

Loads of Benefits

One young boy created his own paraphrase of the Psalmist's delightful declaration when he said "Bless the Lord, O my soul, **and I get all the benefits!**"

That is not too far off the mark, even if it is not an exact rendering from the original language! As far as the equation between the Lord and me...I come out on the long end of that one. I give so little, gain so much! I know that you feel that way, too.

[Pardon me! My prejudice is now showing.....!] I want to use that same foundation to comment a bit to you – as members of this great Illinois network – and offer **WHY I WANT TO MEET YOU AT DISTRICT COUNCIL THIS YEAR!**

I know, I know... you **expect** me to say that! And I (equally) **expect** that your pastor's heart would say the same with, "I want to meet you at the prayer meeting this week," or, "I want all students to attend our annual retreat," or, "I want you to all come and hear the guest speaker I have scheduled." That is not a mercenary heart speaking when you say such, it is a heart of love, inclusion, and wanting their benefit.

I don't mind confessing, I have been framed with a bit of this slant. Both Coleen and I recall as children and teenagers that once a month, our parents took us out of school for the day so that we would (as an entire family) attend the Sectional Fellowship Meeting. It was three services, a fellowship meal, and lots of time for friendship and connection. (There was not a once-a-year PK retreat to meet other pastors' kids, but there was a once-a-month opportunity to develop friendships.) I've attended every District meeting imaginable, and yes, recall our attendances at General Councils where we a) traveled by car, no matter how far away, b) stayed at Motel-6 fare, and c) brought along the ice chest in order to eat two meals a day in our room...to save on expenses. But we attended every meeting and every session.

Though others may dispute this fact, I do not believe that regimen has warped me at all...though I do believe it has **enriched me deeply**. I have experienced our fellowship at work, I have been enriched by some of the finest preaching and teaching...and **I've made lifetime friends** along the way!

District Council 2010...I really do want to see you there. From the Enrichment Session of Monday afternoon to the concluding meeting with Lee McFarland...I believe you'll be blessed. I think you'll meet the finest missionary team in the world on Monday night, and "get ordained all over again" in our Tuesday service. Yes, there are lots of plusses to be gained.

[If you slip in midway and leave early...you can say, "I attended Council this year," but you will shortchange yourself and the rest of us.]

Here's the Reader's-Digest-version on it all...We participate. We are inspired. We are challenged. We make connections that bring great benefits.

Todd Hastings is in China today because of an altar call at a District Council meeting. Two church plants are in place because of Kendall Bridges' message on a Council morning. One member of our ordination class will kneel on Tuesday because he walked in to get his License, expecting to go no further, and heard an inner resolve of, "I will complete my Ordination and walk to that altar."

Connection will be a big word this year.

I want you to "get all the benefits!"

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