

2009 NEWSPAPER DEVOTIONAL ARTICLES by Rev. Mike Jones

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January 6, 2009

LASTING CHANGE

Many people will initiate changes such as weight loss or character improvement during the first part of 2009 . Sadly, most of them will abandon those changes in a very short time. They meant well but the change they were seeking to accomplish required more effort, endurance, and pain than most people were willing to invest into the project.

I tell people that maintaining change is a like learning the difference between Pity and Compassion. Pity is someone else's hurt in your mind while Compassion is someone else's hurt in your heart. Real change comes when the desire for change moves from your mind into your heart. Jesus told His disciples in Luke 14:28-32 that they should not "pick a fight they could not win nor begin a building they could not finish." In both instances Jesus said a person needed to consider their resources and be willing to fully commit to the project before they began to build or battle.

In the same way, the only method to guarantee success in change is to consider the full cost of the change and then commit to that change with all your heart. Jesus did not call disciples to "try me for awhile and see if you like my life style". He demanded that they leave their tax tables or fishing nets and fully commit to walking with Him. A change so radical until Jesus called it dying to self and being born again as a child of God.

You and God have the ability to produce any change in your life that is part of God's plan. It is just a matter of determining what change God wants in your life and then joining God with all your heart in accomplishing that change.

January 7, 2009

INSIGHT INFORMATION

I am a "note taker". Almost always, I have a note pad of some kind with me as I travel or attend meetings. From time to time I look back over these notes to remember information and to reflect on any insight I gained from the message or meeting. I thought I would share some of this insight information at the beginning of a new year in the hopes that it would be beneficial to you.

Listening to a large number of speakers has led me to realize that some speakers Manufacture the "Word" (They take a scripture and "depart there from" so they can share some thoughts about things from their own perspective). Some speakers Manipulate the "Word" in order to get it to say what they want it to say. Some speakers Misuse the "Word" by taking the scripture out of its context or by claiming promises for themselves that God gave to others. But, thank the Lord, some speakers Minister with the "Word" so that people are changed and problems are solved.

Here are some sentence thoughts to make us "ponder": It is easier to talk About someone that it is to talk To someone. No plan will work unless you are willing to stop planning and go to work. Christians should not be Police looking for law breakers. They should be Physicians looking for someone to heal. Many good people were good before they became godly but being good did not make them godly.

One final thought to help make 2009 a success- Inspiration should lead to dedication which should lead to participation which should lead to perspiration which will lead to jubilation.

January 13, 2009

COMPLACENT CHANGE

Change seldom comes by chance. Almost always there must be a determination of what needs to be changed and a desire to bring about that change before lasting change takes place. In the same way, simply wishing for change is generally a waste of time that ends up producing heartache and discouragement instead of the results you desired. Something must produce change before change will be produced.

If you do what you have always done then you will get what you have always got. Change is produced when circumstances or situations develop to the place where adjustments to the circumstances or alterations to the situations are more desirable than leaving things as they are. In other words, if you are happy where you are then you will not move to where you need to be.

So the question will have to be, "Is there anything in your life that is brothing you to the point that you are willing to do what it takes to change your circumstances or situation?" If you are complacent with your circumstances then it will be difficult, if not impossible, to produce change in your life.

Jesus was well aware of the relationship between complacence and change. That is why He gave warning such as this one about the approaching world catastrophes- And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting (gluttony) , and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man. (Luke 21:34-36)

January 14, 2009

WHAT IS IN YOUR HEART?

The Bible often uses the word "heart" to represent the "driving force" in a person's life- He did not have a "heart" to do the task or his "heart" would not let him give up. With that in mind I would like to show you some things in your "heart" that will greatly impact your life.

Your Treasure (Those things you count valuable in life) will impact your "heart" in motivations and methods of operation- *For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.* (Matthew 6:21)

Your Thoughts (Your perception of circumstances or your preoccupation with situations) will have a great influence on your "heart" and what you say and do- *For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he:* (Proverbs 23:7). In fact, Jesus said your thought life was so influential until the thought was like the deed- *But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.* (Matthew 5:28)

The Troubles that come into your life can either destroy your "heart" or develop you into a person of great character and conviction- *Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.* (John 14:1) *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.* (John 14:27)

The best advice I can give to enable you to have a good "heart" is to *Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.* (Proverbs 3:5)

January 20, 2009

PRESIDENTIAL PRAYER

Today is the day things “change” in America. A new president and a new administration will take the reins of power and launch their agenda for the next four years. The Bible commands us to pray for our leaders- *I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty* (1 Tim 2:1-2); so I want to share these prayers for our new President.

I pray for Safety for the President. There are a lot of “weird thinking people” in the world and the thought process of some of them does not contain the logic necessary to make proper decisions. May God’s protecting hand be with our new President.

I pray for Sense for the President. May he have the wisdom that is needed so he can deal with the problems America faces and lead in developing the tremendous potential that still lies within the minds and heart of the people of America.

I pray for Stability for the President. Millions of people believe their agenda is absolutely the only course of action that should be followed by the new President. I pray our new President will get his instructions from the Word of God and take his directions from a consistent walk with God. May he hear the voice of God above all the clamor and noise that will assault him each day.

Finally, I pray for Success for the President. May he establish a prosperous and peaceful country where those of us who desire to live right and do right can “lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty”.

January 21, 2009

PRIORITY PRINCIPLES

Jesus said that man’s entire obligation to religion could be summarized in 2 principles- Love God above everything and Love your neighbor as yourself (Mark 12:29-31) *And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: {30} And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. {31} And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.*

But how does that work in real life? How can we show our love TO GOD? Jesus made that simple enough- (John 14:15) *If ye love me, keep my commandments.* We show God we love Him truly by doing what He tells us to do.

How, then, do we show the love OF GOD to those around us? Again, Jesus said it would be easy enough for those who were not Christians to know those who were true followers- (John 13:35) *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*

These two principles will guide you to a wonderful and fruitful life. But they must be practiced and not just talked about- (1 John 3:18) *My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.*

Do you want a GOOD week? Look for opportunities to put these two principles into practice and you will be wonderfully surprised with the difference it will make in your life.

January 27, 2009

BARBER BLESSING

It started when I told the Barber he was a vital part of my ministry. He thought at first that I might be joking but I assured him I was serious. Then I went on to explain that my appearance had a big bearing on the way people listened to my sermon. I told him that if my hair was unkempt and looked bad then numerous people in the congregation would be distracted from the message I was trying to get inside them by what they could see on the outside of me.

It was amazing to see the transformation that took place in my Barber. Suddenly he saw himself doing something important instead of simply servicing another customer. He became animated in his conversation and diligent in his hair cutting procedure. In fact, it became one of the best hair cuts I have received in a long time, even to making sure the hairs in my nose, in my ears, and along my eye brows were cut just right!

This was another example to me of what a difference it makes in a person's life when they feel the task they are doing is important. The sense of being needed, coupled with a feeling of accomplishment, is one of the biggest motivators in the world. When people feel like what they are doing has value and merit their attitude toward their work is entirely different from a person who feels their work is not required or is not appreciated.

If you feel your Pastor or the other people at Church are not living up to their potential try a little bit of positive praise. You will be amazed at the change in a person who is praised for the good he does instead of being constantly criticized and belittled.

January 28, 2009

COPIER COVER

Something was wrong and it was baffling to the lady helping us with our church bulletin as well as to me. The Church has purchased a new (to us) copier in the middle of the year and we had watched in amazement as copy after copy rolled out of this machine without the need of changing the toner cartridge.

Finally, just before Christmas, the copier told us it needed a new toner cartridge and we called our copier company for service. The technician came, replaced the cartridge, and the copier went back to doing its usual great job. Three weeks later, however, the copier suddenly stopped working and declared it needed another toner cartridge. Something was wrong with this picture!

The copier company had left us a spare cartridge so we assumed the new cartridge was defective and decided to replace it with the spare. That is when we found that the technician had forgotten to remove the cap from the cartridge when he installed it into our machine. The toner could not do its job because it was still trapped inside the cartridge.

Many people who claim to be followers of Christ do not make much of an impression on the world. Maybe the problem is the fact that they are not prepared to empty themselves into the work of God because a "cap" of pride or personal ambition remains in their way. What a difference it would make, and what an impression they would make, if they would yield everything to God so all barriers could be removed and God could flow through their life as He desires.

February 3, 2009

MARRIAGE AND MINISTRY

On February 6th, I celebrate being married to the lovely Princess Paula for 39 years. She has been a good companion and a faithful spouse and I continue to rejoice in God's direction in leading us to join together as husband and wife. I certainly have no desire to lose her and I have no inclination that I would seek to "replace" her if something were to happen to her. As my wife likes to remind me, she is my "good thing" from the Lord- *Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD.* (Proverbs 18:22)

Forty-Five years ago on January 10, 1964 I was ordained into the Gospel Ministry. As a 16 year old boy there were many things I did not know about the Bible and about serving God. I did know, however, that God had called me into His work and put a fire in my soul to preach His word and share the good news about Jesus Christ and I was determined to do what I could where I was with what I had. Since that time God has blessed me in amazing ways and I have seen many wonders of the Lord as He has directed my ministry and allowed me to preach in numerous countries all over the world. During those forty-five years I have also seen the "dark side" of Christianity as preachers sinned, churches split, and members grumbled about anything and everything. Through it all the fire still burns and I am determined to fight a good fight and finish the course in such a way until God will be honored and lives will be changed.

A good wife and a meaningful life; all because I chose to follow God's plan for my life. Does it get any better than that!

February 4, 2009

WINNERS AND LOSERS

Losers lose because Losers are losers. Winners win because Winners are winners. Sometimes Losers win but they are still Losers. Sometimes Winners lose but they are still Winners. Winners have something inside them we call "heart" or "the will to win". Whatever it is, it is the driving force that causes a Winner to practice longer, play harder, and accomplish more regardless of the circumstances or the situation.

Christianity is not a "magic potion" that suddenly causes all of your problems to disappear, your bills to melt away, and your circumstances to all of a sudden become favorable. In fact, when a person comes to God through faith in Jesus Christ and becomes a believer he will probably encounter more persecution and additional problems. The difference in a Christian, however, is that he has suddenly become a "Winner" and he now can face life with confidence and courage.

When a person become a believer in Christ their body becomes the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinth 3:16). This simply means that God moves in and you go from being a Loser into being a Winner- *Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.* (1 John 4:4).

How can YOU be transformed from a Loser into a Winner? Ask God to come into your life and give you His winning ways- *He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.* (John 12:25-26).

February 10, 2009

GIRDLES

Looking for something special for your wife for Valentine's Day? How about a girdle? Just kidding, I will not be responsible for the harm that will come to you if you give your wife a girdle and she thinks that means she is fat! Instead of giving your wife a girdle how about seeing if she can help you learn about some girdles worn by men of God in the Bible. [The Bible reference for the answers would many times tell you the answer so the reference and the answer can be found under "quiz" at www.ministerministry.com]

What preacher preached with a Linen girdle that was good for nothing?

What preacher wore a "Curious" girdle?

Name two preachers who wore Leather girdles?

What man of God wanted his enemies to wear a "Cursing" girdle?

What man of God wore a girdle of Righteousness and Faithfulness?

Who was the man of God whose girdle was used as a handcuff?

Who was last seen wearing a Gold Girdle?

One final "Fun Fact". Who was the preacher who was told to preach naked; without a girdle or anything else?!

February 11, 2009

WIVES

Rather than tell you to love your wife on Valentine's Day (You are supposed to do that all the time!), I thought I would share some interesting things about wives in the Bible. Hope you will take the time to look up the answers; and I hope these questions will help you realize that all marriages have to deal with, and learn to adapt to, less than perfect conditions.

- Who was told to preach on the day his wife died?
- What Preacher was married to a prostitute?
- What Preacher's wife caused him problems because she was from a different nationality?
- What man worked for a wife for 7 years and then ended up with the wrong wife?
- Whose wife talked like a "foolish woman" and ended up having 20 children?
- What wife controlled her husband's affairs but ended up being eaten by dogs?
- Whose wife tried to interfere in a trial being presided over by her husband?
- Whose wife helped him rob from the Church?

Because giving you the scriptural reference to these would many times also give you the answers, I have placed the scriptural references and the answers to these under "Quiz" at www.ministerministry.com. Hope you got most of them.

One more question; and I will give you the answer to this one. What did Jesus have to say about marital gender and commitment? *And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.* (Matthew 19:4-6)

February 17, 2009

SMALL GODS

It was my first time in Sidney, Australia and I was browsing a local book store. A small book caught my attention and I immediately knew I had to own a copy. The book was written by J. B. Phillips and was entitled "Your God is too Small". I have read the book several times and it has some good content but the title of the book is still the most intriguing part.

I personally believe there are three major factors contributing to the decline of respect for Christianity in America today. One factor is the Disgrace of Christian Leaders. It is difficult to respect a religion being preached by men of questionable character with high moral standards in the pulpit but low moral standards in their own personal life.

Another factor in the decline of Christian influence is the Dilution of Christian Authority. This is epitomized by an ever increasing number of "personal churches" led by men who cannot live with other Christians so they go out and start their own little movement which is basically going back to the worst time in Biblical history when "every man did that which was right in his own sight".

In my opinion, however, the most devastating factor in the decline of Christianity is the Defeatist Attitude exhibited by many people who call themselves Christians. When the prophet Elijah wanted to call a nation back to God he issued this challenge, "the God that answers by fire, let him be God." This immediately struck a positive cord with the people because they were looking for a God who was big enough to be a God they could feel confident in following.

If your "god" is so small until He cannot help you in life then I would fear to trust Him in death. I am glad I serve a God who is big enough to make me more than conqueror in life and who has defeated death, hell, and the grave.

February 18, 2009

PROVEN PROVISION

For nearly 20 years I have operated a Faith Ministry that allows me to help people come to Know Jesus Christ as their Savior and then to Show Jesus Christ in their changed life. It is called Minister Ministry because the purpose of the ministry is to minister (serve) by helping people come to a greater awareness of God's pardon and provision. It is a "Faith Ministry" because it relies entirely on God's provision to operate- nothing is sold nor is a "suggested donation" suggested.

Recently I had the opportunity to do some work for someone and they graciously gave me a gift of \$500 as a means of showing their appreciation. Like most people, I have numerous "holes" that this money could go into but Minister Ministry was low on funds and I needed to purchase some bibles and other materials to give away so I felt like the Lord would have me give the money to the ministry- "Freely you have received, Freely give" (Matt 10:8).

Several days after I gave the money to the Ministry I received a letter (which was post marked on the day I gave my gift). Inside was a note saying God had impressed the letter writer to give a personal gift to my wife and I. I thought it might be a few dollars to allow us to go out to supper or something. Imagine my surprise when I opened the check and it was written for \$500 (Is there a "Glory" anywhere in the house!!).

God told us to "prove" Him in the matter of finances (Mal 3:10). Over and over He has proven faithful in my life. He is a great and wonderful God.

February 24, 2009

BARRIERS TO BLESSINGS

Why do so many Church Members live lives of defeat, despair, and quite desperation when God said, "In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." Ro 8:37? What hinders Christians from being vibrant and victorious? I believe the answer is found in a simple verse that describes how an entire nation ended up wandering in the wilderness waiting to die instead of triumphantly living in the promised land- *Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel.* (Psalms 78:41)

We limit God when we fail to follow His leadership. The most important statement in the Bible (I believe) is "The Just shall live by Faith". This statement is used as the "backbone" of 4 Books in the Bible and describes the purpose and plan of the Bible in one concise sentence. It also describes the reason people fail to follow God's leadership; they do not really believe God's plan for their life is the best plan. They spend their time second guessing God and telling God why His plan will not work in THEIR life instead of joyfully walking with God into the abundant life.

We also limit God when we fail to trust Him to help us handle the Challenges of Life. The Children of Israel could only see the giants and walled cities they would have to overcome. Unwilling to believe in God's great power they chose the slow death of wilderness wandering instead of triumphant kingdom living and ended up spending their lives walking in circles instead of enjoying the grapes and grain of the promised land.

God has great things in store for you if you will follow His leadership and trust His power. The barriers to your blessings are erected by your response to God's leadership.

February 25, 2009

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

People will sometimes ask me if I know someone who "stands out" in their Christian walk. My immediate answer is that the best Christian I know is my wife. She is a prayer warrior, a Christian Lady in modesty and character, and she consistently practices what I preach! Several recent incidences will show you what I mean.

It had been a very busy week the week before and my wife was looking forward to several "down" days where she had to simply do the "normal" things. In order to get some real rest my wife decided to work extra hard on Monday so she would have just a few things to do on Tuesday. Monday night she sat in her chair very tired but knowing she would be able to sleep late on Tuesday and enjoy a much slower work pace.

Suddenly the phone rang and my wife heard her sister in law say she was sick and needed my wife to help her at her business on Tuesday. This would mean the end to all my wife's plans and anticipated rest but she knew she needed to make the sacrifice. My wife worked all day at this business, came home just in time to get ready for the Ladies Meeting at our Church, and finally arrived home, exhausted, around 9:00pm.

She said she was going to sit in her chair for a while and unwind so I went back to my computer to finish some work. When I looked in on my wife later she was writing encouragement notes for people so that I could mail them the next day. Now you know why I consider her one of the best Christians I know.

March 3, 2009

HOW TO LOSE AN ARGUMENT

Genesis is the book of beginnings so it is not surprising that among the beginning of all the good things you also find the beginning of bad things- The first sin, the first murder, and the first argument. It is this first argument (between Satan and Eve) that I want to look at today and see if we can learn some lessons to help us avoid conflict.

First, Eve went wrong because she received Wrong Information- Gen 3:4 “And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die.” As you well know, not only did Eve end up dying but the curse of sin and death was brought on the entire human race. It is amazing how many people end up in conflict over wrong information (Just look at all the false internet rumors floating around demanding you stand against a problem that does not exist).

Secondly, Eve went wrong because she failed to consult the Source of the Conflict. Eve and Satan argued about what God said but instead of waiting to ask God what He really meant when He came down for His evening walk Eve decided to reason with the devil and ended up with disastrous results.

Finally, Eve went wrong because she felt compelled to justify her position by enlisting someone close to her (Adam) to see things from her point of view. Normally, those close to us will more easily see things our way so we bring them into the problem and the “mob mentality” easily convinces us that surely we must be right because others agree with us!

Sometimes the best way to win an argument is to simply walk away- Pr 26:20 “Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth”.

March 4, 2009

CONFLICT CONSEQUENCES

It is not normally a good policy to “pick a fight with God” but Adam was the first man so he had no one to turn to for wisdom and advice and he ended up picking a fight he could not win. In this initial conflict with God several consequences of conflict stand out.

Conflict breaks Fellowship. As soon as Adam disobeyed God he tried to hide from God. In the same way, when you find yourself at odds with someone the first thing you want to do is avoid that person. Jesus, however, commanded us to go to that brother and seek every means possible to restore the broken fellowship (Matt 18).

Conflict exposes areas in our life we do not want others to see. When Adam got out of fellowship with God he immediately realized he was naked and exposed. In the same way, conflict often reveals our pride and temperament failures which brings shame and increases the break in fellowship.

Conflict promotes passing blame to others. Adam blamed Eve, Eve blamed the serpent, and the serpent was probably looking all around for someone to whom he could “pass the buck”! Normally conflict is not solved until people are willing to face their own failures and responsibilities.

Finally, conflict impacts those close to us. Not only did Adam suffer from this conflict but Eve and the serpent also suffered destiny changing consequences. Homes, communities, and even countries have all suffered horrible results because a small misunderstanding was allowed to irritate and grow instead of being handled with love and understanding.

The command of Jesus that if “thy brother hath ought against thee; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift to God” (Matt 5:23-24) is a good life principle.

March 10, 2009

REVELATION ROAD

One of the good things about the book given by God (The Bible) is that the Father continuously inserts directions for people so that they can easily find their way to live with Him forever. Since this is time for my “spiritual birthday” [I was born again on Monday, March 19, 1962], and since so many people like to talk about the Book of Revelation; I thought I would share with you the “Revelation Road to Salvation”. If you are a fellow pilgrim then you will rejoice in seeing the wonderful plan once again. If you are heading in the wrong direction then you should read this “road map” carefully so you won’t continue on the road you are traveling and end up in a very hot place.

The Need to Turn around and change your direction: “But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.” (Revelation 21:8).

The offer to change your life and your destination is given to everyone because Jesus died for everyone- “And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;” (Revelation 5:9)

You enter God’s Road to a Heavenly Home by opening your heart to God through an act of Faith- “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.” (Revelation 3:20)

I am going to Heaven; are you?

March 11, 2009

SALVATION ASSURANCE

I was Born Again on Monday Night, March 19, 1962. I did not come from a religious background and I did not understand much about the Bible or Christianity but I did recognize the fact that there was a deep dark hole in my life that was being filled with self and sin and, as a result, I had no peace or joy. When I heard that God would clean the “junk” out of that hole and replace it with His love and mercy I literally jumped at the chance to ask Him to come into my life and make me a new creature.

Almost immediately, the enemy of my soul (Satan) began to attack me and point out how often I stumbled and messed up as a new born baby just beginning to grow in the Christian life. These attacks caused me to study the scripture (your attack back fired on you didn’t it Satan!!) where I found wonderful promises from God about the security of our relationship. Here are a couple of those promises from just one book of the Bible (John).

“He that believeth on him is not condemned: ...” (John 3:18). “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:” (John 1:12)

A person can believe and receive or doubt and do without. I choose to put my past under the blood and my future in the hands of Christ. I hope you will do the same- “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.” (John 3:36)

March 17, 2009

TEACHING AND PREACHING

Almost immediately after I became a child of God (March 19, 1962), I felt God's call on my life to preach the Gospel. Emotionalism Christianity pretty much ruled the day in my circle of Christianity during those early days. If people shouted and cried and ran up and down the aisles then everyone thought it was a great service. If the sermon had "meat" but no great emotion people would say as they shook your hand upon leaving, "Keep praying and trying. You will get it after awhile!"

Some way, in the mercy and grace of our Great God, I became convinced that God wanted me to stir people's minds as well as their hearts. I took a lot of criticism from people but I could not shake the burden of my heart to teach as well as to preach. Only later did I find Ephesians 4:11- "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; (This should actually be translated "Pastor teacher") and gain confirmation that God did indeed call "weird" people like me!

I am convinced that a spokesman for God has three main responsibilities: 1) Evangelize (Declare unto people their broken relationship with God and then show them how to be part of God's family). 2) Educate (Direct, inform, guide, and instruct people in the ways and worship of God). 3) Exhort (admonish, persuade, and urge people to abandon their sinful ways so they can live the wonderful life God created them to live).

Forty seven years ago God forgave my sin debt and made me one of his children (Glory!). Now each day I try to walk with Him and grow more like Him. I still have much to learn but, if God will help me, I will share with others not only that I know God but also how I grow with God.

March 18, 2009

PRESSING PROBLEMS

Did you know that the word "crowd" is not found in the Bible? I was thinking recently about how people keep people from coming to Christ and decided to look up "crowd" in the Bible. That is when I found that the word "multitude" or "press" is used instead of the word "crowd".

The Greek work for "press" is actually derived from the root word for vehicle. "Press" actually means "a throng of people who carry you along". Having spent time in India I can relate to this situation. Sometimes the people are so thick until you find yourself swept up in a river of humanity and you actually have to work your way to the edge and hope for a place to break out of the "press".

In the Bible this "press" of people caused problems with people trying to get to Christ for Healing (Mark 2:4 And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay.); for family time (Luke 8:19 Then came to him his mother and his brethren, and could not come at him for the press.); and for Salvation (Luke 19:3 And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature).

The woman with the long term issue of blood had the right answer- When she had heard of Jesus, (she) came in the press behind, and touched his garment (Mark 5:27). Work your way through the people and the problems until you can get to the feet of Jesus. That is where you will find peace in the "press".

March 24, 2009

HEART WORDS

And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites: And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them: That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel. (Deuteronomy 17:18-20)

When God gave instructions to Israel concerning the duties of a king He listed an unusual requirement. The King was instructed to personally write a copy of the Law (Possibly the book of Deuteronomy) and then read his written copy each day in order to learn to reverence God and obey His commandments. It is interesting to note that the favorite book of the King of kings (Jesus Christ) was Deuteronomy (He quoted more from this book than all other scripture combined).

If you are really serious about incorporating the word of God into your memory and into your life then you might want to do a “kingly thing” and take the time to write (or type) a book of the Bible and then spend a month or two reading your copy. I know it is available on computer and in writing but it is easier to get it into your heart when you write it yourself. What a great adventure lies ahead of you!

March 25, 2009

GOD'S CHILD

The heart of Christianity is that faith in the sinless sacrifice of Jesus Christ can change us from an enemy of God into a son of God. What glorious good news! Religion tells us how bad we are and how hard we will have to work in order to placate an angry and vengeful God. A relationship with God through Jesus Christ changes that “angry God” into our loving Heavenly Father!

Now, instead of a far off God who is remote and uncaring I have a loving Heavenly Father who delights in having fellowship with me. Yes, I submit to the authority of this Father and painfully learn that disobedience brings punishment but I also realize that the reason for the punishment is not the wrath of God but His love- “Ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.” (Hebrews 12:5-6).

Having the great God of the universe as my Father gives me access to an abundant source of help and supply- “But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:19). It also means I never have to face problems or perils alone- “Be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” (Hebrews 13:5).

How can you know this wonderful relationship with God? “As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:” (John 1:12).

March 31, 2009 REVIVING THE CHURCH

Dr. Harry Reeder, III is a church growth specialist and the pastor of Briarwood Presbyterian Church of Birmingham, Al. In his seminars he lists ten symptoms of a declining Church: 1. They become program focused. 2. They are nostalgia Dominated. 3. They are personality dependent (certain people always have to "run" the church). 4. They suffer lack of resources; both financial and people. 5. Each year brings numerical decline (normal loss in a church each year due to death, desertion, and division is 10% of membership. Anything less than a 10% growth rate is a loss). 6. They are in a maintenance mentality (everyone is so busy just keeping things going until they have no time or energy for growth). 7. The people are defeated and making excuses (The people blame the pastor and the pastor blames the people). 8. Many in the church have loss hope for any meaningful and lasting change. 9. There is a vacuum of good leadership (Old leaders are tired and young leaders have moved to other locations). 10. The church begins to "Play the victim" (We are suffering because we are doing things right. The other churches in the area who are growing must be turning liberal or compromising).

I think all of these things are relevant and true but I am convinced the "missing ingredient" in churches today is the lack of being Christ Centered. Jesus said HE would build His church (Matt 16:18) and if HE was lifted up then He would draw all men unto himself (John 12:32). Satan is not trying to stop church from having programs; he is trying to prevent them from preaching Christ. So let us make preaching Christ our goal and marvel at what God will do to revive His church and change this world.

April 1, 2009 WE WOULD SEE JESUS

A young preacher had just graduated from Divinity School and taken his first Church. Week after week he tried to impress the people with the depth of his understanding of the Scriptures or the relevancy of his message. And week after week he left the pulpit with a feeling of failure.

One Sunday when he arrived at the pulpit and started to put out his notes he saw a sign taped to the top of the pulpit. It contained a simple statement, "We would see Jesus". Hurt and bewildered, the young preacher stumbled through the message and made it back to the parsonage. Waves of anger washed over him that someone would be so callous. This was followed by waves of depression and anxiety. He tried to lie down and get some sleep but that simple statement kept pounding in his mind, "We would see Jesus".

Finally he rolled off the bed into a kneeling posture. Beside the bed tears of repentance washed through his soul as he acknowledged his pride and arrogance. What a change the new day brought. Instead of strutting among the people he looked for ways to serve them; and, in the process, to serve the Lord.

Day after day this happened until several weeks had passed. Then one Sunday, when he entered the pulpit, he found another sign taped to the pulpit, "Then were the Disciples glad when they had seen the Lord".

April 7, 2009 VAIN FAITH

Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. (1 Corinthians 15:12-19)

Twice in this extremely important portion of God's Word Paul states that if the resurrection of Christ did not take place then your "faith is vain". In the original Greek it literally declares "If Christ is not risen then our preaching amounts to nothing and your faith is empty, unfounded, and without effect".

It is not enough to believe that Jesus was a "good man" with "good teachings" who will help us live "good lives". Jesus came to show us that we can never be "good enough" to satisfy the righteous Judgment of God. Then He died in our place to pay our sin debt. Finally, He was raised from the dead conquering sin, death, and hell so that you and I could not only become, but also live like, children of God. Christianity without the resurrection is empty and powerless!

April 8, 2009 CONSIDER THE CRUCIFIXION

It is easy for us to look into the face of a new born infant and marvel at the greatness of God's work in creating such a person of love and life. It is difficult for us to picture that same God approving, let alone designing, the act of the man and woman who produced that child! Yet, the very first command given by God to the created man and woman was to "be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth" (Gen 1:28). This literally means that husbands and wives were to have sex often enough until they would have children enough that the world would be repopulated. When is the last time your preacher preached on regular marital sex?

It is easy for us to dream about a marvelous place called Heaven where pain and sorrow are a thing of the past and eternal bliss is the joyful privilege of each inhabitant. It is more difficult for us to picture the pain and sorrow Jesus suffered in order for people to gain access to this Heavenly bliss. Picturing the throne in Heaven is easy; picturing the thorns in His head as he died for you and I is more difficult.

Bunny rabbits, new dresses, and chocolate candy make Easter a fun time for all. Watching the Son of God suffer in agony on a cruel cross is not nearly as appealing, yet, there would have been no resurrection Sunday if it were not for crucifixion Friday.

Do not become so busy "admiring the baby" this Easter until you forget how it came into existence. Remember that God was just as much in the function of the cross as He was in the fruit of the resurrection.

April 14, 2009 RELIGIOUS SHAMS

When we talk about something being done in “Vain” we normally mean something that has no impact or effect. The original Hebrew for “vain”, however, is rooted in the word Sham or Fraud. That is why so many religious activities are listed in the Bible as being in “vain”.

It is a Sham to use God’s name to curse people or to put down people- Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain. (Exodus 20:7)

It is a Sham to go through the motions of religion while a world desperately needs to hear about a life changing God- Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. (Isaiah 1:13)

It is a Sham to use prayer as a formality when it can be used to activate all of God’s power and provision- But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. (Matthew 6:7)

It is a Sham to preach Christ as a good moral prophet and not as the crucified, risen Son of God- And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. (1 Corinthians 15:14)

It is a Sham to talk about religion and never put it into practice- If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain. Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world. (James 1:26-27)

Is your religion a “sham” or a life changing experience with God?

April 15, 2009 LUKE WARM RELIGION

Jesus talked about a group of religious professionals who made a big show but were in reality nothing but beautifully decorated graves- Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. (Matthew 23:27). How terrible that must have been to teach about God and His wonders and yet be cold and dead on the inside.

Something more awful, however, would be to have just enough “religion” to deceive your heart, deaden your conscience, and ruin your soul. Your only desire was to use God as a “hell insurance policy” so you gave God lip service but were never willing to commit your life and energy to His word and work. Everyone in the church and the community seemed to like you and you were such a “good old boy” until you convinced yourself that you were a child of a God you did not know and did not particularly like. When the preacher preached on sin you thought he was talking about other people. When the Holy Spirit called during the invitation you could only think about getting first in line at the restaurant. You came to church sometimes, what more could God expect?

How awful it will be to stand before God with great expectations about rewards and Heaven and listen with amazement and horror as God looks at you with cold judgmental eyes and declares, “I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.” (Luke 13:27). Then the Truth that could have set you free will finally show you how blind you really were.

April 21, 2009 THE TWENTY DOLLAR PENNY

One of the great joys of walking with the Lord is to sense and hear His constant guidance. God does not “tie my shoes” but I do expect Him to provide the resources I need in selecting my shoes (A little thing between God and I. He gave the children of Israel shoes that lasted 40 years (Deut 29:5) so I expect Him to provide me shoes when I need them).

I am in one of my busy times right now with numerous projects going on that demand my attention and time. Recently, on the way to work, I stopped at a local country store for a sausage wrap for breakfast. As soon as I got in the car that morning I had begun telling God how busy I was as I “complained” about all the things I had to do. When I came to the counter to pay for my breakfast I was one penny short and the “give a penny, get a penny” tray beside the cash register was empty. I ended up having to use a twenty dollar bill to pay for breakfast just because I was a penny short.

On the way back to the car I looked down and there was a penny shining on the ground beside where I had parked my car. Suddenly, “the world stopped as I realized what had happened”. I was so busy complaining to God about how He was running my life until I failed to give Him an opportunity to help me by showing me what I would need in a few moments. Thank the Lord it only cost me a broken twenty that time. May God help me in the future to listen to His voice so I can hear His wonderful plans instead of focusing on my passing problems.

April 22, 2009 ENDING RIGHT

I do not like a movie or book in which the “bad guy” wins. The “anti-hero” seems to be the rage right now in a society which seems determined to turn all values and morals upside down but I think teaching people that “bad” is really “good” will be something that society will one day greatly regret.

I attended a funeral recently where the deceased was just a few months older than I am. I realize more each day how close death is and how important it is for me to keep my affairs in order. This was also a week in which many in the media, including our president, proclaimed that America was no longer a Christian nation so we should abandon Christian principles and practices and become like the nation of Israel during one of the darkest times in their history, “In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.” (Judges 21:25)

All of this led me to once again look at three life principles for living in the last days. First, I want to live until I die. I refuse to let the increasing darkness that surrounds me keep me from enjoying the light of God that lives in my heart. Secondly, I want to be an example until I expire. I want people to see the grace and goodness of God in my life and realize the “good” I proclaim is better than the “bad” heroes they are told to follow. Finally, I want to be finished when I finish. I do not want to waste my time and energy numbing my mind with “entertainment” when God has a job for me to do. May God make it so.

April 28, 2009 BLACK ROCKS

If a million people tell you a black rock is white it does not change the color of the rock nor the ability of clear sighted people to see that it is a black rock. If Society and the government call sin an alternate life style it does not change God's attitude toward those who engage in this life style nor does it change God's judgment on those who promote or participate in such activity (Luke 17:28-30).

Some preachers in our country are giving up on their stand for righteousness and holy living because of the recent wave of propaganda being disbursed by the liberal media. Let me encourage you to continue to stand steadfast for God's Word and God's Ways. I have read the end of the Book and although Satan and his followers make a big roar toward the end I know that when the dust settles Saints will be singing on streets of gold while Satan and his followers will be crying in a lake of fire. And nothing the media says will change that.

God and the world are looking for people who are Christian by practice as well as by profession. The world is desperately seeking people who will declare God's love and display God's love as God has written about it and shown it in the Bible. This means loving people enough to point out the dangers of disobedience as well as the delights of walking in God's will.

You can tell me all day long that a black rock is really white but you do not fool me and you certainly do not fool God. Sadly, who you may fool is yourself; and that would be a sad way to live and to die.

April 29, 2009 FIRM BELIEF

I am not the smartest man in the world but I did graduate as valedictorian from my high school. I am not the most sophisticated man in the world but I have traveled to over a dozen foreign countries and have been exposed to various cultures and most of the world's predominate religions. I am not someone who has accepted certain religious teaching simply because I am from the South. I question God about everything: Why do some people suffer and others do not? Why do some people who live like the devil make lots of money while others who do right all their life barely earn a minimal living. Why does God have to beg people to serve Him while people eagerly flock to serve Satan? There is very little God and I do not discuss.

Christianity is a major part of my life now but, sadly, I had little exposure to the Church and its structure in my early life so I was not "brain washed" into accepting certain beliefs without first examining them logically and in the light of real world living. The Core Beliefs in my life are based on years of Christian living and hours of Bible Study.

I want you to understand this so you will realize when I say that the Bible is the complete and unerring word of God that I am not saying this simply because it is what people expect me to say. I believe sin is wrong because the ultimate judge of all mankind, God, has declared it to be wrong and not because I have an "Axe to grind" or a prejudice to promote.

God is the only God. Not because I say so but because it is so!

May 5, 2009 REST

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. (Matthew 11:28). This is one of the great promises of Christ that seldom seems to be claimed or enjoyed by His harried and ever busy followers. In fact, many churches pride themselves on the busyness of their schedule! Someone needs to remind us again that it was the sin of being too busy to take time to spend time with God that eventually led to captivity for the nation of Israel (2 Chron 36:19-21).

One of the problems in our society today is that many people do not know what it means to "rest". They equate "rest" with entertainment, shopping, or taking time from the busy schedule of work to take on an equally busy schedule of amusements (Think of the miles and miles of things to keep families "busy" on their vacation at places like Pigeon Forge or Myrtle Beach).

The Word "Rest" used by Jesus in this verse comes from a Greek word meaning to Release, to Relieve, or to Refresh. Those terms describe exactly what a person should look for when they seek meaningful rest. Real Rest comes when you are able to Release your stress, Relieve the normal responsibilities that press you down, and Refresh your soul and body so that you are renewed and re-energized.

Real rest does not necessarily come from laziness (doing nothing). Real rest is when you engage in something that "reconnects" you with God and with yourself. It is stressful for me to have to write an article but it is greatly refreshing to be able to spend time with God so that the article flows from our communion together. I pray you find some way to "rest" this week.

May 6, 2009 BABY BOGGLERS

I thought it would be interesting to talk about babies in the bible as we approach Mother's Day. Here are some questions to (hopefully) get you to digging in the Bible- which would make your mother proud!

What Baby was Named "The Glory is Departed"

What Baby was Named "This is not my Child"

What Baby was Named "God is among us"

What Baby's Cry saved a nation?

What Baby greeted his cousin while still in the womb?

What Baby was called to preach before he was born?

What Baby was filled with the Holy Ghost from the time of his birth?

When will it be safe for Babies to play in Snake Pits?

When did Mothers have boiled baby for breakfast?

What man's wives had a "baby war" in order to win his affection?

When does a Baby receive his corrupt nature?

When does a Baby receive his soul?

How old does a Baby have to be in order to go to Hell when they die?

When does an old man become a Baby?

Will Babies go up in the Rapture?

May you "be like a baby" this week as you hunger and thirst for the word of God - *As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:* (1 Peter 2:2) [Answers to this quiz can be found at www.ministerministry.com].

May 12, 2009 SUNDAY MORNING BELIEVERS

What would you think of a man who showed up at his home once each week, went straight to the bed room, where he asked his wife to be really enthusiastic about being intimate with him with the hope that they would have yet another child for him to boast about. After their encounter he would then throw some money on the table and tell the wife to make sure the kids were taken care of and educated right. He would then walk whistling out the door as he called over his shoulder to his wife that he would look forward to another good time with her next week.

What would you think of a Church Member who showed up once each week for Sunday Morning Services where he expected to have a “goose bump” experience as he “worshipped” the Lord and anticipated new converts to be born again and brought into the body of Christ. He would throw a little something into the offering plate and then tell the preacher as he left the service to make sure these new converts were well educated and cared for. He would then go about his life and feel good about himself until the next Sunday (if he felt good) when he would again show up for another “good experience”.

Jesus calls people to Worship Him, Walk with Him, and Work for Him. Someone has to practice for the singing, care for the nursery, teach the classes, and do the one hundred and one things that must be done if a Church is to be a growing vibrant Body of Believers. People do not accomplish this if you only show up to Worship God on Sunday Morning.

May 13, 2009 FIVE FOLD PURPOSE

Several great things have come out of the venomous and vicious attack of the Christian Church by the liberal community. First, their obvious hatred and loathing of fundamental Christianity gives a true picture of their “tolerance” (Anything they want MUST be accepted while anyone who disagrees with them is a bigot and a fraud).

Secondly, the accusations the liberal community keeps throwing at the ministry and methods of the Church have caused the Church to take a long overdue look at its core beliefs as well as its perceived behavior. No longer can the Church expect to be respected and honored just because of its present name or its past accomplishments. Inquiring minds want to know and the Church better be ready to justify its reason for existing. It also must be able to validate its authority to issue life changing and society controlling declarations.

With these things in mind, I have prepared a five-fold purpose statement for the Church where I am assistant Pastor. Our Church exists in order to: 1) Provide opportunities for people to participate in the worship of Jehovah God, 2) Proclaim the Gospel which can change your life by bring you to Faith in Jesus Christ , 3) Shape your Life by Developing Christian Values in your life, 4) Enrich your life through fellowship and interaction with a Christian Community of fellow believers, 5) Educate you in the word of God so you will be able to enjoy abundant life as well as defend your Faith in an increasingly skeptically world.

The Christian Church should not stop because of a “barking dog”. Instead, it should seek to share the good news of Christ with that “dog” so it will become a “sheep” and enjoy life with the Good Shepherd.

May 19, 2009 BUG BARRIER

The official Board of our Church normally meets after Prayer Meeting on the first Wednesday night of each month. Because many of the men come directly to church from their work they have no opportunity for an evening meal. We have begun providing something for them to eat at the beginning of the board meeting to help with this situation. During a recent Board meeting we kept having bugs fly all around our meeting table trying to get into our food.

We checked all the windows and doors in the office complex and could not find where the bugs were coming from but their presence continued and was soon making life miserable for everyone. Finally, one of the men noticed that the top of a mini blind was moving. Upon investigation he found that someone had unhooked the window latch and the top window had slide down about two inches. As soon as we closed this window completely our bug problem ceased.

If you have something in your life that is continually “bugging you” then you need to find out where the “bugs” are coming from. If the “bugs” are not coming from the usually suspected places (mistakes you make or wrong activities you engage in) then you might need to look higher. When God sent the flies upon the Egyptians in order to get them to let His people go, those flies came only upon the Egyptians and not upon the people of God. If you have “bugs” that are bugging you then there must be a reason God is allowing them to come upon you. It would be to your advantage to find out why the barrier has been let down and then make sure it is repaired.

May 20, 2009 POWER OUTAGE

A lesson giving incident occurred at a local church recently. Just before time for Wednesday Prayer Service the power to the church went off. No lights and no Air Conditioner forced the suspension of normal services. A short time of prayer and fellowship outside the building took place but it soon became obvious that no time limit could be given for resumption of power so almost everyone returned home.

As the last group of people was getting ready to leave they saw a repair truck from the power company come by and stop at a pole just down from the church. They observed as a repairman threw the switch on the pole transformer and then watched in awe as a bright spark of fire burned in two a small branch that had fallen across the lines. Now one of the men had to go back into the church and turn off all the lights and make sure the Air Conditioner was correctly set. Power had been restored.

The prayer power of this church was stopped (for that night) because a small limb fell across the power path. I hope you see the lesson in this incident. Often it is not the big problem that sets back our prayer life. Instead, it is usually a relatively small obstacle such as bitterness, anger, or lust that “trips us up” and stops the flow of power in our prayers.

Christians serve a big God who is able to do big things for His people. If the light of His power is not shining in your life then I encourage you to look for whatever is blocking the power and remove its hindering influence. You will be amazed at the difference the power makes!

May 26, 2009 THE PATTERN TO FOLLOW

Jesus is not only our Savior; He is also our example. His call to His disciples was to “follow me”. His assurance was that if they would “follow Him” then He would “make them fishers of men”. In other words, the pattern I will show you will change your life from mundane fishers of fish into world changing fishers of men. What a life changing challenge!

At the beginning of Jesus’ ministry He returned to His hometown and went into the Synagogue “as usual”. The first thing Jesus wanted to teach His disciples was the importance of regular attendance in the house of God.

When asked to speak at the Synagogue, Jesus immediately asked for the scroll of Isaiah and turned to the place designated in our Bibles today as chapter sixty one, verses one and two. It has to be obvious to His followers that Jesus was a well versed student of the Word of God so this should also be a pattern in their own life.

From these verses of Scripture Jesus spoke about God’s call to service: God gives Power for service (“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me”). God has a program of service (“He has anointed me to preach, to heal, to set captives free, and to give sight to the blind”). And God has a Period of Service (“The Acceptable year of the Lord”). Again, He showed His Disciples the pattern that God wanted them to follow in their life and ministry.

Are you just wandering through life wondering what to do with the energy and ambitions God has given you? Jesus provided the pattern you need to follow. Jesus said this pattern would lead to Abundant Life. Try it today.

May 27, 2009 WORKING FOR THE WIND

Listen to these words of contemplation from Solomon- Ecc 5:16 *this also is a sore evil, that in all points as he came, so shall he go: and what profit hath he that hath laboured for the wind?* Solomon was well aware that we brought nothing into this world and we can carry nothing from this world so he wanted us to ponder the profit of what we do while we live in this world.

Solomon realized that the few short years a person lives in this world can be a blessing to the person and to others or they can be wasted and squandered. He refers to someone who lives such a wasted life as someone who works for the wind and has nothing to show at the end of life’s journey but an empty hand full of invisible air.

What a horrible end to a person’s life to realize that all of their work has no more value than a bucket full of air! No wonder Jesus admonished His followers to “Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life,”(John 6:27). Jesus knew that “working for the wind” produced no joy in this life and no rewards in the life to come.

Determine today to make your life count for God and eternity. Do not just “get through life”; make a difference in the world around you and you will find it will make a difference in you. Stop complaining about your lemons. Look for some ice for your lemonade! You are important to God and you have a task only you can accomplish. Make your life more than a passing breeze.

June 2, 2009 TOLERANCE

Our president continually calls on us to be “tolerate” toward those who have wrong beliefs and wicked behavior. That is hard for me to tolerate!

When a person’s “rights” are more important than a baby’s life; that is hard for me to tolerate. When scientific speculation is promoted as more trustworthy than the Word of God; that is hard for me to tolerate. When people’s desires for alternative marriages supersedes God’s principles for marriage; that is hard for me to tolerate.

I love people and I value their view point. That does not mean, however, that I have to condone wrong behavior or wrong beliefs in order to let everyone feel good about themselves. A child may want to play in a busy highway but I have enough love for that child to do everything within my power to keep them from doing themselves harm.

I realize that people have a free will. I also realize that most people’s opinions are shaped by where they live, what they listen to or watch, and by parental oversight or lack of oversight. I understand, and tolerate the fact, that people like different foods and different clothes than I like. My tolerance ends, and my responsibility begins, when these people want to go play in a snake pit because the snakes all have such pretty colors!

I strongly suggest our president become more than a once a year at Easter Church attendee before he suggest I abandon Biblical Beliefs and learn to “tolerate” activities and actions that harm people’s character and standing with God. May God help us to continue to realize that sin separates us from God and do all within our power to stand steadfast and faithful to God and to His word.

June 3, 2009 THREE TRUTHS

Here are three truths every graduate needs to consider:

TRUTH NUMBER ONE: GOD HAS A PLAN FOR YOUR LIFE. You need to find that plan and walk in it- (Psa 16:11) *Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.* There are three kinds of people in the world: (1) Those who don't know what is happening, (2) Those who simply watch what is happening, and (3) Those who cause things to Happen. What I want you to realize is that even if you belong in that first group, the group that doesn't have a clue about what you are supposed to accomplish, you can still rest in the fact that God has a plan and He gladly reveals that plan to those who seek His will for their life.

TRUTH NUMBER TWO: THE WORLD IS OUT TO DESTROY YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD BY DESTROYING YOUR PURITY. To be successful in life you must make a conscious determination to live pure-(Dan 1:8) *But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank:.*

TRUTH NUMBER THREE: NO ONE KNOWS HOW BIG YOUR BOOK IS OR HOW MANY CHAPTERS YOU HAVE LEFT TO WRITE. ARE YOU READY IF THE BOOK ENDS TONIGHT? (Eccl 11:9) *Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.*

Congratulations on finishing this chapter in your life. May the remainder of your life be filled with God’s grace and goodness.

June 9, 2009 WHAT IS GOD DOING?

Most of the interaction between God and His followers centers around three areas. Recognize these areas and you will be greatly helped in your understanding of what God is trying to do in your life. And that will fill you with joy as you grasp how much love and effort God is putting into shaping your life.

Understand that God Punishes you in order to get you to sin less- *For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.* (Hebrews 12:6,10). God does not punish us in order to harm us but “for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness”. What a great goal God has for us!

Realize the God Prunes you in order to get you to produce more- *Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.* (John 15:2). Isn't that amazing? God does not stop His work on us until we reach our full potential! Such love is overwhelming.

Finally, understand that God wants us to live a life of Piety in order to be like Him- *But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.* (1 Peter 1:15-16). God calls me to be holy not so that I will miss fun but so that I will become like God! It does not get any better than that!!

June 10, 2009 CONSTANT CONNECTION

And when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the LORD, she came to prove him with hard questions. (1 Kings 10:1)

The world was all abuzz about a new king. His wealth and his power were talked about in caravan camps and palace board rooms throughout the region. His architectural triumphs were admired in cultural centers and intellectual institutes all over the mid east. But his wisdom was always where people “dropped anchor” when they talked about him.

One of the great attributes of Solomon's wisdom was the fact that his wisdom was always coupled with his dedication to the Lord. In fact, in the original Hebrew the words mean that people marveled at Solomon's wisdom because of his “constant connection” to the Lord. What a great thing to say about the intellectual prowess of anyone!

When the enemies of Daniel were looking for a way to find fault against him they realized they could not “find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God.” (Daniel 6:5). What a great testimony!

When Jesus wanted to reassure His followers about the tragic circumstances He was about to face He said, “He that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.” (John 8:29). What a great way to face life; constantly connected to the Father because you always do those things that please Him!

When people comment to others about you do they talk about a physical trait you possess or do they talk about how you are “constantly connected” to the Lord? Your real testimony hinges on that answer.

June 16, 2009 DAD'S DESIRE

It is usually difficult to know what to buy for a Dad. The flowers and candy that come so easy on Mother's Day just do not seem appropriate for Dad. So instead of trying to solve that problem I thought I would share three desires that our Heavenly Father wants for His Children and which would make great "gifts" for any Dad.

First, Our Heavenly Father wants His Children to Guard their Heart. Among other things, a person's speech ("out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." Matthew 12:34) and a person's standards ("Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." Proverbs 4:23) comes from your heart. A good Father wants a child with a good heart.

Your Heavenly Father also wants you to Guide your Life. He wants you to make sure the road you are traveling will end up where you need to be. He does not want you to be too lazy to walk your chosen path or so lustful for wrong things until you venture off the path of life into the swamp of sin and ruin.

Finally, your Heavenly Father wants you to Grow your Soul. Many people today live like a dog seeking nothing but food, fornication, and frolicking with the pack. God made you for more than that and He wants you to develop your potential and personality into the great person you can be.

There are many gifts a Dad could receive this Father's Day but any Dad would be thankful to know his child was guarding his heart, guiding his life, and growing his soul. This will take a lot more commitment than buying a gift card but it sure will delight your Dad.

June 17, 2009 GENERATIONAL GOD

(God) shewest lovingkindness unto thousands, and recompensest the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them: the Great, the Mighty God, the LORD of hosts, is his name, (Jeremiah 32:18)

People in America are finally beginning to realize that Sin is not just a short term pleasure that is easily repented of and carries no consequences. God declared many years ago that abandoning Him for something else would have long term as well as immediate repercussions and today in America the Lustful Generation (I want it all and I want it now) has given birth to the Lost Generation (I had it all but now I have lost my money, my morals, and the meaning to Life). God told us and we just would not listen: *Thou shalt not make thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters beneath the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments. (Deuteronomy 5:8-10).*

The good news is that just as Sin brings long term repercussions so does righteousness- *And the LORD said unto Jehu, Because thou hast done well in executing that which is right in mine eyes, and hast done unto the house of Ahab according to all that was in mine heart, thy children of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel. (2 Kings 10:30)*

June 23, 2009 RELIGIOUS REALITIES

Following God does not give you the world but it does change your world. Jesus depended on women's gifts to support Him, Fish to pay His taxes, Strangers to give Him a grave, a fellow worker to take care of His mother, a small boy to provide the food when company came, wicked women to wash His feet, and converts and critics to invite Him into their home for a meal. Jesus died a pauper but His death enabled millions to inherit the riches of God's Grace and mansion in heaven.

A relationship with Christ may cost you your relationship with family and friends but it will bring you into the family of God and allow you to invite your earthly family to join your heavenly family in the greatest adventure it is possible to undertake- *Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore? And (Jesus Said) every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.* (Matthew 19:27, 29)

When you come to know Peace with God (salvation) and the Peace of God (the Holy Spirit's presence within) you will also enter into warfare with the world, the flesh, and the devil. Many people shy away from coming to God because of this warfare but God has declared *we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.* (Romans 8:37)

The realities of religion are not always what we expect but the reality of a relationship with God through Christ is the greatest joy you will ever know. Join me in walking with God today.

June 24, 2009 LIFE'S ROAD

Sometimes life's journey takes us down dark roads of doubt and uncertainty, dreary roads of weariness and despair, or dreaded roads of pain and tragedy. Sometimes life's roads are bumpy with unforeseen obstacles or unexpected events when we were anticipating smooth traveling with life's "car" set on cruise. And sometimes the scenery along life's road is not what we desire or anticipated as we watch loved ones suffer or families dissolve.

We think we know about how long Life's Road will be but it never seems to match our health, our wealth, or our estimations. Healthy people die suddenly and unexpectedly. Wise People who "did all the right financial things" have recently seen their retirement move much farther down the road through circumstances completely out of their control. Many people who thought they would be active for many years to come find themselves staring at a ceiling from a hospital bed instead of looking at the Grand Canyon as they had envisioned.

Two principles I want you to remember as you travel Life's Road. First, the King of kings has sent a helper (The Holy Spirit) to walk with us, strengthen us, and hold our hand as we journey to the King's house. Learn His voice and listen to His directions. Secondly, don't let the distraction on the road take your eyes off your destination. One day (O Glorious Day!) the struggles of the road will end and be forgotten in the joy of finally arriving at the Father's House.

One final thought. Life's road has a broad way and a narrow way. Make sure you are on the narrow way leading to eternal life and not on the broad way leading to destruction.

June 30, 2009

ASSURANCE

The Bible declares that Abraham was so persuaded of the promises of God (Rom 4:21) until he “against hope believed in hope”. Christians today need that same kind of Assurance as they face an uncertain world. Thankfully, the Bible gives us three important areas of life that we can have complete assured assurance about.

1) God's Care: (Romans 8:38-39) *For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.* Nothing that Satan, circumstance, or live can throw at us is able to overcome the love that God has for us. God loved us when we were unlovable. Jesus loved us enough to die for us when we were dead in trespasses and sin. Be assured that God's love is one constant you can cling to in an ever changing world.

2) God's Keeping Power- (2 Timothy 1:12) *...for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.* You should have a persuaded assurance about your salvation. The author of our salvation has already conquered death, hell, and the grave; never worry that Satan will be able to overcome you. You can walk away from God but God will never walk away from you.

3) God's Future Plans- (Hebrews 11:13) *These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.* What a privilege to know that we do not need to know the future as long as we are walking toward it holding God's Hand!

I have a persuaded assurance about God's Care, my salvation, and the future. Do you?

July 1, 2009

BOOK BOX

I had to carry my wife to the Dentist recently. In the center of the waiting room was a book box. The first hour that I waited no one looked inside this book box. Finally, a young girl came in, went straight to the book box, opened it, and began to look through the treasure of books it contained. Soon all the children in the waiting room were busy looking through the box.

I am a child of God who is waiting for the soon coming return of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. While I am waiting, I realize God has left us a book full of treasures and truths that needs to be explored. But many days it just sits in its place, gathering dust, while people busy themselves with must less important things. What if, like this little girl, I could open the lid and get people to see the wonderful things contained in this blessed book? It might cause such excitement until soon everyone would want to look into the book!

Citizens of the United States are blessed with the wonderful privilege of freedom of speech. It is a shame that we use that freedom to gossip, criticize, and complain. What a delight it would be, and what a difference it would make, if we used that freedom to open the lid of God's Book and show people the eternal truths and precious promises it contains.

One day heaven and earth will pass away but the word of God will endure forever. Let's make it our business to use the freedom God has so graciously given us to share God's Book with all the other children around us. Who knows, it might just lead to them becoming our brother or sister in the Lord!

July 7, 2009 WEED WONDER

Recently, my brother in law, who is a postman shared about a “God Moment” he experienced as he was delivering mail one day. He was walking toward a home and happened to notice a weed hanging over the edge of the walkway just as he brushed against it with his leg. At that precise moment a “heavenly insight” flooded his mind and he sensed a wonderful awareness of the presence and plan of God.

The seed pods on that weed stood out with amazing clarity on that day and he realized when he brushed against the weed and caused those pods to fall into the wind that he was part of God’s plan. Without his “help” those seed would have remained on the stalk but his “accidental” brushing against that plant had given them a chance to scatter and eventually fall into fertile ground and reproduce. His action was a small thing but the moment of “heavenly insight” is something that will impact him always.

One cannot help but wonder why these “God Moments” are so seldom seen. Day after day my brother in law trudged up this sidewalk to deliver mail to this home with no thought but doing his job and getting out of the heat or cold. Why did God stop him on this day and share His presence and plan in such a special way? I don’t know but I do know that if these moments were common then that would turn the extraordinary into the ordinary and cause us to miss or overlook the moments when they came.

Look for your “God moment” today. It may come from something as simple as a weed but do not miss it because it is meant to encourage and enlighten you in a way you would not have imagined.

July 8, 2009 CHRISTIAN CAUTIONS

The journey from earth to heaven is one of the most exciting and adventurous walks a person can experience. You walk with God and you serve God as you journey toward a permanent place in God’s house. Does not get any better than that!!

Along the way, however, there are several obstacles that Christians need to consider. You must learn to be careful of wounds, mindful of weariness, and aware of worldliness.

Be careful of wounds that you inflict and that are inflicted on you- *The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.* (Proverbs 18:8) *And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.* (Zechariah 13:6)

Weariness brings discouragement and doubt and draws you away from your work for God; - *And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.* (Galatians 6:9). A person must learn to rest and reflect on what they are doing for God and what God is doing for them along the way or they will faint and falter. The prophet Elijah became so tired until he lost contact with God and with his purpose and ended up with a critical crisis time in his ministry (I Kings 19).

Worldliness is not so much a specific action as it is an attitude- Paul told the Roman Christians to be not conformed to the world but to be transformed by a renewed mind (attitude) [Rom 12:2]. Worldliness simply means we allow the worlds goals to replace God’s values in our life.

Wounds, weariness, worldliness; 3 enemies to be on guard against as we travel life’s journey.

July 14, 2009 JUST JUDGMENT

It is amazing to me how many people who live a sinful life style tell me it is wrong for me to judge them but it is alright for them to judge me about my judging them in their sinful lifestyle! The truth is, all of us judge people every day; from the crazy driver ducking in and out of traffic ahead of us to the strange people at work who do things in a much different way than we would do them. My main concern, however, is not this "normal" judgment of people. My main concern is God and His judgment.

God will judge the nations of the Earth (Ps 82:8) and will separate those nations who have promoted righteous behavior from those nations who lived only for self satisfaction (Matt 25:31-46). Nations and leaders may think they are only answerable to their egos and public opinion but one day God will judge them with righteous judgment and many a tear will be shed.

God will one day judge people about their moral standards (Heb 13:4 Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge). He will also judge people about their hidden actions (Ro 2:16 In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel).

In Fact, God will one day judge Everyone (Heb 12:23 ...to God the Judge of all,) so it behooves us all to be prepared to face God as a righteous Judge. The good news is that while God does not judge on the "curve"; He does judge on the "cross" where even the worst of sinners can find mercy and forgiveness. What a joy to know my judge has become my father since I have been born again into God's family.

July 15, 2009 AFTER THE GRIEF

Recently I had the great privilege of sharing in a memorial service for a friend. After much prayer and thought I realized there were three main principles I wanted to communicate to the family as they dealt with their grief and engaged in a new life without their loved one.

1) Enjoy Life: Ec 5:18 *Behold that which I have seen: it is good and comely for one to eat and to drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labour that he taketh under the sun all the days of his life, which God giveth him: for it is his portion.* Their departed loved one did not want them sad before he left; nor would he want it now.

2) Embrace God: Do not allow death's pain or life's pressures to rob you of a daily walk with God. Hold tightly to God each day and allow God to guide and grow your life. Rest in God's peace as you "Let not your heart be troubled" (John 14:1). Depend each day on God's provision for your needs. Trust each day in God's Power to protect and keep you.

3) Expect to be Judged: Ec 11:9 *Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.* Look forward to meeting your loved one again in a better place. Just be aware that entrance into Heaven is a gift of God; not a right of man. Judgment comes before jubilation so make sure your "ticket has been punched" based on your faith in Christ.

July 21, 2009 SERVANT SHADOW

Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth? are not his days also like the days of an hireling? As a servant earnestly desireth the shadow, and as an hireling looketh for the reward of his work: So am I made to possess months of vanity, and wearisome nights are appointed to me. (Job 7:1-3)

One of the wonderful attributes of the word of God is that it is a “living word”. Its authority and stability does not change but its application can vary as the Holy Spirit applies the word to various circumstances and situations in your life. Those of us who read the Word on a regular basis witness this as we re-read a familiar passage and suddenly see its application or encouragement in an entirely different way; even though we thought we had already “drained all the honey” from that verse.

A good example of this is the little phrase about the “servant earnestly desiring the shadow” in this passage from Job. One person took this phrase to mean the servant was showing his humility by waiting in the back ground until his master called. Another person saw the servant as lazily “sulking” in the background shadows so the master would not call him. Still another thought the servant was selfishly looking for the shadow as a place of comfort from the fiery rays of the sun. Three different outlooks from the same statement; all tempered by the reader’s background and personality.

Some people tell me reading the Bible is “dull and dry”. I think they must be reading it with their mind on a ball game! The Bible is the living word of God with a life changing message about how a Great God desires to bring people into His family and fellowship. Nothing dull about that!

July 22, 2009 THE UNEXPECTED GOD

Sometimes God will show up at an unexpected time for unexplained reasons and do extraordinary things just because He is God and He decided He wanted to do something to manifest His glory or encourage His people. It is amazing and awesome when we experience such an event and catch a glimpse of the glory and goodness of God in the midst of all the troubles and trials we experience in our sin cursed world.

Jacob experienced such an event one night in the midst of loneliness and despair. Trouble at home and his father’s desire for him to marry within the God chosen ancestry line had sent him from his comfortable home to a sandy camp with a rock for a pillow. He expected only a night of rest but suddenly Angels and God showed up and this sandy place became a sacred shrine so that Jacob ended up exclaiming, “Surely God is in this place and I knew it not” (Gen 28:16).

Moses experienced a career changing event when he unexpectedly met God at a burning bush. The Apostle Paul had a radical life changing event when he unexpectedly met Jesus on the road to Damascus. John the Beloved Disciple unexpectedly heard about God’s future plans while he was exiled on a desert island.

Keep your eyes open. God may unexpectedly manifest Himself in your life today. It may be through a dream or a vision or it may be something as simple as taking time to minister to a stranger- *Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.* (Hebrews 13:2). Whatever God uses, you will never forget a day when you experience God and see His glory.

July 28, 2009 DISRESPECTING GOD

What in the world has happened to the world? Why are so many people displaying anger and hatred toward anything pointing people toward living right and doing righteous acts? Why has God and good suddenly become the “bad guys”? In short, why has it suddenly become wrong to be right in America?

There are a number of answers I could give you; the election of a liberal leaning president and party, the disintegration of the family due to work place pressures, and the changing moral standards about marriage and acceptable society standards. All of these have a bearing on the problem but the most important issue I believe is the fact that many in America have lost their respect (awe) of God- *Let all the earth fear the LORD: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him.* (Psalms 33:8). Preachers have fallen into sin, “Christian” politicians keep exposing their “feet of clay”, and denominational divisions have muted the authority and clarity of the Church so that many people have lost their respect for Christianity and the God it proclaims. Anger and anarchy have replaced peace and joy as multitudes stumble in the darkness of selfish desires and sinful behavior. Like a drowning swimmer they now lash out at the very one who is seeking to rescue them from darkness and despair.

According to Psalm 4:4 it is when we stand in awe of God that we sin not. Conversely, it is when God and godly things become the subject of ridicule and rejection that people find it easy to allow sinful practices into their life. That is why it is so important for Christians to “stand in awe” of God in their daily practices and their life principles.

July 29, 2009 BEHIND BUSINESS

Whenever possible, I try to use Monday mornings for what I call “behind business”. “Behind business” is the work that accumulated over the week end. You would be amazed at the number of things people ask me to do before and after services on Sunday. Many of those requests need to be dealt with on Monday. Monday is also the day I try to process and copy the DVD and CD copies of our Sunday Services as well as edit and upload our services to our web site. Besides all this, Monday is usually the time to check up on absent members, sick members, and hospitalized members as well as send greetings to people who visited our services Sunday.

I learned the hard way long ago that if you do not attempt to get your “behind business” out of the way on Monday then it really starts to build pressure or give off an “odor” by the middle of the week when normally my plate is already full and does not need this added stress. When “behind business” gets behind then it is not a good thing.

There is no short cut to spiritual power or a strong relationship with God. Believe me; I have tried about everything you can imagine. The only way to spend time with God is to spend time with God. When that “business” gets behind it will end up hurting every other “business” in which I am engaged so I have learned that time with God must be a priority. I guess that is why Jesus declared that the most important “business” of a person is to “Love the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind, body, and strength”. Make sure you do not get behind in that “business”.

August 4, 2009 PRIME PARKING

I had just been to a funeral and needed to go by Wal-Mart on my way home in order to pick up a part for my computer. I was in a hurry (as usual) but not on a schedule. Because of traffic, I ended up going all the way to the store and then turning into the parking lot instead of entering from the “back” side of the lot as I normally do.

As soon as I started to turn into the parking lot I noticed that the very first parking space was vacant and it was not handicap parking. “Glory!” I thought, “God has provided another good parking place for me.” When I started to turn in, however, the Holy Spirit spoke to my heart and told me that this space was for someone else and for me to find another space.

It was a long way into the parking lot before I found another empty parking space. Hurt at being snubbed so rudely by the Holy Spirit, I walked the long distance from my car to the store. When I passed the prime spot that had been empty but was now occupied by a van I glanced to the side and saw a young mother unloading 2 small children. The Holy Spirit spoke to my heart and said, “Mike, right now you are a little fat and the walk from the car to the store did you good. For this lady, however, it would have been a difficult and dangerous trek with those small children.”

There are a lot of people on planet earth. God loves and cares for each of them. Sometimes that care means fat people need to walk while a mother gets a prime parking place. Isn't it great to know God's wisdom will always do the right thing?

August 5, 2009 PASTORAL PRINCIPLES

I think the most important people in the world are Pastors. I know that is a radical statement but I base it on the belief that Pastors are called to proclaim vital spiritual principles in order to help us live properly in this world, as well as prepare for a good entrance into the future world. No other person or organization has a responsibility as great or as needed.

My belief in the importance of Pastors leads me to look for “Pastoral Principles” I can share with other pastors and apply to my own life. Here are a few of those principles that I hope will help your Pastor to become a more effective worker and help you in your prayers for those who have the tremendous responsibility of being a Pastor.

A Pastor should be someone who speaks with Authority (Jesus spoke this way- Matt 7:29), who speaks with Anointing (It is obvious the Holy Spirit is guiding him), and who speaks to provide Answers. The normal duties of a Pastor means he must be someone who organizes the body of Christ for the best use of its God given talents, who agonizes over the needs of his flock, who evangelizes those who need to hear the good news of Christ, and who is energized by the power of the Holy Spirit.

This means that you should regularly pray that God would Guard the Heart of your Pastor, Guide the Life of your Pastor, and Grow the Soul of your Pastor. It is easy to take “pot shots” at your Pastor but if you are looking to him to help guide your family and friends into Heaven then you need to pray more and say less.

August 11, 2009 SERMONS STARTERS

Almost all of my life I have been a preacher (I began preaching when I was 14 and I am now 62). I no longer get the opportunity to preach as much as I once did but “preparing to prepare to preach” is still a habit of my life. This means I still write down sermon ideas as soon as I receive them (I keep notebooks everywhere!). Here are some recent ideas that may help you with a devotion or message you need to give.

People wanted to be with Jesus for the Food He provided, the Miracles He performed, and the Fame He possessed. When He stopped distributing bread and started talking about the cross the crowd quickly faded. Popularity is fleeting when commitment is proclaimed.

Satan tempted Eve with Forbidden Pleasures (“You shall not eat of every tree of the garden”), False Promises (“You shall not surely die”), and Fleshly Pride (“you will be like God”). These are the same tactics he uses today.

The Problem is that far too many people have faith in Christ instead of Christ as their faith. They believe there was a person (probably divine) named Jesus who did great things while on earth and they are willing for Him to forgive their sins and make things better for them. Their Faith, however, does not extend into asking Jesus to come into their heart and take control of their life. They do not mind using God but they do not want God to use them.

Many people would like to “dance with the devil” on earth but then settle down with God in Heaven when they die. To these people God is a necessary “evil” while fleshly pleasure is an evil that is necessary.

August 12, 2009 RELATIONSHIP LIVING

Salvation is not merely about rescuing a person from Hell. Salvation’s primary purpose is to prepare people for fellowship with God both now and in the eternity of Heaven. Christianity is not simply rules and regulations that prevent us from doing wrong. Christianity guidelines are to bring us to abundant life where love for God and our neighbor are the primary privileges and principles of our life.

Jesus made the astonishing statement, “he that has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9). That principle changes Christianity from a religion which is hard and heavy into the reflection of a relationship with God. No longer must Christians seek to “clinch their fist, grit their teeth, and do the best they can”. Christianity is not “me” trying to impress the world with my religious righteousness. Now it is God in me showing forth His glory through our loving relationship.

Nearly forty years ago I entered into a marriage relationship with the lovely Princess Paula. She does not beat me in the head each day and tell me I had better keep my eyes straight ahead and my hands to myself because I am now married to her. She lets the bond of our love take care of that. Relationship and fellowship have bound us together in a way that rules and laws could never have accomplished.

If you secretly look for ways to bypass your Christian duties or if you proclaim devotion to Christianity but really long for the prodigal son’s riotous living then you need to examine your relationship. If God is simply “hell insurance” instead of your heavenly Father then you need to give God your heart as well as your hand. The change will be astonishing.

August 18, 2009 I GENERATION

We are now living in the "I-Generation". It is called the "I-Generation" because it is the Internet Generation, the Isolation Generation, the "I" Generation, and/or the Insecure Generation. All of the descriptions fit and describe a generation lost and lonely looking for fun and fulfillment in a land filled with broken dreams and abandoned hopes.

This generation has never really known the thrill of victory- sports heroes they want to emulate are suddenly found to be powered more by drugs than determination. Every war they have known (Viet Nam, Iraq, Afghanistan) has ended in "strategic" withdrawal instead of victory. And they recently discovered that greedy bankers can turn the American Dream into a nightmare almost overnight leaving people broke, unemployed, and hopeless.

This generation "lives" on the Internet where every area of their life is exposed to millions of people via Face book or Twitter and where any information they want (no matter how bad) can be found in a matter of a few clicks. They have become so accustomed to living in a virtual world until they find it almost impossible to interact with real people. It has become so bad until many now text each other rather than talk to one another even though they are in the same room!

Isolated from each other, the moral view and world view of this generation is now shaped by movies, internet gossip, or TV comedians pretending to be news reporters. Paul accurately described this generation as people "who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worship and served the creature more than the Creator" (Romans 1:25). If they could only realize that coming to Jesus brings Abundant Life to replace their isolated loneliness. Please help me tell them!

August 19, 2009 AVAILABLE TO GOD

"All that God is is available to the man who is available to all that God is." Ian Thomas Starting from zero, with none of today's modern communication methods, the first generation of Christians changed the world for generations to come. They believed that Jesus Christ was the Son of God and the answer to the needs of humanity and they acted on that belief in spite of intense persecution and with little resources. They made themselves available to God and God make His power available to them!

What a change from modern Christianity where people sit on padded pews in air conditioned Churches waiting with impatient minds for the preacher to finish his Sunday sermonette in time for them to get to the head of the line at the local restaurant. Unwilling to make themselves available to God because God might ask them to do something that would hurt their pride or seek to actually get them involved, they go through the motions of Christianity and wonder why Society, and their family, is in chaos.

These people try to be "good" and "do the right thing" but they would never consider committing themselves unreservedly to God's will and work. Their faith is simply a historical belief in a distant Savior who died and left them a good example. To them, Christianity is about what God can do for them; not about what they should do for God.

What if Christians really believed what they say they believe? What if they acted as if God could not only forgive a man's past but He could also change that person's present as He prepared him for the future! What if they believed Christianity actually worked? It would be world changing. Ask the first generation disciples!

August 25, 2009 FAILURE FACTS

I am still amazed at how often I fail. I do not do any “major sins” but it is still troubling how many times I think wrong, talk wrong, or act wrong. I know better and as soon as the words are out of my mouth, or the thoughts are into my head, or the actions have already transpired I regret the wrong I did and wonder why I continue to allow these things to happen.

Eve was a lot like me. She had every reason to do right and enjoy life but she walked into a failure that, in her case, had major consequences. I spent some time studying her failure recently in order to try to gain some insight that would help me in my own life.

Eve failed because she was away from Adam when Satan engaged her in a conversation that led to wrong conduct. Normally I goof up when I separate myself from the right people or the right employment and get with the wrong crowd (TV or gossip people or bad thoughts).

Eve failed because her eyes sought out the source of wrong, her heart began to desire the one thing she did not have, and her mind began to believe that she would not face consequences for doing wrong. Translate this into it is not wrong to scan things on TV or the Internet because they will not “really” hurt me.

Eve failed because she did not consider the fact that her actions would impact others (All of mankind!), her relationship with her husband, and even God! Maybe I would fail less if I thought about the hurt gossip causes people or the price God paid because of my failures.

Thank God, failure is not fatal; but it sure is troublesome.

August 26, 2009 STOPPING SKATEBOARDS

Sometimes doing the right thing does not make me feel as good as I want to feel. Recently, some of our youth began bringing skateboards to church. Our Church is on a hill and a concrete driveway leads from the parking lot to the bottom of the hill. When I saw the kids riding the skateboards they were having a blast sitting on the skateboard and riding at amazing speeds to the bottom of the hill. As I looked at them soaring down the hill I thought to myself, “If I was not so old and fat I would like to try that myself!”

Sadly, I had to ask the kids to stop riding the skateboards because, as they sat on the skateboard and zoomed across the parking lot, they were so low until a car entering the parking lot could not see them and a fun situation was a dangerous situation. We had also had some problems recently with kids on skateboard trying to use steps and ramps under the church breeze way while people were present and another fun situation turned into a dangerous situation so we had forbidden skateboards at church.

Sometimes I hate being the bad guy. I certainly do not mind our kids having fun and I hated having to deal with this situation.

God does not tell us about the sinfulness of our hearts and the horrible consequences of this sin in our life in order to keep us from having fun. God in His love seeks only to guide us into an abundant life instead of a life that would harm us as well as others. Just remember, *God sent not His son into the world to condemn the world (tell you how bad you are) but that through Him the world might be saved (provide good for you!)* (John 3:17).

September 1, 2009 CONTENT IN HIS CARE

God cares about what you care about- 1 Peter 5:7 *Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.* God not only cares about the concerns in your life; He cares about everything in your life- *Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us. Selah.* (Psalms 62:8)

God cares about small things in our life. Just as He watches over Sparrows sold in the market place- *Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God?* (Luke 12:6) so He watches over the seemingly minor things in our life such as the number of hairs on our head- *But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows* (Luke 12:7).

God cares about the sickness that pays unwanted and unwelcome visits to your life- *For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard.* (Psalms 22:24). In fact, in a wonderfully amazing statement, God declares that He shares the very afflictions of His people- *In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old* (Isaiah 63:9).

Knowing that God cares for you so much should bring great peace and contentment into your life which will impact the way you talk and the way you live- *Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.* (Hebrews 13:5).

September 2, 2009 DECIDING WHO TO CHOOSE

What if God leveled the playing field? What if God did not threaten us with Hell if we fail to serve Him or promise us Heaven if we do serve Him? What if God simply stood beside Satan and told us to choose who we wanted to serve without any pressure? Who would you choose?

Think about it, free to serve the desires of the flesh and the directions of Satan without any fear of eternal consequences. And if there was no "God card" to play then it would probably not be long before society would no longer frown on the unrighteous acts you did. Life styles would be based on what felt good or on the internal desires of each individual rather than on some "religious rules". (Sounds a lot like today's society!)

Can you picture what it would be like to be able to follow Satan without any "pious intimidation"? I can because I see variations of this life style lived out in people's lives every day. The Joy of sexual freedom quickly turns into disease, divorce, distrust, and disappointment. The ecstasy of Drug and Drink use soon becomes slavery to a mind, money, and body consuming monster. The freedom to be free from God quickly becomes captivity to sin, self, and Satan; and they are horrible masters.

Can you imagine what it would be like to serve God just because you wanted to serve God? I can. Oh, the joy of placing my life and my very being into the hands of a God who has demonstrated His love for me over and over. Satan is out to destroy me and Christ seeks to give me abundant life. I do not have a difficult time choosing who to follow.

September 8, 2009 GOD'S GOOD HAND

An insurance company advertises that you are in "good hands" with them in order to build a sense of Trust in their company. Three times in Scripture (all during the rebuilding of Jerusalem after the captivity) the phrase "the good hand of God" is used. Each of these times declares again how we can trust God in all of life's circumstances.

1) God's "Good Hand" will protect us in life's journey- (Ezra 7:9) *For upon the first day of the first month began he to go up from Babylon, and on the first day of the fifth month came he to Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his God upon him.*

2) God's "Good Hand" will provide the friends we need so we can develop into the person God wants us to be - (Ezra 8:18) *And by the good hand of our God upon us they brought us a man of understanding, of the sons of Mahli, the son of Levi, the son of Israel;*

3) God's "Good Hand" will open doors of opportunity for His children in order to allow them to accomplish God's plan for their life- (Nehemiah 2:7-8) *Moreover I said unto the king, If it please the king, let letters be given me to the governors beyond the river, that they may convey me over till I come into Judah; And a letter unto Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the palace which appertained to the house, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall enter into. And the king granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me.*

Are you in the "Good Hands" of God? If not, His outstretched nail scarred hand invite you to come to Him today.

September 9, 2009 HAND IT TO GOD

We live in an age when our minds are assaulted with conflicting information and depressing situations. Like little children, we have reached the place where we just want someone to hold our hand and tell us everything will be alright. That is exactly what God wants to do if we will simply hands things over to Him.

Hand the Circumstances of your life over to God- *My times (circumstances) are in thy hand: deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me.* (Psalms 31:15). Find out what God is doing and adjust your life to His guiding hand. It will bring abundant life!

Hand the Health of your body over to God- *...God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified:* (Daniel 5:23). God designed our body and put the breath of life into it. If we belong to God then we should trust Him to take good care of His property!

Hand the Care of your soul over to God- *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.* (John 10:27-29).

If you are too tired or confused to hold God's hand then put yourself Under His hand and let Him care for you- *Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.* (1 Peter 5:6-7)

September 15, 2009

THE RIGHT IMAGE

Christianity is not about searching for the Truth. Christianity is about believing in the one who is the Truth. Christianity is not about seeking a higher sphere of wisdom until you attain a pinnacle of enlightenment. At the very height of education God still views man's wisdom as foolishness- *Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?* (1 Corinthians 1:20)

Christianity is not about trying to live a good life. The best life we can live does not meet God's minimum requirements- *But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags;* (Isaiah 64:6). Even the great Apostle Paul looked at all of his "religious" living and attainments and declared they were nothing but "dung" in the light of the righteous requirement of a holy God (Philippians 3:1-9).

There have been times that I have been treated like a stray dog by Christians. They have talked about me and quarreled at me. They have adamantly stood by opinions that "baffled my brain" and there have been times they acted more like the world than the world. But I still love them because the God who has control of my life loved me when I was (and still many times am) just like these same people.

Christianity is not about making people into this perfect image (everyone has a different image!) you have formed in your mind. Christianity is about God slowly forming us into the image of His Son through the work of the Holy Spirit in our life. So work with God today and God will work in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure (Phil 2:13). Then the world will see Christ in your life; and that is Christianity's goal.

September 16, 2009

BUILDING BLOCKS

People do not build churches; churches build people. The reason many churches are struggling to survive is because they are attempting to use programs or promotions to recruit people instead of using prayer and powerful preaching to touch the hearts of people. Their goal is to get more people in order to build a bigger church; and it does not take these people long to realize they are just pawns in the "Successful growth game" being played by the Church.

Jesus declared, "I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). His guidelines for building His church were fairly simple. Seek to serve instead of being served. Seek to be used for others; not to use others. Seek to give, not to gain. Seek to exalt God instead of seeking self exaltation. And learn to love others instead of looking only for others to love you.

A radical change takes place in a church when they stop counting noses and begin touching hearts. You can feel the difference when you walk in the door. People greet you with enthusiasm and make you feel as if they sincerely want to worship God with you. The music is about people joining their hearts and voices together in praise and adoration to a living God who deserves their honor. And the sermon is about how a right relationship with God can move you from where you are into the place God wants you to be.

Church should not be a place you go because you feel guilty. It should be a place where you worship God and hear God's life changing message. A church like that will rock your world and change your life.

September 22, 2009 GUIDANCE COUNSEL

Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. (Psalms 73:24). We live in a day when people really need the “Counsel” of God about what is right and wrong. Many are more “ignorant” than rebellious about doing what is right. Here are a few questions you need to ask about what you want to do to determine if you are doing the right thing:

Consider the impact your decision will have on your Body. Will it defile your Body?- *If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.* (1 Corinthians 3:17). *Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.* (1 Corinthians 6:18). Will it capture your Body? *All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.* (1 Corinthians 6:12)

Consider the impact your decision will have on your Spiritual life- *Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;* (1 Peter 2:11)

Consider the impact your decision will have on your Conscience: Will it weaken your Conscience? *Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.* (Romans 14:22-23)

Finally, consider your accountability to God: *So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.* (Romans 14:12) *Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.* (2 John 1:8)

September 23, 2009 CONSIDER OTHERS

When you are making a major decision you should not only consider its impact on you but also its impact on others. Here are several principles that will help you make the right choices about other with your decisions.

Will your decision help build up other people? *And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:* (Hebrews 10:24)

Will your decision harm the Faith of Others? *Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.* (Romans 14:13) *But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.* (1 Corinthians 8:12-13)

Will your decision dishonor those deserving Honor, such as God: *Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die* (2 Samuel 12:14), or government: *Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.* (Romans 13:7).

Will your decision obligate you to something you should not be part of? *Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?* (2 Corinthians 6:14)

Just remember, you will always make the right decision if you base your decision on one fundamental principle- *Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.* (1 Corinthians 10:31)

September 29, 2009 PUT OFF

That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. (Ephesians 4:22-24)

One of the most important things that can happen in the life of a Christian is for them to “put off” the old man and “put on” the new man. This life changing event is usually the act of a moment and the actions of a lifetime. It comes about when a person realizes that trusting Jesus to forgive their “sin debt” secures their place in Heaven but it does not do away with their sinful nature. They come to realize that Christianity must change their behavior as well as their belief if it is to bring Joy and Peace to their life.

“Putting off” the old man means you are no longer under the Control of the “old man” in your conduct- *But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; (Colossians 3:8-9).* You abandon your old way of thinking, speaking, and acting.

“Putting off” must be combined with “Putting on” if it is to be effective- *put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; (Colossians 3:10,12).*

God changes our life when the old man is put off and the new man is put on. This is an act of the will driven by the godly desire in your life since you trusted Christ. It is a radical change; and it is a wonderful life.

September 30, 2009 PUBLIC PRAISE

It is amazing as you visit from church to church to see the differences in the way people express public praise to God. Some people believe any extra “noise” during the service is irreverent and should not be tolerated. On the other extreme are people who are so noisy during service until it is difficult to hear what the speaker or singer is saying. My personal preference lies somewhere in the middle of these praise techniques.

I think expression of public praise should be Appropriate. I have heard people say, “Amen, Praise the Lord!” after the speaker would say something like, “Most of your children are going to die and go to Hell if you do not realize the seriousness of their situation”. That is not a time to “praise the Lord”; it is a time to cry out for mercy.

Public praise should affirm the word of God or the message being given (“Amen” means “make it so” as a witness that you want the speaker’s statement to become true). It should not be from Habit or as a means to impress others with your spirituality. It is all about praising God, not about promoting you.

People ask me what I think about people raising their hand during service as either a silent testimony or as an accompaniment to their vocal praise- *I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting. (1 Timothy 2:8).*

Some people are more vocal than others and they will tend to be more expressive in Church as they are in life. That does not make them better than a person who silently worships from a heart filled with praise and adoration. It only makes one silent and the other noisy.

October 6, 2009 THE STAY AND THE STAFF

For, behold, the Lord, the LORD of hosts, doth take away from Jerusalem and from Judah the stay and the staff, the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water, The mighty man, and the man of war, the judge, and the prophet, and the prudent, and the ancient, The captain of fifty, and the honourable man, and the counsellor, and the cunning artificer, and the eloquent orator. (Isaiah 3:1-3)

What has been will be (Ecclesiastes 1:9). America is entering the same cycle of moral decay and national decline that happened to Israel when she began to forsake God. I hate to see it happen and I hate to live through it.

The beginning of this decline is described in the verses at the beginning of this article. First to go was the “stay” of Bread and Water; the basics principles of good and greatness. We began by killing our unborn and then telling the children we had that God could not be a part of their education or thought process.

Next came the loss of the “staff” of leadership- Mighty men (Heroes) were all tarnished, the Man of war (soldiers) were sent to non-winnable wars to be discouraged and disgraced, the Judge (law) became a sham, the Prophet (Religion) became a mockery, the Prudent (wise investor) was ruined by a corrupt system, the Ancient (elder leadership) were told they were irrelevant fit only for disposal, the captain of fifth (middle income) was made the bearer of most tax burdens, and the Honorable man, the counselor, the cunning artificer (artist), and the eloquent orator (skillful speaker) were all dismissed in favor of pleasure and popularity.

God can still revive this country and return us to greatness. But it has to start with you and I returning to God with all our heart so God can return the “stay and the staff” to our land.

October 7, 2009 DADDY MOMENT

All the preliminaries had been completed and the special music had just finished when the Pastor walked up to the pulpit to begin his sermon. Right at that moment the Pastor’s seven year old daughter came bounding up the steps to the pulpit and told her dad she needed to tell him something. The Pastor realized this was not a good moment to have a father-daughter conversation but he stopped long enough to kneel down and ask his daughter why she was interrupting him.

Her reply changed the Pastor into a Daddy and delighted the entire congregation as they got to share in a very special “daddy moment”. The daughter looked at her dad and proudly proclaimed that she had accepted Jesus Christ as her Savior during the Sunday School hour. The Pastor thought that was worth stopping all the pre-planned programs and turning this moment into a special celebration time.

Later he was able to baptized his daughter at a baptismal service in which 24 people followed the Lord’s example and were publically baptized into the Christian faith. During that time he expressed his delight in changing his physical daughter into his spiritual “sister”. What a marvelous time of rejoicing.

I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the only door that grants entrance into Heaven. I want everyone to believe in Jesus so they can know the security of forgiven sins and the joy of a restored relationship with God. I especially want, however, to know that all of my physical family is experiencing the abundant life and the eternal life that comes through faith in Christ. Events like this “daddy moment” motivate as we celebrate; and that makes it even more special.

October 13, 2009 WHAT GOD DESIRES FOR YOU

If people only knew what God desired for them then they would gladly accept Jesus as their Savior and give themselves unreservedly into God's service. So here are Four Good Things God desires for you:

- 1) God wants to Redeem you from sin. YOU are the one who sinned by violating God's Laws and breaking God's heart. But God does not want you to be alienated from Him so Jesus came to redeem you from sin punishment and allow you to become a child of God.
- 2) God wants to Recruit you for service. Abundant life means you not only have peace with God; you also have a place in the Body of Christ. Everyone does not have the same job but everyone has a job to do for God. And great is the peace of heart when you are where you are supposed to be, doing what you are supposed to do.
- 3) God wants to Refine you into the person He knew you could be when He created you. He does this through life's circumstances and situations. The good thing to remember is that God never allows more into your life than He knows you can handle- *There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it* (1 Corinthians 10:13).
- 4) God wants to Reward you. (Jer 29:11) *For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.*
God desires the best for you. Give yourself completely to Him today.

October 14, 2009 CHANGING GODS

Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit. Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the LORD. For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water. (Jer 2:11-13)

Has our nation changed their God? It is acceptable in America to promote witches and demons at Halloween but they will put you in jail if you talk about the birth of the son of God at Christmas. Has our nation changed their God? The command of the Bible about marriage (*Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.* Hebrews 13:4) has been abandoned by the liberal media and the legal profession in favor of homosexual partnerships and live in lovers.

Has our nation changed their God? Sunday is now a Pleasure day instead of a Worship Day. Schools get a "winter solstice holiday" instead of a Christmas break and stores now proclaim "Happy Holiday" instead of "Merry Christmas".

God declared there were 2 evils that happened when people changed gods; they deserted the "fountain of living waters" and then they made their own water containers which were unable to contain any water. Since America has abandoned God you can no longer leave your door unlocked, marriage and family life are in shambles, greed and graft control financial and governmental institutes, and drug use has skyrocketed as men seek the peace they once found in a relationship with God. "My people have changed their glory for that which does not profit," saith the Lord, "Be astonished at this, and be horribly afraid".

October 20, 2009 WHO TO LOVE

People normally think of “love” as a mystical feeling that causes people to be attracted to other people. Others use Love to describe their interest in, or zeal for, causes and creatures (“I love Nature” or “I love endangered animals”). Some even use Love as a metaphor for “lustful desire for another”. In each case, however, Love is considered a force within the person that compels the person to do things for or with others that they would not normally do. With that definition in mind let me give you 5 objects worthy of your love.

Love God: *And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.* (Deuteronomy 6:5)

Love your Neighbor: *Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD.* (Leviticus 19:18)

Love the Church: *LORD, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth.* (Psalms 26:8)

Love your Enemies: *But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;* (Matthew 5:44)

Love yourself: *For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* (Galatians 5:14). Each time God asks us to love our neighbor the standard for this love is always self love. You will not love and respect others correctly if you are not confident in and care about your own self.

Who and what you love defines your character, your conduct, your conversation, your confidence, and your companions. Make sure the object of your love is worth the consequences of that love.

October 21, 2009 WHAT LOVE DOES

The Bible declares that Love suffers long, and is kind; envieth not; vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. (1 Corinthians 13:4-7). When love like this lives in your heart then several character qualities will be produced in you.

Purity: *Ye that love the LORD, hate evil:* (Psalms 97:10). *Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:* (1 Peter 1:22)

Forgiveness: *Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins.* (Proverbs 10:12)

Contentment: *Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith-*Prov 15:17

Faithfulness: *A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.* (Proverbs 17:17)

Stability: *Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame.* (Song of Solomon 8:6)

Love cannot exist in a vacuum. Love must express itself in actions and attitudes toward the object of its affection. Love is like dye in water; it will eventually produce changes that seep into every part of that water and transform how that water is viewed.

Jesus declared that our willingness to keep His commandments was directly tied to our love for Him (John 14:15). Do others see God in what Love is doing in your life?

October 27, 2009 LOVE AND LIVING

When people ask, "Why should I live a good moral life?" most religions will say, "In order to find God." Christianity, however, would answer, "Because God has found us". Christians have learned they are not saved by good moral living, we are saved for it!

In the thousands of newspaper articles I have written these verses may have been used more than any other verses- *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.* (Ephesians 2:8-10). These verses declare that God saves us from our bad works for His good works but He does so on the basis of a marvelous "God thing" called Grace- unmerited, unearned, undeserved redemption given by God because of His love for us- Glory!

When Jesus asked His disciples to live right He did so like this, *If ye love me, keep my commandments.* (John 14:15). He did not threaten them or command them to do right, He simply stated an obvious truth; if you love me then your conduct will demonstrate that fact.

When you fail to live right it is not because the preacher has not preached hard enough to you about your responsibilities as a Christian. Your failures are the result of not allowing your love for Christ to operate in your life. Instead, you have allowed "Law" to dominate you, demean you, and (since you can never meet the demands of the law) defile you.

Let me invite you to fall in love with Jesus and enjoy the wonderful life that comes from simply walking with Him each day.

October 28, 2009 TWIN TROUBLE

Sometimes it is important to consider the consequences of our conduct even if the conduct makes good sense at the time- "It is not economical to go to bed early to save money on candles if the result is twins!"

I am aware that people have preferences in entertainment according to their personality. My brother in law likes to go to football games. He arrives early, has a great fellowship time with friends, sits on a hard seat in hot, cold, or rainy weather, and then makes his way home through all the traffic after the game. I would much rather watch that same game in the comfort of my home where I can watch replays of any important parts and immediately begin to do something else when the game is over. Neither one of us, however, uses the football game as an excuse to get drunk or engage in other harmful behavior. We want a good action to end up with good consequences.

The Bible declares we should *"Let not then your good be evil spoken of: For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."* (Romans 14:16-17). The principle given here again is that we should consider the consequences of our conduct. With that in mind may I ask a few questions?

Is the "entertainment" value of watching movies and TV about people killing and maiming other people worth the damage it does to your mind and soul? Is promoting demons and witches as a form of decoration worth the spiritual impact it has on the thought process of your child or the demonic power it releases in your life?

Sometimes actions seem like the right thing to do until the twins begin crying all night.

November 3, 2009 ACCLIMATION

Her name was Debbie. She was the “cook-server” for the free morning breakfast at the hotel where I was staying. Circumstances had combined to bring her and her family from their home in upper New Jersey to live in the foothills of South Carolina. As we talked each day she would comment about how hot it was (We were having early morning frost and the high each day barely cracked 70!!). I told her if she wanted hot then she needed to live in the coastal area as I did and enjoy 90 degree weather with 90 percent humidity.

Debbie’s sister had moved to the upstate area of South Carolina almost 15 years before this and Debbie said she could not believe her sister wore heavy coats all the time and talked about how cold it was. I told Mrs. Debbie that it was just a matter of acclimation; after a length of time your body will adjust to its surroundings.

Before we began talking about the weather, we had been discussing the changing moral and spiritual climate in America. As a parent of teen age boys, she was very concerned with what her boys were being taught in Society and in School. She said that one of the deciding factors in transplanting her family to South Carolina was the fact that morals and manners were still part of community standards.

The great evangelist, Vance Havner, preached a great sermon on “Getting use to the Dark” in which he told about how our eyes acclimate to the dark in dimly lit restaurants. He said that was exactly what happens in society; we get used to the darkness as our world gets worst and worst. Do not let that happen to you. Do not acclimate to the bad, celebrate the good, and keep your light burning brightly.

November 4, 2009 BOTTOM DOOR NUMBERS

Recently my wife and I stayed in a motel during a Revival meeting and our room was located across the hall from the stairs. Since we were only on the second floor I used the stairs almost all the time to go up and down; which I did a lot because the coffee pot was in the refreshment center on the first floor! On one such trip I happened to notice that the floor number was painted in a huge white letter on the bottom part of the door.

I wondered why the number was so close to the floor until I began to think that I was in the stairs that were also an emergency exit. If the building was on fire and people needed to evacuate they would need to stay close to the floor in order to breathe so that is where they would need to look for the floor number.

Life is filled with many challenges- sickness, debt, conflict, etc. The “smoke” from these problems should drive us to our knees where we can call from the depth of our problems to the ear of a loving God in Heaven. While we are waiting for the smoke to clear, however, we need to keep moving forward for God and away from the danger or hurt of the difficulty.

It is during this time that we sometimes feel lost and wonder if we are going in the right direction. Look for God’s “Signs” as you travel (They will always be so you can see them from your knees!) and you will find the encouragement and direction you need in order to escape the danger and return to the wonderful sunshine of God’s love.

November 10, 2009 WHAT HARM CAN IT DO?

Probably the most common statement people make about their wrongful actions is "I did not harm anyone". By some strange standard, these people seem to think this makes their bad action reasonably good. Jesus, however, did not ask if your actions harmed anyone. His principle was always, "What good have you done?" [Jesus condemned the man who hid his talent in the dirt. He had done no harm with it but Jesus condemned him because he had done no good with it! Matt 25).

The true Christian does not ask, "What can I get out of life?" His question is, "What can I put into life?" Jesus declared that the greatest person in the work of God is the person who is willing to forget about themselves and serve others- *But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.* (Matthew 23:11-12).

The groundwork for mankind's first sin was built on desiring more from life than God had given permission to have. Instead of looking for ways to enjoy the promises and provision given them by God, Adam and Eve looked at the forbidden fruit and decided, "What harm can it do?" and ended up bringing death, disease, and despair into the lives of countless million people. The landscape of America is littered with the destroyed marriages of people who said, "What harm can a little fling do?" Likewise the lives of countless thousands are destroyed each year on the rocks of selfish pleasure because they asked, "What harm can this do?"

Someone once declared that the root of sin is desiring to take more from life than we put back in. It is certainly something worth thinking about.

November 11, 2009 WHEN TO QUIT

One of the great principles young people need to learn is "If you start something then finish it". The excitement of beginning a task is almost always followed by the drudgery of doing the task. At the beginning of an undertaking work is like "play" as the anticipation of conquering the problem fills you with energy and zeal. Soon, however, the task becomes toil and the sweet taste of victory seems to stretch further and further into the distance. You "hit the wall" and the temptation to quit the project weighs heavily on your mind and spirit. You know you should keep going but the temptation to give up is very strong.

This is the time that the force of your vision must give you the fortitude you need in order to keep going when everything within you is crying out for you to quit. The difference between success and failure in life is often defined by what you do at this moment. A quitter begins quitting and soon quitting becomes a pattern in his life. Conversely, this is when a Christian gathers strength from God by holding to the promise that he can do all things through Christ who strengthens him.

Is there ever a time to quit? Yes, when the job is done- When Jesus had finished the task given Him by His Father he could pray, "I have finished the work thou gave me to do" (John 17:4) and then declare from the Cross, "It is finished" (John 19:30). Paul, at the end of his ministry could declare, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course," (2 Timothy 4:7).

Never quit until you are finished. And then rejoice in the victory.

November 17, 2009 BENT BRANCH

And the sword shall abide on his cities, and shall consume his branches, and devour them, because of their own counsels. And my people are bent to backsliding from me: though they called them to the most High, none at all would exalt him. (Hosea 11:6-7)

The old saying "As the branch is bent so shall it grow" applies to people more than we wish to admit. In spite of prophetic preaching and providential punishment, the children of Israel continued to go down the wrong road and make wrong choices until God finally declared they were "branches bent to backsliding". Something was wrong so deep within the heart and character of God's chosen people until they continually make wrong decisions and did wrong deeds. Like a tree branch that was bent out of shape during its formation years and had grown in the wrong direction, the Children of Israel were now "bent" toward doing wrong.

Thankfully, God promised He would send His son, Jesus Christ, to give His people a new heart and a new hope. The "bent branch" would be broken and then become a new branch, forgiven of its past and indwelt by God himself (in the person of the Holy Spirit). Grafted into the vine (Jesus) this new branch would now become fruitful and Joyful (John 15:1-11).

During this Thanksgiving season I encourage people to "Rejoice, God is alive and so are you" (Jesus said, "Because I live, you shall live also" John 14:19). Deformed at birth by the warping power of sin we now can be changed by the transforming power of God. I no longer have to give in to the "bent" in my life because I am being changed by my connection to the vine of life. That is certainly something to rejoice about.

November 18, 2009 THE RIGHT DECISION

There are many things that shape the character and conduct of a person. The society environment of a person helps determine their language (and the accent of that language!), their manner of dressing; their taste in food, and their social, political, and religious views. Their natural personality determines, to a large degree, how they respond to life and its changing circumstances; such as whether they will be bold or bashful in situations. Their family environment will facilitate life patterns such as their work ethic, their punctuality, and their vision of how a family should function [For example, children of "wife beaters" often grow up to become beaten or beaters].

When you think of all these forces; and then add in economic considerations, concern for other's happiness, and time constraints, no wonder it is so hard to choose a restaurant when you meet with friends! Most decisions in life however, have much greater consequences than how much you will enjoy a meal. Decisions lead to actions; and actions can have long term consequences (Think about deciding to marry someone or murder someone!). Decisions indeed make a difference.

God's people had wandered in the wilderness, confused and discouraged, for 40 years. At the end of that time God asked them to make a decision- *I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: (Deuteronomy 30:19).*

If you are wandering through life, confused, discouraged, and feeling hopeless let me invite you to choose God and His plan for your life. That decision will change your character, your conduct, and your eternal destination. I think that is a wise decision!

November 24, 2009 PROBLEMS OR PRAISES

What is your problem? Someone once said that everyone either causes problems or cures problems but problems are always a part of life! In any case, most people are usually so busy dealing with problems until it is difficult to be thankful and joyful just because a day comes up on a calendar. The Bible shares a lot about the problems of people. The woman with the issue of blood came to Jesus because of a Health problem (Spent all she had on doctors and was not any better). Zacchaeus came to Jesus because of a "Heart" problem (Had a full pocketbook but an empty heart). The Beggar at the door of the temple called on the followers of Jesus for help because of a "Hope" problem (He no longer asked for deliverance from his problem; he just wanted help to maintain his problem. He asked for cash instead of a cure). Problems come in all sizes and shapes but they seem to always find a way to get to your door each day.

The word "problem" is not found in the Bible but all of its family members, such as trouble, affliction, and sorrow; creep into the fabric of almost every Bible Story. Adam's kids fought to the death and Abraham's kids are still fighting! And if you follow a Pastor around for a week you will hear enough about disease, debt, divorce, dissension, and despair to last a life time.

There is Hope, however. Christians are able to rejoice this Thanksgiving season not because they do not have any problems but because they have help, hope, and healing in the midst of those problems- *God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble (Ps 46:1)*. Rejoice, God is on your side and He is bigger than any problem that comes your way!

November 25, 2009 UNLOCK PRAISE

What is locking you away from the help you need? As I exited the hospital recently I saw an elderly man and the parking attendant talking to a woman in a car. The elderly man had brought his wife, who recently had a stroke, to the hospital for treatment and had driven up to the front door in order to get his wife unloaded before he parked the car. Some way, when he closed his door the car doors locked and the key was still in the ignition. Now the man and the parking attendant were trying to get the lady in the car to understand that she needed to push the button beside her hand in order to unlock the doors. But the stroke had impacted the ladies ability to understand and she was looking at her husband and the parking attendant with a look of total bewilderment about what they wanted her to do.

The Bible tells us that "the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." (2 Corinthians 4:4). Multitudes labor each day under the slavery of sinful practices and habits when deliverances could be found in "pushing the button" of faith so that Jesus could set them free from sin's prison. How sad to watch them sit in bewilderment each day when freedom is so near.

When Jesus sets the captive free it is always a time of rejoicing. You can celebrate the death of a turkey this Thanksgiving or you can rejoice in eternal abundant life because of the sacrificial death and the glorious resurrection of Jesus Christ. Why don't you have a truly thankful Thanksgiving this year!

December 1, 2009 WINTER OR CHRISTMAS

It is almost hilarious to watch Satan work through the press and the politicians in order to get people to stop acknowledging the birth of the Son of God. Sometimes I think it would be a good idea to let them have their way! Think about it. Christmas would become a “Winter Holiday” with no religious meaning. Imagine how the merchants will like seeing their business plummet as people stop buying gifts (Remember, giving gifts is to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ and that would not be allowed under this policy). Consider how the liberal press would like being laid off at Christmas; excuse me, the “winter holiday”, because stores would no longer need to purchase ads on TV or in newspapers since there would be no reason for people to purchase gifts for each other.

Enough with this silly nonsense! Christmas is about the birth of Jesus Christ. Yes, it has been commercialized beyond reason and greatly exploited by people seeking only pleasure or profit but it is still a time to rejoice in the fact that God became a man and dwelt on earth. You can deny this fact or demand that I not acknowledge this fact but it does not change the fact that God gave the world the greatest gift in history when the “Word became flesh and dwelt among men”.

The choice is yours. You can worship winter if you desire but I can guarantee you “winter” will not heal you in your sick bed or comfort you in your death bed. Or you can rejoice in the fact that God so loved the world until He sent His only son to live and die for you. I think I will chose to emphasis that part of Christmas.

December 2, 2009 THE COMING REDEEMER

Rev. Henry Horne, speaking at the National Association of Free Will Baptists annual convention, declared that if we believe Christ is coming again then we will be a people of 1) Happy Anticipation, 2) Righteous Reputation, and 3) Faithful Proclamation. That is good preaching that is much needed in today’s society.

God promised for several thousand years that a Redeemer would come to earth in order to “bruise the head” (Gen 3:15) of Satan and set men free from sin’s captivity. Most people, however, allowed their faith in this coming of the promised Messiah to weaken to the place they were living their life for pleasure and profit with little expectation that their Redeemer would arrive one glorious day. Then there was a birth in Bethlehem and God arrived on earth!

The Gospel is about the life and death of God as the Lord Jesus Christ. But the gospels do not end on a cruel cross. Easter Sunday dawned with a bright sun and an empty tomb. Jesus not only provided redemption from man’s past sins; He promised He would return and give His followers a glorious future.

As the disciples of Jesus watched Him ascend back into Heaven the angels declared that “this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11). That is a promise from God and you should build your life and your expectations upon it. Christmas is a sign post on God’s highway of history that proclaims His love and His faithfulness to fulfill His promises. Do not get so caught up celebrating His first coming until you are not ready to meet Him at His second coming.

December 8, 2009 CLING TO THE PROMISE

Sometimes good people go bad. Sometimes religious institutes become more godless than God like. Sometimes it looks like Satan is winning and God has taken a vacation. Sometimes Christians get discouraged and let despair nibble at the corners of their faith. It happened in days gone by. It is happening today.

Jesus gave several reasons why Christian people would become discouraged as the end of time approached.

Loss of confidence in God's Program because it seems as if prayers are not effective- *Shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?* (Luke 18:7-8)

The triumph of Evil and the resulting pressure from society and the flesh to quit trying- *And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.* (Matthew 24:12)

This was the picture over 2000 years ago. The nation of Israel was in subjection to other nations and in despair because of the decline in moral and social values in the country. People had prayed and prayed but things were getting worst instead of better. Where was God and what could they do to change the situation?

Suddenly an angel spoke to a teen age girl telling her that her world would change and in the process God would come to earth by becoming flesh and dwelling among men. In Rome, the capital of the world, nothing changed. In Jerusalem, the capital of Israel, nothing changed. But in Nazareth; and eventually, Bethlehem, world changing change was growing in the body of a virgin girl. Hope was on the way because God was coming!

December 9, 2009 CHILDREN AND CHRISTMAS

I like the fact that the Christmas Story is given in such a way until it is easy to share with children. People ask me from time to time how we can "Put Christ back in Christmas". I appreciate their sentiment since it is hard to conceive of celebrating the birth of Christ without talking about the Christ whose birth we celebrate! But the answer I generally give is to tell people to listen to and observe children during the Christmas season. You will generally discover that children find a way to find God in the middle of all the hustle and bustle of the holidays.

I had just finished some shopping recently and was returning my cart to the cart holder. In the next aisle a harried lady was talking on a cell phone as she hurried toward the store. Behind her was a very young girl who stopped directly opposite me and watched a bird playing on the ground. The mother called for the child to stop lingering behind, they had a schedule to keep. The little girl looked longingly at the bird and then went into the store. If the mother could have heard God above her cell phone she would have stopped and watched the bird with the child; and made a Christmas memory that would have lasted a life time.

God's son, Jesus, had a wonderful appreciation for children (Luke 18:15-17). I think that is why God makes the Gospel so simple until even a Child can understand and accept God's gift of salvation through Christ. Christmas is about the birth of a child. If you will let them, the children around you will show you the joy and celebration God wants at this special time.

December 15, 2009 BEING GOD'S DAD

How do you think you would react if God came to you one day and said, "I want you to raise my Son for me"? That is what happened to Joseph when the angel appeared and told him his espoused wife, Mary, was about to have the God child. In the process of taking God into his family, Joseph shows us how we can also become a part of God's family.

Joseph first had to deal with his fear of the responsibility of allowing God into his life. That same fear keeps many people from taking the final step of salvation. They fear they cannot handle the responsibilities that come with accepting Christ. May they hear the angel's message to "fear not".

Joseph also had to deal with the social pressure that came with marrying an unwed mother in order to bring God into his family. In the same way, becoming part of God's family many times will cause others to misunderstand the changes in our life because of what God is doing in our life.

The supernatural work of God that brought about the conception of God also had to be accepted by Joseph ("That which is born is of the Holy Spirit" Matt 1:20). Welcoming God into your life is not a mental game you play; it is a supernatural "new birth" performed by the Holy Spirit. It is not something you can explain or even understand; it is something you must accept by faith.

If you want God to come into your life and make you part of His family then you need to do just what Joseph did, "Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the messenger of the Lord had bidden him".

December 16, 2009 WISE MAN WORSHIP

During Pastor Prayer day in India recently every Pastor reported conversion decisions in their church during the previous week. Wouldn't it be wonderful if every Pastor at our minister's meetings in South Carolina could report conversion decisions when we meet? Wouldn't it be wonderful if Christians could get together a day a month for Prayer! And wouldn't it be wonderful if everyone made an effort to lead someone to Christ this Christmas season?

Christmas is all about finding and worshipping Christ. Christmas is not just an excuse to get together as a family and exchange presents. It is about God coming to earth as a man so we can join God's family by accepting the gift of salvation through faith in the babe of Bethlehem who became the Christ of Calvary.

Take the familiar story about the Wise Men coming to find the new born King. This story is a wonderful example of how to lead a person to accept Christ as their Savior. First of all the Wise Men saw a light (star) shining in the midst of the darkness and despair of their daily life. This light led them to a place (Jerusalem) where they could hear the word of God which directed them to come to Christ. The leadership light from God above them and the word of God inside them brought them to kneel before Christ where they worshipped. And that, ladies and gentlemen, is a perfect picture of a person getting "saved" through faith in Christ!

Put Christ back into Christmas by putting Him in your heart as well as in your holiday. Be a wise man; come worship the king and give him the gift of your heart.

December 22, 2009 CALMING THE CHAOS

By this time in December, you have wandered through the wilderness of pre Christmas activities and are now so tired until you cannot wait for Christmas to finally be over! It is too late for me to change the hustle and bustle of the Christmas activities that have stolen your time, stressed your life, and exhausted your body. Like a boat without paddles in a swiftly moving river you have been dragged along by the current hoping and praying you would not run into any rocks or plunge over any waterfalls. Now that you are finally moving into quieter waters, let me share a few suggestions so you can get a little of your joy back.

One of the great Christmas verses that has nothing to do with Christmas is found in Nehemiah 8:10 *Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength.*

In this verse are found four principles that will help restore Joy to your Christmas. "Go your way" means you need to gain control of your life again. Dig out the paddles and begin steering that boat. "Eat the fat..." tells you to enjoy the bounty of blessings available at this time of year. "Send portions" reminds you to remember those less fortunate than you. "The Joy of the Lord is your Strength" means for you to take your eyes off the chaos around you and put them back on Christ; which is where they were supposed to be all the time! Try these principles and see if you do not have a MERRY CHRISTMAS.

December 23, 2009 REAL CHRISTMAS JOY

The famous preacher, Thomas Guthrie, wrote the following about Sin- "Who is the painted temptress that steals our virtue? Who is the murderess that destroys our life? Who is this sorceress that first deceives and then damns our souls? Sin. Who with icy breath blights the fair blossoms of youth? Who breaks the hearts of parents? Who brings old men gray hairs with sorrow to the grave? Sin. Who changes gentle children into snakes, tender mothers into monsters and their fathers into worse than Herod's, the murderers of their own innocence? Sin. Who cast the apple of discord on household hearts? Who lights the torch of war and bears it blazing over trembling lands? Who by division in the church rends Christ's seamless robe? Sin. Who is this Delilah upon whose lap the mighty sleep until their strength is delivered into the hands of the uncircumcised? Sin. Who hurls insanity from her lofty throne and impels sinners mad as a Gadarene swine down the precipice into a lake of fire? Sin."

Why would I begin a Christmas devotion with such a negative quote? Because the reason for the season is the birth of a Savior. Christmas can be a time of great celebration and wonderful family fellowship but Christmas will only bring joy to your life when it brings Christ into your heart. Great joy comes because unto us is born this day a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. Nothing can satisfy the longing in your heart or fill the need of your soul except this Savior. Stop looking under the tree and begin looking on the tree (cross) if you are going to find the real joy your soul craves.

December 29, 2009 BECOMING REALLY RICH

Would you like to be really rich in the coming year? Here are three guidelines to help you find real joy no matter how much is in your bank account.

Learn the Joy of Contentment: If you do not enjoy what you have then having more will not bring enjoyment. Determine each week to do something that cost little or no money but it brings you enjoyment. When you no longer need money to be happy then God can trust you with money- *But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.* (1 Timothy 6:6-9)

Trust God instead of your Circumstances: Joseph was sold into slavery by his family but that did not stop him from being a prosperous man full of integrity- *And the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. And his master saw that the LORD was with him, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand.* (Genesis 39:2-3)

Believe God wants you to have all you need- *Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favour my righteous cause: yea, let them say continually, Let the LORD be magnified, which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant.* (Psalms 35:27)

It is not devout to be destitute (Nor is it righteous to be rich). God delights in blessing His children. He is just smart enough to bless them in such a way until the blessing does not become a curse. Learn that lesson and you will be really rich.

December 30, 2009 FUTURE BEAMS

An interesting story is told about New College in Oxford, England. Founded in 1379, it is one of the oldest Oxford colleges. It has a great dining hall with huge oak beams across the top, as large as two feet square, and forty-five feet long each. Nearly a hundred years ago someone decided to inspect the oak beams and found they were full of beetles. This was reported to the College Council, which met the news with some dismay because beams this large were now very hard, if not impossible to come by.

Someone finally suggested that there might be some worthy oaks on the College lands. The college was endowed with several plots of land which are run by a college Forester. They called in the College Forester, who of course had not been near the college itself for some years, and asked him if there were any oaks for possible use.

He pulled his chin and said, "Well sirs, we have been wondering when you would ask us about the oaks." Upon further inquiry it was discovered that when the College was founded, a grove of oaks had been planted to replace the beams in the dining hall, because oak beams always become beetly in the end. This plan had been passed down from one Forester to the next for over five hundred years saying "Do not cut the oaks. They are for the College Hall."

This is a wonderful example of the need of long range planning. Oaks do not grow in a day and godly character does not grow from a single Sunday Service. So I simply ask you this question, "What are you doing today that will put you in a good position 500 years from now?"