



Getting Outside the Walls

“Some of us are like the Dead Sea, always taking in but never giving out, because we are not rightly related to the Lord Jesus.” ~ Oswald Chambers

If you've ever been to Israel or watched video or pictures, you have probably seen people floating in the Dead Sea. It is truly one of the moments that will always stick in the minds of those that have made that special trip. The Dead Sea is more than 1,300 feet BELOW sea level — making it the lowest point on earth. Although it can have healing properties to your skin, because of the massive levels of salt (up to 32 percent), no living thing can survive in that water. An interesting point is that the water in the Dead Sea is the same water that came from the Sea of Galilee down the Jordan River. The sea that provides so much drinking water and life at the top is toxic at the bottom. What changed? What began as water flowing out and constantly being renewed ends up being confined and stagnant.

I'm sure you've heard the phrase on the cover: "Get Outside the Walls." We are told that we need to "Get Outside the Walls" of the church. But, what does that really mean? Does it mean getting outside our comfort zone? Does it mean being the hands and feet of Jesus? Or does it just mean being willing and eager to be used of God whenever and wherever? Paul says that "hospitality starts at home" — being hospitable to those of the household of faith first. They will know us by our love for each other. But, the first sign of a declining church is also when the staff and members start to focus more on what's going on inside the church rather than what is happening in the community and world around it. Paul gives warning in the Bible to be careful not to fall into that mentality. And, he thanks those congregations who reached outside and cared

for those on the outside of their walls.

In Philippians 2:4, Paul encourages us to "Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interest of others."

In Philippians, chapter 1, and Colossians, chapter 1, Paul thanks the churches for their love for him and their love for the saints — outside their walls

And Jesus, in Matthew 25, says, "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me."

I'm so thankful for the many SBC of Virginia churches that reach outside on a regular basis — through ministries such as ESL (English as a Second Language), Disaster Relief and partnership and compassion ministries. Just recently, a number of churches came together to emphasize foster care and adoption. As I write this article, church youth groups are coming together to minister in Manassas, Virginia, at Fusion Mission Camp. And, very soon, hundreds of churches will start packing backpacks for needy children in Appalachia, Virginia. A challenge to us all, a statement of intention, and a testimony of what is happening all wrapped up in one phrase — Getting Outside the Walls. ■

Brandon

(left) Excited Appalachian children receive backpacks given by the many generous churches of the SBC of Virginia

(right) Church youth ministering in Manassas, Virginia at Fusion Mission Camp

