



Do You Have an Ebenezer?

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The last few weeks have included several trips back and forth to various destinations in Pennsylvania. One of my favorite aspects of my work is the time I get to spend with people across the body of the CGGC. There are folks across the country who have become dear brothers and sisters in Christ. On these most recent trips, I got to reconnect with some of these dear brothers and sisters. I also got to pass an Ebenezer several times.

Author

The weekly eNews is provided by CGGC Executive Director, Lance Finley



What's an Ebenezer? You might recognize the phrase from the hymn, *O Thou Fount of Every Blessing*, written by Robert Robinson in 1758. There's a beautiful line "*Here I raise my Ebenezer, Here by Thy great help I've come.*" It's a reference to 1 Samuel 7:12: "Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen. He named it Ebenezer, saying, 'Thus far the Lord has helped us.'" If you follow the narrative in 1 Samuel 4-7, you'll learn that the Philistines had not only defeated the Israelites, but captured the Ark of the Lord's covenant as well. The situation comes to a head in chapter 7 with the

Israelites confessing their sin, the Philistines gathering to attack again, the terrified Israelites crying out to the Lord and seeing the Lord act on their behalf. In building an Ebenezer, Samuel was giving the Israelites a visible reminder of their history with God and how He had helped them.

So what's my Ebenezer? There's a BP gas station near Ravenna, OH; just north of Interstate 76, that has become an Ebenezer in my journey with God. Sometime during November 2008, I was traveling home from Doubling Gap Center (the ERC camp and conference center) with Brenda and a very young Carter. We were expecting our second child (Molly) at the time. Brenda got a message to call her doctor's office. As I drove, I listened to my wife repeat the possibilities being reported to her from her latest ultrasound: Spinal Bifida, Down syndrome, Trisomy 18. None of these words are things that expectant parents anticipate or desire to hear. We were shocked and frightened.

We exited I-76 and pulled into the parking lot at a BP gas station. We spent some time processing this unexpected news and a fair amount of time crying and praying. This phone call would be the beginning of a string of similar phone calls over a long pregnancy filled with lots of possible threats or potential

health problems. In the months preceding this phone call, I had been sensing that Jesus was asking me “Am I enough for you Lance? Do you love me for the benefits and blessings I give to you or do you love me because you love me? If you don’t get what you want, will you still follow me?”

One of our prayers in that BP parking lot was simply “we are going to trust you in this, Jesus.” If we have a healthy baby, it’s for our good and your glory. If we have a child with special needs, it’s for our good and your glory – there will be blessings that we cannot see or understand right now. If we lose this child, we know that somehow, you will use even this heartbreak for our good and your glory God. That remained a constant prayer through this difficult season.

Today, Molly is a healthy and active eight year old who loves soccer, music and anything chocolate. Did God heal her? I don’t know. Did a medical tech just badly misread multiple tests and give us incorrect information? Again, I don’t know. What I do know is this, during this period of several months when we walked through multiple valleys during this very scary pregnancy, God, in His abundant grace, worked to deepen our faith in Him and our capacity to trust in and rely upon Him in ways that would not have happened otherwise.

When I drive by that BP station on I-76, I’m often prompted to remember God’s care for our family, especially my beautiful and fierce Molly, and thank Him for His gracious provision. I remember how God has helped us in our time of need. I remember how God graciously taught me to trust Him in manner that was deeper and more profound than what I had experienced up to that point in my life. I’m grateful for that painful, scary season because of how God took me to new places of faith and obedience. This BP Station stands an Ebenezer, reminding me of God’s faithfulness to love me and draw me deeper into His love.

What are the Ebenezers in your journey with Jesus? What are the things that remind you of the help you’ve received from the Lord? What are the visible reminders of how God has proven His love and care for you over the years? Maybe you need to create an Ebenezer of your own, to remind you of the ways in which God has demonstrated His great love for you?

Christ’s Peace,

Lance