

CONSIDER IT JOY

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything." - James 1:2-4



(L) This fall one of our freshman girls was baptized at her church. Her small group drove over an hour to share in her joy! (R) James is a senior at Millersville this year and on the basketball team. It has been a joy to watch him seek to represent Jesus well on and off the court!

A MATTER OF PERSPECTIVE

I always appreciate the Bible's invitation to the reader to see things through a different lens. As young parents, Melanie and I often spend time trying to help our boys see their world with different eyes because we have perspective on life that they don't have. At 5 and 2.5, this lack of perspective is understandable.

"No you cannot eat all of that candy right now!" - "Yes, you do have to be kind to your brother."

Often our attempts at perspective are met with a "Why?". I am realizing how often I do this to Jesus. At the end of Job (chapters 38-42), God reminds Job that he (Job) doesn't have all the answers. God is not bound by a finite understanding of the world, there are no mysteries to him and he doesn't seek council from anyone. However, we still find ourselves, like Job, asking God "Why?". Although this can be a fair question, it isn't one that we need to linger too long on. God invites us to consider the idea that he knows what he is doing and has a vested interest in our wellbeing.

In James chapter 1, James (the brother of Jesus) implores the readers to consider their hardships in life, of all different kinds, as a joyful experience. Does he encourage them to do this because hardship in life is a joyful experience? I don't believe so. James is inviting his readers to see these hardships in a broader prospective, or a Godly prospective. Is it possible that these momentary (at least momentary for this life) hardships could produce something in us that is of greater value than the hardship itself?

These verses in James conclude with the reader being mature and complete, not lacking anything. May we press on in the midst of our various trails to the end goal of maturity and being more like Jesus. May our world be colored with the hope of the Gospel and of the promise of God's faithfulness!

OUT OF THE ASHES COMES NEW LIFE

The contrast of last school year to this school year couldn't be more stark. As we concluded last year on a campus that was totally shut down we wondered, "What in the world will next year look like?". We began to pray and ask Jesus to move in a powerful way on campus.

"Call to me and I will answer you and show you great and mighty things that you do not know"
- Jeremiah 33:3

In his kindness, God has answered this prayer by giving us an overwhelming number of new students. This is best represented by our recent fall retreat. In previous years we would have 30-35 students go on our fall retreat every year. As we passed the signups around this year, we watched as more and more people put their name on the page. As our staff team watched over the course of a week or two we thought: "Surely most of those students won't actually go... would they?". Yes, in fact they would go. The first weekend in October, we joined together with the Bowie State Navigators to host our 2021 fall retreat. The Millersville Navigators sent 70 people on that trip, more than double what we normally send!

Numbers however don't begin to tell the whole story. These students have already begun to buy into our Millersville Navigators culture. They are eager to know Christ! Our student leaders are overwhelmed with students in their Bible studies and younger students asking for time with them to hear what God is teaching them. Some of these students are hearing about the good news of Jesus for the first time! During the retreat, one of our student leaders shared about how one of her girls decided she was done fighting Jesus and wanted to commit to following him for the rest of her life!



Our Millersville Navigators group picture from our 2021 fall retreat with Bowie State Navigators. We had 70 people attend for the weekend!

As the year carries on and new challenges arise in academics and relationships, in our physical bodies and our mental wellbeing, spiritually and emotionally; may Jesus grant these students and each of us the abundant life promised in John 10:10!

"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I (Jesus) came that they may have life and have it abundantly." - John 10:10

"FOR THIS CHILD, WE HAVE PRAYED"

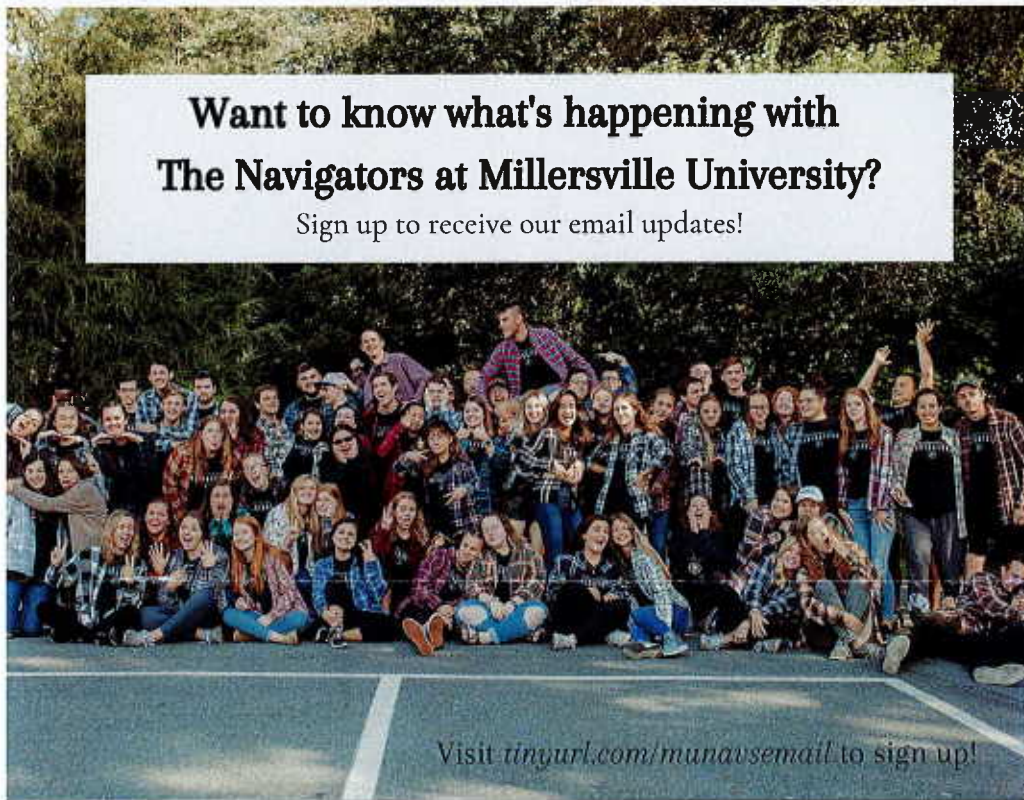
In the spring, we were surprised with the news of new life! Over the past 12 years, infertility has been part of our journey with the Lord and each other. By the grace of God, Caleb and Ian were born through the wonders of medicine and the persistent pleading of the saints. In May, we learned that it would please the Lord to do a new thing. In January we are expecting our daughter! Our boys are overjoyed to have a little sister and we eagerly anticipate her arrival!

- Please pray for Melanie and our little lady as they finish out this season of pregnancy.
- Pray also for our family as we adjust to a family of 5!
- Praise be to the author and sustainer of life!



Want to know what's happening with The Navigators at Millersville University?

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This picture describes pretty accurately that there's a lot happening in the lives of The Navigators at Millersville University! We want you to be kept up to date on it all! Every month we send out a prayer email, with updates on what's happening on campus and ways you can pray with us for our students! Make sure to check your spam folder around the 5th of each month if you haven't been getting the emails, or check out the link below to sign up to receive them!

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John + Melanie Birkenbine