

## 2016 NEWSPAPER DEVOTIONAL ARTICLES by Rev. Mike Jones

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## **January 5, 2016 CHOOSE FAITH**

It is not the fault of the government, the media, or other world religions that over half of the seats in the average church are empty on any given Sunday. The government excludes Christianity from governmental grounds, prayer from educational assemblies, and increasingly puts pressure on preachers to never call a sin a sin if society finds it socially acceptable. The media mocks and villainizes Christian ministers and their message and continually presents propaganda or programs which emphasize that it is not "cool" to be Christian. But there are no law officers or crowds of reporters barricading the entrance to your church.

Attacks of propaganda and acts of persecution may come but God is not dead; He is not even sick! His promises are still steadfast and we are still more than conquerors through Christ who loves us. We fail to be victorious when we believe what we see around us instead of what God speaks to us. [People of God walk by faith; not by sight and this Faith comes from hearing the Word of God-Rom 10:17. Can you see how important Bible Preaching Churches are?].

God is still building His Kingdom and people are still being born again into an exciting abundant life by faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Determine in your heart that you are going to do what you can, where you are, with what you have to make sure God's word is preached and His work goes forth. God calls us to walk by faith; not stop and stare at crowds of clowns!

## **January 6, 2016 SERMONS IN A SENTENCE**

I hate it when I listen to a sermon and do not have a single sentence from that sermon I can take home and "chew on". Listening to a large number of speakers has led me to realize that some speakers Manufacture their message (They speak because it is Sunday and not because they have something to say). Some speakers Manipulate their message (They take a scripture and "depart there from" so they can share some thoughts from their own perspective). Some speakers Misuse their message by using scripture out of context or by claiming promises for themselves that God gave to others. But, thank the Lord, some speakers Minister with their message so that people are changed and problems are solved.

Here are some recent sentence sermons to "ponder": "It is easier to talk About someone than to talk To someone." "No plan will work unless you are willing to stop planning and go to work". "Christians are not Police looking for law breakers; they are Physicians looking for someone to heal". "Change seldom comes by chance." "If a million people tell you a black rock is white it does not change the color of the rock". "God did not say everything would be good. He said everything would be under His control and He would work it together for good".

One final thought to help make 2016 a success- "Inspiration should lead to dedication which should lead to participation which should lead to perspiration which will lead to jubilation".

## **January 12, 2016      CONDUCT OF THE CONVERT**

When John Calvin recommended someone to a church for membership he made this statement, "Let your hearts love him, but let your eyes watch him". He was not anxious about the salvation of the saint but he was concerned about the conduct of the convert!

Paul had similar concerns when he told Timothy to, "Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins:" (1 Timothy 5:22). And even John, the Apostle of "Love", told his followers to "Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1).

When a Christian is forgiven of sins through faith in the sacrificial death of Christ they immediately have a perfect standing before God. Their fleshly character, however, needs constant work as they learn to yield deep seated desires and ingrained sinful behavior to the character changing control of the Holy Spirit. This means Christians are perfect before God while, at the same time, they are constantly learning to conform to the image of Christ in their conduct before men.

Christians are changing for the better but they are not perfect yet. Pray for them, love them, and help them to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ when their conduct does not meet your expectations. Their faith is in a "solid rock" but they live in a body of flesh and it is sometimes feeble.

## **January 13, 2016      UNCLOG**

All during the Christmas holidays (When we had a house full of company and did many loads of washing) my wife complained that her washing machine was not working properly. When I was able to examine it I found the filter on the hot water line going to the washing machine was almost completely clogged up. Clean filter, problem solved- Glory!

There are numerous things in our spiritual life that can have the same "clogging" impact. Sin in the life of a Saint can derail his prayer life- "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me:" (Psalms 66:18). Obeying God, on the other hand, can "open up the windows of Heaven and pour out blessings beyond our ability to receive" (Mal 3:10)

Gossip about a person can hurt their heart so badly ("The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly". Proverbs 18:8) until it is very difficult to "unclog" that pipe and reach them with God's love ("A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city: and their contentions are like the bars of a castle." Proverbs 18:19). Words are dangerous clogging agents!

Jesus said, "The water that I give shall be a well of water springing up into everlasting life". (John 4:14). If you are not enjoying those "living waters" then you might want to look for a clog in your water line.

**January 19, 2016**

**FINDING THE FUTURE**

The phone call woke me from a sound sleep at two AM. My sister-in-law was returning to her home in Maine and she made a wrong turn in Washington, DC. Her panicky plea was for immediate directions about what she should do. I gently cut through her frantic fear and told her I could not tell her where to go until I knew exactly where she was now! After several calming moments she was able to see a sign telling her what road she was on; the rest was simply directing her from where she was to where she needed to be.

Life has a way of doing that to us. Everything seems to be going smoothly until we accidentally make a wrong decision and suddenly we feel lost and afraid. It is often those moments of seeking to find our way that define our future.

Sometimes we FEAR the future and are afraid to venture into the unknown. This fear can paralyze us and limit our life. Sometimes we FANTASIZE about the future as we dream about what we want instead of working with what we have. Discouraged and disappointed because life does not happen like the fairy tale in our mind we cry instead of conquer.

But the wise person will FACE the future with complete confidence in God to give them guidance and wisdom; so that even when they get "lost" God still knows how to get them to the desired destination.

**January 20, 2016**

**BRAKING GOD'S POWER**

I once had a deacon whose car broke down and the garage loaned him a car until his was repaired. After Church the deacon's daughter asked if she could drive home. The Deacon said yes, handed her the keys, and whispered for me to watch.

The daughter adjusted all the mirrors, cranked the engine, and prepared to back out of the parking lot. But the car wouldn't move. She would put it in gear, press the gas...and the car would just sit there. Finally the deacon / father could hold it in no longer. He burst out laughing and pointed to his foot. His "loaner car" was the car the dealership loaned to the school as a Driver Education car so there was a brake on the passenger side for the driving instructor. The Deacon had been pressing the brake as his daughter tried to move.

Sad to say, that same sort of thing happens with God. He has everything loaded and ready for us to live a wonderful abundant life but we fail to go anywhere. Nothing is wrong with God's provision, God's plan, or God's Power. Our failure to yield completely to God, however, "puts the brakes on God".

The Bible declares that we limit God through Unbelief and Sin. Unbelief does not allow God to work THROUGH us and Sin in our life does not allow God to work WITH us.

Do not limit God. Take your foot off the brake and allow your life to be the wonderful ride God intended for you.

## **January 26, 2016      COMING UP SHORT**

A local restaurant has an extremely nice lady as cashier. She and I often talk about traveling or church activities while I pay my bill. Recently, we were talking while I wrote my check and really got involved in the conversation. Later that week I needed to write another check and noticed that the check I had written was still in my checkbook!

I went back to the restaurant and asked the cashier if she had come up short recently. She seemed surprised that I would know she was short but we both laughed when I handed her the check and told her we had been talking so much until I had forgotten to give her the check I had written.

Coming up short is not a strange thing. Telling this story to cashiers has led to several stories about money being caught behind cash drawers or under the counter after falling to the floor. The stories were funny now but they were frantic when they happened because the cashier knew they had to repay the lost money.

Sadly, all of us have come up short with God- "All have sinned and come short of the Glory of God" (Rom 3:23). The good news about this bad news is that it can have a happy ending also. Jesus "wrote the check" for the wages of Sin and now it is a simple matter of taking that "check" and, by faith, giving it to God.

## **January 27, 2016      GOD'S FORGETFULNESS**

If I carry a coat or umbrella into a restaurant I move my credit card to the money section of my wallet as a reminder. I move my watch from my left wrist to my right wrist when I need to remember an appointment.

I am glad to know God also has Memory Reminders: Every Rainbow reminds Him that "the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh" (Genesis 9:14-15). The "engraving on the psalms of His hand" remind Him of His perpetual commitment to Israel (Isaiah 49:15-16). And He even has a "book of remembrance" to remind Him of those who "feared the LORD, and thought upon his name" (Mal 3:16).

My problem is that Satan often tries to "memory remind" me of the bad things I have done. In my anguish over this guilt I cry out to God "Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions:" (Psalms 25:7). That is when I am glad God develops "sin amnesia" as I hear His wonderful voice proclaiming: "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins" (Isaiah 43:25).

God remembers His love for me but He has no "memory reminder" about sins covered by the shed blood of Christ. Those sins are forgiven and forgotten- "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more" (Hebrews 8:12). Glory!

**February 2, 2016**

**THE FIRST WAS SECOND**

The fact that the first born was born second changed everything. In the sordid story of Judah and Tamar we find masturbation leading to prostitution where a father-in-law sleeps with a daughter-in-law and twins are conceived. Not your normal Bible Story!

During the birth of these twins we learn that Life's privileges are at times snatched out of our hands- "And it came to pass, when Tamar travailed, that one child put out his hand: and the midwife took and bound upon his hand a scarlet thread, saying, "This came out first". And it came to pass, as he drew back his hand, that, behold, his brother came out: and she said, How hast thou broken forth? this breach be upon thee: therefore his name was called Pharez. And afterward came out his brother, that had the scarlet thread upon his hand: and his name was called Zarah" (Genesis 38:28-30).

The "first born" was born second. Instead of receiving the benefits and blessings of the first born he received only a scarlet thread because he was in fact the second born (The line of Christ is through Pharez and not "scarlet thread" Zarah).

Several lessons: Zarah learned first impressions do not always last. Pharez learned that God has a plan that even a sorry conception or a nurse's mistake could not change. We all learn that we should not let the circumstances of our birth dictate the value of our life.

**February 3, 2016**

**READ REVELATION**

Revelation begins with a blessing on those who read, hear, and keep its words. It ends with a curse on any who add to or take away from the prophecies in the book. Other books of the Bible were given by the Holy Spirit (Prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. 2 Peter 1:21) but Revelation was given from God to Jesus Christ who told it to an angel who conveyed it to John (Revelation 1:1).

God the Father "kept" these Future Events from Jesus the Son until the appropriate time- "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father". (Mark 13:32). But now that Jesus was crucified and glorified it was time to tell "the rest of the story".

Revelation reveals the glorified Christ who emerged from the tomb as the Lion to rule instead of the Lamb to be sacrificed. It is not just information; it is for adoration, sanctification, and anticipation. It brings us to the feet of Jesus, shows us the fate of the world, and brings down the final curtain on this present world (There is a new earth coming but that is a subject God lightly tantalizes us about at the end of Revelation). Read it this week and let it reveal Jesus in a whole new light.

## **February 9, 2016      GOD'S LOVE**

God's love for us can be painful: "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth" (Hebrews 12:6). God sometimes uses "time out" (Israel's 70 years of captivity) and "take away privileges" (But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear. Isaiah 59:2) but He loves us enough to "get our attention" in a painful way if that is what it takes to get us to recognize and deal with a problem.

Our Love for God, sadly, can be partial: The Church at Ephesus had "left their first love" and now were performing without passion (Rev 2:1-7). Jesus realized the human tendency to allow love for self, society, and sin to invade our love for God so He set the priority principle to be: "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" (Mark 12:30).

God's love can be painful and our love can be partial but, Praise God, His love for us is wonderfully permanent: "The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee" (Jeremiah 31:3). God loved me when I was unfit for His presence and unworthy of His pardon; and that love abides- Glory!

## **February 10, 2016      DEMONSTRATE LOVE**

An ancient city was besieged, and at length obliged to surrender. In the city were two brothers, who approached the conquering general, and begged permission to leave the city before it was set on fire. They were told they could leave but they could only take with them as much of their property as each could carry. The two youths appeared at the gates of the city the next morning, one of them carrying their father, and the other their mother.

Paul told the church at Corinth, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity (Love demonstrated by action), I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal" (1 Cor 13:1). Paul knew that announcing love is never as meaningful as demonstrating love.

Life is filled with opportunities to express our love for people; kind words, unexpected actions, and sacrificial service. Sadly, many people, when given an opportunity to choose the most important things in life; chose possessions or positions over people. Their love, as Paul said, is just a loud noise or an annoying background tinkle.

Someone close to you is waiting for you to demonstrate your love for them (Even Jesus said, "If you love me then keep my commandments" John 14:15). Will you choose to show them you choose them by your actions or will you only caress their ears with empty words?



## **February 16, 2016      ELEPHANT PRINCIPLES**

Elephant is not found in Scripture except indirectly as "ivory" in 1 Kings 10:22, 2 Chr. 9:21, and Rev. 18:12. Some "Elephant Principles", however, can be good instructions for life.

When there is an awkward situation or circumstance in a gathering of people many people seek to avoid mentioning it but everyone knows about the "Elephant in the room". Jesus called it "straining at a gnat, and swallowing a camel" (Matthew 23:24). Decorum must sometimes give way to discussion.

A question I often ask congregations is, "How do you eat an elephant?" The answer, of course, is "One bite at a time". When Jesus decided to feed 5,000 people He had them divide into groups of fifty and one hundred. Then a little boy's lunch fed them a group at a time until, amazingly, there was still food left over! Remember that the next time you have an "elephant of a problem".

I do not have room to tell how to describe an elephant (Look up the story from India about five blind men coming upon an elephant and describing what they have encountered) because I want to end with telling you how to stop an elephant.

Most people do not have an "elephant gun" in their possession when they meet life's elephants. That makes it good to know Elephants are afraid of a mouse and to remember Jesus said, "If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed you can move mountains"!

## **February 17, 2016      GAINING GOALS**

Resolutions have met the hard face of reality and many people are struggling with their goals for a better life this year: Lose weight, gain wealth, take more control of their life, give more attention to projects they want to start or complete, hug happiness, release bitterness, eat less, exercise more, drop bad habits, pick up new friends.... Many are thinking about giving up; Don't!

The good news is that many of the goals you desire for your life are also goals God desires for your life. God want you to be healthy, happy, and prosperous in your life. He wants to help you put away the bad and take up the good so you can do the things you need to do and forsake the bad habits that hinder your life and your relationships.

God is on your side in doing the right things this year! He wants to give you wisdom so you will know the right things to do. He also wants to empower you with the ability to do those right things on a consistent basis.

It is all a matter of trusting God's promises and following God's plan for your life. That is why the first step toward attaining your goals is a sincere and complete dedication to God. When you and God join forces you will find you are more than conquerors though Him who loves you (Rom 8:37).

## **February 23, 2016 TWO FOR ONE**

When I ordered my bacon, egg, and cheese biscuit the clerk told me it would be \$2.16 for two biscuits. I told her I only wanted one biscuit so she told me the price for one biscuit was \$2.69 plus tax. My brain started to overheat so I asked why one biscuit would cost so much more than two biscuits. She said it was a sale they were promoting. My brain is still trying to process why two biscuits could be on sale but one biscuit could not be on sale!

I'm glad God is a lot smarter than this burger place when it comes to two for one. When I came to God I was a sinner in need of salvation so I trusted the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ as the payment for my sins. Wonder of wonders, when I trusted Christ to forgive my sins I was born again and the Holy Spirit came to dwell in my heart! I thought I was getting one need met; pardon for my sins, but in reality I was getting a second need met also, power to live for God through the ministry of the Holy Spirit at work in my life. What a tremendous two for one!

God wants to pardon and empower you today. And the best thing about God's offer is that His two for one is free for the asking.

## **February 24, 2016 THE VERSE**

There are 31,101 verses in the Bible. The Old Testament contains 23,144 verses and the New Testament contains 7,957. The shortest verse in the Bible is John 11:35- "Jesus Wept". (The shortest verse in the Old Testament is I Chron 1:25 "Eber, Peleg, Reu."). The longest verse in the Bible is Esther 8:9 (90 words).

Ezra 7:21 is a verse containing every letter in the alphabet except "J". Daniel 4:37 contains every letter of the alphabet except "Q". Several words only occur once in all the Bible verses: Eternity (Is 57:15), Reverend (Ps 111:9), Grandmother (I Tim 1:5), Gnat (Matt 23:24), and Easter (Acts 12:4) [Christmas is not in the Bible].

Although every verse (and every word) of the Bible is important, there is one verse that contains a truth so vital until the teaching of this verse has dominated my life and work for the past 55 years- "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).

It is difficult to make it any more simple or plain than that. Those who believe (cling to, rely on, trust in) Jesus Christ have everlasting life. Those who trust in anything else, or nothing at all, abide under the wrath of God. I would say that truth is important enough for me to spend a life time sharing it with others.

## **March 1, 2016 YOUR IMPACT**

He started walking behind a mule and now he is the owner of a major business. I have the honor of calling him friend. When I saw him recently I reminded him of the large number of people that have been impacted by advice he gave me that I shared with others. He has been a difference maker in many lives.

You, too, are a difference maker (for bad or good) among your family, your friends, your colleagues, and your community. Your actions elevate you and those around you as you inspire or instruct them (It is people like you who oversee community softball, or deliver that inspiring special song in church, or take care of a local family during a death...) or they impede or isolate by your negative actions and attitudes.

The impact that you have will be determined by the inner person you are which, in turn, is manifested in your personality and performance-“Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right” (Proverbs 20:11).

Zig Zigler tells people they can get what they want when they give other people what they want. I say you can make the positive impact God wants you to make when you put God on the throne of your heart and let Him make the “you” in you into the image of Christ.

## **March 2, 2016 CHANGE YOUR STORY**

If you are attempting to help a person overcome a problem there are several questions you need to ask and one you must never ask. The “never ask” question is “describe your problem for me”. Most people have spent hours (or days!) going over the problem in their mind and they can’t wait to give you all the explanations and excuses they have invented. Allowing them to repeat this “story” only enforces the false reality in their mind.

If the answer to a person’s problems was in exposing the explanations and excuses they have developed then they would have realized the answer already and would not need your help! Your objective is to get them to move past the increasingly hard concrete of the retelling of what went wrong and allow them to see that change is the only way to bring about change.

When people approached Jesus with problems He normally asked a version of four questions: 1) What do you want to happen? 2) How do you think God can help you accomplish that in your life? 3) What changes do you need to make in order for God to make changes in your life? And 4) Are you willing to trust God to heal your hurt and develop you as a healthy holy person by allowing Him to control your life?

You can continue to repeat your tragic story in words and actions or you can allow God to change you- And that will change your story!

## **March 8, 2016 GUIDANCE**

God's guidance can make a big difference in what happens in your life. It was a Sunday Morning and I had to pick up my wife and her dad at his home. I have made that twenty mile trip numerous times and I just "automatically" turned on a road and started the journey. A few miles from home the Lord spoke to my heart and told me going my normal way was not a good idea and that I should take a back road I never travel.

I listened to God's voice and traveled a different way (thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, Isaiah 30:21). By doing this I came out just before where I needed to turn off my usual road in order to go to my father in law's home. When I got to the stop sign at that intersection there were cars backed up to that stop sign!

Had I gone the way I normally go I would have ended up in a huge traffic jam instead of arriving at my father in law's home in time to pick him and my wife up for church. It still amazes me that a God with a Universe to run would take time to direct a "nobody" like me so I could get to church on time. What an awesome God we serve!

## **March 9, 2016 JOIN GOD**

Most people decide they want to do something and then ask God to bless their feeble efforts. Instead, we should wait on God until He reveals His fabulous plans and then join Him at His work. Remember that Christ said that HE would build HIS Church and the gates of Hell would not prevail against it.

Normally, Christ builds His Church is by sending people and opportunities to a Church. The Holy Spirit knows exactly what the body of Christ (The Church) needs and He will send the right people at the right time to allow the Church to fulfill its mission for Christ.

These people may be Eyes (People of Vision), Hands (People to work), Feet (People of Service), and even Funny Bones (People with a sense of humor to allow us to take God (but not ourselves!) seriously). If they are sent by the Spirit they will be exactly what the Church needs in order to accomplish God's purpose and plan at this moment in time.

In addition to People God will also send Opportunities. These are situations that God provides for a congregation to do His work. Your Church may suddenly have many widows (An opportunity to minister emotionally, financially, and spiritually). Are you may have an influx of other nationalities, or youth, or singles, etc. Just remember, these are opportunities, not obstacles.

God is building. You just need to see what God is doing and then join God at His work.

## **March 15, 2016 HOW TO CHANGE A LIFE**

Some days the best you can do is “get through that day” and pray things will be better tomorrow (Been there, done that, got the T-shirt). But if simply surviving each day is your permanent plan then I have some Good News for you- God calls us to Abundant life; not a mediocre mundane life.

Exodus 36 is the story of God’s way to change “church” from a man found rock altar to wonderful worship in a magnificent tabernacle where the very presence of God resided in the Holy of Holies. Several factors are presented here that will help you as you change your life.

You need wisdom to know WHAT to do, understanding to know HOW to do, and motivation (DESIRE) to do what you know to do- Then wrought every wise hearted man, in whom the LORD put wisdom and understanding to know how to work all manner of work ...even every one whose heart stirred him up to come unto the work to do it: (Exodus 36:1-3).

Finally, you need the resources to do the work required (Israel gave so much until the builders had to tell people not to bring any more!)- “God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, (Ephesians 3:20).

God wants your life to be better. What do YOU want?

## **March 16, 2016 LOVE FOR A LADY**

The Bible says we can learn to love (That the aged women TEACH the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, Titus 2:4) and we can be drawn to love (We love him, because he first loved us 1 John 4:19). But it does not tell us we should seek to “fall in love” (The Bible uses the phrase “fall into” to refer to things like iniquity, wrath, or judgment. Be careful about letting only your emotions dictate your actions!).

The Bible talks about “arranged marriages” (Isaac saw his bride for the first time on their wedding day-Gen 24:64-67) and about “buying a bride” (And Jacob loved Rachel; and said, I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter- Genesis 29:18). But it saves it’s “favor with God” remark for the blessing of “finding a wife”- locating the one that is the one for you! (Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD Proverbs 18:22).

Today is the birthday of my beautiful bride. As she continues her journey through the seventh decade of her life she is still a lovely lady who is a precious princess. Her faith in God and her devotion to helping others are an inspiration and example to many.

Jesus said “finding a pearl of great price” is worth giving up everything to obtain. Happy Birthday to my pearl who was worth the price!

## **March 22, 2016 REDEMPTION**

Jesus did not want to die on the Cross (He was God; not crazy!- “And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt” Mark 14:36). But He allowed Himself to be beaten, mocked, and crucified because He knew this was the only way to redeem mankind.

Jesus knew that all the money in the world could not save the world- “They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him: (For the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever:” Psalms 49:6-8).

No one could force Jesus to die- “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself.” (John 10:17-18) but Jesus knew that if God did not have a plan then mankind did not have a hope- “For we must needs die, and are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again; neither doth God respect any person: yet doth he devise means, that his banished be not expelled from him” (2 Samuel 14:14).

So Jesus died on the cross to redeem us from sin so we could live with God forever. I will gladly serve a God like that!

## **March 23, 2016 HE IS RISEN**

Jesus appeared no less than 17 times after His resurrection: Five times on Easter Sunday. Six times between Easter and the Ascension. Six times between Pentecost and the completion of the Bible.

On Easter Sunday He appeared to Mary Magdalene (Mk 16:9), to the “other women” (Matt 28:9-10), to Peter alone (Luke 24:34, 1Cor 15:5), to two disciples on road to Emmaus (Mk 16:12-13), and to the ten Disciples (Mk 16:14).

He appeared six more times before the ascension: To the eleven disciples a week after Easter (John 20:26-29), to seven disciples by the Sea of Galilee (John 21:-), to 500 at once (1Cor 1:6), to James, the Lord’s Brother (1Cor 15:7), to the eleven on the mountain in Galilee where He gave the great commission (Matt 28:16-20), and to the eleven on the Mount of Olives before His Ascension (Acts 1:3-12).

After this He appeared to Stephen before his death (Acts 7:55), to Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3-6), to Paul in Arabia (Acts 26:17, Gal 1:12, 17), to Paul in the temple (Acts 22:17-21), to Paul in Prison (Acts 23:11), and to John on the Isle of Patmos (Rev 1:-).

“If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable” (1 Corinthians 15:19). Jesus Christ rose from the dead. He did not simply teach good doctrine and do good deeds- He conquered Death!

## **March 29, 2016 FIVE STONES**

When David was on his way to do battle with a giant (Goliath) he stopped at a brook on his way and picked up 5 stones. The story of these stones and their purpose will help us as we battle life's giants of discouragement, disaster, debt, disease, and death.

These were smooth stones. As they traveled down life's river they tumbling and rubbed against other stones in the river to smooth out their "rough edges" so they could fit in the slingshot correctly. These were selected stones. Out of a river bottom filled with stones David picked these five (Just as God today chooses men at His will to do His work).

These were sufficient stones. David picked 5 stones because he knew he would possibly have to face Goliath plus Goliath's brother and Goliath's three sons (2Sam 21: 15-22). The death of each of these giants help us realize how God deals with big problems in our life- Goliath was killed by trusting God and using what God provided. Another was killed with someone's help (2sam 21:15-17). One was killed by a man called Sibbechai (corpse-like) and may mean some giants trouble us all our life (Paul's thorn in the flesh).

Goliath's brother reminds us about Family Relationship problems. And the final son was physically different (24 fingers and toes) to remind us that Physical limitation can hinder us.

Let me close by reminding you of a sixth stone- the one rolled away to reveal a risen savior who conquered the giants of death, hell, and the grave- Glory!

## **March 30, 2016 HOLY SPIRIT**

Jesus promised that when He left He would not leave us alone so on Pentecost the Holy Spirit came to indwell believers and build the Church. It is this Holy Spirit living in believers that changes them from harsh law keepers into abundant life lovers.

This Holy Spirit is called "the seven Spirits of God" because of the Spirit's seven fold ministry in the world. The Holy Spirit must Call us to God (We are dead in trespasses and sins and the Holy Spirit must draw us to God). The Holy Spirit Convicts us of our rebellion against the law and love of God (As a human I tend to make excuses and give explanations. The Holy Spirit goes into the depths of my heart and reveals I am rotten to the core without the redeeming grace of God).

The Holy Spirit Converts me (I can turn over a new leaf but only the power of the Holy Spirit can give me new life}. The Holy Spirit Commission me into the body of Christ and gives me a position in that body (1Cor 12:-). The Holy Spirit is the Cleansing agent in my life (Galatians 5:16 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh) and the Holy Spirit is the Changing energy of my life (His filling power empowers me).

Finally, the Holy Spirit is also my Companion; living in me and manifesting God to me, so I am never alone in this life. Glory!

## **April 5, 2016      HEAVEN'S BOOKS**

The Bible is eternal so it will be in Heaven (Mt 24:35) but there are also other "heavenly" books. Heaven has books that list the evil works of sinners (Revelation 20:12-15) and the idle words of men (Matthew 12:36). There is a "pre-birth" book (Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them. Psalms 139:16) and there is a death appointment book (Hebrews 9:27).

Heaven contains God's Remembrance Book (Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him Malachi 3:16); People's Tears Book (Thou tellest my wanderings: put thou my tears into thy bottle: are they not in thy book? Psalms 56:8); and a book listing those who are truly God's Children (There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life. Revelation 21:27).

But the title deed to the earth is the Heavenly Book that shows us why Christ is King as well as Savior- "Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon" until Christ stepped forward and the angels proclaimed, "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;" Revelation 5:-). Redeemed by Christ, I will reign forever with Christ-Glory!

## **April 6, 2016      COMMUNICATION**

A public speaker learns that the tone of his voice is often as important as the content of his speech. He also realizes that body language communicates as much as a tongue! Here are some Bible guidelines that will help you communicate more clearly and effectively.

**FIND A COMMON LANGUAGE-** 1 Cor 14:18-19 "I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all: Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue."

**BE PATIENT** Do not speak for the speaker before he speaks (Don't assume an assertion!)-Prov 18:13 "He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him."

**HAVE A GOAL TO YOUR GAB-** What is the objective of your oratory?? Make it your goal to bring Good News: Prov 25:25 As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country.

**BE CAREFUL ABOUT YOUR "NON WORDS"-** Prov 15:1 "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger." Remember tone and body language.

Accept the fact that some problems can't be solved with speech- Prov 29:19 "A servant will not be corrected by words: for though he understand he will not answer". And know when to Walk Away for a "cool down" period- Proverbs 21:19 "It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman."



## **April 12, 2016    DEVOTIONAL DELIGHT**

I have had the great privilege of reading the entire Bible many times and portions of scripture hundreds of times. Amazingly, I still find new and exciting things almost every time I read my life journey guide-“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psalms 119:105). Here is a “devotional delight” from a recent time of letting God speak to me through His word.

Sometimes America’s rapid slide into an amoral country where nothing is “right or wrong” any more makes me want to cry in depression and despair. I know that history and the Bible are filled with the horrible consequences for a country or people who abandon God’s guidelines and my heart breaks for the suffering which sinful attitudes and actions will bring.

That is why this verse from my devotion meant so much to me: “For Israel HATH NOT BEEN FORSAKEN, nor Judah of his God, of the LORD of hosts; THOUGH THEIR LAND WAS FILLED WITH SIN against the Holy One of Israel” (Jeremiah 51:5). God said, “You abandoned me but I have not abandoned you!” Glory!

Then God revealed a verse that challenged me to go from Faith into works: “Lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed” (Hebrews 12:12-13). The deeper the darkness the brighter our light needs to shine- do not despair; be disciples!

## **April 13, 2016    DISOBEYING GOD**

When you disobey God and put your desires ahead of your duty to God there are consequences. Your works do not produce your Salvation but works are extremely important in your walk with God. God saved the Children of Israel out of Egypt but as He was leading them to the promised land they “turned back, tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel” (Ps 78:41). Disobeying God tempts God to “spank” you (Heb 12:6) and limits how God can Bless you (Hosea 7:1).

Disobeying God also impacts enjoyment of your relationship with God. Adam and Eve disobeyed God and found themselves without clothes and living in the weeds of the world instead of the garden of God. And King David lost the “joy of his salvation” (Ps 51:12) when he violated God’s laws.

Disobeying God can impact your health- For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep (1 Corinthians 11:29-30). It can also impact others- When Peter decided to go back fishing several other disciples said, “We go with thee” (John 21:3).

Jesus told several parables about the Master delaying his coming and how the servants got slack; and got caught! May we remain faithful to our Father and loyal to our Lord as we anxiously await the return of our Master and Messiah.

## **April 19, 2016 GIRDING YOUR MIND**

“In a sin saturated society you need to re-think your thinking by ‘girding up the loins of your mind’ (1Pet 1:13) so you will see the light instead of stumble in the dark” – From a sermon by Rev Lanny Ard (Pastor, New Prospect FWBC).

The fact that we have more access to more information than any generation in history has seemingly confused many people instead of increasing their wisdom. Rather than expanding our concern many people seem overwhelmed by the data deluge of TV news and internet commentaries. Knowing too much has made us care too little!

“Information overload” has developed into intellectual apathy (“going along to get along”), hopeless anger (No one seems to be able to seam the “stupid” that pervades government and media), or resigned acceptance (I’m too tired and confused to fight so I’ll just accepted anything anyone does as “normal” so I will never “offend” anyone).

Paul expanded Peter’s exhortation to “gird up the loins of your mind” when he told people to “Let your loins be girded about with truth” (Eph 6:14). Knowing the Truth sets up free (John 8:32); which is the reason the devil and the world try so hard to confuse or confound Truth.

The Psalmist said learning to walk in the truth of God would “turn my mourning into dancing and gird me with gladness” (Psalms 30:11). Bind (Gird) your brain with God’s truth and be overjoyed instead of overwhelmed.

## **April 20, 2016 HAVE YOU?**

Have you ever felt like you were an outcast; totally alone and forsaken? Have you ever felt like the people who were supposed to help you were actually harming you? Have you ever had a problem that kept sucking you dry financially? Have you ever been afraid to even approach God? Then you may be desperate enough to “throw caution to the wind” and do whatever it takes to touch the hem of God’s garment?

All of these describe the woman with the issue of blood in Mark chapter five. For 12 long years this lady wrestled with a “bleeding problem” which isolated her from everyone because to touch someone would make them “unclean” (Lev 15:25-27). She went to doctors but she ended up “suffering many things of many physicians” which left her financial broke instead of physically healed.

She worked on this problem with every bit of energy and effort she had but all her efforts made the problem worse instead of better! She heard about Jesus’ healing touch but could not touch Him so she devised a scheme of touching just the hem of Christ’s garment where her desperation brought deliverance- Glory!

If you are carrying burdens which sap your strength, rob your joy, drain your pocketbook, and fracture your faith know that Jesus is passing by today. Don’t let the crowd or the circumstances stop you from touching the hem of His garment. It will make you a different person!

## **April 26, 2016 HELPING**

Two friends talking: "I sometimes wonder why God allows hurt and hunger in the world when He could do something about it" "Why don't you ask Him?" "I am afraid He would ask me the same question!"

*Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? (1 John 3:17).*

My wife and I live on basic Social Security and are "financially challenged" but that does not excuse us from doing what we can, where we are, with what we have. We regularly tithe to our Church and support mission work in Brazil and India but that does not excuse us from feeding the hungry or helping those in need. So each month we give to a Christian Organization providing help and support to needy people around the world (Samaritan's Purse). We also provide monthly support for a widow and her children in India and I serve as a conduit for meals, materials, and support for Ministers, Christian Workers, and Seniors in our local area through a Ministry I head (Minister Ministry)-

*If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? (James 2:15-16).* Christianity must work if it is to work; and that means going beyond preaching and praising.

## **April 27, 2016 BELONGING TO GOD**

Before you became a Christian God saw the good you did as filthy rags (Isa 64:6) and the bad you did as sinners falling short of the glorious life God intended for you. But on that glorious day you trusted Christ as Savior exciting things happened.

You were forgiven of your sins (*In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Colossians 1:14*) and you now have Peace with God (*Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: Romans 5:1*).

You joined the Family of God (*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*) and became a friend of Christ (*I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. John 15:15*).

You have direct access to God (*For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Ephesians 2:18*) which means the Holy Spirit living within you can translate your greatest needs into a language God understands (*Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Romans 8:26*).

Pardon for your past, a plan for your present, and a place for your future; you trusted Christ, you are complete! (Colossians 2:10).

## **May 3, 2016      SIGNIFICANT**

I am a saved son of God who is Significant to God. I am significant as the salt of the earth who preserves and flavors society (Matthew 5:13). When my voice is silent and people have no moral compass then every man will do that which is right in his own sight and society will slide into chaos.

I am significant as the light of the world (Matthew 5:14). I shine in the darkness of men's doubt and despair so they can avoid life's shipwrecks and prepare for eternity's judgment.

I am significant as a branch of a fruitful vine (John 15:5). Jesus is the vine and I am the branch. He provides life and stability to me and I produce fruit for His glory and for the good of mankind. The vine needs the branch for its fruit and the branch cannot survive without the vine.

I am significant because my body is the temple where God the Holy Spirit dwells (1Cor 6:19). I get to "glorify God in my body, and in my spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:20) and I have the "comforter" abiding within to help me handle being as well as guide me in becoming. I am not alone.

I am significant as God's "workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." (Ephesians 2:10). My life and what I do matters.

I belong to God. I am Significant.

## **May 4, 2016      ONE ANOTHER**

The Bible gives us nine things we should do for "one another".

1. LOVE AND HONOR ONE ANOTHER-(Rom 12:10) "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;"
2. HUM A HYMN OF HARMONY WITH ONE ANOTHER (Rom 15:5) "Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus."
3. ACCEPT ONE ANOTHER-(Rom 15:7) "Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God." (All members of the body are not the same but all parts of the body are needed)
4. SERVE ONE ANOTHER-(Gal 5:13) "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another". The Greatest of all is servant of all
5. HELP ONE ANOTHER-(Gal 6:2) "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." (Many hands make light work)
6. SUBMIT TO ONE ANOTHER-(Eph 5:21) "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God". (It is not YOUR Church; it is God's Body)
7. FORGIVE ONE ANOTHER-(Col 3:13) "Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye."
8. ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER-(1 Th 5:11) "Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify (build up) one another, even as also ye do."
9. FELLOWSHIP ONE WITH ANOTHER-(1 Pet 4:9) "Use hospitality one to another without grudging." Do not invite just those who invite you (Luke 6:32-35); Show Christian Concern to all.

## **May 10, 2016 FIVE GOOD LIFE PRINCIPLES**

A good life is built on a good foundation. Here are five life principles to make your life better.

1) Find the peace and purpose you crave in a relationship with Jesus Christ: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Mat 11:28-30).

2) Harmonize with God for Happiness: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee" (Isa 26:3).

3) Trust in God's Plan in the bad days; as well as the good: "The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand" (Psa 37:23-24).

4) Depend on God supplied strength for life encountered difficulties: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth" me (Phil 4:13)

5) Watch what comes out of your mouth and what goes into your life: "For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it" (1 Peter 3:10-11).

## **May 11, 2016 A WORSE THING**

Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: SIN NO MORE, LEST A WORSE THING come unto thee. (John 5:14).

Jesus picked this man out of all the sick people at the pool of Bethesda and healed his 38 year old sickness. Later he "findeth him" and said to him "I gave you health and a new opportunity. Do not waste what I have given you or something worse may happen to you!"

When Jesus kept the mob from stoning the woman caught in the act of adultery by exposing their own failings He did not "high five the woman" and say, "We showed them!" He forgave her sinful behavior ("neither do I condemn thee") but then He told her to "Go and sin no more". Translation: Do not go back to your old ways and blow this opportunity because I will not be around the next time to deliver you from the mob (Jesus was headed to the Cross).

Paul admonished people suffering persecution that turning FROM Faith was worse than suffering FOR Faith: "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" (Hebrews 10:28-29).

A great thing becomes a worse thing when it is wasted!

## May 17, 2016 ONE THING LACKING

Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me. (Mark 10:21).

The Rich Young Ruler had manners (he kneeled at Jesus' feet), morals (I have observed all the commandments since my youth), and an earnest desire to live right (what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?). But instead of welcoming him into His flock Jesus told him, "One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me."

Jesus called many to take up their cross but (as far as we know) this is the only person Jesus told to get rid of all his possessions as a condition of discipleship. If you read the Gospels carefully you will find that Jesus called His disciples to follow Him each year during His three year ministry. They were not asked to sell everything they had in order to become "fishers of men". They only went into full time ministry after Jesus rebuked them for their post-resurrection fishing trip.

The one thing lacking was not the possessions this man had but the fact that his possessions possessed him ("he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions."). What is YOUR "One Thing"?

## May 18, 2016 MIRROR SUNDAY

Churches sometimes become so occupied with politics, potty places, and a society wallowing in the moral sewer of sexual perversion and worshipping at the altar of self-generated theology until they are worrying about everything but doing nothing about anything. How did we get into this funk instead of functioning as a world changing body of believers?

Christians become ineffective when they are too tired to think great thoughts, too timid to do great works, too doubtful to expect great miracles, and too worldly to bring Heaven to a desperate dying Society. Churches become ineffective when they use their energy and resources to maintain habit formed traditions instead of proclaiming world changing truths.

Preachers become ineffective when their goal is to make people feel good instead of pointing them to the life changing glory of God ("that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Romans 6:4).

If you think things are bad now you should have walked through the Roman Empire with the Apostle Paul-Slavery, life crippling poverty, temples dedicated to prostitution, people being killed by animals and by each other for sport, etc. Yet Paul and his fellow Christians shook this empire to its roots.

The power of God and the plan of God have not changed. Maybe Churches need a "mirror Sunday" where people stop praying for Aunt Susie's arthritis and start praying for God to use the "man in the mirror".

## **May 24, 2016    GOD'S SHOPPING LIST**

When God saw one of His churches in trouble (Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: Revelation 3:17) He did not “kick them to the curb”. He gave them a shopping list of things they needed to help them get better (Revelation 3:18).

He first told them to “buy of me gold tried (purified) in the fire, that thou mayest be rich”. Next He told them to get “white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear”. Finally He urged them to “anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.” I want all of these but I have questions.

How do we buy gold from God? We know God’s goodness is obtained without money (Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Isaiah 55:1) but what do we use to buy gold and how do we get it to God if we have it?

Why did God put these items on His “shopping list” instead of the “normal” goodness and grace? Gold, garments, and gobs of eye salve are not normally preached from pulpits. Why these items and what can we expect if we somehow obtain them? I have questions.

## **May 25, 2016    FAITH**

Faith is the Key that unlocks the pardon, power, and peace of God. Saving Grace works through Faith to bring us to God (Eph 2:8) and it is impossible to please God without Faith (Heb 11:6). Faith believes that what God said He would do; He will do. Faith is not based on human generated desires or society accepted standards but on the promises and pronouncements of God (Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God Rom 10:17).

You can do works without Faith but you cannot have Faith and not do works (James 2:17). Faith believes that something does not have to be seen in order to be believed (Heb 11:3). Faith also does not have to be experienced to still be expected (Heb 11:13). Yet Faith in the “unseen and unexperienced” can move mountains and establish kingdoms!

Faith is not dependent on your ability to “hold out” during difficult times; it is founded on your willingness to “trust in” the full persuasion that, what God promised, he is able also to perform (Romans 4:21). Faith is not wishful thinking that things will get better nor is it hiding your head in the sand pretending problems do not exist. Faith is simply trusting that the God’s truths can be trusted. It is not based on human reasoning but on heavenly proclamations; and you can rest in those for eternity!



## **May 31, 2016 LORD'S LIMITATIONS**

Jesus Christ and God are Equal (I and my Father are one. John 10:30) yet when the "Word became flesh and dwelt among men" the Lord accepted certain limitations in His "Godness" in order to be a submissive Son and perfectly represent God on earth ("He that has seen me has seen the Father"). His example should be the example of submissive service for every Christian.

Jesus limited His Authority: When asked by James and John to grant them a special place of honor Jesus had to reply "But to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared." (Mark 10:37-40). Are we willing to yield our "rights" to God with complete confidence that God will make the correct decision about what should be done?

Jesus limited His Honor: "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:" (Philippians 2:6-7). Is your reputation more important than God's will for your life?

And most marvelous of all, Jesus limited His life: "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." (Philippians 2:8). What keeps you from giving it ALL to God?

## **June 1, 2016 LIVING DEAD**

And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; ...I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. (Revelation 3:1).

Sardis had a living name but a dead "soul". They were what I call the "living dead". Living dead is when you no longer have purpose or passion; when each day is a new day to recycle old burdens and struggle with old baggage. Living dead is the smile on your lips that hides the heartbreak in your heart.

Living dead is a loveless marriage with a passionless partner because you found your man instead of God's plan. Living dead is children you gave everything to but God; who now break, rather than bless, your heart.

Living dead is being a prisoner to debt and despair because you spent more than you had looking for an elusive "something" you did not have. Living dead is mindlessly binge watching reality TV because it can be turned off and the realities of your life cannot. Living dead is looking in the mirror and finally realizing all those things "they" say about you may be true!

Having a name to live but in reality being dead is a bad place to be. Good News- Jesus met death and came out a winner! He can restore your soul and bring light to your darkness. Call on His name and let Him change your name from the "living dead" to the born again.



## **June 7, 2016 PAIN**

God is not a Masochistic deity who inflicts pain on people in order to ultimately bring them pleasure. The trying of Faith (Experiencing painful delayed answers to prayer) develops Patience (Jas 1:3) and facilitates our growth as Christians by cultivating long term trust in God's promises but God does not "hit us in the head with a hammer so we will believe He is a good God when he stops"!

Pain is part of everyday existence mainly because people have human bodies, men do foolish things, and Satan is the real Masochistic Master who tries to never show you the pain that is part of the pleasure (Think hang over after and the incredibly stupid things you do during "party time").

When God thinks about you He looks for ways to give you a better life; not a bitter existence: "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" (Jeremiah 29:11). God even works it so that the bad things that come our way will ultimate work together for good (Romans 8:28). God wants good; not bad, for you!

My heart and my prayers are with you if you are suffering pain today. I am not ignoring or belittling what you are going through. I just want you to know God has not maliciously afflicted you and He certainly has not abandoned you! He is an ever present help in time of trouble- Rest in His love.

## **June 8, 2016 FRUITLESS**

Fruitlessness is serious. Jesus "cursed" the leaf only fig tree (Mark 11:13) and said God would "cut off" any non-fruit bearing branches-"I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. 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 15:1-2). We should live our life so we can meet God with a hand filled with fruit instead of a heart filled with regret.

God's first command to Adam and to Noah after the flood was "be fruitful" (Gen 1:28, 9:1). Everyone will not produce the same amount of fruit ("They which are sown on good ground; hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred."-Mark 4:20).but everyone should produce fruit!

This fruit comes from Spirit filled living (Gal 5:22-23), Christian testimony sharing (Prov 11:30), and normal Godly living (A person in a right relationship with God "shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper" Psalms 1:3).

Sadly, Fruitlessness has a time limit-"Then said the master unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why does it take up good ground?" (Luke 13:7). What time is showing on YOUR "Fruit Clock"?

## **June 14, 2016    SHORT SERMONS**

Sometimes a few words can convey great thoughts. Here are some “short sermons” I thought about recently. I pray they will stir your heart and motivate your life so you can be the amazing person God wants you to be.

Do not let your words condemn your worth- “For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.” (Matthew 12:37). Unchristian Christians produce a distorted display of the Divine design. Do not be the one rotten egg which makes people dislike God’s great omelets.

Do not allow bitterness about other’s blessings, bondage to your own blessings, or blindness to God’s blessings to shrivel your heart or short circuit your thankfulness. The worst thing in life is not losing possessions; it is losing peace with God, pardon from God, or the power of God.

There is a God and you are not Him. He calls us to reverence His name, respect His wisdom (Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Romans 9:20), and respond to His orders (“To obey is better than sacrifice.” 1 Samuel 15:22). You cannot reverence a god you disrespect, disregard, or distance yourself from.

The world is determined to impose its values on the board room, the bed room, and the bath room; which means Christians should be busy in the Prayer room.

## **June 15, 2016    SEEING WITH SIGHT**

A leader is a dealer in hope. He gives people assurance they can get through their present problems and instills confidence in a better future before them. He gets people to see beyond their “down” vision and their dim vision to the victory vision that is coming their way.

“Down” vision comes when we focus on the wrong things. Driving to the hospital once I noticed the trash in the ditches and the litter on the road sides and my heart became increasingly depressed at how badly people treated their world. The Lord finally spoke to my heart and said, “Get your mind out of the gutter and back on the glory or you will be no good to the people you are visiting!”

Dim vision can be physical (I am almost blind without my glasses) but the dim vision a leader must correct is brought on by our wrong actions (“woe unto us, that we have sinned! For this our heart is faint; for these things our eyes are dim”-Lamentations 5:16-17) and our rebellious attitude (“Son of man, thou dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house, which have eyes to see, and see not;” Ezekiel 12:2). Dim vision limits us to seeing only our own wants and our own world.

Sight is the gift of God but seeing is the opportunity of people. May God help you today to lift up your eyes from the gutter and see the glorious life that God has envisioned for you.

## **June 21, 2016 THE ANCHOR**

Several years ago a friend got a new boat and invited me to ride the river with him. After riding up and down the river for a while and seeing most of the features of the boat we decided to stop and try out his anchor. The water was running very swiftly and I was a little worried but he cast out his anchor and then shut down the engine.

We were just starting to talk when I noticed that the landscape was changing. We looked around and found the boat was being dragged by the current directly toward a nearby concrete bridge post. We began to move faster and faster as my friend tried desperately to restart the engine. Finally, just as we were about to strike the bridge, the engine caught and we were able to pull away.

All of us need anchors in our life from time to time so here are a couple of things you should realize. First of all, you must cast an anchor out of the boat if it is to do any good. Life is so hectic and trouble is so troubling until sometimes we need to just stop and hold on to “hope as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast” (Hebrews 6:19).

Secondly, when you cast out the anchor MAKE SURE IT CATCHES on something that will hold you! I'm glad to know today that, in my spiritual life, my anchor holds and grips the solid rock.

## **June 22, 2016 HEART**

Your heart lives with the treasure you love (“Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also”). For some people treasure is riches; for others it is reputation or relatives or relaxation; but whatever you treasure you can find your heart parked right beside it. So if your heart is leading you to do things you should not do or go places you should not go then change what you treasure and it will change where your heart hangs out.

Your heart determines the words that come out of your mouth (“A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.” Luke 6:45). Foot in mouth disease is simply a symptom of bitterness, bile, or bad corrupting the heart. Let God give you a new heart and a new mouth will come as part of the deal!

Your heart can be broken by criticism from others (Ps 69:20) but your merry heart can be medicine to the multitude (“A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones.” Proverbs 17:22). Are you a heart breaker or a heart healer?

Sadly, a heart can be divided in its allegiance to God (Hosea 10:2). Torn between two lovers makes for a miserable life- and a heart breaking end.

## **June 28, 2016 THUNDERSTRUCK**

Singing in church recently the song was about being "overwhelmed" by the glory and goodness of God. As we sang the song a word sprang into my mind that I had not thought of in a long time- "Thunderstruck". At one time this was a fairly common word but I cannot remember the last time I heard anyone use it.

Thunderstruck is defined as extremely surprised or shocked by an unexpected loud peal of thunder. Synonyms are astonished, amazed, astounded, staggered, surprised, startled, stunned, shocked, aghast, taken aback, dumbfounded, floored, blown away, dumbstruck, stupefied, dazed, and speechless. All of these describe how I feel when I am overwhelmed by the glory and goodness of God.

Thunder is the sound caused by the sudden increase in pressure and temperature produced by the rapid expansion of the air surrounding and within a bolt of lightning. This expansion of air creates a sonic shock wave (sonic boom) which produces the sound of thunder. (The rule of thumb is to slowly count when you see a lighten flash and the number you reach divided by five is the number of miles you are away from the lighten bolt).

This simply means thunder is the result of a great display of light. In the same way, looking at the light of the wonder and majesty of our great God should cause us to pause and be "thunderstruck" as we are overwhelmed by His glory and grace.

## **June 29, 2016 EXTINGUISHED CANDLESTICKS**

Would the Lord be unhappy if the church you attend closed? I am in the church opening, church building business so I am always hesitate to talk about closing churches but I was reminded of that possibility recently while reading Revelation. God told the church at Ephesus that it was no longer performing its function because it had begun to labor without love. He said this continued conduct would result in God removing their candlestick (Rev 2:5). And this candlestick was revealed just before this as being the church ("the seven candlesticks which you saw are the seven churches" Rev. 1:20)

How can we make sure a church's candlestick remains in place so it can send light into the darkness. The answer for the church at Ephesus was to Remember, Repent, and Renew- ("Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works." Revelation 2:5).

Remember the reason your church was created- "God hast created all things, and for His pleasure they are and were created". (Rev 4:11). If your church is simply a place for "Aunt Susie" to worship instead of a body of believers sharing the word of God and the work of God then you need to wonder if your candlestick has about burned out.

Once you know why you exist then repent of past failures and renew your love for God, His people, and His plan. Then watch as your candle glows brighter and brighter.

## **July 5, 2016      GUARD YOUR GAZE**

As we enter the “season of undress” where many people wear less clothes in public than they do in the privacy of their homes it is necessary to talk about ways to “Guard your gaze” and “temper your thoughts”- “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).

We live in a weird world. People spend much time and money getting just the right “clothes” that will show as much of their body as they can and then become offended if you look at their body! They want you to admire them but not ogle them.

I cannot have “the talk” with teens that is the responsibility of parents but I can point out a simply Biblical truth for the married people reading this- “To avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.” (1 Corinthians 7:2).

Marriage should provide ample and satisfying intimate opportunities which are regular and pleasurable for both parties. The Bible calls this “knowing” each other. This requires communication, coordination, consideration, and cooperation. It is a temptation killer when it satisfies the desires and drives of both spouses.

You cannot keep a bird from flying over your head but you can prevent them from making a nest in your hair! Guard your gaze so you can enjoy your summer.

## **July 6, 2016      NOTHING POLITICALLY NEW**

Solomon said, “There is no new thing under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 1:9). Consider that as we enter this political season and see ancient mistakes recycled into present problems which may lead to future destruction. Here are some past political failures to contemplate.

Do not become known as the politician who irritated God (or the electorate) to anger more than any other politician – “And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him.” (1 Kings 16:33).

Be careful that those who advise you do not “sell you to work wickedness” instead of encourage you to make wise choices – “But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the LORD, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up.” (1 Kings 21:25).

And, most importantly, do not erect a god of convenience instead of the true God because if you decide you want a government apart from God then God may just say, “Okay, let’s see how that works out for you!” – “Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan. And this thing became a sin:” (1 Kings 12:28-30).

## **July 12, 2016      MARSHMALLOW OR MASTER**

Why do so many people see God as a “marshmallow” instead of a Master? Why do they believe God’s Love is simply blessings that never involves corrective actions to make people better (Heb 12:19)? Why do they think God’s Justice could never allow them to suffer consequences for their conduct? Why do they immediately fault God as being bad because bad things happen to good people who live in a bad world?

Regardless of what the masses and the media tell people God is still the only God and He is the judge of what is right. God is absolutely perfect and as a good God He will never do wrong. When God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah for their wicked lifestyle [Gen 18] there was first of all accusation (The cry of Sodom and Gomorrah was great). Then there was investigation (sent a team of angels to personally see the situation). During investigation there was time for supplication (God gave a great chance for mercy based on Abraham’s prayers). But, finally, the actions and attitude of the people left God no choice but condemnation- “We will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the LORD; and the LORD hath sent us to destroy it.” (Genesis 19:13).

God did not act rashly or impulsively but a Holy God could not, and would not, overlook sin. Remember that when you think God is a marshmallow who winks at your wickedness.

## **July 13, 2016      POWER PREACHING**

When God shows up in Church then the Preacher become irrelevant! “And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the LORD. So that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud: for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of the LORD” (1 Kings 8:11). Preachers should realize that their job is to represent God to the people. So when God shows up have enough sense to get out of the way!

It is not personality or performance that will “raise the dead” from their trespasses and sins; it is the cross centered, resurrection powered preaching of the Gospel of God- “To try to do the work of God without the power of God is like trying to empty the ocean with a pitch fork. You will work yourself to death and never accomplish anything of lasting value.”

Everyone hates to admit it but some church activities are “man-made” instead of God given- “So the king offered upon the altar which he had made in Bethel (the things )which he had devised of his own heart; and ordained a feast unto the children of Israel: and he offered upon the altar, and burnt incense.” (1 Kings 12:33). When church services are “devised of our own heart” instead of devoted to worshipping God then the church will have no power; which will soon mean it will have no place in society.

## **July 19, 2016     PRAYING FOR PASTORS**

One of the most important individual in your life should be your pastor. He prays for you, preaching God's word to you, and partners with you in helping to "raise your children in the way they should go" (Prov 22:6). As you pray for your Pastor each week here are some helpful insights.

Pray for your preacher to have the time and talent he needs to prepare the message each week God wants you to hear. Pastors need time to study ("In the preaching of every sermon someone will suffer. If the preacher does not suffer in the preparation of the sermon then the congregation will suffer in the presentation of the sermon").

He also needs spiritual perception to know how to present the message he has prepared. He needs to know how to begin a sermon ("He who hums and hesitates loses his hears") and how to end a sermon (It is bad when the congregation finishes the sermon before the pastor finishes the sermon. We all know that the fifth time a preacher says, "In conclusion" he begins to irritate instead of educate his congregation).

Pray for your pastor's family life (A Pastor's extremely busy schedule can develop "terrible teens" and an "unappreciated wife" at home- "If Satan cannot defeat you he will attempt to defeat someone whose defeat will defeat you"). And pray for your Pastor's health- He is exposed to a lot of physical, as well as spiritual, "sickness".

Pray for your Pastor this week. You will see the impact on Sunday!

## **July 20, 2016     TWISTED**

In order to sharpen the blades for my lawn mower I grabbed by 100 foot extension cord to plug in the drill I was using to sharpen the blades. I just unwound a few feet from the roll up device and when I completed sharpening the blades I planned to simply roll the cord back up so I could use it later to power my blower to blow off grass clippings. Did not happen that way!

When I tried to rewind the cord it "developed a mind of its own" and became so tangled until I finally had to unroll the entire 100 feet of cord and rewind the cord back onto its device. While I was going through this twisted cord complication I began to think about how easy things in our life get "twisted"

It is easy for a tongue to get twisted- Ever notice how effortlessly a statement dressed in a modest red dress can be twisted into a blue see through blouse by the time it reaches its fifth telling!

Thoughts and truth can be twisted- That is what the media and the politicians are trying to do; twist your thoughts into the pattern they want you to see.

Other things that are easily twisted are treasures (What treasure is, how it should be obtained, and where it should be stored) and time (how, when, and where it is used).

Twisted truths and twisted perceptions can turn simple into complex. No wonder Jesus talked about straight gates and narrows ways leading to the good life.

## **July 26, 2016      PRAY AND PREPARE**

As America's continued moral disintegration manifest itself in religious terrorism and racial division it is time to intensify prayer and increase preparation. You should pray that God's peace and pardon will be given to everyone with full confidence that "the Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

You should also pray with absolute assurance that God's protection and provision are yours to claim as a Child of God. This prayer for God's provision should not be prayed however with an Ostridge head in the sand mentality, but with the realization that "faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone" (James 2:17).

When God talked to Noah about a rapidly coming world destruction He did not tell Noah to "Trust me and everything will be alright". He said, "Trust me and build an ark!" Then God told him to store enough supplies in that ark to withstand a long term situation- "And take thou unto thee of all food that is eaten, and thou shalt gather it to thee; and it shall be for food for thee, and for them." (Genesis 6:21).

Paul told Timothy that "if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (1 Timothy 5:8). If the "infidels" attack will you find you are "worse than an infidel"?

## **July 27, 2016      RATCHET IT UP A NOTCH**

Why don't we ratchet up our worship service this week and see what great thing God will do when we stop doing the same small things each week. Remember, a rut is simply a long grave! Here are three ideas to challenge us out of our worship complacency.

Instead of telling everyone that you welcome them to the service (As if they were doing God a favor by showing up where they are supposed to be) begin a worship service with these statements- "What do you want to do for God in this service? What do you expect God to do in your heart in this service? What are you willing to let God do in your life in this service?"

Once a month begin a service by stating "We believe prayer is just as important to worship as praise songs so today we are going to have three periods of prayer and only two praise songs." Use the first prayer time to pray for families and frailties (sickness, disease, needs). Use the second prayer time to pray for salvations and rededications in this church, in our country, and around the world. Use the final prayer time to ask God to anoint the Pastor with power as he presents God's message.

Ask people to drop questions about the Bible or God into the collection plate along with their offering. Then draw two or three of these questions and answer them before the sermon. Expect great things!



## **August 2, 2016 PROBLEMS**

Had things gone according to my plan instead of God's plan I could have ended up in the wrong place at the wrong time and a "ghost writer" may have been writing this article! My plans were to go by the bank before it closed and then go by an office supply store to purchase envelopes and paper needed for the mailing of a mission newsletter. But paper started jamming in the printer and the pen writing the deposit slip developed a "mind of its own" so I ended up leaving fifteen minutes later than I planned to leave.

Half way to Florence traffic slowed to a crawl and my frustration increased exponentially. When I arrived at the scene of the accident I realized if I had left home on my time instead of God's time then I would have been at the place of the accident at the time of the accident- and my day may have been fatal instead of frustrating.

In my devotion that morning the Lord had shown me how a king had a "hard of hearing" problem because God had something to accomplish- "Wherefore the king hearkened not unto the people; for the cause was from the LORD, that he might perform that which the LORD had spoken ..." (1 Kings 12:15).

Lord, help me to realize that some problems are to prevent bad things from happening to me and some problems are to produce good things for you.

## **August 3, 2016 TRUNK GARBAGE**

A little garbage can cause even perfume to stink! My nephew needed to borrow my car and I needed some trash taken to the dump so I told him he could borrow my car if he would take the trash out. Later that day the car had been returned and I was on my way from my storage building to my home after a very hot afternoon of cutting grass and trimming weeds.

As I approached my car the Lord spoke to me and told me very distinctly that I needed to look into the car trunk. When I opened the trunk I immediately saw that my nephew had forgotten to throw out a small garbage bag; which would have made my car very "ripe" in this summer heat if I would not have found and removed it. Thank God for His leadership!

Wise King Solomon said, "Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savor: so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honor." (Ecclesiastes 10:1). We would say it this way today- "A bad stink can overpower a good smell just like a foolish action can ruin a good reputation!"

Solomon said, "Wisdom is better than weapons of war: but one sinner destroyeth much good." (Ecclesiastes 9:18). Do not let garbage in your trunk defeat and destroy you.

## **August 9, 2016 OFFENDED**

When you offend someone you need to realize silence is not only golden; it is sometimes better than words. Sometimes "I am really sorry" is all you've got but it is not enough. This is when you must recognize that additional words will only make it worse. Throwing lighted matches into a gas filled room is not the best way to try to get someone to see the light!-"the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!" (James 3:5).

Jesus said it was impossible but that offense would come (Mt 18:7) [In fact, the words and wonders of Jesus offended His hometown (Mt 13:57), the Pharisees (Mt 15:12), and His own disciples (Mt 26:31)] but He told us to seek to avoid offending. And Paul took up the drumbeat when he said, "Give no offence in anything, that the ministry be not blamed:" (2 Corinthians 6:3).

Foot in mouth disease is not an easy situation to overcome- "A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city: and their contentions are like the bars of a castle" (Proverbs 18:19). All you can do is trust that time and your love will heal the wound without leaving a permanent scar. So be careful what you say, how you say it, where you say it - - and be ready to shut up and show love while people heal up.

## **August 10, 2016 I WILL NEVER**

Growing up one of the things I said I would never do was take off my shoes before I entered my own home. I would do it for other people but I said I would never do it in my home- my house, my rules! Said the man who married a Princess and now has inside and outside shoes!

The only entity in the universe who can positively say, "I will never" is God. And He said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5). You can count on God to the very end! If He brings you TO the valley of the shadow of death He said He would walk with you THROUGH that Valley (Psalm 23:4).

Not only will God never leave us; He will never break a promise He makes to us- "I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I sware unto your fathers; and I said, I will never break my covenant with you" (Judges 2:1). (We may live and act in such a way until God's promises cannot be fulfilled in us but we broke the covenant; not God!)

And God has said He would never forget what we do- "The LORD hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, Surely I will never forget any of their works". (Amos 8:7).

Only God can say, "I will never" and He has said, "I will never forsake you, break by word to you, or forget what you do"- Glory!

## **August 16, 2016 WHAT MOLD MAKES YOU?**

Our body is largely shaped by our eating, our activities, and our ancestors. Our mind is mainly molded by the things we allow through our eye gate and ear gate and how they react with our past perceptions and our present personality. But our soul should be developed by our desire to be molded like our master.

The goal for every Christian is not self-joy but to be like Christ- "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren." (Rom 8:29).

Our desire to be conformed to the image of Christ means we cannot allow the world's pressure or philosophy to mold us - "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." (Rom 12:2)

This devotion to be like Christ then molds our way of life into His way of life- "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: 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 1:14-16)

You are what you are because something is molding you. What mold makes you??

## **August 17, 2016 PARENT PRINCIPLES**

As Children begin a new school year here are some principles Parents need to "study up on".

First, know who rules your life. Who is sitting on the throne of your heart? Whoever rules your roost will determine your actions, your attitude, and your eternity. Make sure the King of kings is ruler of your life.

Second, recognize who guides your going. The devil does not mind a person professing Christianity as long as they do not practice their profession. When you live in a Kingdom you give allegiance to the King. This means you have access to the benefits of the kingdom and are assured of the protection of the kingdom but it also means you must adhere to the Laws of the kingdom. Are your decisions and activities based on Kingdom principles?

Finally, be real in your religion. You can fool some people but your family knows when you are simply playing a game. Do not be "righteous just for rewards". You know what I am talking about; "Lord, if you will heal my child then I will read my Bible each day" or "If you will give me the job I am seeking then I will come to church each week" and then your family sees you going right back to your former ways.

Have no reservation about your reservation. Do not make God sick with lukewarm living. Be genuine in your godliness. Three principles that will help parents.

## **August 23, 2016 A FATHER'S IMPACT**

The accusations of a father can sometimes end up destroying his own family—"And the king commanded, and they brought those men which had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions, them, their children, and their wives; and the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces or ever they came at the bottom of the den" (Daniel 6:24). Trying to destroy God's man ended up destroying their family. (What was that you were saying to your family about the preacher when you left church Sunday?)

The actions of the father can sometimes "kick back" on his children—"And Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had: and they brought them unto the valley of Achor. And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? the LORD shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones," (Joshua 7:24-25). (How are the time, tithe, and talent you are stealing from God impacting those around you?).

We are each accountable for our own sins—"The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son:" (Ezekiel 18:20) but the actions and attitude of a Father can have a far reaching impact on his family.

## **August 24, 2016 LOVE ELEMENTS**

Society paints love as passion and pleasure and all about "me" getting my needs met or about experiencing some extraordinary "tingling" feeling somewhere inside my body or emotions. The Bible shows us the reality of love.

Love commits us to those we love- "And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free: Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; ... and his master shall bore his ear through with an aul; and he shall serve him forever." (Exodus 21:5-6).

Love does what it is supposed to do- "If ye love me, keep my commandments." (John 14:15). Temptation is not defeated by strength but by love.

Love loves- "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (1 John 4:20).

Love cares enough to hurt in order to help- "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent." (Revelation 3:19).

Love is not something you reason out but something you respond to. It is an emotion that makes no sense but when it clicks nothing else makes sense. It is God allowing humans to experience God- "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." (1 John 4:16).

## **August 30, 2016 HOW TO MAKE ENOUGH MONEY**

No matter where you fit on the pay scale, here are some principles that will help make what you make enough for you to make it.

1) TITHE: You cannot expect God to bless you if you are robbing Him each week. My personal testimony, and the testimony of countless others, is that giving God your "First Fruits" is the best possible way to accomplish more with 90% than with 100%.

2) TRUST: Faith in God for provision and supply brings glory to God. God is happy when His children do things that bring glory to Him! So the more you exercise your faith the more you will see God's amazing ability to do exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think (Eph 3:20).

3) TEMPERANCE: Self-control and Self-denial are two character traits that God desires to build in His children. That is because even God finds it difficult to fill a pot that has no bottom!

4) THINK: Use your brain before you open your pocket book. Is the Debt worth the "slavery" that follows (Prov 22:7)? Earn interest instead of paying interest. Money is not "magic"; it is a tool. Learn to use it in the most effective way.

5) TALENT: God gives every person a special gift. Too many people settle for being part of the "rat race" instead of flying in the freedom God intended. God gave you your gift for a purpose; part of that purpose may produce a profit!

God is able, are you willing to do it His way?

## **August 31, 2016 THE GREATEST**

My life goal has been to help others turn silver into gold. At the beginning of my journey with the Lord I, like many Christians, earnestly prayed for God to make me the best Christian I could be. Only problem was, God decided to take me up on that and I learned early that God's "thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD" (Isaiah 55:8).

I thought being the greatest Christian would mean popularity and prosperity but God said He thought of greatness this way- "Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all." (Mark 10:42-44).

So I have spent my life providing free books and sermon material to preachers and Christian workers so they can "take my silver and turn it into gold". I wish beyond words I could have given more and better but it never ceases to amaze me how much gold a good preacher can mine out of the mediocre material I give them to begin with!

Everyone wants a clean house but no one wants to be the maid! Just remember that the maid gets to rejoice when mundane work allows others to do mighty things. So be great today- serve God by serving others.

## **September 6, 2016    MAIN THING**

My Pastor recently reminded us that the Main Thing must always be the main thing because anything less than the Main Thing does not get the Main Thing done. (If you do not know “Church Speak” the Main Thing is winning people to faith and fellowship with Christ). That made me think about four ways we can share our faith in Christ this week.

Declare your Faith: say it, tell it, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat it, text it, phone it, write it.

Demonstrate Christ: Jesus said a cup of cold water given in His Name would not lose its reward so find ways to show Christ without words this week. Helping the needy is needful but sometimes blessing those around you with an unexpected act of goodness speaks volumes.

Defend Christianity: Write a letter to the editor (Do not be “nasty negative”. Have a point and make it. Do not preach at people; share how a relationship with Christ has changed your life and show how it can help change people, communities, and a nation).

Donate to Christian causes: Support missionaries and organizations that go where you cannot go and who minister beyond your ability. Multiply your ministry by helping others do their ministry.

Most people communicate things they love, loathe, or lament. Wouldn't it be wonderful this week if they also communicated their Lord! That might help someone struggling with minor things find the Main Thing.

## **September 7, 2016    NEEDING TO BE NEEDED**

Facebook has taught us that the “need to be needed” is a common, and sometimes, consuming concern of many people. It is true that everyone needs to be appreciated (a verse I often quote from the “Jones devised version” declares “Everyone needs a little bit of petting every now and then”) but the need to constantly be adored and appreciated can become a “god” in our life and lead us away from the peace and plan of God.

Jesus faced this situation when His ministry was very successful and everyone wanted Him to stay where the success was evident- “And when it was day, he departed and went into a desert place: and the people sought him, and came unto him, and stayed him, that he should not depart from them. And he said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent.” (Luke 4:42-43)

There were great needs where Jesus was ministering and He could have stroked His ego by presuming the people could not get along without Him. Instead He realized that God's plan was more important than His preferences so he left the crowds and pointed His face toward the cross.

Do not allow your need to be needed to capture and control you. You are not God; your job is to obey God, not try to be Him.

## **September 13, 2016 MULTIPLY**

I, like you, like it when the good given to me is not just increased but multiplied. If you give me one hundred dollars that is good. If you give me one thousand dollars that is great. If you give me ten thousand dollars things get exciting around my house!

God said He would multiply the length of your life if you would obey Him (That your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, in the land which the LORD swore unto your fathers to give them, as the days of heaven upon the earth. Deuteronomy 11:21) and several times men of God prayed for God to multiply Mercy, Peace, and Love to the people of God [Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied. (Jude 1:2). Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, (2 Peter 1:2)]. I like that multiplication!

God said He would cause events to happen so the presentation of His power would multiply people's awareness of Him as the only true God (And the LORD said unto Moses, Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you; that my wonders may be multiplied in the land of Egypt. Exodus 11:9). I long for that multiplication.

But be aware that God also said He would multiply sorrow to those who abandoned Him for another god (Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god: Psalms 16:4). Be aware of that multiplication.

## **September 14, 2016 CHRISTIANS ARE**

Christians come in all colors, nationalities, and ages. They vary in their worship style and their work situation but there are five things common to all Christians. Christians are:

- 1) A Royal People: "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light:" (1 Peter 2:9). Christians are a child of the King; they should act like it!
- 2) A Redeemed People: Christians have been bought off the slave market of sin by someone who had the Right to Redeem them, the Resources to Redeem them (a sin free sacrifice), and the Resolve to Redeem them (For God so Loved...). The most expensive price in the world was paid so Christians could freely come to God simply by Grace thorough Faith.
- 3) A Rare People: They walk the narrow way instead of the broad way. They are in the world but not of the world which is shown in their modest Dress, scriptural Diet, and heavenly Destination.
- 4) A Radiant People: The Joy of the Lord is their Strength, the light of the Spirit radiates from their life, and the Love of God controls their attitude and actions.
- 5) A Related People: Christians are different parts of one Body who have the Same Father, belong to the Same Family, and inherit the Same Future Fortune.

Christians are because they believe God is, God did, and God will. And they welcome you into their family.

## **September 20, 2016 SMALL SENTENCES**

We are told in the Bible not to “despised the day of small things” (Zech 4:10) so here are some “small sentence sayings” that may help improve your life.

No matter how much frosting you put on a bad cake it is still a bad cake! (“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.” Matthew 23:25).

The way to change people is not to react to the way they act but to example the way you want them to act- “And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.” (Luke 6:31).

I have never met a drowning man who believed other people should mind their own business and leave him alone. It sounds independent to say, I can do it by myself until you cannot do it by yourself! That is when you are glad “God shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper.” (Psalms 72:12).

Have you paused in your busy schedule to praise God for your busy schedule? And remember that you should always do business with Heaven before you do business on earth.

Finally, a person who believes he cannot just about always cannot! Be a winner by realizing “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” (Philippians 4:13).

## **September 21, 2016 Things to Know about Hell**

Hell is a place of torment, tribulation, and terror. It is a real place (Jesus spoke about Hell more than He did about Heaven), a reserved place (Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: Matthew 25:41), and a remorseful place (The rich man in Hell was told to “remember” and multitudes tormented in the flames of Hell will continually regret ignoring God’s invitation to salvation).

Hell will contain hypocrites, horrible people (do you really want to spend eternity with mass murderers, child molesters, and terrorists?), and hordes of people who thought that if they ignored God then God would in some way ignore their sin and allow them into Heaven because they were “good old boys or girls”. No one likes talking about anyone ending up in Hell but Jesus said the road to destruction had a wide gate and a broad way and “many there be which go in” (Matthew 7:13).

There are, however, some things you cannot find in Hell- Peace, Rest, Joy, Comfort, Water, and Hope of escape. And, joyously for them, because of their faith in the payment for their sins by the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ you cannot find any Christians in Hell.

Hell is not a good place and you do not want to go there but “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation: (Hebrews 2:3).



## **September 27, 2016 HELL THINGS NEEDED IN CHURCH**

“The Rich man also died, and was buried, and in hell he lifted up his eyes”. When Jesus drew back death’s curtain and allowed us to see Hell (Luke 16:19-31) He revealed Eight Things in Hell we Need in the Church – (1) Sinners, (2) a vision of Heaven (“He lifted up his eyes and sees Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom”), (3) Earnest Specific Prayer (“send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue”), (4) an awareness of the torments of Hell Fire (“I am tormented in this flame”), (5) Faith that God’s Justice will prevail (“remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented”), (6) a Missionary burden (“I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment”), (7) a Dependence on the Word of God for Salvation (“If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead”), and (8) a realization of the finality of eternity (“so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence”).

There is a Hell to shun as well as a Heaven to gain. Do not become so preoccupied with living until you forget about dying.

## **September 28, 2016 RESPECT OTHERS**

Respecting the rights, reputation, and relationships of others should be a Christian way of life. Jesus thought this was so imperative until He said the most important thing a person could do; second only to an undivided love for God, was to “love thy neighbor as thyself” (Matthew 22:39) (In other words, show the same concern, respect, and consideration to those around you as you yourself would want).

When God gave the ten commandments the first four dealt with respecting our relationship with God and the final six talked about respecting various aspects of the society in which we live: 1) Respect your family (Honor father and mother), 2) Respect life (Thou shalt not kill), 3) Respect marriage (Thou shalt not commit adultery), 4) Respect Property (Thou shalt not steal), 5) Respect reputation (Thou shalt not bear false witness), and 6) Respect, don’t envy, another’s prosperity (Thou shalt not covet).

It is difficult to respect a person you are regularly disrespecting! If you constantly disparage a person’s talk, talents, and thoughts then your statement of respect will always be tainted with your sentiment of disrespect- “I respect them but...”

That is why the Apostle Paul tells us “there is no respect of persons with God.” (Romans 2:11) as he reminds us that we all have faults and failures and all of us need God’s mercy and grace. So this week give other people the same respect you want God to give you.

## **October 4, 2016 GIVE PEOPLE A CHANCE**

Talking about people is much easier than talking to them and erecting barriers is simpler than building bridges. Many times we immediately begin building these barriers because of a person's color, culture, or "different than our" conduct without giving them an opportunity to show us what an amazing person they are. One life lesson I have learned is that there are bad and good people in every race, religion, and region.

I love the people of India in spite of the fact that their color, customs, and culture differ from what I experienced when I grew up. This Compassion for them was generated by contact. This Contact helped me to stop seeing differences and begin seeing people.

Once you begin seeing people as people you stop fearing them and begin communicating with them. When you communicate with them enough to see their heart then your heart begins to bind with their heart and suddenly "those people" begin to feel like brothers. Love intermingles lives.

I am old enough to remember out door bathrooms and open windows bringing hot air into a hot house to try to survive summer swelter. I appreciate an indoor rest room in an air conditioned home! But it would not have happened if I was determined to keep everything the same and not allow something different into my life. Open your heart, extend your hand, make a friend. Your life may be a lot better because of it.

## **October 5, 2016 PIPELINE LEAK**

Recently a gas pipeline in Alabama sprang a leak. It cause gas shortages and gas price spikes in six states! Several things about this leak illustrate what sin does in the life of a Christian.

It polluted the ground water which shows the hidden impact of sin. A previous spill in SC was said to have polluted ground water in 4 states. This illustrates how your own little "personal pleasure sin" may in fact influence family and friends in a wider circle than you could imagine.

The results of this leak disrupted a large group of people- Concerts were canceled. Long lines and closed pumps caused people to spend much more time locating gas than normal. Pocket books became thinner. In the same way, sin in the life of a Christian impacts the joy of Christianity (One of the first things David asked God to restore when he confessed his sin was the "joy of his salvation"). Or (classic cliché) imagine the impact on a church service the Sunday after the pastor is found in an affair with the piano player.

Finally, this spill brought public scrutiny on the pipeline company, made people insecure about the dependability of their gas supply, and may bring costly penalties to the pipeline company. In the same way, Sin in the life of a Christian causes people to doubt the authenticity of Christianity and fear future failure of those walking with the Lord.

Be careful about leaks in your life.

## **October 11, 2016      LIKE ME**

If all my church was just like me what kind of church would my church be? Would it be just about service or would there be some serving? Your boss does not expect you to come to work and tell him how great he is so he can give you a fat pay check solely for showing up. So why do you think God will abundantly reward you for merely showing up at church and telling Him how great He is? If everyone worshipped and no one worked would God's work be done in my community?

If my Pastor read the Bible and prayed just like me what kind of sermon would we hear on Sunday? Would it be filled with holy expositions or Hollywood exposures? Would he have spent more time busily texting rather than meditating on Biblical text?

If everyone shared the Gospel with those around them like me how many people would hear the Gospel this week. Why are you ashamed to share the eternal truth of God's word but cannot wait to tell total strangers about some really neat websites you found as you spent hours surfing the web? If those around you were like you would you be stumbling in the dark instead of walking in the light?

If you died today, what difference would it make in building and maintaining the Kingdom of God in your community? Remember this, if you are not making a difference then is there a difference being made!

## **October 12, 2016      SOMEBODY PAYS**

A drunk driver runs into the car of a man headed home from work and seriously injures the man. The man is rushed to the hospital where he suffers weeks of pain and treatments. The drunk man is not seriously injured (naturally!) and is financially flat (always!) but the man who was injured has insurance so after he pays his part the insurance company pays the rest. But somebody pays!

The insurance company is not magnanimous nor does money miraculously appear in its coffers. The premium of the injured man (hopefully supplemented by the company that employs him) is used to pay the insurance company so the insurance company can pay the hospital. But somebody pays!

The man's salary to pay his premium and his company benefits come from the sales or services of the company which are purchased by customers. The man or the company does not magically have money. They can only pay if somebody pays!

The wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23). That is an irrevocable immutable law of God. Sin is anarchy against God and He cannot ignore it or overlook it because to do so would allow darkness to overrule light. When someone sins somebody must pay!

All have sinned and come short of the glory of God so everyone meets God with a debt they cannot afford to pay. But Somebody (Jesus Christ) paid- Glory!

**October 18, 2016**

**HURTING YOURSELF**

Being bad is not good. In Mark chapter five the Bible described an evil man as continuously (“always, night and day”) longing for a high (“he was in the mountains”) but experiencing great lows (“and in the tombs”), filled with despair (“crying”), and doing himself harm (“cutting himself with stones”). Why would he hurt himself like that?

It is easy to see how drug addicts and drunks hurt themselves with their actions but sometimes it is common folk who also “cut themselves with stones” as they travel through life.

Sometimes we hurt ourselves by our relationship with others (“there is a time wherein one man ruleth over another to his own hurt” Ecclesiastes 8:9) and sometimes circumstances cause us to hurt ourselves (“He that sweareth to his own hurt” Psalms 15:4).

But most often, we hurt ourselves when we ignore what we know is right- “Turn ye again now every one from his evil way, and from the evil of your doings, and dwell in the land that the LORD hath given unto you and to your fathers for ever and ever: And go not after other gods to serve them, and to worship them, and provoke me not to anger with the works of your hands; and I will do you no hurt. Yet ye have not hearkened unto me, saith the LORD; that ye might provoke me to anger with the works of your hands to your own hurt. (Jeremiah 25:5-7).

Help yourself; do not hurt yourself, this week.

**October 19, 2016**

**LIVE LIFE**

You can go through life making excuses and accepting failure or you can be more than a conqueror through Him that loved you (Rom 8:37) as you claim God’s promise of Abundant Life (I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly- John 10:10). Life is a choice but you have to make the choice if you want to see the change!

You can let life happen by hoping for the best or you can make life happy by doing the things you know need to be done when the opportunity arises- “Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, yet she collects her meat in the summer, and gathers her food in the harvest. How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? When wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?” (Proverbs 6:6-9).

I absolutely KNOW “God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19) but I also know that God’s “two edged sword” (The Bible- Heb 4:12) likewise says “if any will not work, neither should he eat.” (2 Thessalonians 3:10). God provides for the needy but He does not look kindly on the lazy.

You can endure life, exist in life, or engage life with the belief that God created you with a plan and for a purpose- “Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations” (Jeremiah 1:5). God gave you life; now live it!

## **October 25, 2016      ONE FOOT CIRCLE**

Around every person there is drawn a one foot circle. It is invisible but it is very much in evidence. As long as you stay out of this circle everything is fine. If you attempt to cross the invisible line and enter that circle the person who the circle belongs to will automatically and instinctively move back. That is their personal space and they are careful about who enters it.

A friend is someone whom you trust enough to allow into your one foot circle. You feel secure enough with them that you do not pull back when they violate your space. That principle, by the way, is why Americans adopted the habit of shaking hands instead of hugging as they do in many other countries. Because America is made up of many cultures they became suspicious of each other and the hand shake allowed them to make contact while maintaining the one foot circle for both parties.

The Bible says "Perfect Love casts out fear" (I John 4:18). When people accept the forgiveness of God and become acquainted with the Love of God something strange happens to our one foot circle. We begin to love and trust people; and suddenly the handshake is replaced with hugs of mutual fellowship. Instead of pulling away from people we want God's love to manifest itself to them through us. And our one foot circle is suddenly big enough for more than one.

## **October 26, 2016      AMBASSADOR EMBARRASSMENT**

Ambassador was a big word for a little girl so she studied hard for her part in the Church play as she repeated over and over, "I am an ambassador for the Lord". The play began and the little girl looked out at all those people looking back at her and her brain "froze". Trying her best to remember what she was supposed to say she blurted out, "I am an embarrassment for the Lord" instead of "I am an ambassador for the Lord"!

I can sympathize and emphasize with this little girl because many time I feel I am more of an embarrassment than an ambassador for the Lord! No, I do not go out and get drunk or commit adultery or things like that. But sometimes I have to really work at showing "Christian nice" when the flesh is angry or the waitress' service is really bad. And your perceived attitude is as important as your articulated words (I can say 'I love you' a thousand times and you may or may not believe me but I can give the impression I do not like you and you believe it instantly and forever!)

Every day my attitude and my actions point to the greatness of God or the failures of His servant. David wrote "Let not them that wait on thee, O Lord GOD of hosts, be ashamed for my sake: let not those that seek thee be confounded for my sake, O God of Israel." (Psalms 69:6). May that be the prayer of every Christian.

## **November 1, 2016 TWISTED TRUTH**

A fictitious story is told about a racing contest between the United States and the Soviet Union. Both governments commissioned their best engineers to produce the fastest automobile possible. After much experimenting and preparation, the day arrived for the contest. The American car won by inches. This was rather hard for the Russians to handle so their leading newspaper carried the following report: "Russia and the U S competed in a long awaited race yesterday. Both cars broke all former speed records. The Soviets came in second and the Americans finished next to the last!"

Sometimes you can misrepresent the truth in such a way until the truth is no longer the truth even though it is still the truth! We recognize this in politicians who say things in such a way until a clear statement can be explained later in an entirely different way than the way it was originally expressed. We also recognize it in Church Members who proclaim a Biblical principle one way when it applies to others and another way when it applies to them!

Jesus said we would "know the truth, and the truth would make us free" (John 8:32). Sadly, many twist the truth so that it corrupts our thoughts or confuses our stability. It would behoove these people to remember that "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness" (Romans 1:18).

## **November 2, 2016 LIVING LEGACY**

If you wait until you get there to find what you've got there you might not like what you've got there when you get there!

A pig and a cow met in the barnyard. The pig lamented his lack of popularity. He complained that people always talked about the cow's gentleness and kind eyes while always using the pig's name as an insult. "I do not understand why cows are esteemed so much higher than pigs", the pig complained. "After all, pigs give bacon and ham and people even pickle our feet."

The Cow thought for a minute and then said, "Maybe the difference is that cows give what we can while we are still living!"

What are you giving "while you are still living?" I am thinking of a man who decided to designate to mission work in India in his will so he could help build churches when he died. As he thought about the needs, however, he decided not to wait until he died in order to do what needed to be done. His sacrificial giving has already built several churches in India where hundreds of people worship in block buildings instead of searing sun or pouring rain. And He did it while he was still living.

Jesus told us to "lay up treasures in Heaven". Our goal should not simply be to "get to Heaven". Our goal is to "get heaven" to as many people as possible before we get there.

## **November 8, 2016      STIRRING A STAGNATE CHURCH**

Some churches are growing and prospering but some churches are Stagnate Churches where a few people struggle to maintain the building and the budget so the same people can sing the same songs and listen to the same sermons (different text) each week. Here is some advice that can stir a stagnate church into a place of living water.

1) Repent of Luke warm living. That is the advice God gave the church in Revelation. Had they heeded God's advice and returned to God's plan then I believe they would still be a lighthouse for God today.

2) Renew your vision for the Lord. Find the work God wants you to do and get busy doing it. If you are satisfied to just "show up" at church it will not be long before no one else will show up to watch you show up! Lift up your eyes and look on the fields; and then start doing something about what you see.

3) Find ways to get outside the Church walls. 95% of dying churches have little involvement outside the church walls. They are "dead sea churches" with resources coming in but little going out except that which evaporates toward heaven.

People will drive fifteen miles to attend a loving church telling about a living lord but they will not walk across the street to attend a stagnate church where the living water fountain is no longer functioning.

## **November 09, 2016      CONVERT, CHALLENGE, COMFORT**

Christians are called to convert sinners, challenge society, and comfort saints. Sinners are converted by the power of God through the grace of God but the faith to activate that grace comes from the proclaiming of the word of God by Christians. Christians share God with sinners because they love people and want them to be "born again" into the family of God.

Christians are called to challenge society by being the light of the world and the salt of the earth. They shine light into the darkness of the sinful mindset of a non-Christian world and seek to preserve society from the moral depravity of "every man doing that which is right in his own sight". Christians illuminate and illustrate by their annunciations, their attitude, their actions, and their appearance.

But Christians are also called to comfort Saints (1Thess 5:11). They do this with words (said words and silent words [hugs]), and warmth (Fellowship with other believers as the body of Christ), and wisdom (Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established- Proverbs 15:22), and their witness about God's wonder at work in their life.

Christianity is much more than a system of belief; it is a life changing, destiny changing, personality changing experience that makes you a new creature as old things are passed away and all things become new. It is God living in you as you live for God.

## **November 15, 2016 LIVE DRIVING FORCES**

Most people do what they do because of routine, reason, reaction, or reward. Side Note: There is also a “random” factor to life which we cannot control (I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favor to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all. Ecclesiastes 9:11) but most people’s success in life depends on their use of “routine, reason, reaction, and reward”.

Wanting to lose weight changes your routine (eat less, exercise more). A new born baby in your life can change the reason you do much of what you do. When others treat you badly or shower you with kindness it changes your reaction to them. And knowing your efforts will be rewarded and recognized will drive you to work when nothing else can.

Your Christian life will be a success or failure based on this same criteria. Daily prayer and Bible study will build your relationship with God (routine). Desiring to reach others with the Gospel so they can know the pardon and peace you know will change you into an effective witness for Christ (Reason). Doing good to those who spitefully use you (Mt 5:44) will impress them and show them God in a different way (Reaction). And knowing “your labor is not in vain in the Lord” will bring patience and productivity to your work (Reward). You are special; now live special.

## **November 16, 2016 GOALS**

No one asked, “Oh, by the way, Preacher; what do you want from God?” I had just preached a message entitled “How to get what you want from God” and during the fellowship meal afterwards no one asked me what I wanted from God and how I expected to receive it. If they would have asked I would have given them this threefold answer.

I want a partner who will be a companion and a help-mate. I want two to become one who are committed to one another to such a degree until they can always count on, and believe in, one another.

I want prosperity that will allow me to enjoy life myself and have enough left over so that I can give to those in need in such a way until my gift will make them better as well as blessed.

I want purpose that will become fruitful to such a degree until it drives me to be faithful in the performing of it.

People often tell me their goal is to “be happy” or “have peace”. My question is, “What does it take to make you ‘happy’ or to bring you ‘Peace’ and what are you doing to bring those things into your life?” Better husbands normally make better wives. Reckless spending seldom brings great riches. Lazy undirected work seldom brings amazing results. Know what you want and then want it enough to know what it takes to make it happen.



## **November 22, 2016    WRONG RIGHT THANKS**

Sometimes thanking God for the right things is the wrong thing to do- Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. (Luke 18:10-14).

It was not the Pharisee's right activities Jesus condemned; it was his wrong attitude- And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: (Luke 18:9). If your praise is an ego trip about your own goodness instead of an expression of admiration to God for His blessings then you are giving wrong right thanks.

If your thanks are a put down of others instead of praise up to God then Jesus said you were "despising others" instead of adoring God.

Praising God is the right thing to do; just do not do it wrong!

## **November 23, 2016    REJOICE REASONS**

I thank God He makes me win so people can see by my winning that our God is a Winner: "Thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place." (2 Corinthians 2:14)

I thank God He gives me things so I can Praise Him for the things He gives me: "Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God." (2 Corinthians 9:11).

I thank God that when my outer self is down my inner eyes can still look up and see the smiling face of our loving God- "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance." (Psalms 42:5).

I thank God for friends who have made me better and have allowed me to make them better- "We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth;" (2 Thessalonians 1:3).

Praise is an act of worship and a suitable sacrifice to God: "And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing." (Psalms 107:22). Look without, look within, and then lift up your thanks with song, cymbal, and celebration. God is a good God; tell Him that!

## **November 29, 2016 DOING NOTHING ABOUT SOMETHING**

What would happen if nothing happened about something? Do you really need to do anything about some things? Remember, in some situations your silence is more powerful than your words- "Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding." (Proverbs 17:28).

We should never limit our obligation to do what we can, where we are, with what we have when the opportunity presents itself. But we should also consider the need for, and the consequences of, the actions we are about to take. Here are some things to consider.

Is it really any of your business? "He that passeth by, and meddleth with strife belonging not to him, is like one that taketh a dog by the ears." (Proverbs 26:17). Grabbing a dog by the ears may seem the way to prevent a problem but how do you let that dog go!

Do you know the real problem or do you simply see the ripples on the surface of a very deep pond? Crying for attention should be treated differently from crying from sickness. When the heart of the problem is a problem of the heart a Band-Aid is not the need.

Will your help help or will it do more harm than good? Giving money to enable addiction or dependency eases your compassion but it actually increases the problem.

Sometimes you should consider this question, "What would happen if nothing happened?"

## **November 30, 2016 WHEN GOD SAYS NO**

God can't can't but He will won't! Or to put it in normal talk, nothing is impossible with God but some things are not in the will of God.

The divine will of God is one of the most difficult things for humans to accept. We know that God can do anything; yet, there are times that prayers and petitions get either no answer or a "No" answer. Many of those prayers are earnest prayers for very real needs and we know God could change the situation; but He doesn't.

That is why the most often repeated theme in the Bible is "The Just shall live by Faith" (Four books of the Bible are based on this principle). Faith is trusting in God's love even when you can't see God's face. Faith believes God's Plans are best even when you cannot see His purpose. Faith is accepting God's "No" even when you desperately want a "Yes".

In the middle of work, worry, and lack of wealth. In the midst of sickness, sorrow, and depression. In the living of life you must recognize that God's power and love are guided by a wisdom that is beyond our understanding.

Our prayers should never be to "make" God do what we want; they should be that God would cause us to want what He wants. Remember that God's "No" shows just as much love as His "Yes". Accept it with the same joy.

## **December 6, 2016      CHRIST WITNESSES**

Was Jesus God or simply a wise good man? If He was a good man doing good works we should admire Him. If He is God who became a man then we should reverence and obey Him.

When Jesus asked His disciples what they thought about Him Peter replied, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" and Jesus told him that this insight did not evolve from the human thought process but it was a divine revelation from God the Father ("flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven"-Matthew 16:17).

John the Baptist bore witness to the fact that Jesus was the foretold Messiah-"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world". (John 1:29). But Jesus said He had even "greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me." (John 5:36).

Jesus also based His Christ claim on the witness of scripture ("Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me". John 5:39). But His greatest witness was from God Himself- "And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me." (John 5:37).

Christmas is not simply about the birth of a baby in Bethlehem. It is about God becoming flesh and dwelling among men. Do not let the presents overshadow His presence.

## **December 7, 2016      A DIFFERENT GIFT**

Let's give everyone the gift of a changed "you" this Christmas. Let's change the "ho-hum" into the "ho-ho-ho" and the "bah-humbug" into the Hallelujah chorus as we celebrate God coming to people so people can come to God and be a new creature in Christ.

First change a little thing in your life and expect big results- "You will never change your life until you change something you do daily. The secret of your success is found in your daily routine" (John Maxwell). Take five minutes of Facebook time and devote it to Facetime with God each day (One Bible Chapter and a brief time of seeking's God's face before you face the world will make a world of difference).

Exercise a little each day: God does not mind you walking while you fellowship with Him (Over and over the Bible talks about men "walking with God"). Drink hot tea instead of hot coffee one morning a week- it will cleanse you palette and remind you to "think outside the box" that day. Remember, you can never become what you want to be if you remain what you are.

The world contains dreamers [think about doing something], schemers [plan to do something], and doers (do the deed). Dreamers contemplate the world. Schemers strategize the world. Doers change the world. Determine to do something today that will make a difference in you and in those around you. It will be a gift appreciated by all.

## **December 13, 2016 SPIRIT GIFTS**

Wisdom knows what needs to be done. Knowledge knows how to do what needs to be done. Faith believes that what needs to be done can be done. Obedience listens to wisdom, knowledge, and faith and does what needs to be done. Working together the Body of Christ gets the job done.

The Bible declares that the Spirit of God gives “gifts” to the Church in order to enable every member of the Body of Christ to function in way desired by God and designed by the Spirit (1 Cor. 12). These “Gifts” are not given based on the natural ability of a person. Instead, they are “divided to every man” (1Cor 12:11) according to the will of the Spirit so that every part of the “Body” will do what they are supposed to do in order for the Body to accomplish its mission.

It is true that you do what you do because you are what you are but it is also true that a Christian is a “new creature” in Christ who does different because they are now being made different by the Spirit. Many people find no joy in life because they do what they do out of necessity or habit; for pleasure, profit, or to please / placate other people; or because of religion, regulations, responsibility, or respect. Find real Life Joy by recognizing your Gift from the Holy Spirit and then be the wonderful person He made you to be.

## **December 14, 2016 CHRISTMAS IS THE SAME**

It has been over 2000 years since that first Christmas but many things about Christmas remain the same.

Even Wise Men struggled with Christmas presents so they went generic. Money for the man (Joseph, gold). Perfume for the woman (Mary, frankincense), and Myrrh for the Messiah (Had medicinal properties [diaper rash, teething] but was bitter to the taste symbolizing His death (Nicodemus used a 100lb bag of aloes and myrrh to wrap Jesus at His death -Joh 19:39)

Christmas is a time of travel and economic hardship for families. Joseph and Mary had to travel to Bethlehem because of a tax. This meant no job, no room at the inn, no doctor, and strangers (Shepherds) dropping by unexpectedly to gawk at their “present”.

Christmas is the same in its Meaning- God became a man to show He “gets it”. Christ lived as a man suffering hunger, persecution, family problems, etc. so now we have a great high priest praying with us who knows the needs of our heart.

And Christmas should be the same celebration of God’s Glory (Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men) and His Love: (1 John 4:9) “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.”

Man’s need and God’s love have not changed so do not let the stress of the season dampen the celebration of our Savior’s birth.

## **December 20, 2016 CHRISTMAS COST FOR CHRIST**

In our hustle and bustle at Christmas it is easy to overlook the great cost of Christmas for Christ: (Philippians 2:5-8) "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

This passage describes Four Things Christ gave up when He exchanged a mansion in Heaven for a manger in Bethlehem.

1. HIS ROYALTY- He left the splendors of Heaven for the squalor of a stable so you and I could have a home in Heaven. The King became a common man so common people could become children of God.

2. HIS REPUTATION- He became of no reputation so that we who have a bad reputation might be redeemed as new creatures; faultless in God's Grace.

3. HIS RIGHTS- The Son became a servant. He gave up His royal rights so that men who were wrong might be made right.

4. HIS LIFE- He who is life became obedient unto death so that those who were dead in sin could have eternal life. He gave us the present of His presence so we could have the pleasure of His pardon.

Christmas is about Christ giving the greatest Christmas present possible. Open it today.

## **December 21, 2016 A CHRISTMAS DEVOTION**

The marvelous story of the Birth of Jesus teaches us some vital lessons that can help keep Christ as the central part of the commercial enterprise that now dominates December [The financial burden of Christmas was always a way to benefit others; not you- "Everyone went to be TAXED".]

Christmas reminds us God like families to worship together even if it means travel- "Everyone went to his own city". Our family time at Christmas is a great time of celebration, jubilation, and time spent in glorification of the birth of the Son of God.

Christmas reminds us that God has a plan and we get to be part of it! "Her (Mary) days were accomplished" so that Christ was born exactly WHEN He should be born exactly WHERE he should be born (Remember the Jerusalem leaders were able to tell the wise men where to look because God had written about the birth place hundreds of years before).

Christmas reminds us that "All things work together for the good to them that love the Lord" even if it means you have to "Wrap the new born baby in swaddling clothes because of no room in the inn". (Remember a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes in a manger was a sign to the shepherds).

But most importantly, Christmas is a time to make the effort to find and worship Christ- "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known to us."

## **December 27, 2016 PSALM ONE PARENTS**

I believe that parents should require their children to memorize, and repeat back to the parent at least once each week, the first Psalm. Its warnings about the evils of worldly associations and the consequences of a wicked life added to the emphasis about reading the word of God are foundational principles that should be instilled in every child.

A look at the first half of this Psalm will give you an idea of its importance- "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper" (Psa 1:1-3).

The first thing you notice is that life influences come from people who you listen to, who you fellowship with, and whom you seek to impress. Who you become is largely determined by who you allow into your inner circle.

This negative influence should be replaced by constant contemplation of Divine directives. This meditation will provide correct soul nourishment which will result in fruitful living and life success.

Make 2017 a Psalm One year as you anticipate the most fruitful year of your life.

## **December 28, 2016 CENTER IN THE WORD**

The Christian Church is founded on the Principles of the Word of God; built by the Preaching of the Word of God; and organized around the Precepts of the Word of God. Our goal is not to be "politically correct" or "relevant to today's society" but to clearly and honestly show God to the world He created and which He will one day judge.

The Church may change the prelude to the preaching of the Word of God (contemporary or traditional) and the presentation of the preaching of the Word of God (slides, videos, microphones) but it can never change the Message of the preaching of the Word of God.

The Message of the Word of God should be a sent (inspired) message, a savior message (We preach Christ), and a saving message (Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God). Preaching's purpose is not simply to give you a weekly emotional high or make you feel better by hugging your hurt. Preaching is to enlighten; not entertain. It is meant to make you feel bad about your sinful self and your sinful actions so you will be born again and become a new creature in Christ.

If you are interested in "drawing a crowd" and becoming a bigger and better Church in the coming year you can try all kinds of gimmicks and games or you can remember that the founder of the Church said, "If I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto me." (John 12:32).