scored a full 100% on their Scripture memorization tests. That’s a perfect 100% on 100 verses in 100 days!

I can say in the plainest of language that I was completely inspired by this year’s class. Their academic and in-the-community accomplishments are truly amazing and inspiring. But let me hasten to add that I am sure that this class (or any other!) would take no credit or praise for their efforts. They would give all the glory, honor and praise to Him who alone deserves it!

And that’s the best indicator of all.

They not only learned the words, texts, books and doctrines. They learned what (Who)! all of it points to: Jesus Christ!

Thank you class of 2011! You’ve inspired me. And you’ve taught me a great deal about God and His love, I, along with the other staff here at Light Bearers, am indebted to you.

“Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen” (1 Timothy 1:17).
The mystery of the cross explains all other mysteries. In the light that streams from Calvary, the attributes of God which had filled us with fear and awe appear beautiful and attractive. Mercy, tenderness, and parental love are seen to blend with holiness, justice, and power. While we behold the majesty of his throne, high and lifted up, we see his character in its gracious manifestations, and comprehend, as never before, the significance of that enduring title, “Our Father.”

Ellen G. White, 
Great Controversy, p. 652

The sacrifice of Christ as an atonement for sin is the great truth around which all other truths cluster. To this great truth all other truths are tributary. Christ is the foundation of every true church. All who are brought to a new faith are to be established on Him. The plain, simple truths of the gospel are to be kept before minds. Christ crucified as the atonement for sin is the great central truth of the gospel, round which all truths cluster. To this great truth all other truths are tributary.

Ellen G. White, 
The Upward Look, p. 85

The power of the cross will move in you the mysterious springs of hope and fear, adoration, and love. Angels are watching and waiting, and will witness to the fact that the world has you not. Jesus has found you sitting at His feet to learn from Him, the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Henceforth, surrendering your will to the will of Christ, you are drawn into a region where the cross is the central object. The world fades from your view. The glory shining from the threshold of heaven is the all-attractive influence. The riches of the grace of Christ hold you in willing obedience. You are only too glad to impart to others the gift you have received.

Ellen G. White, 
Lift Him Up, p. 252

The sacrifice of Christ as an atonement for sin is the great truth around which all other truths cluster. In order to be rightly understood and appreciated, every truth in the Word of God, from Genesis to Revelation, must be studied in the light that streams from the cross of Calvary. I present before you the great, grand monument of mercy and regeneration, salvation and redemption—the Son of God uplifted on the cross. This is to be the foundation of every discourse given in our academy, however, was persuaded that the time was right. While we did not encourage their decision, we are thankful they saw fit to allow us the privilege of occupying the facility.

You don't have to look very hard to see a gospel illustration in this. One gives up its life so another can live and prosper. We are not rejoicing in the death, but we are certainly rejoicing in the resurrection! And it's not just us who are rejoicing. The former board chairman is my new neighbor (and a longtime friend), and he is fully enthusiastic and supportive of ARISE’s move to “his neck of the woods.” So while there is still sadness in all of our hearts, that sadness is tempered with great joy.

As one of the co-founders of ARISE, it is impossible for me to adequately communicate just how significant it is for us to have our own facility. In the past we've had to work around our landlords' schedules, rules and perspectives. Not anymore! We can have spontaneous praise services any day and at any hour! We can invite community contacts to come for worship services, to listen to visiting instructors, or for a game of ultimate Frisbee. We have an onsite dean (Matt Minikus) who, with his wife Josie, lives literally with the students. This creates ongoing and important opportunities for ministry, mentorship and friendship. We can take evening, morning, or afternoon walks (or runs!) around the expansive grounds. We can even have class out on the lawn on a bluebird day (which we did several times!).

The list goes on and on. Really, there is just no comparison to the way it was versus now. It's a whole new world.

There’s a second reason that this ninth class was in a class of their own. It has to do with their phenomenal academic success. Here’s a little background. The Cornerstone program offers three levels of certification. The most demanding is called the Certificate of Highest Excellence, which requires the equivalent of at least 99% on all reading, assignments and tests. The third is called simply the Certificate of Completion and is still the equivalent of a “A-” to “B” in the traditional grading system. So it’s A+, A, and A-. Anything below the “B” receives no certificate status, and does not participate in the graduation/commissioning service at the end of the course.

In fairness to the other classes, we’ve only been employing this system for the last three years. Nevertheless, this year’s class is remarkable in terms of their commitment and performance. Of the 39 students, 25 attained the Highest Excellence Level Remember, that’s 99-100%! Nine reached the Excellence Level (97-98%), and four received the Completion Certificate (an “A-” to “B”). Furthermore, of the 25 at the Highest Excellence Level, 12...