



Your NAWE Companion

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Content and Joyful in Jesus

Andy Hogue, *Leander, TX*

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"There's nothing with enjoying a refreshing adult beverage every now and again," a friend I've known and trusted over many years said.

He and I didn't quite see eye-to-eye after what had happened in our home town in recent years. Due to a technicality in state law and some quick maneuvering by certain personalities, our humble home of about 800 people had transformed from a dry, farm-and-ranch-centric North Texas hamlet with one Dairy Queen and no grocery store to something that's becoming a bit of an entertainment draw for the area.

The sight of visitors drinking whiskey and beer around the town square took some getting used to. (At one time the square was used for storing vast piles of feed and fertilizer!) Equally jarring was a tall security fence around the school campus and talk of adding new police officers to the beat (when once the city had one). That seems to be the natural progression of many small towns lately.

It would have been easy for me -- a political writer and consultant by trade -- to engage in a debate of whether alcohol sales helps the economy or drains it. It would have been much easier for a social conservative like me to engage my more moderate-but-equally-churchgoing friend in a tedious discussion regarding moderation versus total abstinence. I was ready to go, with plenty of Bible verses in mind.

Then I felt a "check in my spirit." Have you ever had one of those? Almost instantly, our talk went from a matter of external behavior to one of "inward holiness" -- one of the SYMPTOMS of sin, rather than outward manifestations of it.

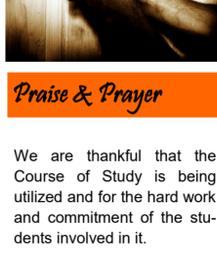
I asked whether the town was more enjoyable with alcohol now being freely consumed in public places. He said it was, "by far." "What a boring town we've had for all those dry years," I countered. "Now wait a minute!" he bristled, ever-proud of the Christmas celebrations, homecoming events, and fall festivals held around a town square once as dry as the Kalahari.

I regret we didn't get to finish our conversation. I walked away from it wishing everyone could celebrate each day like it was one of those community festivals. Actually, we can -- if we would surrender our fear of discontent to God.

The "peace of God which passes all understanding" (Philippians 4:7) doesn't require social crutches, be it alcohol or some other poor substitute. And "the joy of the Lord" (Nehemiah 8:10) relieves us of that nagging boredom some of us often feel with our day-to-day existence, which lays the groundwork for temptation. "Now godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Timothy 6:6).

Regardless of your opinion on drinking, if only we would "be filled with the Spirit" we wouldn't need to be "drunk with wine" (Ephesians 5:18) or wrapped up in anything else that distracts from and destroys the gift of each moment God has given us. It wouldn't even be a political issue! Whatever it is that plagues us -- drunkenness, covetousness, sexual impurity, dishonesty, boasting, cheating, hoarding, you name it -- there's a universal answer:

More and more of Jesus every day.



Praise & Prayer

We are thankful that the Course of Study is being utilized and for the hard work and commitment of the students involved in it.

Pray for Noel Ray Bracewell (Stuttgart, AR) who is recovering from serious injuries suffered in a bad car accident.

Pray for the house church at Leander, TX (see article).

Let's keep praying for our nation, especially in light of the upcoming election.

Pray for our churches and pastors, that we will be faithful to all God is calling us to be in these times full of both great challenges and great opportunities.

"In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."
- 1 Thessalonians 5:18

Getting to Know You

The Westward Expansion

Larry Shreiner, *Blairsville, GA*

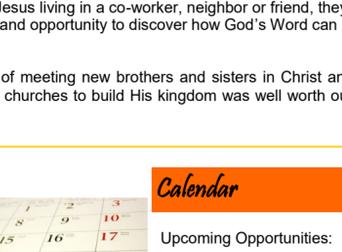
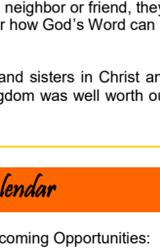
Did you know we have a NAWE member in the heart of Texas? Just to the north of Austin you will find the community of Leander. It is here that Andy and Katrina Hogue have established a house church.

About two years ago Andy discovered the NAWE's website and began communicating with Tony Elder. Andy discovered that his theology and church history were very similar to that of our members and churches. What drew Andy to the NAWE was its Wesleyan traditions and lack of heavy denominational pressures. Andy believed that the NAWE was God's perfect place for house churches to grow and multiply.

It was partly because of our curiosity to discover how God is using house churches to grow His kingdom that Tony and I drove a total of 30 hours and 1838 miles to visit Andy. What we found in Andy's house church was an exact replica of the house church described in Acts 2:42. "All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer." As we came to the door of Andy and Katrina's home, we were greeted by their two-year-old son. The brisket smoking in the backyard revealed that a fellowship meal was soon to be enjoyed. It wasn't long before members of the house church arrived carrying their delicious contributions to a table that was quickly filling with all the food that makes a great down-home Texas meal. Grace was said as we all held hands. The round table we sat around enabled us to share the events of our week and how God moved in our lives. After the enjoyment of a fantastic meal and sweet fellowship, we moved to the comfort of the living room. Hymns were passed around and our voices, singing old familiar hymns, began to fill the room. Then God's Word was read. What happened next is really the reward experienced when you are part of a house church. Questions were asked about the passages read and the Bible was the source of the answers. The scriptures came alive as individuals shared how God, His Son Jesus, and the Holy Spirit became a daily reality in their lives. After prayer requests were placed in the hands of our Savior, we returned to the table to share the Lord's Supper. How sweet it was take the bread and juice in remembrance of Jesus' death so our sins would be forgiven.

The number attending may have been small but the love we experienced was huge. Home Bible churches are made up of people who may not feel comfortable entering a formal church setting, but because they see the results of Jesus living in a co-worker, neighbor or friend, they will accept an invitation for an informal meal and opportunity to discover how God's Word can improve their lives.

Yes, it was a long car ride, but the reward of meeting new brothers and sisters in Christ and experiencing how God is using small house churches to build His kingdom was well worth our time.



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Calendar

Upcoming Opportunities:

October 13-15: National Conference on Christian Apologetics in Charlotte, NC

November 11-12: Pastor's Conference at Kentucky Mountain Bible College