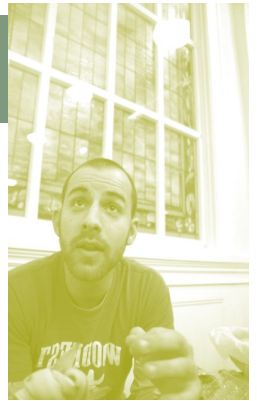


The Philadelphia Epistle

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



To the Bride-To-Be. To the Church. To the called apart. May your lives reflect your glorious calling and identity as the Beloved of Christ!

Joe Tucker, your friend, brother, and sent-out son for the Kingdom of God!

Grace and Peace from God through Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Son of Man.

On Becoming More Like Christ— My Time in The Desert...

I mentioned in my second letter that perhaps one of the greatest joys (and I use “joy” here in the sense of God fulfilling our hearts, not being simply happy and content) of being a Christian is that Christ truly invites us to follow Him; that we are welcomed, privileged, and encouraged to follow in the footsteps of our Savior. I likened my first week there as my “Philadelphia Baptism.”

I would now like to share about my time in the desert. (Recall that immediately after Christ’s baptism, he retreats into the desert for forty days.) Now although I haven’t left Philly to go to any surrounding deserts, we did have a solitude retreat. We left the city at the height of its business (Phillies’ World Series win, Halloween, Friday night) and went into the woods for a day. Why?

To remember the value of solitude and silence. Not being alone, but being alone with God. Not simply being quiet, but allowing one’s heart to be still. Like Jacob wrestling with the Man of God, it was only by allowing ourselves to wrestle with God that our identity could be found. (For Jacob, he became Israel {Genesis 32}).

Moreover, we spent one weekend on the street. The day is called the Pauper’s Right of Passage (PRoP for short), and after watching a documentary on homelessness, and sleeping on the hard wood

floor of a church, we spent the day in Center City, without money and without lunch. Our only assignment was to meet, befriend, listen, and talk with homeless people. In other words our day was dedicated to treating them like actual people and to gather a small insight into what their world is like.

And both experiences were trying. Hard. It was difficult to simply not talk for a day. It was challenging to watch and experience the dehumanizing looks on the streets of Philadelphia.

And one might ask if I was tempted during my stay in the desert. Of course. Tempted to be relevant (that I *must* have something to say or something to give). Tempted to be spectacular (that people would notice *me* above my newfound homeless friend). And tempted to be powerful (to choose to be upwardly mobile rather than befriend the meek). {Citation-I stole these temptations from Nouwen’s *The Way of The Heart*}

But if my time in the desert has taught me anything (and rest assured that it has taught me much, I’m just not able to ver-

balize everything yet...) it is that the way of following is Christ is not comfortable. One could say that the way of the Cross is actually discomforting. That as we (or me here in Philly) endeavor to live more like the One Who Ransomed us, we will face trials, wrestle with our identity, realize our own shortcomings, and suffer with those who suffer.

And to what end? What results from this disconcerting time spent in the desert? The fortitude of faith to affirm the seemingly simple yet deep truths of God.

God is good.

God loves me deeply.

God cares for the poor.

Think of these things. Search out their depth.

Grace and peace.

Greetings!

Three months have come and gone and I still pine for the fellowship of friends and family in Akron (and elsewhere)!

To the many Campus Focus houses, I pray that your fellowship spurs you on towards Christ. That you do not merely hang out

but seek community together. Also, be self-controlled. I long to see you come winter.

To my many brothers, the Red, Mike Smith, Jacob, Cool Adam, Wardy, Noah, Poest, BA, Chaz, Jake, AJ, Scott, Chima, PC, Hirsch, Jason, JDH, Schaadt, Justin, Beetler, Nate, Patrick, Duke, John, Tim and the many others: I love you and miss you greatly. Continue to live as the men of God I know you all are. Lead well. Be humble. Seek Christ.

And to my many sisters as well. My love and encouragement to live as Godly women, gentle and strong, compassionate and modest.

And to my extended family. I will greatly miss your fellowship this Thanksgiving. I truly love you all and am delighted to see you come Christmas!

And to the many others. My thanks and love!

THE PHILADELPHIA EPISTLE

LOGAN Hope, Esperanza, Indo-China, Living Water, and the Logan Neighborhood

I am encouraged to write to you about the many ministries that I am involved with here in Philadelphia; to rejoice with you where God's kingdom is advancing and to pray together for the places in need of Good News and light.

At LOGAN Hope I work with the older students (4th through 8th graders) and have begun to establish actual relationships with many of them. Whether helping them with their homework, simply listening to their day, playing dodgeball, or actually talking about the deep matters of life, I have been encouraged to get to know these adolescents better. But with that knowledge comes grief. I hear of their electricity getting shut down. I listen and counsel as they try to express the struggles of growing up in the city, where drugs and gang-life are commonplace. So pray for the lives and families of my students. Pray for God's presence and provision. Although this world seems desperate, we know and believe that God is faithful!

At Esperanza Health Center I work with billing and financing. It isn't always exciting work, but it is work that helps them function as a non-profit organization. And I am glad to monotonously

help an organization that actively reaches out to HIV patients, that gives inexpensive medical support to poor neighborhoods. I would ask you to pray for Esperanza's continued support and growth as a non-profit organization.

Relationships are also forming at Indo-China American Council, where I tutor young adults working towards their GED equivalency. The lives of many of these students are inundated with despair. They are high school drop-outs, some are pregnant, some have records already. Yet there is this desire within them to rise above the despair of their situation and to make something of themselves. Pray for God's hope and peace for these students. Pray also that God uses me there (math lessons are often a hard bridge into spiritual conversations...)

My Cambodian church, Living Water, has been a vastly different experience than my many years at The Chapel, but it has been encouraging as this small church community has welcomed us into their fellowship (and yes if you were wondering, Cambodian food is delicious). However (and I pray this for churches everywhere, Living Water, The Chapel, everywhere) pray for God's justice to permeate the Church as well. Pray that the urgency of God's heart for the poor and that

His love for all is clearly preached. Especially pray for the Living Water church as they are attempting to form their own church, possibly seeking out a new building, and weekly growing in new youth attendees (many of these high schoolers are coming for something to do and finding the truth of Christ, pray for discipleship, clarity, and the fullness of the Gospel being declared!)

And as for my neighborhood, Logan, it is becoming a place close to my heart. So when I find the remnants of drugs around my block, my heart weeps. And when the neighborhood kids anxiously wait on our front porch for us to come home from LOGAN Hope, hang out with them, and treat them to dinner my heart rejoices. This neighborhood like so many others has both the seeds of hope and the seeds of despair. Pray that hope is sown, grown in love, and reaped in discipleship and truth Pray that despair is rooted out. Explicitly, I would ask you to pray that the local library remains open so that the kids have someplace to go.

Pray diligently, the Lord hears the requests of His children.

Grace and Peace!



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!!

Finance Update: Launch Goal Success!!

It seemed like an insurmountable (or at least challenging) task, to raise \$12,000 for the year, but with your generous support, we have reached this goal. So a whole-hearted thanks to everyone who contributed even the smallest amount and to the many of you who diligently prayed for me, my support, and my ministry here. Thank you so very much.

And your true reward is God's pleasure. The fact that your support is to God a pleasing aroma, true worship if you will. (And know that I pretty much consider myself to be at your service, which is true regardless of your support or not!!)

However, Mission Year is not just my experience, it is also the experience of my teammates and the many other laborers for Christ in Chicago, Atlanta, New Orleans, Camden, and Wilmington. So please continue to give if you are lead to (you can continue to donate to my account or donate directly to Mission Year). As always, my overflowing thankfulness.

Grace and Peace!!

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