

# The Philadelphia Epistle

THE LETTERS OF JOE TUCKER TO THE CHURCH FAR AND WIDE  
SEPTEMBER 2008

**Joe**, a member of the beloved community that is the body of Christ, called as a love-servant to the city of Philadelphia by the grace of the Messiah the Son, Savior, and Sent of the Most High God.

To my supporters, friends, and family in Akron and abroad, to those sanctified by the work of the Cross and called to be holy. To those who were once enslaved, but are now free. To those who were once poor, but now possess the richness of Christ (a very different richness indeed). And to those who were once spiritually unemployed, yet are now counted as workers of the LORD!

Grace and Peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ

## Joe's Philadelphia Baptism

**F**riends, a great deal has transpired since last I wrote you and it is to my joy to share my lessons and experiences with you all.

I have been with Mission Year for not more than 3 weeks (at the moment I write this), yet in reflection it has seemed longer. My first week was spent in team captain training, learning the ins-and-outs of the city, familiarizing myself with Mission Year policy, and making preparations for my team to arrive.

Arrive they did and after two nights in the city, we left and ventured to a farm outside Atlanta for Mission Year wide training. This means 94 some college-aged students listening to a spiritual smorgasbord of insight, training, and wisdom. (I'll give you a morsel to wet your inner appetite: The thesis of the Bible is God's continual plan to restore His creation to a 'Community of Oneness')

## Greetings!

**O**h, Akron and all my friends therein, I do miss you with a holy longing for community and kinship! Continue in His great fellowship despite my displacement from you!

To the men of the Manastery, may you continue to serve your Nepalese neighbors remembering that once you were strangers from God!

To the many CF attendees, my prayer for your continual growth, not just in number, but in spiritual depth and discipline.

Thus after an intense week of learning and training we returned "home" to Philadelphia. Namely for myself and my 5 co-laborers (Tina from California, Chris from Cincinnati, Lindsey from St. Louis, Katie from Michigan, and Tim from Pennsylvania) home is a neighborhood of Philly called Logan.

Logan, which is about a 20 minute subway ride North of Center City, is a diverse neighborhood that some time ago was a suburb of Philly. It is now a residential zone of Philly with a demographic of roughly 60% African-American, 30% Asian, and 10% other (that's me!!).

I have started working with a neighborhood school called L.O.G.A.N. Hope that enrolls students in K-8 that are primarily of Cambodian descent. I also have been attending a Cambodian church called Living Water. And after an initial struggle with the names of some of my new brothers and sisters in Christ, I have come to greatly enjoy this community and look forward to pointing my students at Logan Hope to

To the Illuminate gathering, I miss ushering Aisle 3 and pray your continued worship to the true God, letting God define your worship, not your worship defining God.

To my co-laborers in Reach Akron, continue to strive for the worthwhile goal that is the fullness of the wholistic Gospel for Akron. I hope to write you soon with many encouragements!

To the gatherers of the Applebee's Alternative, I pray that your conversations begin to allow the Spirit of

this friendly and growing neighborhood church!

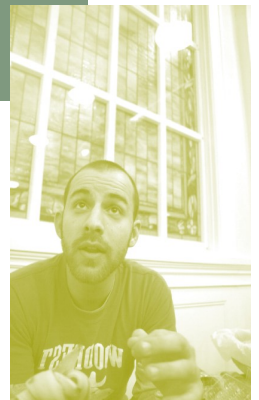
The remainder of this week will be spent searching for further ministries to partner with (I'm hoping to work with some economic growth/job development). Pray for me as I search out the beautiful collision of the needs of the city and the people therein and the gifting God has inspired upon me.

Concerning my new baptism (check the blog if you haven't already!!) perhaps the greatest spiritual insight I have garnered here is that God invites us to truly *follow* Jesus Christ. To follow Him in baptism, life, service, love, suffering, death, and resurrection. This week has served greatly as my baptism into service here in Philly!!

God to move within you. Nothing says rEVOLution like youthful zeal!

To my family, my deepest longing for your companionship and my daily prayers for your well-being, maturing, and for lives that continue to shape after Jesus Christ.

For the many other supporters and friends not listed above, my love, prayers, thanks, and friendship!



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## Joe's Change of Plans

Many of you have asked about visiting or sending me physical gifts, and I am excited to finally be able to answer you. I will not be having anyone staying the night with me until after Christmas. That is not to say that you cannot visit, but that it is best for my team and the people I work with to be free from distractions as we settle in to work, life, and ministry in Philly. The only free day that I have for visits is Friday, so if you want to come to Philly to see me and chill in the city, Friday is really the only day I have available (and I wouldn't be able to put you up for the night). Now concerning gifts, I am not opposed to receiving cookies and whatnot via mail (check the address below) just know that in an attempt to truly love my neighbors I have put on much of their lifestyle. I live where they live. I shop where they shop. I eat what they eat (sorta...). All this to say, is that I do not want to be spoiled. I do not want weekly gifts of food or stuff. However, concerning the occasional box of Oreos, I will acquiesce with much thanks!

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You can send your tax-deductible contributions, made payable to Mission Year to P.O. Box 17628, Atlanta, GA 30316. Please make sure to designate your donation toward my support by writing my Account Fund # (08-0012) on the memo line of the check.

Talk to my Mom for envelopes!!

I have delved deeply into the Word of God these last couple of weeks, and the Scriptures have never seemed so inspired. I have just finished I Corinthians and would like to share my reflections with you, for I have found Corinthians (and any epistle for that matter) best read while serving as an ambassador for the Lord. That is to say try reading the Bible with the urgent lens of mission.

I'll consider mainly I Corinthians 15 (since I just finished reading it). In I Corinthians 15 Paul defends the theology of the resurrection. He shows the logical fallacies for believing in Jesus and not the resurrection, then goes on to use the resurrection from the dead as a reason for mission. Paul asks in verse 30 "Why do I put my life in danger every hour if the resurrection from the dead isn't true?"

That's what I love about God and the life He has called us to. For the most part it agrees with most other world faiths: do unto others, have morals, etc. But then there is this mandate to love unconditionally as God does, to give of yourself for the cause of someone else. To literally and figuratively lay down one's

## Epistle Editorials: I Corinthians

life for another. And this act is pointless without the resurrection.

We can love each other when its easy with or without the resurrection, but the hard missions, the toughest loves are enabled through the hope of the resurrection, that (as Paul says in verse 58) our labor for the Lord is not in vain. Therefore we are able to serve when we are unappreciated, we are able to forgive time and time again. We are not only able but called to show grace and dignity to the sinners of the city no matter how many times they return to their vice. And in doing so we see ourselves and the infinite love and grace that God has for us.

I'll also comment on I Corinthians 7 (and will cite that I'm stealing some of this material from a Francis Chan sermon I heard online...). This is a chapter of the Bible that has long confused me (married, single, etc.), but makes so much sense when read through the lens of mission. Consider verses 29-31. Paul takes a break from his exhortations on whether to stay married, stay single, marry or

not to say something to the affect of, "You're missing the point!" I want those who are married to act as if they are not, those who mourn as if they mourn not, those who rejoice as if they were to not. For time is short.

What time? Our lifetime? Well yes, but moreover, our lifetime to do what God has called us to do and what consumed Paul, mission. To go out and love the world with the love of God, declaring truth and extending grace! So is marriage important and does it need to be guarded, by all means. But God's mission is at hand and we cannot let anything abate this from our minds, not materialism, marriage, laughter, nor grief.

So dear readers, as much as I am enjoying and excited to be mission-ing in Philadelphia, it is my hope that you also are a light, a city on a hill, a missionary to wherever and whomever (and be open to whom it may be) God has placed you. For remember time is short and the work you do for Him is never in vain.

Continue in grace. Belabor by love. And hope in Him.