

# THE COMPASS

## Cardboard Boxes

Pastor Joe Johnson

The cardboard box! So many great things come in cardboard boxes! The mailman delivered presents sent from home and they were in a large cardboard box. My friends Barnes and Noble sent me some books in a cardboard box. I took apart my road bike for a flight to the west coast what do you think I put my precious bike in? Yep, a cardboard box. From apples to apple computers—is there anything in this country not shipped in cardboard boxes?

And yet cardboard doesn't last. I saw a two year old climb on an empty box and you can guess what happened. It collapsed and down went the toddler! It doesn't take much to dent such a box or put a hole in it. In fact a used cardboard box wears its frailty for all to see. A friend in Africa received a six month old care package in a cardboard box that was being held together by only prayer and tape!

So how does it feel to be a cardboard box—cardboard box from God? He has placed Jesus, the gospel good news of our Savior in you and sent you to this world! He has sent you to family, friends, classmates and coworkers with the treasure of life itself! You have God's Holy Spirit in you so that you can see the glory of Jesus and proclaim his name to the world!

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## Matters of Faith and Global Positioning by Molly Dancer

A week after I arrived in Nairobi, Kenya, I read a news report stating that 86 people had died in city traffic accidents during the last fourteen days. It only took one glance around to understand that street life in Kenya is merely the survival of the fittest. Closing the newspaper, I decided this statistic was a solid reason to continue my morning prayers with diligence.

That first week in Nairobi made me realize that everything is a peril to your body, life, and soul. The sun sears the flesh. The tap water harbors microscopic bugs-of-death. Foot traffic is infested with pick-pockets. The 24 hour music and noise is mind numbing. And of course, the traffic itself holds the



*Mark Anderson & Emily Mierendorf  
visiting before Evening Praise.*

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**Encouragement, the awkward first step**  
by Mark Zondag

My heart is pounding. Sweat creeping down my face. The adrenaline is starting to kick in, as well as the pain. The more pain I have, the more my motivation starts to slip. "Just stop now and it will all be over," that little voice tells me. Then someone yells "Keep it up, you're doing great!"

Encouragement, it is one of the many forms of help that we can give. It can also be one of the hardest forms of help to give as well. Without it, giving up would be easier. No one would be pushing you to keep striving to be your best. Without encouragement, any obstacle in the road, no matter how insignificant, could be potentially fatal to a goal. With encouragement, that obstacle, no matter how large, cannot stop the progress towards a goal.

Encouragement, how does it happen? Talking to others to find out what they are struggling through. It requires building those bridges with people so that you can help them. It requires that awkward period when first getting to know them. It requires understanding that some people do not tell you that they are struggling right away. It requires knowing how to encourage others. It requires always being ready to truly listen and respond to those who need help.

Encouragement, how does it relate to me? It means taking that uncomfortable first step to get to know a stranger. It is a difficult first step, but a necessary one. It requires being selfless at all times, just like Jesus was for us. Always be ready to encourage and help anyway you can, whether it is talking to someone about their struggles or just taking their mind off of them.

Encouragement, why should I do it? Romans 15:5 says "May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had." God wants us to be there for each other when we struggle through the hard times. God wants us to be selfless like Jesus was. God also wants us to be to encourage like Jesus did, after all he was our example of love.

*Abby Buske & Mark Zondag lead the singing at Evening Praise.*



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## Encouragement From the Word

by Kari Baltutis

*“For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope” (Romans 15:4).*

Being a senior Mechanical Engineering student, I know now, more than ever, what it means to be busy. While it may be easy to get caught up in my seemingly endless school work and obligations to various student groups, I make it a priority to attend the Bible classes our campus ministry provides each week. These classes not only provide an in-depth study of the Bible that cannot be matched by going to church alone, but they also encourage me greatly in my faith.

The first Bible class that assembles each week is the Roman’s study with Pastor Johnson. Every week we read a new chapter of Romans and discuss what all the verses mean and how they can be applied. These discussions almost always lead to personal stories about how the concepts of these verses have been demonstrated in one or multiple students’ lives. Being able to both hear and share these stories inspires me in knowing I share common fears, problems, aspirations, and most importantly, a common faith with the people there.

The women’s Bible study, also offered each week, provides similar encouragement, but in a different way. Especially since our study this semester is covering the differences and similarities in men and women, as described in the Bible, discussions are often easy to relate to on a different level than the Roman’s study. Having an all-Christian-women group brings deeper discussion to the study on a more personal level.

Through prayer, discussions, and the reading of God’s Word, I feel renewed and encouraged in my faith every time I leave Bible class. I pray that more students become involved in these studies so that they too may reap the benefits of Christian fellowship.

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### Cardboard Boxes - Continued from page 1

Oh you may not look like much, you may easily get beat up, scratched, even start to show the wear and the tear but it’s not the outside that matters but who is inside! You may look like a box that has been shipped all around the world, dented and falling apart but Jesus is in you. And yes you and I may only be cardboard boxes (and beat up ones at that) but what a treasure, what a God, what a Savior we have!

*“But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.” 2 Corinthians 4:7-10*



*Worship in the Presidents’ Room in Coffman Memorial Union*



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### Matters of Faith - Continued from page 1

potential of giving you either an incurable ulcer or an express ticket to the pearly gates. Thus, holding continuous dialogue with the Lord from dawn to dusk became not only necessary for my self-preservation but there was no other opportunity for me to see or feel His presence; I was lonely.

Growing up in the Lutheran Church, we are given a thorough education in God's omnipotent powers and omnipresence. I know by heart that He is capable of being in all places, at all times, with all people. Nairobi, at first glance, and even at the second and third glance, was clearly left off of God's omnipresent grid. Quickly becoming known as a politically and socially volatile country, Kenya hosts criminalities of all kinds; it is a breeding ground for ethnic clashing, government corruption, and zealous youths. Stability of any form is simply a dream for many Kenyans. However, the greatest paradox revolves around the fact that Kenya is considered to be one of the most Christian nations in Africa; religion is the breath of life for these people. For example, "Upendo kwa Mungu" (love for God) booms within the civil society; gospel music blares from the taxis, slogans such as 'God is good' and 'Glory be to God' are written on bus windows, store fronts, graphitized on walls, and spoken by most. Many government meetings and ceremonies are opened with prayer and Sunday is still considered a holy day of rest. In a country as perilous as this, our Lord's name is readily heard and

seen. His being, on the other hand, I found much more difficult to recognize.

To complicate matters, the spiritual ease I anticipated in my move to Kenya was non-existent. I assumed that when I removed myself from daily comforts, routines, and temptations at home, I would automatically cleave more tightly to God, especially being in a foreign country. The first week away, the Lord heard from me probably more than another other human alive, but after some time, loneliness, discouragement and pure frustration led me further from His hand. I could no longer see the Lord at work in my life, I could not feel His guidance, and I certainly failed to see His mercy among such great destitution. In conclusion, it was easy to assume that God simply didn't hang out here in Kenya. Nevertheless, I was aware of one thing: I was still alive amid the chaos; I wasn't about to take it lightly. Whether I am able to recognize it or not, His grace comes daily, along with the sunburns.

My weeks in Nairobi have now turned to months and life is once again a routine; yet I maintain a continuous awareness of being different and not fitting in. I believe I now understand what it means to live as a foreigner in this world, and also what it means to possess blind faith. Hebrews 11 has become the encouragement I crave in my daily life. Hebrews 11:3 says, "By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was

*Matters of Faith - Continued from page 4*

not made out of things that are visible.” Verse eight continues, “By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place...And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he went to live in a land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents...For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.” Faith is the hardest thing to come by these days; I have it, it’s in me, but the weakness of it overwhelms me. When we juxtapose our current lives with Abraham’s it is clear where we fall short: absolute surrender in terms of trusting God. I originally ventured to Kenya knowing that the desire to go was instilled by the Lord; it was a calling I couldn’t dismiss. However, once I arrived, the calling I had previously felt morphed into the thought, “what the heck was I *thinking?*” Nothing was easy, I got lost countless times, I was accosted by unfavorable characters, I forgot the purpose of my career path, of my life. What I wanted most of all was to go home. I told God daily, “Excuse me, this is too much, I didn’t sign up for this. Kenyans are crazy and rude, I feel weird, I’m lonely. Take me home.”

Mistake number one was that I *told* Him, who am I to say what is best for me? Mistake number two is that contentment, as I found out, is not a matter of global positioning; it is a condition of the heart.

Oswald Chambers, an inspiring Christian writer in the early 1900s, explained our purpose of obedience to God’s callings. “Again and again you will come right back to what Jesus wants, but ever time you will turn back at the true point of testing. We tend to say, ‘Yes, but – suppose I do obey God in this matter, what about...’ Or we say, ‘I will obey God if what He asks

of me doesn’t go against my common sense, but don’t ask me to take a step in the dark.’ In the spiritual realm, Jesus Christ demands that you risk everything you hold on to or believe through common sense, and leap by faith into what He says. Once you obey, you will immediately find that what He says is as solidly consistent as common sense.”

Most days, my presence in Kenya doesn’t make sense. Though I don’t get lost in the city anymore and I can weather the stares of strangers, I fight to maintain the faith that Abraham held, I struggle to see Him at work amongst the poor and homeless. I am humbled daily.

Therefore, I remain in Kenya and will continue coming back in future years, not always knowing my path or destination but always being provided for. It is in these provisions that I have finally come to see the Lord; though outwardly we live in a godless world, He shows himself to us in the mere fact that we arrive safely home at night; He sends us someone to point us in the right direction; He never leaves us. No matter where I may find myself, no matter what I do today or tomorrow, at every latitude my compass swivels back here, to the Word of God – this place is my true north. “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”



*Progress on the Dinkydome and apartments “next door”*



*The view from True North’s Windows*

A while back I saw a sign in a store listing all the reasons people leave their job, and the percent of people who fell under each category. It had about ten encompassing reasons including: retirement, death, moving, salary, etc... The top reason people left their job, accounting for about two thirds of all people, was dissatisfaction with coworkers. More than all the other reasons combined, people quit because they were fed up with the other people at their job.

Isn't it true? How often did an otherwise good job feel miserable because of people who seemed to be an obstacle or intolerable? Or how much does an already bad job feel that much worse when you find out who you're doing it with. Don't you wish they would just leave? I guess when we can't make those other people leave, then we just quit.

It's easy to point fingers, but when are "those other people" you and me? How many people quit their job, or worse, quit the church, because of us? When does our frustration, irritability and stress become more than our neighbor can bear? More importantly, how do we change? How do we help people with their burdens and be an encouragement, a breath of fresh air to them,

when we can't even bear our own burdens and encourage ourselves?

We can't. We're not the answer. Jesus is the answer! When we couldn't accept others, and others couldn't accept us, Jesus accepted us (Romans 15:7). When we couldn't bear our burdens, Jesus took them on himself at the Cross. He takes our burdens and fills us with joy and peace so that we are able to share His hope with those around us (Romans 15:13). So remember the encouragement we receive from Jesus and share that hope and encouragement with everyone around you.

By Mark Anderson

*May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had.*

*Romans 15:5*

*Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God. Romans 15:7*

*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13*

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