

### 1992 NEWSPAPER DEVOTIONAL ARTICLES by Rev. Mike Jones

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## January 1, 1992 JOYOUS NEW YEAR

I think more people are happy today than on any other single day in the year. Multitudes of husbands will be happy because their football team won. Multitudes of wives will be happy that football season is finally about over. Multitudes of kids will have finally rescued the princess or figured out how that Christmas toy is really supposed to work. And multitudes of moms will be happy that school break is just about over!

It's good to be happy. That's the reason everyone wishes you a HAPPY New Year. That's the reason people spend so much money at Christmas for that perfect present. That's the reason people are already counting the days until their next vacation. Always looking to be happy.

The sad fact, however, is that most of the people who are happy today will be unhappy tomorrow. The tax forms will arrive. The kids will take sick (again!). Bills will start arriving. Everyone will start getting on everyone else's nerves.

I can't promise you will be happy all the time. That's because happiness is based on circumstances; and they change. I can, however, tell you about a joy that passes understanding. It comes from knowing Jesus Christ as your Savior and serving Him as your Lord.

I wish you lots of happiness this year. But I really pray you'll find the road past happiness into full joy in a relationship with Christ. That will turn it from a Happy New Year into a Joyous New year; this year, and forever.

## January 8, 1992 CIGARETTE LIGHTERS

I have a cigarette lighter on the old car I drive. I use it to hang a garbage bag on. I don't smoke, and I don't like other people smoking in my car, so that puts a useless item to a useful purpose.

God has given me a good imagination. Sometimes, Satan tries to control my life by using that imagination to think wrong or wicked thoughts. I have learned to "Cast down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;" (2 Cor 10:5).

It's not enough to "cast down" wrong thoughts. I want to bring "into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ". So, instead of allowing my imagination to control me, I use it to write sermons, books, and articles. That way I can take a potential wrong and turn it into something that helps others.

Part of the wonder of Christianity is that God takes something bad, redeems it, and makes it into something good. He's trying to do that in your life today. But it only works with attitudes you give Him access to. He can't change bitterness, anger, and worry into love and peace unless you're willing to not only forgive but also do good to them that spitefully use you (Matt 5:44)

So, don't just stop using your "cigarette lighter" to light cigarettes, find a useful purpose for it. That's what God expects of you.

## January 15, 1992 UNUSUAL BIBLE THINGS

Our Church is in the process of "reading the Bible Thru in 1992". Here are some little "odd" things I've picked up through the years that I used to help prick their curiosity as we began.

- 1) Man who lived to be 969 years old (Gen 5:27). Do you know what happened the year he died?
- 2) Man who used a stone for a pillow (Gen 28:11)
- 3) Baby who had a scarlet thread tied around his hand before he was born (Gen 38:28-29)
- 4) The man who controlled a battle by holding out his hands (Ex 17:11)
- 5) The man whose donkey saved his life (Num 22:28-30)
- 6) The man who had a bed 13 1/2 feet long and 6 feet wide (Deut 3:11)
- 7) The women who had to shave their heads before they could marry (Deut 21:11-13)
- 8) When the Sun stood still for a day (Josh 10:13)
- 9) The woman who killed a man by driving a tent stake through his head (Jud 4:17-21)
- 10) An army with 700 left handed men (Jud 20:16)
- 11) The man whose hair weighed about 6 2/3 pound when it was cut annually (II Sam 14:26)
- 12) The man who had 12 fingers and 12 toes (II Sam 21:20)
- 13) When an Axe floated on the water (II Kings 6:1-6)
- 14) The man who had 700 wives and 300 concubines (I King 11:3)
- 15) The man who had 88 children (II Chron 11:21)
- 16) When did the Sun travel backward (Is 38:8)
- 17) The Preacher who walked naked for 3 years (Is 20:2-3)
- 18) When an entire graveyard came to life at one time (Ezek 37:-)
- 19) The Harlot who was the ancestor of Christ (Matt 1:5)
- 20) The man who ate locust for food (Matt 3:4)

## January 22, 1992 GOD'S REQUIREMENTS

One of the things that confused me in my early Christian life was the vast number of requirements that preachers made of people. They always seem to be condemning me for the wrong I did; or for the right I failed to do. I was almost ready to quit because I thought I could never meet God's Requirements.

Thankfully, I came across a simple little sermon that described what God is really looking for in the life of a Christian. These Five basic requirements are like stepping stones in a Christian life.

ONE- A Changed Mind- We call this Repentance. It simply means we change our mind about sin because we start to look at it from God's Point of view. We thought it was fun; God says it's fatal.

TWO- A Changed Heart- We call this Regeneration. This is the work of the Holy Spirit of God in our life. It takes place when we come to God repenting of sins and accepting by Faith His provision for the payment of Sin (Christ's death on the cross).

THREE- A Changed Life- We call this Conversion. Our mind has changed about sin, our heart has been changed by God, which causes us to change the way we live. We become new creatures in Christ.

FOUR- A Changed Standing- We call this Justification. It means we are able to come to God's throne just as if we had never sinned! This gives up boldness in prayer and confidence in life.

FIVE- A Changed Service- We call this Sanctification. The deeds that we do now are for the Glory of God and the Good of others. We work under the guideline that the greatest of all shall be servant of all.

Have you met God's Requirements?

## January 29, 1992 SOWING SEED

Isaiah 32:20 is a good description of the mission of God's people-"Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters, that send forth thither the feet of the ox and the ass."

This verse describes our objective, as well as our equipment. Our mission is to Sow the seed of God's word beside ALL waters. When Jesus told the parable of the sower he said the sower sowed on the path to the field, on the rocky soil, among the thorns, and on the good ground.

That's the kind of attitude we need. We should never miss an opportunity to sow a seed. It may be a tract to a stranger, a devotion book in a hospital waiting room, a kind word to someone, a cake to a neighbor, or a clear presentation of the gospel in the home of a friend. The main thing is to use EVERY opportunity to reach EVERY ONE you can with the Good News of Salvation through Christ.

Not only is our mission in varied locations, our methods will also vary. Some will use the "ox" and some will use the "ass". The ox is steady, sure footed, patience, and dependable. The main asset of some people's Christianity is their steady dependable Christian living.

The ass is faster than the ox, and more stubborn! Some Christians witness with a brief word and a determination that will not be swayed.

If you are a Christian, sow seed everywhere, using the personality God has given you. The fruit will make every sacrifice worthwhile.

## February 5, 1992 FIND THE BOOK

One of the things I have learned during my years of pasturing is that people learn more by doing that they do by hearing. That's why I use puzzles and quizzes from time to time in our services.

There are 21 books of the New Testament listed in the puzzle below. These books are listed backward, frontward, up or down. If I just wrote these books on a sheet of paper you probably wouldn't even scan the entire list. But you might even open you Bible in order to find them in this puzzle.

Remember that the next time you think Church is just a place you come and sit. If that's all you do then maybe that's why church is so boring to you. Christianity is Abundant LIFE. And that means activity FOR God as well as Adoration OF God.

W E H T T A M X F A E O N D B C A J O H N  
C Y A C L E A C T S P W T M S D T K B C S  
P A W Y R O R F I R S T J O H N R T K K B  
H L L C K Y K O R E V E L A T I O N C J S  
I D K S S H E X N U F E P H E S I A N S N  
L B X N B W J U D E J Q M F Z P Q R J A A  
I D E A J K D P R E T E P I E J H Z I I I  
P Q T I C S W O H G G L H E B R E W S H N  
P F U S K E J I D J A I I Y Y S F T J W O  
I U B S S M L G J E L O L Z C Q I G H E L  
A M R O M A N S P B A K E R D R I H N K A  
N Y M L W J A N O C T I M O T H Y H T U S  
S N M O E E P O A C I K O D X O E F L L S  
A X R C N C F C U B A Y N Q N I G Q M S E  
Z D L A J M N Q N B N L M M H W P E Z O H  
C O R I N T H I A N S X P Q T P S U T I T

## **February 12, 1992 CHRISTIAN LOVE**

"If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the Love of God be in him? Dear Children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth." (I John 3:17-18).

Most of the Churches in the Lake City area are entering into a venture that will profoundly effect the moral climate of the city. This effort will cross racial and economic barriers and enable people to actively and effectively minister to the needs of the people in our community.

It is called "Love, Inc" and it's key verses are those at the beginning of this article. It's goal is to show the love of God with deeds of compassion instead of merely words of concern- "Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if not accompanied by action, is dead" (James 2:16-17).

As we express our love to our family and sweethearts this Valentine's Day, let us renew our determination to show Christian love to everyone. That will involve more than a cute card or a box of candy; but the results could be life changing for those that give, as well as for those who receive.

## **February 19, 1992 MISSED OPPORTUNITY**

One of the men in the first Church I pastored and I were standing around talking one night after Church. In the course of the conversation, he asked me how I liked pump shot guns. I told him that I had never owned one but I didn't think I'd like them very well. I thought the pumping action would destroy my aim.

Next week I found that this man had given his nephew a nice pump shot gun. Later, he told me he had planned to give it to me but I had said I didn't like pump shot guns. I told him I would have learned to like it if he would have given it to me!

Some of the best and most beneficial services at our Church are the Wednesday night Prayer Meetings. We share songs and scriptures, as well as burdens and blessings. We usually have a pretty good attendance but I often wonder about the people who attend on Sunday morning but never come on Wednesday night.

I think they're just like I was about the pump shot gun. They don't think it's worth the effort to come to Wednesday Night Services. If they would just come a few times they would see what they were missing.

Life is so short and opportunities are so limited. Isn't it a shame to have an opportunity each week to enrich your life and then fail to follow up on it?

I never see a pump shot gun without remembering what I missed. I wonder if that's the way some people will feel when they need the spiritual uplift of Church but sickness or circumstances prevent them from attending.

## **February 26, 1992 SUCKER OR SUCCOURER**

Paul ends his letter to the Romans with a list of people who have helped him in the ministry. The first of these is a lady named Phebe who was described as a "Succourer" of many- "I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea: That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also." (Rom 16:1-2).

The word "Succourer" means someone who helps or assists another. Our word for "Succourer" today would be "Sponsor". So Pheobe was a lady who had helped sponsor numerous Christian projects; including Paul's missionary journeys.

Some people in the world today describe someone who gives their money to Christian Ministry as a "Sucker" instead of a "Succourer". They believe that it's foolish to give money to proclaim the Gospel when there are so many other things to do with their money.

I wonder who they will think is the "Sucker" when the banks of Heaven are opened and they see the interest earned by those who have been "Succourers". I think I'll lay up my treasures in Heaven where they won't rust or be robbed. That will give me joy as I help people in this world and joy as I look forward to rewards in Heaven. I believe that will make me a "Succourer" instead of a "Sucker".

## **March 4, 1992 EVANGELISTIC ECONOMICS**

One of the saddest things I've noticed about many Churches is that they're designed for economy instead of Evangelism.

In order to save construction cost on one or two feet of floor space, they push the pews so close together until getting in or getting out means climbing over someone. It's difficult for people to get in to hear the message and almost impossible to get out if a person wants to respond to the invitation.

And why not spend some money on some really comfortable pews? Everyone always says the pews must be uncomfortable to keep people from falling asleep during preaching. I say, if the preaching is that dull, they're probably better off asleep anyway! Why should those who really want to hear the message be forced to sit on hard uncomfortable benches. I think theater seats are a great idea.

And what about sound systems? Most Churches use a cheap, patched together, system that hums and pops because they're too cheap to spend money on a good sound system. The primary function of the Church is proclaiming the word; but that's the very area that the least money is spent in.

Churches should be equipped so that everyone in the Church can hear everything the speaker is saying clearly and distinctly.

Communicating the Gospel is the most important "business" in the world. The fact that people will not hear the Gospel should be based on the hardness of the sinner's heart instead of the tightness of the Christian's pocketbook.

## March 11, 1992      SMELLS

They flooded your senses when you walked in the door. It was a small shop that specialized in potpourri, candles, and soaps and the scents almost overwhelmed you when you walked in the door.

While my wife was shopping, I asked one of the sales girls if the scents bothered her. She said she had worked there so long until she didn't notice them anymore. Immediately, an alarm went off in my mind.

This is a danger every Christian faces. Dealing with the Divine every day causes us to lose our reverence for the Holy. We sing about Jesus suffering and dying because He loved us while our minds occupy themselves with fixing dinner, paying bills, or last night's date. Our dedication used to be whole hearted but now we're more interested in finding clothes that fit than in finding sheep that have gone astray.

How can God get us to once again notice how great it is to be His child? How can He remove the hardness from our heart so we will once more "smell the roses"?

Maybe we can have a service where we load the entire congregation in cars and ride them through parts of our town. The stench of moral decay and sinful living should really make them appreciate the smell of the Lily of the Valley. Or maybe I could let them visit hospitals and nursing homes with me for a week. Then they'd know why God uses the prayers of Saints as Heaven's perfume (Rev 5:8).

Maybe this is not a problem with you. I just wonder. When is the last time YOU thanked God for the privilege of worshipping Him each week?

## March 18, 1992      THE DREAMER

One of the most famous of the infamous stories to come out of the Jewish Death camps of World War II was the story of "The Dreamer".

Like many of the other prisoners, he had developed a dragging walk, a deadpan face, and a hopeless attitude. That was the only way he could deal with the pain and death that surrounded him.

One January morning things suddenly changed. That day he went around proclaiming to everyone that in a dream the night before he had seen that he would be liberated on March 31. For the next two months nothing could bother him. The cold, the hunger; even the death all around him, couldn't keep the smile from his face and the joy from his lips.

March 31 came and went. On the first day of April they found him dead in his bed. The day before he had been full of life but, when his dreamed up day of liberation came and went, he simply gave up and died.

I know of many people today who dream of wealth or power or popularity. Then the reality of life overtakes the delusions of their dreams. That makes them easy victims of despair, drugs, or depression.

Everyone needs a dream. Just make sure your dream is based on the Word of God instead of wistful thinking. Otherwise, it will all go up in a puff of smoke one day.



## **March 25, 1992      DOUBTS AND DEMONS**

"If you can believe, all things are possible to him that believes" (Mark 9:23).

What a great verse of scripture that is. What a great truth that is, "All things are possible through faith". But it doesn't work for you. Why??

Jesus had just been transfigured on the mountain. He descends from that marvelous moment to find his disciples defeated by a demon possessed boy. The father of the boy brings his need to Jesus. Like he always did, Jesus sought to teach a spiritual lesson before he met a physical need.

Doubts had begun to dominate this man because the disciples had been unable to help his son. What he didn't realize was that the disciples were unable to help his son because they were not spiritually ready to do battle with this demon. They should have prepared themselves for battle by fasting and praying. Instead, they tried to bluff their way through with mere words and they were defeated.

Jesus now has to deal with two problems, the doubt of the father and the demons in the boy. And Jesus knew the doubts must be cast out before he could deal with the demon.

Do you live in defeat? Maybe you're fighting demons when you should be dealing with doubt. "If you can believe, all things are possible to him that believes".

## **April 1, 1992      APRIL FOOLS**

This is the day you must watch very carefully everything that people tell you. It's April Fool's Day and many people think that gives them a license to lie.

The main culprits seem to be kids in school and radio personalities. I'll let you draw your own conclusions from that.

The truth is, however, that we've gotten use to being lied to. No one really believes that a model, who is trying to act like a housewife, can really get out all that ground in dirt with the new improved detergent she's advertising. And I certainly don't believe that a new after shave lotion is going to make all the beautiful girls in the world forget that my hair is thin and my waist is fat.

From advertisements to politicians, we have learned to expect some "manipulation of the truth". We just shrug it off; and grow a little more cynical with each passing day.

In the midst of all this uncertainty, it's good to know that God not only speaks the truth, He is the truth. When God makes a promise, that promise can be depended on. It's backed by the fact that God said it and God cannot lie. What a Blessed Assurance that is.

Don't be an "April Fool" with your life. Don't believe Satan's lie about sin being all pleasure with no punishment. Trust God's Truth about eternal, abundant life in Christ. It's the truth in April; and for all of eternity.



## **April 8, 1992 THE LOST BLOUSE**

I normally pick up our clothes from the cleaners when I'm out visiting. When I get home I'll put them in my closet and my wife will put them in their proper place when she gets the time.

While she was doing this recently she found a blouse that didn't belong to her. Some how it had gotten mixed it with the clothes I picked up.

I immediately took it back to the Cleaners. Boy, were they glad to see it.

The person it belonged to had already come to pick it up and they had searched the cleaners over several times trying to locate it. I could tell they were close to the panic stage.

I have several members of our Sunday School that have been missing from their place recently. It appears they have gotten mixed it with the devil "laundry" and he's taken them to his house. And we all know that the devil is a thief and a liar so he won't return them to their proper place.

My question is this. Why is it alright for the lady whose blouse was misplaced to get angry and ask the cleaners to search their entire business to locate her blouse but it's noseiy and undignified for me to questions my lost sheep about where they were Sunday Morning?

Is a blouse really more important than a person's soul??

## **April 15, 1992 SIGNATURES**

It was the second call like that I received that day. First the Post Office and now the Printer had called. Both were for the same problem and both required another trip up town.

I had been letting my computer write the checks for some bills when I received an emergency phone call. It was a long difficult situation. When I finally returned I put the checks with the bills and went to my next project.

Now the phone calls were reminding me that a check is no good without a signature! The money was in the bank, the figures on the check were correct, but the check was no good until I signed it.

For many people this week is "spring break" for the children and maybe even a day off work for the parents. It's time to plant flowers, cut grass, and start cleaning up the Beach/Lake house. It's a "Christian" holiday but not nearly as exciting as Christmas.

Easter for a Christian means much more than this. Easter is the time God "signed His check" for our salvation. Easter is when the Son of God died as a payment for the sins of mankind. Now I can present the "check" for my salvation at the bank of Heaven with full assurance that it's good.

Easter is also the celebration of the resurrection of Christ. This is God's way of showing man that there is plenty of funds to cover the checks we present. The resurrection is God's big "paid in full" for salvation.

God's check is made out, signature and all. All that's needed now if your faith to cash it.

## **April 22, 1992 HEARING WRONG**

I thought the instructions were pretty straight forward. The lady's daughter had called and told me to tell her mom that she would bring the children to her home early next morning instead of that night. As soon as the activity at the church was over I told the lady and she seemed to understand.

Early next morning I received a phone call. Seems the mother got in her mind that she was supposed to pick the children up from my house! Now the daughter was at her mom's house and the mother was on the way to my house.

Eventually we got everyone together but it illustrated a common problem. People have a tendency to hear only part of what you say. I print the Church announcements in the bulletin and preach them from the pulpit; and people still call me all the time wanting to know times and dates of activities. And I've learned long ago that most people pick up only one or two parts of a sermon; parts that generally have nothing to do with the points you were trying to make.

Even Jesus had this problem. He once told his disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees. They became very upset because they thought he was condemning them for the brand of bread they bought. He was really trying to warn them about the corrupting influence of the doctrine of the Pharisees.

Maybe, just maybe, your Christian life is not all it should be because you haven't REALLY listened to God's instructions. Could it be that you heard about the Crown in Heaven but missed the part about the Cross you're to bear on earth? Maybe you should sit down and read God's instructions again. That might keep you from making unnecessary trips; or ending up at the wrong destination!

## **April 29, 1992 PRAYER**

I hate being late for anything but I knew I was already late for this Revival service. Now it was raining "cats and dogs" and I was really getting late.

Suddenly a car appeared in front of me and I had to slam on brakes. The person driving the car was determined to be extremely careful so they were driving about Five miles per hour.

It was raining so hard until I couldn't see how to pass the car and I was getting later by the minute. I knew the Lord knew the circumstances so I asked Him to please give me a chance to pass this car. Almost immediately the rain slacked up and I could see far enough ahead to pass the car. As soon as I got pass it started pouring again.

The Lord is not my private "magic genie" that grants my every whim. He is, however, my loving heavenly father and He hears and answers prayer. I don't try to order God around and make Him my slave but I do know that God delights in answering the prayers of his servants. I generally express it this way- I don't expect God to tie my shoe laces but I do expect Him to provide the shoes.

Jesus said that many people have not because they ask not. That is a short coming that I have determined God will never find in me. I pray about everything; from parking spaces to cancer. Sometimes the Lord knows I need to walk; but many times He puts me at the front door. Sometimes the sickness is unto death or for the Glory of God; but many times we're able to rejoice in God's wondrous power.

Rain or shine, serious or circumstances, I have learned that the best thing you can do is Pray, and keep on praying.

## **May 6, 1992 MEET AT CITY HALL**

Thursday, May 7, is National "Meet at City Hall for Prayer" day. Its purpose is to allow people to gather together and Pray for our nation. It crosses denominational and racial boundaries and brings everyone to an awareness of the need of prayer in today's society.

I think everyone is aware of the public's anger over government incompetence; as well as their apathy toward voting for today's candidates. Changes are vital but no one believes a person or party is able to bring these changes.

As Christians, we believe that the "Powers that be are ordained of God" (Rom 13:1). We believe that Prayer does, in fact, change things- in our nation, in our state, in our communities, and in our families. By meeting together at City Hall for a time of Prayer, we show public officials, and the general public, that the problems of today's society do indeed have answers if we call on the right source.

Prayer brings God's wisdom to man's Problems. Prayer brings God's stability to a society that's building on shifting sands. And, maybe as important as anything, Prayer brings man to an awareness of his sin; which brings real revival to our land.

We are faced with a choice. We can quarrel and complain about society's problems over coffee in local restaurants or we can seek God's face and find real answers. The choice is yours. I hope you will chose to meet me at City Hall and join in prayer for our nation.

## **May 13, 1992 WRAPPERS**

One of the ladies in our Church is extremely gifted in teaching Object lessons. Twice a month she teaches the Children a lesson at the beginning of our Nine O'clock service (These lessons seem to teach the adults as much as the Children). At the end of the lesson she always gives the children a sweet treat to encourage them (That's when all my adults want to become Children!).

Recently she used this sweet treat as the basis of her lesson. She held up a candy bar and asked the Children if they wanted it. Of course, they all did so she picked a child and told him to go ahead and open the candy bar. When he did he found it was only a wrapper; the candy bar had been removed.

The lesson was simple. Sometimes things have pretty wrappers but when you get pass the wrapper you find they don't have any substance.

It reminds me a little of a gag gift I once received. It started out as a very large box but ended up as a very small gift by the time I had opened all the boxes that were placed inside each other.

Society today seems almost in a frenzy as it desperately tears open wrapper after wrapper and finds the pretty paper contains nothing but husk. Instead of learning a lesson, they keep desperately looking for more wrappers in the hope that somewhere along the line one of them will contain something.

If you are spending all your time and energy ripping open empty wrappers let me point you to the source of Abundant Life- Christ. He doesn't have a fancy wrapper but inside you will find real substance in this Savior.

## May 20, 1992 IDENTIFICATION

One of the local papers recently asked me to come by and identify a minister in a picture they had taken. It was easy to do because I knew the minister very well. I immediately thought about the fact that I'm glad God knows me very well, also, so he can identify me as one of His own. That brings peace and confidence to my heart.

It started me thinking, however, about how God identifies people. That's a very important subject. I certainly wouldn't want God to confuse me with someone else; especially if they aren't a Christian!

First, we know that "the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart." (1 Sam 16:7). This means that God is not confused by a "pretty package".

There was a time during World War Two when Germans dressed as American Military Police and caused chaos in the American lines. God is not fooled, however, by people who pretend to be what they aren't.

Another method God uses to identify People is the presence of the Holy Spirit in their life. "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom 8:9). This abiding Holy Spirit produces the Fruit of the Spirit instead of the works of the flesh and quickly enables God to recognize the person who abides in Him.

When it come time for God to identify those people who are going to Heaven, will He welcome you as a son or order you to "depart from me for I never knew you"?

## May 27, 1992 TIRED IN THE TASK

The Bible tells us to "Be not Weary" (Gal 6:9) in the work of God. That sounds easier than it really is. That's because most people's weariness is not from over work for the Lord. Most people spend much more time and effort working in Little League, Social Events, and Recreation than they do in actual work for the Lord.

The reason most people get tired in the task is because of the mental tiredness that comes from discouragement. They don't see the results they anticipated so they want to quit or complain about how over worked they are.

That's when they "humbly" decide to let someone else try since I'm such a failure; or else start calling for some of the new people in the Church to take their place so the new people can get experience.

If you are one of this "tired in the task" group let me encourage you to keep on keeping on. God looks at your faithfulness as well as your fruit. He expects you to continue faithfully doing your job and trust Him to judge the effort as well as the effect.

Reward day is coming someday soon. Don't be a drop out. The crown you'll receive will be worth all the "crosses" you've carried. Then your moans of discouragement will turn to shouts of joy and your weary mind will be replaced with the wonders of God's eternal bliss.

## **June 3, 1992 LISTENING TO GOD**

One of the most intriguing passages of scripture to me is Jeremiah chapter forty two and forty three. Israel has been destroyed by the Babylonian army. The few people that are left in the land to keep it from becoming a wilderness are faced with a tremendous choice; stay in the land and trust in God's protection or run away to the comforts and ease of Egypt.

The decision is made to ask Jeremiah the Prophet for advice. Jeremiah is hesitant because he doesn't believe the people will listen to what God says. The people assure him that they will abide by God's decision.

After a time of prayer and seeking God's direction, Jeremiah tells the people that God wants them to remain in Jerusalem and trust Him.

Immediately the leaders of the people rebel and tell everyone that Jeremiah has been hired by their enemies in order to destroy them. Everyone packs up and heads for the good life in Egypt (Where they are killed in the very battle they sought to avoid).

The lesson is simple. God doesn't always tell you what you want to hear.

We live in a day when it's possible to find churches and preachers that tell you the love of God allows you to "feel good" about almost any sin you commit. If I were you I'd find out what God really says. Don't let your wants override the direction of God's word. Like these people, you will find that's a fatal mistake.

## **June 10, 1992 ANTICHRIST IS COMING**

The Clock is ticking. Each day, each hour, each minute draws us closer to the end of this present world.

Governments are collapsing. All over the world people are demanding change. Whether it's the communist government of the Soviet Union or the Capitalist government of the United States, People want a change in leadership. And they are even willing to accept a virtual dictatorship if that will ensure peace and prosperity.

There is also a restless movement of People all over the world. Some are trying to escape from war, some are fleeing famine, and many are desperately searching to fill the empty void in their life. It seems that everyone wants a slice of the "Good Life Pie" but no one is willing to put in the work necessary in order to make the pies. People want "Big Brother" to feed, clothe, and pamper them but, at the same time, they want complete freedom from taxes and responsibility.

The "Good News" for all these people is this. A man is coming that will be just what you are looking for. He will unite the world governments, bring peace to the world, and set up a system that will give everyone access to the "pie".

The Church calls him "Antichrist" but he'll have another name. A name so popular until people will have it engraved in their hands and forehead in order to buy or sell.

He's coming. So get ready for the Antichrist if you aren't ready for the Rapture.

## **June 17, 1992 CHURCH CLOTHING**

I know that the Bible says we are not to judge people by the fashion of their clothes. I agree whole heartedly.

The fact that some people wear certain fads and fashions while others are only able to afford clean hand-me-downs should never influence their welcome in Church.

I do think it's high time, however, for Churches to proclaim loud and long the need of modest apparel. The cost of the clothing and the design of the dress are not my concern. The attitude you display toward the house of God by the clothes you wear is a real item of concern, however.

I believe that people who wear highly suggestive clothing or recreational attire to Church have a misconception about the honor and respect due God. If you were invited to visit the President of the United States you would show more respect in your dress. I simply believe God's house is more important than the White House, or anywhere else, for that matter.

The Cost of your clothing is of little concern to me. The modesty of your clothing is something that does worry me. Do you attend Church to display your body or to worship God?

## **June 24, 1992 OBTAINING GOD'S POWER**

When Elijah was translated to Heaven, Elisha asked that he receive a double portion of his spirit. He did and the scriptures record over twice as many miracles for Elisha as for Elijah. We all should want to have this "Double Portion" of the Spirit in order to accomplish more for God.

I find THREE GUIDELINES from Elisha that tell me how to obtain and keep God's Power.

I. STAY CLOSE TO GODLY PEOPLE- Elijah said Elisha would get a double portion if he saw Elijah translated. In order for that to happen Elisha had to stay close to Elijah.

In the same way, I have seen that the people who are faithful in Church attendance and work for God are most often the people who have power from God. Staying close to the fire seems to get the fire burning in you also.

II. WATCH THINGS THAT INFLUENCE YOU- When Elisha needed a special prophecy from God he called for Music and as the music played he received a message from God.

The world is trying to influence you to think wrong and do wrong. A powerful Christian is one who screens the things that influence his life- Music, TV, Recreation, etc.

III. SPEND TIME ALONE WITH GOD- The Bible says that "They that wait upon the Lord will renew their strength." You may think you don't have time to wait but the strength you receive while you wait will enable you to accomplish much more than you could have if you would have pushed ahead on your own.

God has the Power. Will you be the person He can work through?

## **July 1, 1992 AMERICA'S BLESSING**

God is very straight forward in His dealings with a nation- Jer 18:7-10 "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.

And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them."

I think it can best be summarized in the words of the Frenchman who toured America looking for the reason for its greatness. He said that it all boiled down to the fact that "America is great as long as America is good!".

For years now, America has been losing its greatness as it wandered away from God. Moral Laws and Godly Principles have been replaced by Pleasure seeking and Profit motives. Now we stand on the brink of economic and governmental collapse.

There is still hope, but it rest in people like you repenting of sin and returning to God. God still wants to bless America. He would rather give His wealth than His wrath. But He cannot, and He will not, bless sin.

America, come back to God; a person at a time!

## **July 8, 1992 HANDLING HUSK**

While visiting someone recently, I found they had some corn they wanted to give away. It was a hot July Afternoon and I had on my tie but I went into the field and picked several bags to carry home.

We had Church service that night so I had to wait until the next morning to begin preparing it. I got blisters on my hands from cutting the ends off the corn, a mesh of shucks on the carport floor, and a lot of work getting the silk out of the corn.

Finally, it was ready to cut off the cob and cook. When we finally got it ready for the freezer and saw the few pitiful bags that we had gotten, I felt like crying. I put in a lot of sweat and work to get that corn and most of it turned out to be husk and cobs. It will seem worth it in December when we open a bag and have fresh corn for dinner but right now it makes you wonder.

There is a lesson for Christian workers here. Many times I put in a lot of sweat and work to win a person to Christ or develop them as Christians. The results sometimes seem very small compared to the amount of effort I put forth. Sometimes it seems you see more husk than Holiness. Just remember, the husk will be burned one day and the fruit that remains will be worth all the effort you put forth. Even on hot July days.



## July 15, 1992 DUSTY DAYS

The Children in our neighborhood have developed a "motorcycle trail" in an empty lot beside the parsonage. They spend hours riding round and round on this trail (My Generation had to work when we were growing up. Today's generation looks only for ways to be entertained. There must be a lesson in there somewhere).

As the days have become hotter the ground has become drier. Now as they ride around they make huge clouds of dust. This dust floats through the air, covering everything in the area; including my car!

This has brought about several changes in my life style. I used to open the window in my office sometimes to allow fresh air to come in. I also used to leave the windows in my car down sometimes. These things are not a good idea anymore.

We live in a world in which we must increasingly contend with clouds of spiritual dust. A world that worships at the altar of entertainment is only interested in the fun they have, not the dust they raise.

Christians must continually be on guard lest we become careless and the clouds of "dust" bring dirt into our life. If we allow this dust to coat our heart, we become lukewarm to God, indifferent to the dangers of sin, and uncaring about the needs of people. And, eventually, we begin to think dust is normal instead of dirty.

"Pledge" your faith to God today and ask him to wipe all the dust out of your life. Then make the changes in your life style that will keep the dust from building up in your life again. After all, you wouldn't want Jesus to come and find dust all over your furniture.

## July 22, 1992 PRECARIOUS

My wife and I were on the way to Florence when I first noticed something. A big truck pulled up beside a pick up in front of us and tried to signal him. Nothing seemed to work and eventually the big truck pulled away. Then another car pulled up beside the pickup and tried to get his attention. Again, the driver ignored them.

By this time, my wife and I were close enough to the truck to see what the commotion was all about. Evidently, the driver of the pickup had been fishing because a tackle box was sitting very precariously on the rear bumper of the pickup. We pulled along side and tried to get his attention also. He just kept ignoring us.

Finally, he began to realize something was wrong and pulled his truck off the road. The last I saw of him he was walking to the rear of his truck. I hope he counted his blessings. If that tackle box would have fallen in front of an oncoming car it could have caused a major disaster.

Many people are headed down life's highway with their soul in the same precarious position. Any bump or sway could send them plunging into a Christless eternity. Person after person have tried to warn them of the coming disaster. Sadly, they ignore the warnings and think the people delivering them are silly or crazy. I just hope they realize how precarious their situation is before it's too late.

## July 29, 1992 THINGS THAT MATTER

If you knew for certain that you would die at 9:45pm tomorrow, what would really matter in your life?

The Apostle Paul was faced with a situation like this. He didn't know the exact time yet but he knew his days were numbered. As he writes his last letter to his son in the ministry, Timothy, he gives us 3 Principles that matter when death is knocking at your door.

I. A COURAGEOUS LIFE- "I have fought a good fight". Paul was satisfied with his actions during the battles of life. He had stood for God in spite of the opposition of family, friends, and foes. Now he could look back and rejoice in the way he had lived his life. Can you??

II. A COMPLETED TASK- "I have completed my course". Paul hadn't done everything there was to do but he had done everything God told HIM to do. Someone once said, "God buries his workers but His work goes on". Paul wasn't building his kingdom but God's kingdom; and he was satisfied to stop when God said enough. Is God your goal, or is God only a means to help you obtain what you want from life?

III. A CONFIDENT TRUST- "Now there is laid up a crown of righteousness for me". Paul had trusted God with his life and now he looked forward to standing before him at his death. His motto had been, "To live is Christ and to die is gain". He knew that the God who carried him in life would crown him in death. Do you?

Can you Confidently face God about the things that matter? There is still time to changes, but who knows when YOUR course will be completed.

## August 5, 1992 FIRE ANTS

Like most of you, I have a problem with Fire Ants. They seem determined to build a mound around the steps of the Church and the Fellowship Building.

Sometimes I will spray during the week but when I go to Church on Sunday Morning I will find them busily building their mound. And of course, as soon as church is over, every kid in the congregation will believe it's their divine appointment to stir that mound up. The ants will come pouring out and the ladies standing around talking in those fashionable shoes that are nothing but straps will get the message in a hurry that it's time to head for home (I wonder if the husbands goad the kids into stirring those mounds so they can get some dinner!?).

I was listening to an exterminator recently. He said most people were lazy. They want to pay \$10 for something you can pour on top of the mound one time and the ants will disappear forever (Amen). He said the only way to deal with Fire Ants was to determine to consistently do battle with them.

As much as I hate to admit it, Satan is a lot like those Fire Ants. He's determined to get as close to the Church as we will let him; and then do as much harm to Church people as possible. I'd like to "spray" him one time and forget about him. I've learned, however, that the only way to defeat him is to be determined and consistent in your Christian life.

Don't let Satan build a home around your door steps. If he does, you will find your children stirring up his nest and your family receiving his stings.

## **August 12, 1992      BROKEN LIGHTS**

Maybe he had backed into a pole. Maybe some mischievous child had thrown a rock and broken it. Maybe he had driven his tractor too far up on the trailer and that broke it.

However it happened, the man in front of me at the stop light had a broken cover on the brake light of his truck. Now when he put on his brakes you saw a clear light instead of the normal red of a brake light.

The light was still there, and it was clearer than ever. Only now, it was white instead of red and you had to pay close attention or you would forget that it meant "Danger, I'm stopping".

That's something to remember when we're letting our light shine for the Lord. We should never hide our light under a bushel (so busy until we fail to witness) or under a bed (so lazy until we fail to witness) but we should also be aware that the pure brightness of our light can blind as well as bless (Some believe Paul's blinding vision of the Lord was the reason for his eye problems).

Keep the cover of your "humanness" on your light as you approach sinners. Let them see your Love as well as your Light. Otherwise, they may be so blinded by the light until they ignore the danger you're trying to warn them about.

One day soon our garments will be light and we won't need to flash the red warning light for people. Until then, don't become so rigidly righteous until your light confuses people instead of pointing them in the right direction.

## **August 19, 1992      POINTS BUT NO PRIZE**

My nephew recently bought an arcade game for his computer. Since I know a little about computers, he wanted me to load it on his machine and show him how it worked.

I loaded it on the computer and figured out how to make the little man jump and run. All sorts of things were hanging from the sky and every time you jumped and touched one of them you would get points. I ran up a fairly impressive score before I quit and was happy with my accomplishments.

When I turned to my nephew he had a look of dismay on his face. Instead of responding with joy, he explained, "Uncle Mike, You didn't rescue a single person!".

I thought the objective of the game was to gather points. Instead, I found that you win by rescuing a certain number of people.

Does that sound familiar?? A lot of Christians seem to think the goal of Christianity is to accumulate points by being good. They get so busy being good until they ignore the people all around them that need to be rescued. Then they go to Church and compare scores instead of weeping over the needs of these lost souls.

How sad it's going to be when they face Jesus and He proclaims to them, "I didn't die for Points, I died for People. Where are the People?"

## August 26, 1992 ACCIDENTAL TESTIMONIES

A Bible College student had a job as a construction worker. He always carried a little New Testament to read during lunch. One day, in all his activities, he lost his Bible.

Several months later, after he returned to school, he received a letter from someone who had found the Bible, read it, and accepted Christ as Savior. They had seen his name and address inside the front cover and wanted him to know how God worked.

Last year I received a wonderful phone call from a young man I had never met. He told me about searching through a trash can one day in another state to find something to sell to support his drug habit. Somehow, one of the study books on Revelation that I give away had gotten into that trash can. He read the book, repented of his sins, accepted Christ as Savior, and was now attending Bible College to become a Preacher.

A fellow Pastor recently purchased a new Bible. While visiting someone in the hospital he forgot and left the Bible in the waiting room. He called back and asked the husband of the person he was visiting to get the Bible and keep it for him.

During that time of sickness and stress, God used that Bible to speak to that person; so much so, until the Pastor ended up giving the Bible to the Husband.

If God can work this well in "accidents", what could He do if you sowed the seed of the word of God on purpose??

## September 2, 1992 THINGS GOD DIDN'T THINK OF

Sometimes, as you read through the Bible, you come across a verse that stand out with a comforting thought or a different perspective. Some verses, however, make you stop in amazement.

One of those amazing verses is Jeremiah 32:35- "And they built the high places of Baal, which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire unto Molech; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin.

How mind boggling. To think that man could do something that was so bad until God said He had never even considered it!

What was this sin that was so bad until it never entered God's mind? What would cause even God to shake His head in amazement?

Literally, the verse means that people had gotten so bad until they were willing to kill their Children in order to worship at the idol of lustful indulgence. In plain English, they wanted to be able to sleep together and then just kill the consequences.

Does that sound familiar? Aren't we living in a day in which multitudes of people think they should be able to indulge in any pleasure and then just dispose of the problem (forgetting it's a person!).

Something you need to keep in mind. Immediately after God recognized this sin that He had never considered; He tells about the judgment that He would command. And the punishment fit the sin; God removed this people from His mind and allowed horrible destruction to come on them.

## September 9, 1992 SEEING PAST SIGNS

I was trying to exit a road recently but I had a great deal of difficulty. Someone had put up a sign and it was blocking my view of oncoming cars. The sign asked me to vote for a certain politician. Putting his sign where it blocked my vision was not the way to get my vote!

Politicians are almost as easy to pick on as preachers. It would be easy to write an article about how politicians keep blocking the public's view of oncoming dangers in order to get elected. It would be easy to tell about how they make problems instead of solve problems because they're more interested in themselves than in the welfare of the country. But that wouldn't change the Politician or remove the sign.

All of us face similar situations. We see a problem area in someone else's life. It's aggravating to us so we tell the world how sorry the person is who has the problem. That ends up harming the person and allowing the "sign" to remain in place.

Consider before you condemn. There may be circumstances that you don't know about (In this case the Politician's workers had put the sign up in spite of his instructions to the contrary).

Consider also what you will accomplish. Will condemning the person help the situation? Your tongue could turn an honest mistake into a life crippling incident.

Sometimes you just have to look past the signs until a way can be worked out to remove them. Just keep in mind that you're working to remove signs, not destroy people.

## September 16, 1992 CONCERNING CHRISTIANS

Sometimes I wonder who Christians think they are. They act as if they know what is best for everyone; and some of them even act as if they have a direct pipeline to God! And they think this gives them the right to meddle in the affairs of other people.

All a man wants to do is have a little "fun" with another woman and these Christians start talking about destroying morals, wrecking families, and spreading disease.

Why can't they mind their own business and let a person do what they want to do!

Don't these people know that you're supposed to be guided by the rules of Government instead of the religion of God?

Don't they know that educating people about sex is more important than evangelizing people about salvation? That teaching kids the proper use of condoms is more important than teaching them Christian principles to live by?

Don't they know that protecting the environment is more important than preparing for eternity? That an endangered lizard in Malaysia is more important than the morals of a man in South Carolina?

Haven't they heard that freedom means the ability to do anything I want without concern for the consequences?

I guess the good news is that these Christians hope to be "raptured" out of this world soon to meet Christ. Then maybe people can kill, maim, and destroy without having to listen to warnings about the wrath to come. Won't this be a wonderful world then!

## September 23, 1992      SHOWERS

Boy, did that shower feel good! I had just finished changing the oil in my cars and I was hot, sweaty, and dirty. I looked forward to washing all that oil and grim off and becoming presentable again.

As I showered I thought back to Hurricane Hugo and remembered how much that first hot shower had meant then. For several days the only "bath" I had was a dip in the cold polluted waters of Lynches River. When we finally got water and electricity again it made everyone realize just how nice a hot shower really was.

That's a little bit like I feel about my Salvation. I was covered with the grim and dirt of sin and it make me feel very uncomfortable. Not only was I dirty, but I made everything dirty I came in contact with. I used the excuse that everyone else was dirty and smelly also but that didn't bring any comfort to my situation.

Then one day I heard that God was willing to wash anyone who would come to Him by faith. What a glorious day! He washed me completely clean in the blood of His Son, put a robe of righteousness on my shoulders, and invited me to sit at His dinner table. It's simply great!

If you feel dirty and defiled today then come to Christ. His "shower" will wash away your past, refresh your soul, and give you a brand new outlook on life. And it sure feels good to face the world clean from the inside out.

## September 30, 1992      BOLTING DOWN BEER

I drove up behind a van recently at a Red Light. The spare tire for the van was lying on top of the van. On the back door of the van, in hand printed letters, was a sign "Spare tire bolted to roof of van".

The van had been converted to a work area with shelves all along the walls. This meant the owner had to find another place to stash his spare tire. I imagine he had to put the sign on the back of the van because so many people would try to stop him and tell him he had forgotten to put his tire back in the van.

I believe this man had the right to convert his van into a workable vehicle. I also believe he has the RESPONSIBILITY to bolt down his spare tire if he is going to put it on top of his van. I certainly wouldn't want to drive up behind him at 55 miles per hour with a loose tire on top of his van!

In the same way, I applaud the leaders of Lake City who have "bolted down" the use of beer at the Beach Blast. This "spare tire" was a disaster waiting to happen and I'm glad they had the courage and sense to bolt it down before it caused a catastrophe.

It's good to see some people realize that the right to have a spare tire does not do away with the responsibility to keep that tire from falling on other people and wrecking their lives. Thanks to those responsible. I applaud and pray for you.

## **October 7, 1992      SECOND HAND SMOKE**

I don't smoke but I know many people who do. I'm not going to debate the merits of such a nasty habit. I just wish our farmers could get paid enough to grow crops to feed a starving world until they would no longer feel the need of raising a crop whose main purpose is to be burned up.

I have noticed an interesting phenomenon, however. Every time I go to the hospital to visit the sick, I am "greeted" by a crowd of people standing outside the front door smoking. They're standing in the cold, rain, or heat, because they have been excluded from the hospital by the rules regulating smokers. I'm beginning to sympathize with them more and more.

More and more it appears the world is afraid it is going to be infected with the "second hand smoke" of Christianity. It's all right to curse, sing songs about killing policemen, or promote "safe" sex with anyone you prefer. But somehow, we're afraid that if we allow our Children to pray or read the Bible in school they'll become infected with religion. It's all right for TV shows to promote rebellion against parents and adulterous affairs but let a Christian call for moral standards and cries of censorship ring from the rafters.

It's sad that so many are trying to put Christians outside the building. They're not trying to infect you with second hand smoke; they're just trying to keep you away from the fire.

## **October 14, 1992      ROLLING STOP**

The police in a small town were having problems with people who came to a "rolling stop" at stop signs. They would ease up to the sign, take a hasty look both ways, and then keep on going.

They caught one of the culprits one day and were writing him a ticket. He loudly complained the whole time that the stop he made was good enough and that they shouldn't give him a ticket.

One of the officers finally had enough so he dragged the man from his car and began hitting him with his night stick. "Tell me," he said, "if you would like me to keep rolling or come to a complete stop!"

I don't want to impeach God's character but I wonder if He doesn't have to resort to the same means sometimes to get us to understand His laws. It seems we never have time to come to a complete stop when it's time to read our Bible and have devotions. It's always has to be wedged into a hasty Five minutes before work or a sleepy Five minutes at bed time. But in a hospital room or during a family crisis we somehow find a way to come to a complete stop and really pray.

Like the Priest and Levite, we don't have time to come to a stop and be good Samaritans. But if God gets our attention with a Hugo we find a lot more time than we imagined. Or we can't find time for our Children; until we're forced to stop in order to raise bail money to get them out of jail.

A stop sign doesn't mean "keep rolling". Learn that lesson so God won't have to teach it to you.



## October 21, 1992 CURE FOR THE BLUES

Elijah, the prophet of God, had just won a tremendous victory as God's fire came down and the people returned to worship of God. Shortly after this triumph, however, Jezebel threatened him and he ran for his life into the desert. There he sat under a juniper tree and cried out his discouragement and defeat. He had a genuine hard boiled case of the blues.

God gave him a four-fold prescription for a cure for his blues that is needed by many people today.

First, God called him to rest and refreshment. God did not preach to him until he had spend several days resting and recharging his body. Depression is a NATURAL result of exhaustion. It's the body's way of telling us we need rest. Many times the blues start in an exhausted body.

Second, God brought him to Reflection by asking him the question, "What are you doing here, Elijah?". You must identify your problem before you can solve it. Many times, in our haste, we name the fruit of the problem instead of the root. Then, because we deal with the wrong part of the problem, we fail. That brings more defeat; and more blues. We need some real reflection to recognize the real problem.

Third, God Revealed Himself again. He came to Elijah in a still small voice and confirmed his authority and love. Normally the blues come when we allow a cloud to come between us and God. Getting your eyes back on God will break up the clouds.

Finally, God renewed his task. God rekindled his vision and recommissioned his work. What he was doing was important so he needed to keep on working for God; trusting in God to bless the work.

Don't get bogged down in the blues. Rest, Reflect, get another vision of God and your work. That will turn your Blues into a Blessing.

## October 28, 1992 APPEARANCES

I am not afraid of Ghost because my body is the temple of the Holy Ghost. I don't fear witches because I serve a savior who has greater power than all the witches in the world. Why then, you ask, does our Church change Halloween to Family Fund Day and discourage the wearing of costumes that depict witches, demons, and ghosts?

The answer is simple. I don't fear their power but I don't think the church should engage in activities that promote them. The church tries to develop positive caring role models and witches and ghosts certainly don't fit that category. We also realize that, in the Spirit world, these are the direct enemies of the God we love and serve.

If my wife came into my office and I had pictures of scantily clad women posted on my walls, she would be unhappy (Boy that is an understatement!). It would not matter that I told her she was my true love. She would want me to take down the pictures. And think what YOU would think if you came to my office for spiritual help and found my walls adorned like that.

Appearances do matter. It's certainly not wrong to have fun but it is wrong to call giving the appearance of evil, fun. So rejoice that God's changeless clock is changing our world from Fall into Winter. Get together with family and friends and bob for apples and play some good games. Just don't appear to be on the wrong side by promoting activities or costumes that glorify the wrong. After all, if you look like a duck, walk like a duck, and talk like a duck; I just believe there is some duck in you!

## **November 4, 1992 UNDER GARMENTS**

I was waiting for a carry out order at a local restaurant recently when a lady came in wearing white pants. Just before she got to the counter where you place your order she dropped her keys. When she bent over to pick them up, the color and cut of her under garments were immediately obvious.

As soon as I saw this scene, I knew this was good material for an article. Immediately, I began to make notes in my mind about how to use this incident to illustrate the embarrassment some people will feel when the hidden part of them is exposed.

Suddenly, it dawned on me that I was still staring at the back side of this strange lady. Immediately, I looked around to see if anyone saw what I was doing. Of course, everyone who wasn't looking at the lady was looking at me!

How embarrassing! I knew that most of these people probably thought I was thinking adulterous thoughts instead of article thoughts. And, of course, there was nothing I could say or do to make them think otherwise. All you can do in a case like this is "Rejoice that your good is evil spoken (or thought) of."

You may be faced with an embarrassing situation like this also. It may not be under garments but it will be a situation that people will misunderstand your actions. In cases like that, it is always good to be someone who practices the admonition of I Peter 2:12 "Live so honest among unbelievers that when they speak against you as an evildoer, they may be forced to instead glorify God because of the consistently good life you live."

## **November 11, 1992 KEEP A STRAIGHT LINE**

We had just finished basic training in Great Lakes, Illinois and I was headed back to South Carolina for a short leave before being shipped out for a tour of duty in Viet Nam. The father of one of the friends I had made in boot camp owned a taxi cab company in North Carolina. He had arranged to purchase a new cab from a Chicago dealer and several of us were going to drive it back to North Carolina to save on bus fare.

We left after graduation Friday and drove all night. Right at daybreak Saturday morning, we were crossing the river between Ohio and Kentucky. Everyone else was asleep except my friend and I as we started across the bridge. Patches of fog hung over the river and gently encased the bridge.

Suddenly, a truck came barreling out of the fog and it was on our side of the road! I don't know if the driver was asleep or drunk but he was headed straight for us and we couldn't do a thing.

At the very last moment, the truck swerved away from us, bounced off the curbing on the other side of the road and continued on it's way. My friend and I just looked at each other in stunned silence; knowing we had escaped death my inches. If my friend would have jerked the wheel or swerved to avoid the truck we would have crashed. Only the fact that he kept a straight line preserved us.

Life throws many things your way. It's easy to panic and go all to pieces. The best advice I can give you is to keep a straight line. Keep your eyes on God and trust in His care. He sees the "trucks" coming your way long before you do. Just keep on the straight path with God. He will take care of everything.

## **November 18, 1992**      **LISTEN TO GOD**

I used to pastor a church outside of Tupelo, Mississippi. My wife and I had not seen the people in several years so we decided to visit them. We wanted to renew old friendships and share how God was continuing to bless our Outreach Ministry.

It's a little over 600 miles from Lake City to Tupelo so we normally break the trip into halves by stopping for gas in Atlanta. This time, however, when we had driven less than 75 miles, God spoke to my heart and told me to stop for a while. We had promised the people in Mississippi that we would be there by a certain time but the prompting from God was so strong until I felt I shouldn't question it.

We stopped at the next exit, drank a cup of coffee, and stretched our legs. When we got back on the interstate and had driven only 2 or 3 miles, we came to a major wreck with cars and big trucks scattered all over the highway. I'm convinced that if we would have continued our journey we would have been in the midst of that wreck.

Over and over I have listened to God and been at the right place at the right time to meet a certain person by "accident". This time, listening to God, helped keep me from being involved in an accident.

In a world that constantly blares its message at us from Radio and TV. In a world that demands we listen to its advertising claims. In a world like this, we need to learn to listen for the Master's voice. He never speaks unnecessarily. We must learn to listen for His voice and obey His instructions. It's dangerous to do otherwise.

## **November 25, 1992**      **IN PRAISE OF PEOPLE**

Several ladies from our Church recently attended a Prayer/Praise rally in another town. Over and over pastor's wives would stand and tell about how difficult things were or about some problem in the church. Finally, a lady stood up and said, "From what I've heard today, I'm glad I'm not a Pastor's wife!"

My wife, Bless her heart, then stood and said, "I'm glad I am a Pastor's Wife. The Lord has been good to us."

She's right. I pastor some of the best people in the whole world. They aren't perfect yet (or I wouldn't have anything to preach about) but they are great people who are a joy to lead.

I regularly volunteer them for the duties that need to be done in any Church and they do the job willingly and well. Most of our regular attenders live consistent Christian lives and I would rather have them pray for me than anyone I know.

These wonderful members follow my lead about the direction our Church is going and willingly accept any change that can be proven to be beneficial. They respect the long hours I put in and don't waste my time with petty problems (That are really undercover ways of seeking attention or desiring to be petted). When they come to me about something we know it's important and it's treated that way. That helps build healthy relationships, as well as respect for one another.

Thank God for my members. I enjoy living with them down here and look forward to spending eternity with them in Heaven. I love them and praise God for the privilege of being their pastor.

## **December 2, 1992 WASH AND WEIGH**

My brothers and I were doing some work at my mom's home recently. Around noon one of my sister-in-laws invited us to her home to eat some soup. When I arrived, I went into a small bathroom beside the back door in order to wash my hands.

On the floor, in front of the sink, someone had left some bathroom scales. I thought to myself, "If having to weigh before you eat doesn't curb your appetite then I don't know what will!"

As I thought about those scales, however, I began to see a good lesson for Christians. Maybe it's time Christians started weighing as well as washing. I mean by this that Christians need to go beyond asking Jesus to wash them from their sins. They also need to ask Jesus to show them areas in their life that they need to change.

It could be a few extra pounds of bitterness, hate, or envy that you picked up along life's road and now you need to lose. It could be that you have become weighted down with worry, fear, or depression and God needs to show you that this extra "weight" is harming you. Or it could be that some bad habits, harmful gossip, or loose living are giving you a bad appearance to the world and God needs to make some changes in your life style.

Next time you visit with God it might be a good idea to weigh as well as wash. After all, Christ didn't come to simply wash away your past. He also wants to make you a new creature that enjoys the abundant life.

## **December 9, 1992 MY GIFT TO YOU**

Like most people, I am much better at giving than at receiving. In fact, one of the most difficult aspects of pasturing for me to learn was to graciously accept gift from members. A widow on fixed income would slip me a few dollars after church and tell me to buy something special for my wife. My first impulse would be to refuse and tell her she needed the money more than me.

I've learned, however, that she was not giving that gift to Mike Jones. She was giving it to her Pastor as a way of honoring God's man. So, whenever anyone give me a personal gift, I treat it with respect and honor; and often with tears. That's because I know the loving sacrifice that comes with the gift.

I hope you'll accept my gift to you this Christmas season in the same spirit. I don't have the means to get each of you who read this article a gift but I would like to give something for your kind comments during the year.

I have books of past articles (Miracle Messages Volume 1,2,3) and Bible Study Books- Revelation, James, OT Survey, Nehemiah, Prayer, etc. Any, or all, of them are my free gift to anyone requesting them.

So if you would like to receive your gift from me, meager as it is, simply request it from Rev Mike Jones, P O Box 1003, Lake City, S C 29560. It will Bless me to get the opportunity to share with you.

## December 16, 1992 WHEN SOMEONE FALLS

Like many calls a Pastor receives, this one was unexpected and life shattering. A friend had been caught attempting to purchase some drugs and was now residing in the local jail. After praying thru the Tears and the pain, I began to look at Physical things I could do to help.

The Police were extremely helpful and very kind. The bond was high and very difficult to raise, but justified under the circumstances.

When my friend was finally released, I carried him to get his car. It had been impounded and towed when he was arrested. That's when I began to see how some people kick those who are down.

The towing fee was double the normal rate. They knew they had this young man in a bind and now they were trying to make a profit off his misery. They had a right, and a responsibility, to receive a just payment for their expenses. It was awful, however, to use this man's misfortune as an excuse to overcharge him.

This really made me think about how I treat those in difficulty. Do I look at them with disdain instead of mercy? Do I treat them with less respect and concern than I do other people? Do I look at their problem as a headache instead of an opportunity to help them?

Lord, Help me to see people the way you see them- You don't ignore their faults, you just help them in spite of those faults. May I be filled with the Love of Christ, who was willing to leave Heaven for a stable in Bethlehem because that was the only way sinful man could be helped. Help me to never step over, or on, someone who is down. Make me ever mindful that "There but for the grace of God, go I".

## December 23, 1992 THE GIFT

Isn't it strange that at "Jesus' Birthday" Party we're the ones that get the gifts?? Sadly, we get so busy selecting and purchasing those gifts until we fail to appreciate the original Gift from God. That's why I thought it was important that we look at 3 great things about the Gift God gave us on that first Christmas day.

First, it's a CONTINUING GIFT. Like a wedding ring that is passed down from generation to generation, so the Babe born in Bethlehem on that first Christmas has something for every generation and class of people. It's been nearly 2000 years since God sent His Son and His gift is just as needed and important today as it was then.

Second, It's a SURPRISING GIFT. I once received a plastic fruit arrangement from some friends. It was nice and we were glad to receive it but the friends told us there was a surprise in the gift. We looked and the fruit was arranged on a valuable antique corn dryer. In the same way, Jesus was born in a stable and wrapped in rags but underneath He was still God. He just became a Man so that man could come to God.

Finally, It's a GIFT TO BE ACCEPTED. How sad it would be to give someone a gift and then watch as they threw it in the dirt. That's the way God must feel as He sees so many people who desperately need the gift He gives but they're too proud or too busy to accept it.

What about YOU? Have you "opened" God's Gift yet? If you do you'll surely have a MERRY CHRISTMAS.

## December 30, 1992 TIMING

Ecclesiastes Chapter Three, Verses 1-8 is so relevant until it was made into a popular song in recent days. These verses express the fact that Time and circumstances help dictate situations.

"To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace."

The thing to remember about Ecclesiastes, however, is that it was written from Man's point of view. It expresses the hopelessness and helplessness that man feels when he tries to find satisfaction apart from God. This man sees time as a roller coaster ride full of hills and valleys. He can only hope he'll be lucky enough to receive more good than bad.

Christians also do battle with changing circumstances and shifting situations. We know, however, that we serve a changeless God with a timeless plan. That enables us to face the uncertainty of a new year with confidence and expectation. We rest in the fact that God's timing is always right on time. That gives us confidence in the Present and anticipation for the Future. Which is a wonderful way to face life, at any time of year.

## January 14, 1992    **PATHWAY PROTECTION**

While walking around the Church recently, I found a board "bridge" several neighborhood children had put across the ditch behind the Church. As soon as I saw it, I recognized a serious problem. On the opposite side of the ditch an old strand of barbed wire was stretched between two trees.

The children would duck under it as they used the board to cross the ditch. I could almost see one of them getting excited, however, forgetting the wire was there, and receiving serious injury when he ran into it. I immediately got my wire cutters and cut the wire out of the way.

We have just begun a new year. As we cross the "bridge" leading into this new year, we need to recognize that there are dangers awaiting us also.

Temptation is not normally tempting but family problems, financial difficulties, or pressure from friends causes you to yield and the results can be disastrous.

You begin the new year with determination to put meaning and method into your life but in the rush of living you don't have time or energy to do anything but survive. Your intentions were good but you forgot the dangers.

The Good News is that you can face the New Year with faith instead of fear. Jesus knows every obstacle you will face in the coming year and He provides protection from each danger. Listen to His voice, heed His warnings, and follow His directions. If you do, when we reach the end of 1992, you will look back with joy and satisfaction instead of pain and sorrow.

## January 21, 1992    **PROVIDENCE!**

I've told you about how great it is to let God direct your life. Now let me give you a real life example.

I was working in my office the other day when one of the ladies in the Church called. Her husband was off on a trip and she and her youngest child were sick with a stomach virus. She called to ask if I could drive her oldest boy to the grocery store to get some soup and crackers. I was busy at the time but glad I could stop and help her.

As her boy and I were going to the grocery store, I began to hear a strange noise coming from my car. After delivering the groceries, I went back home and the noise became worst. As soon as I got home I looked under the hood of the car and saw that my alternator belt was almost broken.

I was able to go back to a part's store, get a belt, and get back to my garage. That helped because it was now night and raining.

Here is the "kicker". I was scheduled to go to Florence the next morning before daylight to be with someone in surgery. If this lady hadn't called, the belt on my car would probably have broken half way between Lake City and Florence. And I would have had to change it in the dark, in the rain, and in my suit.

When things like this happen once it's a coincidence. When it happens over and over (as it does in my life), it's God's Guidance. And I wouldn't trade it for anything in the world.



## January 28, 1992    **DIVINE WOODCUTTERS**

Many times in life we are faced with some very difficult and stressful circumstances. These circumstances will make us either Better or Bitter. The difference will be in the way we relate to them.

Paul tells how a Christian should look at his circumstances in Philippians 1:12 "But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;". The interesting thing about this is that Paul wrote it while sitting in a Roman jail awaiting execution!

The key word in the verse is "FURTHERANCE". It comes from a Greek word meaning "advance Woodcutters" and was used to describe the party that went before ancient armies to establish roads to allow the army to reach the battle field.

Paul wants us to know that the circumstances of his life were simply God's method of clearing a path for him in order to enable him to do battle for the Lord.

What a difference it will make in your attitude (and actions!) when you realize God allows difficult times in your life in order to prepare you for service for Him.

So let the woodcutters work. They're simply preparing a way for you to work and witness for the Lord. Soon they will have the road ready and you can enter into battle; and I've read the end of the book. It's a battle we win!

## February 4, 1992    **QUITE CHRISTIANS**

Our piano player's mother was sick recently and the ladies of our church decided to send her a fruit basket. As I was driving to her home to give her the basket, I was praying for the Lord to enable me to be a blessing to her. When I arrived, I gave her the basket, visited a while, had prayer, and left.

As I was driving away I was thinking, I wanted to be a Blessing to her but she turned out to be a blessing to me! The faith she displayed and the spirit she manifested caused my heart to rejoice in the Lord. I understand now why her daughter is such a fine lady.

I know a few "bad apple preachers" and a few careless Christians grab all the headline and give a bad impression to the world about Christianity. I'm convinced, however, that there are multitudes of dedicated, devoted Christians in this world. They don't get much "press" but they do lift high the banner of Christ by their consistent, concerned living.

But isn't that just like the picture of Christ that Isaiah the prophet gave- "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. Like a bruised reed he shall not break, and like the smoking flax he shall not be quenched; he shall bring forth judgment unto truth" (Isaiah 42:2-3).

Don't be discouraged, fellow Christians. Others may grab the headlines but your quite Christianity is "grabbing" people's hearts.

## **February 11, 1992 PREPARATION**

I was sitting in court recently trying to lend moral support to a friend. Naturally, it started late. Judges and lawyers evidently get some inner glee from making everyone wait for them. I say this because I've never been to a court that started on time. I think all court officials should be held in contempt of court because they don't follow the very rules they set out to enforce!

While we were waiting to begin, several clerks came in and laid out papers, pens, and other materials. I know they must have felt like they were on stage because everyone watched every move they made.

We knew some of the things they were doing; but many of their activities made no sense to those of us observing them.

That same thing is happening in world history today. Nations are collapsing and governments are changing. All of this is just the Lord arranging events in the nations of the world that will lead to His final judgment of all people and nations.

Like the clerks in court, much of what He is doing doesn't make sense to those unfamiliar with the Bible. To those of us who anxiously await His return, however, each event is another marker on the highway to Heaven.

We know that everything is simply leading to that great final Judgment. A Judgment that will start exactly on time. So you'd better make your preparations; before God finishes making His.

## **February 18, 1992 ROLL CALL**

One of my favorite songs is "When the Roll is Called Up Yonder." I like it because I'm excited about answering the Roll in Heaven (I'm also interested in seeing how God pronounces my name!). I'm excited about answering the Roll because I know my name is written in the Lamb's book of life and I will answer to receive a reward instead of a rejection.

While in court recently, I listened to the Solicitor call the roll of all the cases there were to be tried. Many people were absent and warrants were issued so they would be forced to be there when their case came up. A few of the people had died, several were already in jail, and some sent in excuses for sicknesses.

As each person was called they had to respond by saying either "Guilty" or "Not Guilty". That led to one of the most interesting moments in the Roll Call. When the Solicitor called one person's name he responded by saying, "Guilty". The Solicitor then looked closer at the roll and said that he was sorry but that case was thrown out by the grand jury. Again the man answered, "But I'm guilty." The Solicitor said he was sorry but he couldn't try him now.

I too was Guilty. But Jesus took by penalty and satisfied the law's demands. Because of that, My case was thrown out (or rather "Under the Blood"). Now I don't fear Roll Call; I look forward to it.

## **February 25, 1992 UPSIDE DOWN SPOONS**

I did not have any sisters so my three brothers and I had to take turns washing dishes. I don't like washing dishes.

When I married a wife I gave up washing dishes except in an emergency or sickness. My wife doesn't try to preach for me and I don't try to wash dishes for her!

After we were married for a few years, I decided to "butter" her up by washing the dishes for her one afternoon while she was visiting her mother. Instead of telling me how nice I was, however, the first thing she did was tell me the spoons were lying in the drain the wrong way. So much for butter!

I hated to admit it but she was right. I had rinsed the spoons off and put them in the drain face up. That caused the rinse water to collect in the bottom of the spoon. I should have turned them upside down so all the water would drain from them.

That's a problem people sometimes have also. They come to God for cleansing but they don't turn over after they're clean and sin collects in their life again. They need to learn that God expects us to turn our back on sin when we turn our face toward Him.

If sin is continually defeating you today, maybe you're facing the wrong way. Turn over and let the sin drain out of your life.

## **March 10, 1992 CAUGHT IN THE ACT**

A Preacher friend was heading home late one Sunday night from a speaking engagement. He found a gospel music station and joined in the singing as he traveled. As he sang, however, his foot began to keep time to the music. He didn't realize how fast the song was; or how fast he was going, until the blue light began flashing in the mirror!

He pulled over and waited on the highway patrolman to come to his car. When the patrolman asked about why he was going so fast he said he had been listening to some music and hadn't realized he was speeding. The patrolman then asked to hear the music so my friend turned the radio back up.

The patrolman walked around to the other side of the car, got in, and for the next fifteen minutes the preacher and patrolman listened to Gospel music together. Finally, the patrolman said he had to get back to work. As he was leaving he told the preacher it would be better to listen to the music with his ears and not with his feet!

The Bible says to "Be ready. For in such an hour as you think not the Son of God will come". If He came to your car, or your house, today would He enjoy what you're doing; or write you a ticket!

## **March 17, 1992      APPLICATIONS**

The sign at a local restaurant immediately caught my attention. The Top line said, "Taking Applications." The Bottom line read, "Jesus is Lord."

I can relate to that. I "take applications" every week from anyone who wants to make Jesus Lord of their life. There are a lot of other similarities between these applications.

If you are going to apply, you must first see your need. In the restaurant's case, it's the need for work so you can earn a living. In my case, it's the realization that you need help in this life and hope for the next one.

People who apply must stop what they're doing, come to the Restaurant, ask for an application, and take the time to fill it out. I, too, try to get people to stop what they're doing (Sinning), come to the altar and ask God for an "application", and give it back to God by Faith.

There is one major difference between these applications. If you apply at the Restaurant, you might not get hired. If you apply at the altar, however, God says, "whosoever will may come". That's why it's such a shame that so many people who need an application aren't willing to stop long enough to ask for it.

Let me invite you to church this week. We have plenty of "applications" and you will find that asking Jesus to be your Savior and Lord is the best decision you'll ever make.

## **March 24, 1992      ENABLEMENT**

I wouldn't be able if God didn't enable me. Over and over in Paul's writings that truth comes out. Paul continually stressed his dependence on God's power and provision to enable him to accomplish his work for God.

That has been a sustaining truth in my life also. Every year I distribute thousands of dollars' worth of books and tapes to the sick and the shut-in, to jails and hospitals, to Christians and to sinners. It is all done by simple faith in God's provision. God provides the means, the money, and the open doors. I simply make sure I do what God enables me to do.

If you are a child of God, this same truth applies to you. God will enable you to be the Parent/child, husband/wife, boss/worker, you are supposed to be. You simply have to look to Him for strength. You will be able when you trust God to enable you.

Don't live in defeat. Trust God for the victory.

Miracle Messages Volume III, a collection of devotional thoughts, is now available. It is offered without cost or obligation. Get your copy today by writing or calling

## **March 31, 1992      ORANGE JUICE**

We didn't have a lot of them during the year but Dad would always buy a box at Christmas. And it seemed in my youth that those oranges were the sweetest, juiciest treat you could ask for.

I would pick one out of the box, admire it's texture and color, and then set to work. I'd mash it in my hands as hard as I could. Then I'd put it on the table and roll it back and forth, back and forth. Finally, I'd get a knife, cut a hole in the top, and watch the juice bubble to the surface.

Then I would sit back and enjoy the fruit of my labor as I sucked the juice out of that orange until it was almost as flat as a pancake. No cardboard carton in the world can yield juice that good!

If you are wondering why God is allowing pressure and problems to squeeze you today, remember the lesson of the orange. God may be preparing you to be a tremendous Blessing to someone else.

I know it's not easy, but neither was the cross. But from that cross came a fountain of sin cleansing blood that offers help and hope to all of mankind.

So take heart in the words of James, "Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God promised to those who love him."

## **April 7, 1992      GUIDELINES**

We recently paved some more parking at our Church. I'm sort of a fanatic about paved parking. I think Church is a place where people ought to feel welcome; and I believe that welcome begins when they drive up to the Church. A Church that is unwilling to provide adequate parking implies to me that they aren't really interested in people coming to be in their services.

By the way, I think the members of the Church ought to think about Visitors when they park. We have two spaces reserved at the front door of our Church for visitors. If we have a special day and expect many visitors, I ask the members to park in "out of the way" places so the visitors can easily get into the Church (Just like an employer would ask his employees to park in the far parking lot so the customers could park at the door).

After the concrete dried we had to mark off parking areas. It's amazing where and how people will park if you don't outline the parking spaces.

That's the way it is in life also. God doesn't want to tell us what we can and can't do but if He doesn't give us some guidelines to go by we "park" our lives all over the place. It's not that God doesn't trust you. He just knows it goes much better if you have some boundaries to guide you.

Get inside your parking space at Church this week. You'll find we have a place for your car; and a plan for your life.

## **April 14, 1992 WITHERED TREES**

The Missionary stood beside the tree as tears began to swell in his eyes. It had seemed such a small thing at first and now it threatened to destroy all the work he had accomplished.

One of his recent converts had decided to plant an orange tree so he would have something to share with others. The problem was that he had planted it on his neighbor's land!

Words had become wrath and now the division was deepening to include many in the Church and most in the community.

As the missionary stood beside the tree and looked at the few puny oranges growing on it he prayed for God to do whatever it took to correct the situation. Next morning the tree was dead; dried up from the roots. When the man who had planted it touched it, the tree fell to the ground.

The sore spot became a source of Revival as everyone in the village acknowledged God's power.

Several days before his death, a similar incident happened to Jesus. He looked for figs on a tree and, finding none, cursed the tree so that it withered and died.

If your life is producing no fruit, or the fruit of corruption and contention, then you'd better be warned. The same God who said, "let there be light" and there was light; also said, "Let no fruit grow on you henceforth" and the tree died.

You can rest assured that Jesus will inspect your tree. Will your fruit cause Him to rejoice or reject???

## **April 21, 1992 FALSELY ACCUSED**

My wife and I attended the wedding of one of my former members recently. The wedding was held in a beautiful chapel in a park in down town Charlotte.

When we arrived the wedding part was standing outside in the beautiful spring weather. We briefly greeted several of the family and then went to find a seat in the church.

You know how weddings are. You can't just go into the Church, you must be escorted to your seat by ushers. This had produced a line of people at the door. As I was standing in line, waiting to go in, the photographer's helper came rushing up and demanded that we get into the Church immediately.

The photographer was attempting to photograph several of the wedding party with the Church as a background. Of course, he didn't want a line of people in the photo. The helper insinuated to us that we were a bunch of non-caring idiots because we weren't inside the Church yet. A feat that was impossible without running over the people ahead of me.

Most of us have had experiences in which we were falsely accused of doing something, or failing to do something, that was beyond our ability to control. We normally feel anger or embarrassment at the injustice of the situation.

Even Jesus had to face similar accusations. He would heal a man and, instead of rejoicing over the miracle, the Pharisees would accuse him of being demon empowered!

Don't let false accusations discourage you or cause you to do wrong. Instead, always try to live so that if you are falsely accused you can have "a good conscience; that they may be ashamed who falsely accuse your good manner of life in Christ" (1 Peter 3:16)

## April 28, 1992 PRINCESS PRAYERS

My wife is the original Princess. You know the story. I learned it in Literature in school. The way to determine if someone is a Princess is to place a single pea under 20 mattresses and let the person try to sleep. The Princess will be unable to sleep because of the "discomfort".

This is especially evident in my wife's favorite chair. She gets settled in at night and makes her "nest". Legs tucked under her, wrapped in a blanket, she settles in and hates to move until bed time.

Recently her sister came to spend several days with us. Her sister has 3 small children and they always seem to want to play with the remote control for the TV. When they left we couldn't find the remote control anywhere. For several nights, when my wife wanted to change channels or lower the volume on the TV she had to get up out of her nest. Ungood, very ungood.

While praying today, I asked the Lord about it. We couldn't afford a new remote and I wanted things to be good for my wife. As I prayed the Lord showed me exactly where it was. At first I didn't want to believe it because we had already pulled all the cushions out of the couch. Knowing the Lord wouldn't lie, I looked again.

When I pulled the cushions out there was no remote to be seen. Then I re-examined the picture the Lord had shown me. Between the bottom and back of the couch there is a small area that is not evident. When you push down, however, you realize it's there. As soon as I reached into this area I found the remote.

Thank God that the King of Kings still has time to help me pet my Princess.

## May 12, 1992 THE LIGHT OF LOVE

The mind has a thousand eyes  
The heart but one,  
Thus the light of the whole life dies  
When love is done.

How sad, but true, that poem is. Love is the heart throb of any real relationship. Without Love, people exist in the same house but there is no joy and happiness. They exist like a corporation instead of for companionship; Each only looks for profits from the other partners.

What causes this light of love to dim? What cause family members to build wall of isolation instead of bridges of communication?

Part of the answer is the "thousand eyes of the mind". Many times the lights that bombard the mind end up dimming the single eye of the heart.

The models on TV are slim and sexy while our mate is plain and beginning to age. The books we read tell us how to be a "home run" parent but our kids always miss everything we pitch to them. Long leisurely talks on the porch sounds good but you're so busy you can't even remember if you have a porch!

If we are going to keep the Light of Love burning brightly in our lives we must recognize how important it really is. Solomon said that "if a man would give all the substance of his house for love" it would be condemned as an unworthy price (Song of Solomon 8:7). No matter how big your home, or how fancy your possessions, they are simply "things" without love and companionship.

Work at spending time with those you love; Real Love is not just an emotion, it's an effort. And the effects are well worth the effort! Life without love is living death. Make time for those you love and start enjoying life.



## May 19, 1992 SLIPPING FEET

I began preaching when I was 14 years old; that's 30 years now. During that time, I have preached in many churches; under a vast variety of circumstances.

Some services have been wonderful with the fellowship of God's people and the free moving of the Spirit of God. Others times it would have been easier digging ditches on a cold January morning than trying to warm the frosty faces of the congregation.

I have preached about spiritual suicide, unaware that a family in the congregation had just lost a son to that tragedy. I have preached on the horrible consequences of loose morals, unaware that two teen age girls in the congregation had just found they were pregnant out of wedlock.

I have also preached under a variety of physical circumstances. I began preaching in a tobacco pack house that was converted into a church one night a week. I have preached standing atop tailors, standing on street corners, and standing in water so cold I could hardly speak above my chattering teeth.

One of the most "interesting" times I've had speaking, however, was a church service. The janitor had done an exceptional job of waxing the floor the week before and I had to plant my feet and hold on to the pulpit for dear life in order to stand. Like a lot of preachers, I use my hands extensively when I preach. That day I was afraid to even nod my head!

You may feel that someone had waxed the floor under the circumstances of your life recently. You live in constant fear that the smallest mistake will expose your instability and send you sprawling into injury or embarrassment.

Let me share a great truth with you. Psalm 94:18-19, "When I said, 'My foot is slipping,' your love, O Lord, supported me. When anxiety was great within me, your consolation brought joy to my soul."

Great a grip on God. He's rock solid in a world of shifting sand. No matter how slippery your feet; you'll never fall as long as He holds your hand.

## May 26, 1992 ENDURING TRIALS

For four long hours it had gone on. The little girl had eaten some food she had stolen from the cabinet and for four hours the parents had been at her. Shaking, yelling, and, a few times, even slapping; the parents simply would not stop.

Her pitiful cries would grow weak from time to time but that only seemed to spur the parents on to greater efforts. She promised to be good, to never steal again, to do anything if they would only stop and let her go to sleep.

Not these parents. They even refused to take the child into their arms as she cried and cried for comfort. Instead, they would make her walk around and around the room until, at times, they would be half dragging her.

What could cause these parents to be so cruel? How could they ignore the cries and groans of this precious young girl?

Love. The Answer is love for the Child.

You see, the food the child had stolen from the cabinet was really 10 sleeping pills. And the doctors had told the parents that the child would never awaken if they allowed her to go to sleep.

You may doubt God's love today because of some continuing trouble or trial in your life. Rest assured that the very moment its best God will stop the trial and open wide His loving arms. Trust Him. He does Love you!

## June 2, 1992 MONDAY MORNING EVANGELISM

My wife and I were returning from Youth Camp one Friday when the air conditioner on my car quit. It probably couldn't have happened at a better time, since we were already hot and sweaty from a week at camp and one more day wasn't so bad.

I left home at 6:00am the next Monday so I could be at the dealership when it opened. Since I left home that early, I planned to do my daily Bible reading and some studying at the dealership while I waited.

Almost as soon as I sat down and began reading, a lady came in, saw I was reading my Bible and asked if I was a Christian. That led to an opportunity to share with her a clear presentation of the gospel as well as answer some questions that were troubling her about various doctrines.

Someone came to pick her up and, as soon as she left, another lady came in and asked the same question. That led to another opportunity to share the Gospel.

With all the interruptions, I had just finished my Bible reading when the cashier called and said my car was ready. As I made out my check, she said she was a Christian and that she and all the other secretaries in the office had been listening to me witness to the people in the waiting room.

I hadn't thought of them, but the Lord gave me a large congregation that Monday Morning. Just goes to show that you should use every chance to witness that you receive. You might be doing much more than you think.

## June 9, 1992 KILLING YOUR KIDS

What a difficult trip that must have been. Each step brought her closer to her home; and closer to the death of her child!

When the nation of Israel divided, the first king of the northern nation was Jeroboam. In order to maintain the allegiance of the people, he abandoned the worship of God and instituted forms of pagan worship that fulfilled the fleshly craving of the people. He had become a worldly success but he had incurred God's wrath in the process.

Now the light of his life, his young son, had taken seriously ill. He tried everything he knew to cure the boy but nothing seemed to help. Now, like a lot of other people who have little use for God or preachers until trouble comes, Jeroboam decided it was time to seek help from a higher power. He was ashamed to go to the preacher himself so he sent his wife.

When his wife arrived at the Preacher's home she was told that God's Judgment was on Jeroboam and his household because of the sinful way he lived and led the nation. She was also told that when she arrived back home her son would die.

Can't you almost read her mind as she trudged down that road? Each time her foot would hit the ground I can almost hear it ringing in her mind, "Pay day, Pay day."

The scriptures say that when her foot crossed the threshold of her house the child died.

Are you killing YOUR kids for Wealth, the world's approval, or a wicked life?? Are you walking a dusty road toward the death of your child?? God still invites you to come to Him. The straight and narrow road still has room for you; and for your family.

## June 16, 1992 TAPS

The voice of the preacher's "Amen" sounded off the surrounding trees. The family and friends stirred nervously around the casket. Suddenly, a command rang out and seven guns thundered their salute.

Most people around the grave gave a startled jump and a few even gasped in surprise. Twice more, then, the shots rang out as the honor guard completed its twenty-one gun salute.

Then as the last echoes of the gun shots vibrated through the trees, a trumpet began to play the lonely, plaintive strains of Taps. Grief and pride mingled together as the last notes faded into the afternoon sky.

Slowly the family left their seats and were ushered away from the grave side. They had walked the last mile with their loved one.

For a number of years, when I was in service, I listened to "taps" tell me it was time for bed each night. Taps to me was a call to end the day's work and enter into a time of rest.

When a family gathers around a coffin and listens to taps their heart is filled with sadness. If their loved one is a Christian then they can view taps as I did. A time to cease from work and enter into a wonderful time of rest with the Lord. Thank God for the Hope we have in Christ.

## June 30, 1992 SOFTLY SINNING

Softly and silently they fell. Had anyone been awake to see them, they would have marveled at their transforming power. Empty hollows were filled, ugly scars were covered, and the drab, dirty landscape was covered with layer after layer of fluffy white.

The trouble began when the ground was covered, yet the flakes continued to fall. Quietly they clung to the tree branches and the power lines. Flake upon flake, flake upon flake, until the limbs began to sag.

Suddenly, with a sound like a shot, the first limb snapped. As it crashed to the ground, it carried an ice laden power line with it. Others soon followed until the road was strewn with limbs and the houses were cold and dark.

Hebrews 3:13 says we are to "exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." Sometimes we need this daily warning because sin is so soft and pretty at the beginning. But, Oh what a tragedy, when we allow it to continue.

Most people are on guard against the rank sins of life. You need to beware, however, of "soft sins" that slowly and gently accumulate in your life. If you don't watch out, one day they'll bury you.

## **July 7, 1992 BARRIERS**

I know there must be a perfectly good reason there is a barrier between the Post Office and the Bank but I can't for the life of me figure out what it is! It's just an accident waiting to happen right now. People must exit the Post Office from the rear, go back onto Main Street, and then immediately turn back into the Bank lane. Often they do this in front of oncoming traffic and someone, who is not familiar with our town, is going to end up smashing into them.

That same situation exists between the new Wal-Mart property and the Bi-Lo property (I know someone else owns them but that's what everyone calls them!).

Sad to say, property owners aren't the only ones who put up barriers. I talk with people who are afraid to become a Christian because they think they'll have to pray in public and they don't think they could do that. That's why we never call on someone to pray unless we have secured their permission in advance.

Sometimes even Christians erect barriers of shyness instead of Bridges of testimony because they think a witness has to know everything about God and the Bible. Others think a witness has to be better than "Perry Mason" at presenting their case. What they fail to realize is that a good witness is simply someone who has seen or felt something and now wants to share that information with someone else.

Let's remove the barriers and allow traffic to flow; in business and in Christianity.

## **July 14, 1992 BREEZE BLESSING**

It was the Fourth of July. Many people were baking in the hot July Sun at Myrtle Beach. I was slowly roasting in the same hot sun in a butter bean field.

We had received the call inviting us to pick some beans about 8am but it was 9am before we could begin picking. A few clouds kept the temperature bearable for a while but now, as it approached noon, the sun was shining in all its glory.

The steamy weather has perspiration dripping from my face. Flies and gnats swarmed around my head. Suddenly, a soft gently breeze caressed my face. It hardly moved the leaves on the nearby trees but it was pure delight to me. I couldn't help but lift my eyes to heaven and say, "Glory".

If I would have been sitting in an air conditioned room looking out my window, I probably wouldn't have noticed the breeze. Working in the bean field, it felt just wonderful.

The Bible says, "The full soul loatheth an honeycomb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet." (Prov 27:7). In the "Jones Translation" that means that a breeze doesn't mean anything to someone in an air conditioned home but it's a real Blessing in a Butter bean field. Remember that the next time you question why God doesn't give you ease and comfort all the time.

## **July 21, 1992 FREEDOM TO PRAY**

It was during the early desperate days of World War II. The British Expeditionary Force had been cut off and encircled by the Germans in France. The only escape for the 350,000 soldiers was across the English Channel- and all the harbors had been destroyed.

The British Prime Minister went on Radio and announced the desperate situation. He concluded by asking everyone to "Pray and seek the face of God in behalf of our sons, brothers, husbands, and friends". People began to pray and God provided a thick, heavy curtain of fog. This allowed the British to bring their ships close enough to shore to evacuate the entire force.

If America faced the same situation today, the Supreme Court would probably tell the President it was illegal to call on people to pray. We would probably just watch in eerie fascination as the newscast showed the ocean turning red with the blood of our loved ones. And the politicians would spend their time blaming each other for the catastrophe.

I believe in Prayer. I believe it taps the Power of God. Any nation who turns away from faith in God and begins to trust in their own abilities and intellect is doomed for destruction. While we still have freedom to pray we had better pray; because when we lose our prayer we'll lose our freedom.

## **July 28, 1992 CONFIDENCE ABOUT CHAOS**

In the past ten years I have written a number of Devotional and Bible Study Books. Our Church gives these books away as part of our Outreach Ministry. Due to Finances and Faith (or the lack thereof!), I normally print only 500 to a thousand copies of a book at a time. After these copies are given away I rework and reprint the book.

That used to be a very time consuming job because I had to retype all the stencils for our Mimeograph machine on a type writer. Thankfully, I now have most of the books on computer and I run the stencils through my printer. Not only does this avoid misspelled words but it also allows me to add pictures to the books now.

The problem with printing, however, is that you can't put pages in their normal order. Some have to be backwards so they will fit properly on the page. Many of the low number pages have to be at the end of the books in order to print correctly.

If someone were to open one of my book files and try to read the material they would think I was crazy because it looks like utter chaos. It all makes sense, however, when you start cutting the stencils for printing.

Sometimes it seems the things God does are backward and out of place. It seems more like Chaos than sense. But wait until you read the book! You'll find you can have confidence in Chaos as long as you know God is in Charge.

**August 4, 1992**

**HEAVENLY ASSURANCE**

How can you know that Heaven is a reality instead of a hopeful imagination? After all, everyone wants to believe there is a place of peace, joy, and happiness after this life. Maybe the desire inspires the imagination. This is such an important question until I believe we need to know for sure.

The Bible gives us three ways we can know Christians go to Heaven:

1. THE PRICE JESUS PAID- "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him" (1 Thess 5:9-10). I know Heaven is real because Jesus came to earth to die for my sins so that I could escape the pains of Hell for the Pleasures of Heaven. If there was no Heaven to gain then Jesus would not have gone to the Cross for me.
2. THE PROMISE JESUS MADE- "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14:1-2). Jesus is God, and God cannot lie. If He said I could go to Heaven then there is a Heaven for me to go to.
3. THE PRAYER JESUS PRAYED- "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:24). Jesus prayed that I would live with Him in Heaven. God honors the prayers of His Son. Heaven is real and I'm going there. Are You?

**August 11, 1992**

**THE BIBLE**

The most important book in the world in the Bible. It contains God's Message to Mankind and is therefore the only thing that is permanently permanent- "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Mat 24:35).

It was not written to show the history of the world [although it is historically correct and contains the history of the earth from beginning to end]. It was written to show man that his Objective in life is supposed to be FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD. In the Bible, God reveals the need of, and His plan for, the Redemption that will restore man to that place of fellowship.

Much of what is written in the Bible is not meant to be understood by the casual reader or the educational intellect (I Cor 2:13-14). They're looking for an interesting idea instead of trying to find God. Others try to make the Bible fit THEIR ideas and prejudices and end up trying to put "the ocean into a teacup!!".

If you are looking for magic little sayings or titillating little tidbits, try the grocery store newspapers. But if you're looking to find purpose to life and the way to joyfully face death; come to the Bible. God is waiting there to talk with you any time you're ready to listen.

[Old Testament Survey- an outline of every book in the Old Testament is now available to anyone requesting it. It's Free; write or call today.]

## August 18, 1992    READ IT ALL

Suppose your child came back from the first day of school with only one book. When you asked them why they didn't have any more books, they replied, "We're only studying English this year. The teacher thinks Math and Science are boring and hard to understand so we aren't going to study them any more."

Suppose your husband came home for supper and all you had on the table was a bowl of beans. When he asked where the rest of the meal was you said, "I don't have time to cook everything anymore so I've decided I'll only cook beans from now on. They're easy to fix, look good, and I like them. The rest of you will just have to learn to live with nothing but beans."

Suppose God gave us 66 books in the Bible and said to read them all. Some, like the Psalms, have short chapters and nice words. Some, like many of the New Testament books, are exciting and challenging. Some, like many of the Old Testament Prophets, are long, a little boring, and difficult to understand.

Most people decide to "study only English" or "eat only beans" instead of learning the whole counsel of God. God said that the dot on the "i" and the cross on the "t" were all inspired. You deprive yourself, and dishonor God, when you only read select portions of the Bible.

I'll admit that some should be read more than others, and some speaks to our heart easier than others, but all of it needs to be read. You might be surprise. There have been several times in my life that it was good to know math; no matter how boring or difficult it was to learn.

## August 25, 1992    PERSPECTIVE

I believe every Church should require their Pastor to be absent from his pulpit twice a year.

This will force the lay leadership to look at what is required to have a Sunday Service from a different perspective. They will have to make many of the decisions that they now complain about- Music, Announcements, Offerings, and so forth.

It will also allow the Church to hear another Speaker and, hopefully, gain a new perspective on the passage of Scripture he speaks from. They will also gain a different perspective about their Pastor. They will realize the good pastor they've taken for granted; or gain a new desire to pray that God would help their pastor to become better!

As for the Pastor, It will do marvels for him as he views the service from the perspective of a member or a visitor. He will begin to see how boring announcements can get, how disturbing disorder is, and how long a dull sermon can be!

Sometimes it does everyone good to "walk a mile in my shoes". And as your perspective changes, you will be better able to see the answer to problems, recognize areas that need improvement, and understand why things have to be done a certain way.

In Church, as in most other things, a change in perspective is often just what the doctor ordered.

(The study booklet on the book of Revelation is now available. It goes chapter by chapter through the book of Revelation and also goes into detail about many of the subjects covered in Revelation. It's free upon request).



## September 1, 1992 REASONING ABOUT RIOTS

What do Christians do when the Riots come?

The Nation's debt continues to climb. People's confidence in the Government's ability to deal with the situation continues to plummet. One day soon the checks will stop, public services will cease, and people will panic. Looting and rioting will spread like wildfire.

Since money will have no meaning, people will stop producing electricity and pumping water. Law officers will find it very difficult to justify putting their life at risk for a non-existent government that can no longer pay them.

I know we are extremely close to dealing with this scenario. My concern is not that it's going to happen. I'm concerned about how Christians should react when it comes.

I can stock my house with food and weapons so that I can survive as long as possible. But what do I do when a starving child knocks at my door? On the other hand, since I know the storm is coming, is it right to ignore the need of preparation?

I know I couldn't (and shouldn't) sit around and do nothing while hooligans abuse those I love. But can I, who have continually trusted God, now start putting my faith in guns. I've been in war and I know how blurred the lines become once the killing starts.

The Storm clouds are rumbling on the horizon. If the riots arrive before the Rapture, how do we stay righteous? I don't fear that God will forsake me. I worry that I may dishonor Him.

## September 8, 1992 GOG'S BATTLE

Ever wonder why the United States is more interested in the welfare of the Shiites in Iraq than they are of the Serbs in Yugoslavia? The Politicians will talk about Humanitarian reasons. The Press will talk about Political reasons. But the real reason is fulfillment of Prophecy.

Can you imagine how much power and prestige the president of Iraq will receive when the government of the United States collapses? He won't have anything to do with its collapse but he will claim all the credit; enabling him to unite most of the people of that area under his "Babylonian Empire".

The establishment of this oil controlling empire to its south and the establishment of the Antichrist's European Economic Empire to its west will trigger Russia into action.

The Russian Commonwealth countries (Gog and Magog in the Bible) will invade the Middle East Countries first since they are the weaker countries militarily. Russia also knows that controlling the Oil supply will eventually cripple the Countries of Europe.

The Bible says that as they begin this invasion God will put a "hook in their mouth" and draw them into attacking Israel. In a great Battle directed by God all but one-sixth of the Russian army will be destroyed by earthquake, hail, fire, and mutiny.

Antichrist will claim credit for this victory and this will establish him as the one great power over much of the world. That day is coming. You must either prepare to Meet God or prepare to serve Antichrist. Which one do you chose?

## **September 15, 1992      GOD'S CLOCK**

At first the days started with hope and expectation. Gradually, however, they turned into resignation and despair.

First, there had been the hope that the law would realize he had been framed and set him free. Or that somehow God would deliver him because of his stand for righteousness. But the days kept coming and going and the cell door remained locked.

Finally, there came a day when he saw God's hand at work. The King's Baker and Butler had been imprisoned also. Now both of them had dreamed special dreams and God had given him the interpretation of these dreams. He gave the Baker the bad news he would be killed but he was able to tell the Butler that he would be restored to his place of authority.

His only request was that the Butler remember his plight when he returned to power. But the days continued to come and go and the cell door remained closed. He realized he had been forgotten.

Have you ever felt like Joseph? Have you ever questioned God's love and care because He would not relieve your difficult situation?

Consider this. If God would have released Joseph from Jail early he would not have been called on to interpret Pharaoh's dream. He would not have been made Prime Minister. And he would not have rescued his family from famine.

It was not that he had been forgotten. It was just that God's clock keeps different time than the clock of man. And God's time is always right on time!

## **September 22, 1992      PRAYER MEETING**

Right now the Piano is silent and the pews are empty. Soon, however, the doors will swing open and the Prayer Meeting congregation will begin arriving.

Some will come in tired in body from a rough day at work. Some will arrive with burdened hearts or bruised spirits. Some will come with a look of discouragement as they remember the temptations they yielded to this week or consider the failures they observed in fellow Christians.

No matter what their need it won't be long until the empty room is filled with the echoes of voices raised in song to God. Then they'll try to listen attentively as the unchanging Word of God is read and explained.

Finally, the time will arrive for them to testify about Blessings they have received during the week. Then they will share any Burdens they want others to pray about. That's when the great moment of Prayer begins as people lift their hearts to God in Prayer and Praise.

In a few hours the pews will again be empty and silence will once again fill the Church. But the mid-week Prayer Meeting has encouraged and uplifted people and given them the strength to travel life's journey until the Sunday Services arrive.

Prayer Meeting is one of the most needful services that a Church has. Too bad so many people deliberately chose to miss it.

**September 29, 1992**

**CRISIS CHRISTIANITY**

It's not an easy task to try to live a Christian life in the Military. Cursing is the language and womanizing and drinking are the recreation of most enlisted men. For most of these boys, it is the first time they have been away from the constraints of parents and they are determined to sow some wild oats.

Talk about a difficult task? Try to read your Bible chapters while men all around are showing their Playboy pictures or bragging about last night's conquest. The Peer Pressure to stop being a "goody two shoes" and "live a little" was tremendous.

Things changed dramatically, however, when the Viet Cong started shelling us. Suddenly, men were dropping by my position on a regular basis and asking me to pray for them.

I deal with this same type situation all the time today. People are too busy seeking money or pleasure to think about God; but let some trouble or sickness come their way. Suddenly, plenty of time can be found for Prayer and seeking God.

I can tell many times when people are having marital, children, or job problems. They'll show up in Church for several weeks and pretend God doesn't know how long they've been absent or what they've been doing. Then, as soon as the pressure eases up, so does their Church attendance.

Don't be a "Crisis Christian". Serve God in the Sunshine as well as the rain. That will bring stability to your life and peace to your soul; which is what you're really looking for anyway. Right??

**October 6, 1992**

**PREACHER WORE HIGH HEELS**

I was talking with someone recently about the past Sunday's service. They made a statement that immediately rang a bell with me, "The Preacher wore High Heels Sunday!". Naturally, I wondered exactly what they meant.

The person explained that sometimes the Preacher preached in such a way as to "step on his toes". However, this past Sunday he had preached such a pointed message until it felt as if a woman with a pointed high heel had stepped on his foot!

If your Pastor has been "wearing high heels" recently, let me point out a few things for you.

First of all, a good Pastor never delights in telling a congregation how sorry they are or how sinful they've become. His heart is hurt that people have disappointed God or disobeyed God's Word. His duty as a messenger from God is to deliver God's reprimand; but the desire of his heart is that he could preach peace and joy and happiness.

Secondly, the wish of the Pastor (and of God) is that the "point" of the message would drive you to turn from your sin; not make you more miserable as you continue in your wicked ways. God is not out to make you miserable; He wants you to become a new creature in Christ.

If your life and actions have been compelling your Pastor to wear "High Heels" lately, then repent and come back to service for God. That way the Preacher won't walk so awkward and you won't feel so bad!

## October 13, 1992 POUT OR PRAY

Andrew, my five year old godson, was staying a few days with us recently. Everything was fine until I got too busy to play with him. He began to whine and cry and generally act like a very small child. I sat him on my lap and asked him why a boy as big as he was was pouting and having a tantrum.

"Because it gets me what I want!" he replied.

I let him know that pouting would have the exact opposite effect with me and he calmed down. I told him that if he needed something to politely ask me and I'd be glad to give it to him if I thought it was best.

That's a lesson God taught me many years ago. He let me know early in my Christian life that pouting was not nearly as productive as praying. I found that God delights to hear my prayers but refuses to heed my pouts.

Maybe you are a pouting Christian. Family and friends have let you get by with pouting for so long until now you think you can work the same scheme with God. Instead of praying for God to change you, you think that pouting will make God change your circumstances. Instead of praying for God to make you more like Christ you pout in the hopes that God will meet more of your selfish desires.

Pouting is not praying. "Lord, only what I want" is not the same as "Not my will but thine be done". Praying opens God's heart. Pouting only turns His stomach. Are you pouting or praying??

## October 20, 1992 TRIUMPH IN THE TASK

Someone said recently that if God were a Policeman He would pull the world over for speeding!

We live in a world of deadlines, time stress, and constant pressure. That leaves People physically exhausted, mentally tired, and emotionally drained. The good news is that the time changes this week and we "gain" an hour of rest. The bad news is that most people will squander this extra time. Ever wondered why?

I just looked in my front yard. The leaves are turning and beginning to fall. The air is cool and crisp. God is signaling that this year is coming to a close. The cold weather is supposed to drive us into our homes where we can rest and enjoy the fruit of our labor. America's change from an agricultural to an industrial nation has caused us to lose this awareness.

This means we have lost the joy of finishing a task and enjoying it's completion before we start a new task in the Spring. Now we simply pile one job upon another until we break beneath the pressure. Life has no joy because we don't allow ourselves to rejoice in a completed task. That's why sports has become such an addiction. We need Triumphs to triumph in so we "make time" to watch a ball game. But rejoicing as spectators can never equal the joy of hitting the winning home run yourself. And that joy will never come if we simply work at a task instead of triumphing in a job well done.

It's always good to go back to the beginning. When God created the earth in six days, He rejoiced in a completed task and took a day off. And He made that a rule we're all supposed to follow.

## October 27, 1992 BELTS

I usually go to church before my wife in order to get everything straight and greet people as they arrive. Recently, she came over just before our Bible Institute started and said our dryer had "blown up". As soon as church was over, I went home and began to check it out.

The problem was not nearly as dramatic as it sounded. The belt that turns the dryer drum had broken allowing the tension wheel to come back against the motor. It sounded like it was going to explode when you turned it on but it just needed a belt.

One of the hardware stores in town helped me find the right belt and it was not long until everything was back to normal.

I sometimes see Christians like my dryer. They have a lot of hot air and they make a lot of noise but they don't do their job. That's because their "Belt" is broken. They're not connected to the motor (God) through the belt of Prayer and the work of the Holy Spirit so they can't accomplish anything. Their heater works but, because the belt is broken, they burn some clothes while the rest never get dry. Their human energy without divine direction ends up destroying instead of preparing for use.

It's not enough to have clothes to dry and heat to blow over them; you need the belt attached so the heat can work instead of destroy. It's not enough for a Christian to have zeal and a job. They must be connected to God in order to accomplish their intended task.

And when they're connected as they should be, they will make a lot less noise while accomplishing a lot more work.

## November 3, 1992 WHO TO VOTE FOR

Today is the day. Election Day had arrived and it's finally time to make a decision. You have listened to all the claims and counter-claims but now you must make the final decision in the privacy of your own heart.

It's a little frightening having to make a choice because it will affect not only you but also those around you. But the choice has to be made so let's go ahead and make it.

The choice you make for President will be a simple matter of choosing between Morals and Money. One candidate stands for family values while the other only talks about finances. To me, the choice is very simple. But that's not the choice I want to talk to you about today.

I want you to see that the choices you make every day are a "vote" for either God or Satan. And this vote is a matter of life or death- "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live:" (Deu 30:19).

If you wait until Wednesday to vote in the Presidential race you will be a day to late. I fear that same fate awaits some who daily put off deciding to come to Christ.

I have made my decision. I chose to come to God through Christ. I am willing to live, and die, with that decision. It's the best choice I have ever made. I urge you to make the same choice and "choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live."

**November 10, 1992**

## **FORGETTING THE PAST**

In the third chapter of Philippians, Paul tells about his failures in the realm of religion before he finally found Faith in Christ. Then he makes one of those memorial statements that continues to ring through the ages- "This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

An evangelist was visiting in a home once where the husband and wife had adopted a twelve year old boy. As they talked after supper, the father told about how dirty and ragged the boy was when they first saw him. He especially described the boy's shoes as just strips of leather tied to his feet with rags.

The father went on to say that if the boy ever seemed ungrateful or rebellious he would go to the closet and bring those strips of leather out as a reminder of what had been done for the boy. The evangelist noted that the boy hung his head in shame during the entire story.

Many Christians feel like that boy. They feel that God has brought them into the family but they're afraid He will bring out their old sins any time they fail to be perfect. I've got some good news for you. God has cast your sins into the sea of forgetfulness and removed them as far as the East is from the West. The Devil may remind you of your past but God has forgotten all about it. Why don't you??

Forget the past and reach for the Future. That's what God wants and that's what you need.

**November 17, 1992**

## **HIDDEN DIRT**

It all started when I spilled some coffee. It ran off the edge of the counter and fell to the floor between the cabinet and the refrigerator. The only way to get to all of it was to move the refrigerator out into the middle of the floor.

That's when we found all the dirt and dust behind the refrigerator. It's too heavy for my wife to move and it took something like this to get me to move it. Once she saw the mess, my wife stopped what she was doing and spent the next half hour cleaning behind her refrigerator.

I told her I was sorry I had caused so much trouble. She said she was glad to get the opportunity to do a much needed clean up. Isn't she a wonderful wife!

Many people have places in their lives like this refrigerator. Everything looks good and works well but there is a hidden place in which dirt had been allowed to accumulate. It could be lies, lust, hatred, bitterness, or other "dirt balls" that have been allowed to collect in a dark place. They're well hidden, hard to get to, and easy to overlook when you are doing your house cleaning.

Whatever your hidden dirt is, don't wait for some accident to expose it. Tell Christ about it today. He'll be glad for the opportunity to clean things up- "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)

## November 24, 1992      BUS SIGNS

On a recent trip, we stopped at a traffic light in Alabama. In one of the lanes facing us was a charter bus. Normally, the destination window on top of the bus will list either the name of the charter or the ultimate destination of the bus. This one, however, had a sign that simply said, "I'm lost".

I believe I'd have to think about taking a trip on that bus!

Sadly, I know some churches that give the same impression that bus was giving. Instead of promoting the adventure and excitement of the Christian life, they give the impression that they're as lost as the people they're trying to guide.

They talk about the Love of God but, if you ride their bus for awhile, you find it full of bitterness, back biting, and battles. When you look at the problems in the "bus", you can't help but be reminded of the statement of Jesus about the blind leading the blind. And there are too many people in the ditch as it is.

My destination is Heaven. I want that to be the testimony of my life as well as the proclamation of my lips. I want to live every day, in every way, in such a manner that the people who come into contact with me will know exactly where I'm going. If I pass a stranger on the road of life, I want them to see "Heaven Bound" instead of "I'm Lost". That means Christianity can't be a religion I follow but a life I live.

Then, when I arrive at my destination, maybe my bus will be completely full of joyous passengers who have joined me along the way.

## December 8, 1992    Let's Vote On You

I found the following information in some old papers. I think it is something to make all of us take serious thought.

SUPPOSE membership in our church was good for one year only, and that re-election depended upon the good you had done in the church during that time. Would you be re-elected at the Business Conference?

SUPPOSE church membership was limited to a certain number and there was a long waiting list of those who wanted to get in. Would your actions justify keeping your name on the roll to the exclusion of someone else?

SUPPOSE membership requirements stated that you had to attend 75% of the worship services and 50% of the prayer meetings. Would you qualify to stay on the roll?

SUPPOSE your name would be dropped from the membership if you didn't win at least one person each year to the Lord Jesus Christ. How long could you qualify?

SUPPOSE every member of your church did just as much as you are doing: gave as much, worked as much, attended as much. Would more space be needed or would the doors be shut and nailed?

SUPPOSE they were going to vote on you at the next Business Meeting to determine whether your support of the church justified keeping your name on the roll. And just suppose that only the Lord Jesus Christ would cast the vote- that none of your friends would be allowed to vote. On the basis of your actions, conduct, attendance, and financial support- how would the Lord cast His vote? What would the verdict be?

**LET'S STOP 'SUPPOSING' AND MAKE IT OUR PURPOSE TO LIVE FOR CHRIST!**



## **December 15, 1992 THE HELPER**

The Outreach Ministry of our Church is extensive; and growing all the time. We give away thousands of Audio and Video Tapes, Devotional Books, and Bible Study Books each year. That requires me to do a tremendous amount of extra work each week as we copy tapes, put together books, and distribute literature. The work is so time consuming until I would not be able to do it if the Lord had not sent me a helper.

One of the Men in our community retired from his regular job and now donates at least a day a week to helping in our Outreach Work. His help is invaluable and only Heaven knows what kind of riches he is laying up in Heaven as rewards for his work. Today happens to be his Birthday and I wish him the best birthday ever; and many more years of service for the Lord.

If you are faced with a hectic schedule and a harried life during this holiday season let me remind you that God has sent you a Helper also. When Christ returned to Heaven He sent the Holy Spirit back to instruct, empower, and enlighten us. He doesn't just come one day a week, however. He's there any time you have a need. So don't try to handle life's battles and burdens on you own, ask the Holy Spirit to help. He's an ever present help in time of trouble.

## **December 22, 1992 WHY CHRISTMAS?**

The reason for the season increasingly seems to elude people. Christmas decorations go up in October; and Pocket Books empty by mid-November! Pressures, Parties, and Picking Presents sap our strength and stress our souls. No wonder the cries of the Christ child are lost in the sounds of the season.

Let me refresh your mind about why there is a Christmas. It's clearly seen in Peter's sermon to the first Gentile believers in Acts 10:42-43 "He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that Christ is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

Peter's Message conveys the Three great reasons there is a Christmas. First, God loves people and He wants these people to be able to love Him also. The problem is that, secondly, God is Righteous and this righteousness means that the sins of man must be judged. The love and judgment bring about the Third reason for Christmas. That is, the mercy of God must makes Salvation available simply by faith so that whosoever will may come.

So God loved the world enough that Jesus left heaven to be born in a stable. After living a sinless life, Jesus died in our place in order that we could miss the judgment of God and find forgiveness of sins. This faith makes us part of God's family and grants us an inheritance in Heaven.

And THAT is the real reason to rejoice this Christmas season. Look to Christ and trust Him as your Savior. Then you'll have a very MERRY CHRISTMAS.



## December 29, 1993 A NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION

Now that you've spent all your money giving your children presents for a moment; don't you think it's important to give them principles for a life. They will get these life principles from somewhere. I think you should make sure they get them from the Word of God. The only way to do that is to determine that in 1993 you are going to take your family to a good Bible Teaching Church each and every week.

Let me give you four reasons why you have a responsibility to continually expose your children to the Word of God:

1. GOD COMMANDS IT- "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up" (Deut 6:6-7).
2. IT CAN LEAD YOUR CHILD TO SALVATION - "That from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (II Tim 3:15).
3. IT FORMS A SPIRITUAL HERITAGE IN THE CHILD- "When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also" (II Tim 1:5).
4. JESUS WANTS YOUR CHILD THERE- "Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the Kingdom of heaven" (Matt 19:14).

Don't just give your Children food, clothes, and toys. Give them Principles that will last for a life time-- "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov 22:6).