, "Do not fear; I will help you."

These words are so comforting because of the level of personal connection it conveys. God does not just sit on his throne,

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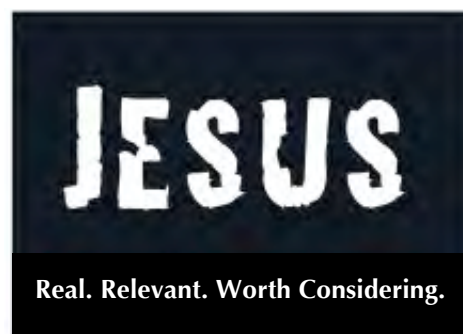


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completely removed from us, and order us around. No! He is close enough to take our right hand and help us. This verse reminds me of when I went out camping with my dad in the boundary waters and I attempted to start the fire. Despite all my efforts, it did not light. Then when I asked my dad for help he took me through the process. I have never had trouble lighting a fire since.

Other world religions do not have this personal connection with their god(s). Dr. Mark Gabriel wrote a wonderful book comparing Jesus and Muhammad. One of the distinct differences between them is the relationship between Allah and Muslims and between God and us. The relationship between Allah and Muslims is comparable to a slave master and his slaves. Allah requires complete unquestioned obedience. Prayers have to be said five times a day at certain times, the dialogue for prayer is already completely written, and he might not even accept them. With God though, our relationship mirrors a father and his son. We can say our prayers when we want, where we want, for how long we want without fear he won't accept them or that he is ignoring us. It isn't a prewritten dialogue but a place we can take our troubles, worries, struggles, joys, and ask for help. It's our personal means of communication with God. How wonderful is that?

Not only has God given us the wonderful gift of prayer but sent his Son to save us! This wonderful gift is mentioned all the time in church and sometimes this gift is taken for granted. But we have to remember how wonderful of a gift we have been given. We did not do anything to deserve it; in fact, we did not do anything to even get it. Yet, this wonderful gift is ours. Let's not forget that!

How about all those wonderful blessing that we receive daily: the food on the table, the roof over our heads, our talents, and our struggles? Sometimes, especially in these times of financial struggle, we focus so much on the bad events in life that we don't look around at all the wonderful gifts we do have: children, friends, our health, and our wonderful Father in heaven. Instead of looking at all our gifts and feeling entitled to them, let's remember where they came from and thank God for them every day. He did not have to give them to us but he did anyway.

Why is Jesus worth considering? After everything is considered, how can we even justify asking that question? God gave us prayer so we can communicate with him whenever we want about whatever we want and we know God is listening. He gives us gifts and blessings every day. He sent his Son to die for us. We don't deserve it, we don't do anything to get it, and yet it is there for us. When we think about it, shouldn't these gifts make us want to go tell non-believers why Jesus is worth considering?

Jesus

Real. Relevant. Worth Considering.

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WHAT IF...???

by Jonathan Zander

One of our goals, at True North this semester, has been to focus on outreach and find ways to connect with the countless people on campus that have never heard of us. The Outreach Committee has done this by handing out flyers and putting up posters on campus to inform others about the existence of our church, organizing Bible studies to provide a doctrinal foundation for these people, and searching for ways to make others feel more comfortable in our presence.

One of the groups we sought to connect with and approach were atheists. How do you approach people that deny the existence of any sort of supreme being or deity, though? It's difficult enough to approach people that are Christian, yet differ on points of doctrine. How do you reach these people that seem so lost and either refuse to acknowledge God or find difficulty in comprehending a god? After some discussion we decided to go with the theme of: What if...? - What if there really is a God? What if the Truth isn't impossible to find? What if there is a book that provides us with all the answers? We hoped that these questions would spark some curiosity in them or cause them to at least ponder what these questions were really asking and meant towards their position and status in life. They deny the existence of God, but what does it really mean if, by some chance, they are wrong? They think the world evolved over millions or billions of years, but what if it didn't? They laugh at our answers to questions on faith, love, and, salvation, but what if we are correct?

The Bible tells us that death and the end of the world should be worrisome and fearful topics for those that deny God. Many who deny Him just find it highly improbable that there could actually be someone in control. My answer to

"highly improbable" is "what if?" Many people refuse to gamble because they say, "What if I lose all my money and can't pay my bills?" Others won't go sky-diving because they say, "What if my parachute doesn't open?" Still others won't ride in planes because they say, "What if I crash?"

Now the odds in a casino may not be in your favor, but many people still come away winning money. Going sky-diving may seem dangerous, but only 1 in 60,000 people who go sky-diving die. To some flying, also, may seem dangerous, but the chances of you dying in a plane crash are one in a million. So, I ask myself why does the fear of the improbable in these situations cause people to hesitate, but the possibility of the existence of God have no effect on so many? To me the latter is the much more fearful "what if?" Now, I don't want anybody to believe in God out of pure fear, but given the possible outcomes, personally I would think longer about denying the existence of God than I would about jumping out of a plane. Some think the odds of God existing are highly improbable. Well, I say the big bang theory and macroevolution are highly improbable. I can jump out of a plane with much more comfort knowing where I stand with God than can a person who denies God and believes in macroevolution. To me this seems to be a point worth considering. This thinking led me to ponder, though, what if we all ask, "What if?"

Personally, in my own life, I ask "what if?" a lot. What would I do if God didn't exist? What if I didn't have God to turn to in times of trouble? What would I do if I didn't have God to comfort me after I don't do as well on a test as I had hoped? What if I didn't have my Christian family to support me in all of the difficult times in my life? What if I didn't have

What If? - *Continued from page 3*

my peers at True North to show me that there is goodness and kindness in the world? What if God wasn't really in control of my life? What if there weren't any Christian women with whom I could start a family? -

Many of these questions cause anxiety for most. The only time they cause me anxiety is when I forget the answer. Then, I just recall Isaiah 41:10, "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." This leads me to remember the answer is that Jesus is with me, and it provides me with an endless amount of comfort. The only real question I have left is what would I do if I was one of the people that don't know the answer? What if I was depressed and didn't

know who to turn to? What if I was hopeless and didn't know where to seek guidance? What if I was really one of these people who doesn't have support from a Christian family? What if I was one of these people who doesn't have Christian peers? What if I truly believed that God didn't exist? - Words cannot describe the utter hopelessness, confusion and fear that would describe this. My life would be so much different in a negative way if this were the case.

To all of those who are in college and lost, I ask what if you had Jesus? To all of those who are depressed and hopeless, I ask what if you had Jesus? To all of those who are experiencing any sort of pain in their life, I ask what if you had Jesus? To all of those who think they are happy, but haven't found God, I ask what if you had Jesus? To everyone I say, Jesus, is worth considering!!!

THANK YOU STUDENTS AND ALUMNI

From Pastor and Val Johnson

The Lord has richly blessed us. Not only are we surrounded by a "cloud of witnesses" who are daily sharing their faith in various witnesses on a public campus, but in 10 years at True North we have acquired a family of some of the brightest, most courageous, and most loving Christians. And I venture to say we have learned much more from these students than they have from us.

Thank you so much to all the alumni and students who sent heartfelt cards and contributed to the wonderful gift that was presented to us back in February. It was put to good use on our vacation over Spring Break as we celebrated our 10th Wedding Anniversary as well.

For fun, check out the videos of Pastor Johnson's surfing lesson on our Facebook Group.



True North Students presented Pastor and Valerie Johnson with a "little" Anniversary present at this semester's B & B Night (Bad Movie & Brunch) from current students and TN Alumni.

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him). He seized church property and regulated assemblies. He instituted civil marriage to replace church weddings. He did not allow Christians to be teachers, the church lost its status and Christianity was replaced with state atheism.

Here we are in the year of our Lord 2011 and things are so much better! Hasn't our society done a pretty good job of getting Christianity out of education? I'm not saying that all schools should be teaching theology. But our public school system has a curriculum that is as anti-Christian as Julian's. I met a high school senior with the outlines of Christian history that went something like this: *We all know Constantine and some church council decided Jesus was god, and then persecuted and destroyed their opponents. The government of Rome was in on this to control people.* It is remarkable that he knew even this since our public high schools can barely teach American history let alone world and ancient history. There are huge forces at work in our country that do not want anyone to open a Bible or an unapproved history book for that matter. So where am I going with this?

As I was looking at this history I had to ask myself a simple question. What are they afraid of? What is it about a Jewish peasant that taught for only three years in an area of about 120 miles long by 80 miles wide? What is it about a guy who didn't advocate revolution, violent overthrow or world conquest that scares so many governments? Why does a man who talked about loving his enemies frighten the powerful? Why fear a man who was executed and died all alone on a cross?

As I look around I notice that the largest group of people on earth claim to follow this man. The second largest religion on earth says he was a great prophet who is returning. The third largest religion calls him a guru. That a Jewish rabbi should have such an impact on the world astounds me.

So here it is. Isn't this Jesus at least worth considering? Isn't he worth, at the very least, a look? Aren't you at all curious? I mean...you're not afraid are you? That's right! I dare you! Take a look at Jesus and see what happens.

⁴⁵ Finally the temple guards went back to the chief priests and Pharisees, who asked them, "Why didn't you bring him in?"

⁴⁶ "No one ever spoke the way this man does," the guards declared.

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SUNDAY WORSHIP**10am – Morning Praise**

At UTEC – *directions on our website*
1313 5th Street SE, Mpls, MN 55414
In the Atrium

WEEKLY BIBLE STUDY

CRITICAL CHAPTERS OF THE BIBLE

9:00am – Sundays before Worship

Small Group studies every week.

THE LIFE OF DAVID.

7pm – Mondays @ Bordertown Coffee**7:15pm – Tuesdays @ Pastor Johnson's****7:15pm – Wednesdays @ Mark's****EVENTS****April 6th & 13th – Wednesday Lent**

Join us at 6:30pm in Utec Room 102A for a short Devotion Service.

April 21st – Christian Passover

This year we're celebrating with Christ Ev.
Lutheran in N. St. Paul

April 22nd – Good Friday

Devotion Service
Noon – Utec Room 102A

April 24th – Easter Sunday

10:00am Worship
11:30am Brunch

Join us after worship at Pastor & Val's house for
Brunch and Easter fun.

May 1st – Outdoor Worship & Picnic

Van Cleve Park on Como & 15th Ave.

Join us for Worship and then Grilling Out!

May 15th – Sunday Worship

Last One of the School Year.

The summer schedule will be posted online.

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*Details & more events posted on our
Online Calendar.*

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ON ASSIGNMENT

GOD'S OPPORTUNITIES OVERSEAS

Study Abroad.

Internationalization. These are words that almost all students hear at least once while attending the University of Minnesota. I heard these words and became a little obsessed with leaving the U.S. during my college years, as I studied in both Australia and Venezuela. It didn't end there, either. After graduation, I took a position as a volunteer teacher in the Czech Republic through Thoughts of Faith for a year. All of these experiences, though each unique, taught me valuable lessons as a Christian.

My months spent in Australia and Venezuela were some of the hardest of my life; at least as far as being a Christian is concerned. It was the first time not having my Christian friends living down the hall from me or being an instant phone call away. It was a time when I wasn't able to go to a WELS church and had to work extremely hard to stay focused on God and studying His Word on my own. They certainly weren't my strongest months and were times when I questioned many things about my faith and God. Thankfully, I returned to True North and the amazing Christian friends I had. There, through renewed study of God's Word, my faith was again strengthened.

My experience in the Czech Republic was completely different from my previous times spent abroad. I taught at Martin Luther School in Plzen, Czech Republic. It was during this year of teaching when I was able to enjoy traveling to many new places, learning about a new culture and overcoming the challenges of living overseas - yet not struggle with the lack of Christian support. It was truly wonderful to live, work, worship and travel with



Melissa Geirach (2nd from right) with friends Janice, Becky, and Noelle in the Czech Republic.

individuals that all believed the same thing as me. How wonderful if we could all have more overseas experiences like this!

It has been about 4 years since I've returned to the U.S. after my time in the Czech Republic. The experience of studying abroad, and helping others have the opportunity to experience what I have, is still constantly on my mind. How can I help others experience life overseas with other Christians, while also giving Christians in the U.S. an opportunity to witness to others? This is one of the reasons why I began an exchange program between 7-9th graders in the U.S. and Martin Luther School in the Czech Republic.

In October 2010, 7 students from Pilgrim Lutheran School in Minneapolis, MN were able to spend two weeks in Plzen, living with families and experiencing the culture of this European country. It wasn't always easy. They missed their families and friends and,

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since many of the Czech families are not Christian, some of them struggled with the lack of shared faith in the homes. One student asked for a Bible so he could talk with his family about God. It was a wonderful experience for me as a chaperone to watch the students grow together as Christians and also give each other support in the challenges they were dealing with during the two weeks in Plzen.

The exchange does not end there, however. In March 2011, 20 Czech students will be visiting Minneapolis, living with families from Pilgrim Lutheran and experiencing American Christian life. Many of these students are not believers and it will give these families such an amazing opportunity to share their faith. I pray that, after this experience with Christian families, they, too, will see how important Jesus is in their lives!

God has richly blessed my life through all of my experiences abroad, but especially through this exchange program in the Czech Republic. He has allowed me to take a passion of mine and share it with others, allowing students to experience another part of the world with fellow Christians and also giving us the opportunity to share our faith and love for Christ with others.

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⁴⁷ "You mean he has deceived you also?" the Pharisees retorted. ⁴⁸ "Has any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in him?" ⁴⁹ No! But this mob that knows nothing of the law – there is a curse on them."

⁵⁰ Nicodemus, who had gone to Jesus earlier and who was one of their own number, asked, ⁵¹ "Does our law condemn anyone without first hearing him to find out what he is doing?"

⁵² They replied, "Are you from Galilee, too? Look into it, and you will find that a prophet does not come out of Galilee." John 7:45-52



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414-256-3279
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True North WELS Campus Ministry

WWW.TRUENORTHWELS.ORG

Office	612-378-1346
Address:	1313 5 th St. SE #328 Box 33 Minneapolis, MN 55414
Pastor	612-597-7998 (cell)
Joe Johnson	pastor@truenorthwels.org
Ministry Coordinator	612-267-3017 (cell)
Valerie Johnson	coordinator@truenorthwels.org

THE HEART OF MEANING

Is it possible that the meaning of life has something to do with relationship? A brilliant and rich, business man looking at his life feels that it has been empty and pointless. Why? Because he didn't spend time with his children. A woman is at the top of her field, successful in almost everything she tries. And yet she feels an inner ache that will not go away. And in her heart she dreams of her father telling her that she loves her and is proud of her.

This longing in the heart to find love and unity in relationships is something that God has placed in us. That is why relationship and the meaning of life are connected. God made us to have relationships with others and to have a relationship with Him. All good human relationships fill our hearts with joy and our lives with meaning because they, in a small way, are imitations of his perfect love for us. God wants

our lives to be filled with meaning and he wants to give us that meaning by bringing us into a love relationship with him. And thankfully he made the first step. Jesus showed us his love by coming to earth for us and demonstrating what love looks like with his life. But he didn't stop there, like a mother who would give her life for her child, Jesus demonstrated his love for us by his death. He gave his life for us so we could know him and find meaning in him.

That longing in the heart cannot be filled with money or power or even pleasure. But when you have a love relationship with Jesus it will fill your life with meaning. God's love will also overflow into all your other relationships.

This is what the Bible says: "This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, that He loved us and sent his Son Jesus as an atoning sacrifice for our sins."

1 John 4:9-10

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E-mail Valerie Johnson at coordinator@truenorthwels.org if you would like the electronic version of these articles.

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