



# THIS IS CHURCH UPDATE

October 2011

## A Light in the South

### Numbers on my Mind:

- **395:** Participants in this year's NLC Fall Retreat! That's nearly 100 more than last year, and we maxed out the retreat center!
- **8:** Men in the SouthSide New Life Team who want to be trained for careers in full-time ministry. It's way more than I can handle, but I absolutely love it!
- **11%:** Growth we've seen both in our Sunday morning and small group attendance this fall over last year. It's so exciting to see things grow!

I'd love to use this update to let you in to the culture of the SouthSide New Life Team. As you may remember, our church's theme this year is [The Light of the World](#). As the SouthSide New Life Team, we're specifically excited about three aspects of what this means:

#### 1) [Coming into the Light](#)

We believe that living lives where **nothing is hidden**, and all is brought before God & his Church is the key to experiencing the grace & freedom Christ offers (1 John 1:6-9). Therefore, we've been allowing significant space every Thursday night for students to share about the most difficult & shameful areas of their lives with one another. It's been a healing time weekly.

#### 2) [Knowing Your Light](#)

We know that God calls us the light of the world (Matthew 5:14), but that this is only true because He, the true light, lives in us (John 8:12). To explore this light, we've been exploring the Gospel in greater depth as well as looking more closely at what it means to have a **unique testimony** and **unique gifts**; to shine his light in our own special way. Next week, I will be teaching

on the various salvation metaphors in the Bible and encouraging students to consider their own story and culture, and create their own Gospel metaphors.

#### 3) [Being Light](#)

To be people who are living transparent lives and well-aware of the unique



*SouthSiders at David Crowder Band's 7 Tour*

work of God in them would not quite be enough to really be the Church. We are called to actually do **something about it**; to live as Jesus lived. We will be equipping our students to serve and share as Jesus did, so that their peers might experience Jesus in a tangible way on campus.

In this process, we have a goal for our team this semester we'd ask you to join us in praying for: We're asking God that all 80 students in SouthSide would **know the Gospel well enough to be able to tell a friend whenever prompted**. Our prayer is that this time of equipping would quickly lead to a time of blessing for all of U of M.

Grace & Peace, *Mike*

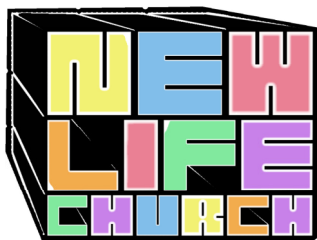
## The Prayer Corner

### Praises

- **God brought 53 SouthSide students to Fall Retreat. That's more than we've ever had!**
- **One of the men in my life group placed his faith in Christ last week! He comes from a really rough background & story, growing up in an abusive household in inner Detroit. God loves to be near the broken.**

### Petitions

- **Pray for our Vision Dinner this Saturday. All proceeds go to support our staff team, and we really need it!**
- **Specifically pray for our three outreach services on Hell & Suffering Nov 6th, 13th, & 20th.**



### Verse of the Month

*"I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves."*

– Matthew 10:16

# A Fall Retreat Slice of Life: Ben Ryding



Much of my Christian life has been characterized by my understanding of Jesus Christ as my savior but not as my Lord. I tend to use my intellect and rationality to dismiss away difficult aspects and commands found in the Bible and have lived my life largely using my own sense of morality. In my head I believed God was compassionate, but I only ever knew how to look to a woman to meet my needs for love, comfort and affirmation. This past year has changed all of that in a big way.

Last August I married my high school sweetheart, a girl whom I had been with for over 7 years. We met when we were just 15 and we became enraptured by the throes of a passionate young love. My relationship with her was never perfect, but our love took us through our high school and college years and we married on August 21, 2010. My life in those first months of marriage was nothing short of blissful. I felt as though I had everything—a wife, wonderful friends, a beautiful church community, and a loving family. However, this joy was short lived, as so much that I held dear would soon be torn away from me.

I discovered in March of this year that my now ex-wife had been cheating on me for several months with a man from her work. My world quickly and violently crumbled around me. In those months I begged God every day for a miracle, a miracle that would rescue my marriage and redeem my relationship with my wife. That particular miracle never came for me; and despite a valiant and painful battle to rescue my marriage, in July we were divorced. I lost my wife and I lost half of my family. I lost my source of joy and love and affirmation in my life. I was alone and destroyed; and I despaired.

There were many prayers in that time period in which I asked God to take me out of this world because of the unbearable pain. I did everything I could to run from it, even foolishly dating other girls, pursuing ungodly relationship. In the end though, my running was in vain. The pain was always near to me--always lingering in my soul whispering despair into my ear. But God had not abandoned me.

At Fall Retreat this year Kevin Armstrong gave an unforgettable talk. He told the story of his own divorce and how his first wife had cheated on him. His re-telling brought up a lot of my own pain and wounding, bringing me to the verge of tears. At one point he showed a picture of his new family up on the projector screen and spoke of the fruits of obedience to God. This message moved my soul in powerful ways.

The time I spent with God at Fall Retreat coupled with Kevin's talk and my struggles this past year with my divorce have radically changed my life. I am more convinced than ever of the importance of Godly obedience and the fruits of that obedience. And in my great suffering, I have never felt more pursued and loved by God and more hopeful that He will mend and grow my heart through obedience to Him. And that's a slice of my life.