

## TRAINING FOR SERVICE

As I write our youth are preparing for the weekend *Training for Service* competition. Since this is the last event until the fall, I thought it appropriate to offer a few comments about this new program that has been such a great success for our congregation and for other congregations in the area.

*Training for Service* is a cooperative effort among the churches in the area. At present, Eastern Shore, Gulf Shores, Jackson, Robertsdale and Summerdale participate. Ministers from each congregation met a year ago and have met frequently during the year to set rules and standards for each event. The idea is similar to that of the well known *Lads-to-Leaders* program but is especially tailored to the needs of our local youth, emphasizes relationships among our local young people and is far less expensive. Of course, the value of any program is in the positive impact it makes on those involved. I think there is no question that *Training for Service* has been a great success. Please read on as I describe the events and preparation for competition.

**Bible Bowl** is the one required event for everyone involved in the competition. The Bible Bowl has focused on sections of the Gospel of John and each competition has required an in-depth, almost memorized study of four or five chapters. The youth are divided into three age groups, K-3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>. They must then answer the fill-in-the-blank questions without adult help. A group of tie-breaker questions are also answered without the presence of a Bible. Students have been intensely studying John in their Bible classes on Wednesday.

**Scripture Memorization** has been the “sleeper” event of TFS. No one expected the level of work our youth put in on this event. I estimate that the youth at Eastern Shore have memorized collectively almost 1,000 verses in the course of a year! While they may not be able to fully quote every verse today, they have had their noses in the word of God and have worked to know the Scriptures.

**Speaking** is an event open to both boys and girls. Some troublesome brethren have complained that we should not teach Speaking and Song Leading to the girls since women cannot lead in the public worship. However, our young ladies can, should and I would argue, must prepare themselves for leading Ladies Classes, Ladies Day’s and other women-only events. Our girls work very hard to prepare speeches and lead singing during the girls part of the competition. Absolutely no males are allowed into the rooms where the girls compete. Our youth are gaining knowledge and experience in developing talks for Wednesday night and eventually for full length sermons.

**Song Leading** is a challenge for many adults. However our young people are learning how to lead singing so that they can become the song leaders of the future. They learn to select, announce, pitch and direct the songs. Even our youngest children are leading singing and that’s a great sign for the future of the church.

In addition, our young people have been involved in service projects, banner making and scrapbooks. *Training for Service* has been a great success. While our children have done incredible work in preparing, our parents are to be commended for their hard

work and dedication in helping the children reach their goals. Without our parents, this program would have never gotten off the ground. We also thank our Elders. TFS is not free but requires a commitment of some financial resources which have been generously provided. They have also been encouragers of youth which means so much.

After a break through the summer, TFS will resume again in the fall. Please let our young people know what a good job they have done.

Bryant

Evans