

## 2012 NEWSPAPER DEVOTIONAL ARTICLES by Rev. Mike Jones

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January 3, 2012	IMPACTING YOUR FAMILY	July 3, 2012	AMERICA'S WIND
January 4, 2012	CHRISTIANITY	July 4, 2012	FORGOTTEN GOD
January 10, 2012	THREE WAYS TO AVOID SIN	July 10, 2012	WHERE GOD WALKS
January 11, 2012	TOMBSTONE TESTIMONY	July 11, 2012	NO POWER; NO CHURCH
January 17, 2012	WORRY	July 17, 2012	THINK ABOUT IT
January 18, 2012	CORRUPT CONNECTIONS	July 18, 2012	YOUR UNFRIENDLY FOE
January 24, 2012	PRAYER FOR OUR NATION	July 24, 2012	MENACES TO MARRIAGE
January 25, 2012	WHO IS THE GREATEST?	July 25, 2012	VIEWING SPIRITUAL RICHES
January 31, 2012	FRUIT OF THE RIGHTEOUSNESS	July 31, 2012	A GOD DAY
February 1, 2012	THE X-RAYED HEART	August 1, 2012	GOD FACTS
February 7, 2012	ONE INVITATION	August 7, 2012	PLACE OF SOJOURN
February 8, 2012	THRILLED TO BE THANKFUL	August 8, 2012	FROM GRUMPY TO GLORY
February 14, 2012	GOD'S LOVE IN YOUR LIFE	August 14, 2012	SUCCESSFUL WALK
February 15, 2012	LOVE THOUGHTS	August 15, 2012	PRAYER PATTERN
February 21, 2012	GOD'S TIRE CARE	August 21, 2012	WHATEVER IT TAKES
February 22, 2012	WHAT DID GOD SAY?	August 22, 2012	TRUE TO YOUR CALLING
February 28, 2012	GUIDELINES TO GOD BY	August 28, 2012	BALLOONS
February 29, 2012	GREATNESS FORMULA	August 29, 2012	GOD'S GREATNESS
March 6, 2012	LIFE ALTERING CHANGE	September 4, 2012	WRATH OF GOD
March 7, 2012	GUARDIAN ANGEL STORY	September 5, 2012	OUT OF THE BOX
March 13, 2012	BEDROCK PRINCIPLES	September 11, 2012	LIGHTHOUSE LESSONS
March 14, 2012	DUTIES TO ONE ANOTHER	September 12, 2012	PATHS OF THE SEA
March 20, 2012	IS GOD SATISFIED?	September 18, 2012	THE RIGHT TIME
March 21, 2012	CHURCH NAME	September 19, 2012	WHAT GOD EXPECTS
March 27, 2012	BE STILL	September 25, 2012	PROVERBS EIGHTEEN PRINCIPLES
March 28, 2012	THE CALL OF THE CROSS	September 26, 2012	FRET
April 3, 2012	COST OF THE CROSS	October 2, 2012	JOB DESCRIPTIONS
April 4, 2012	HOPE FOR THE FUTURE	October 3, 2012	PRAY OR PRAISE
April 10, 2012	GARDENING FOR GOD	October 9, 2012	OTHER SIDE OF RESURRECTION
April 11, 2012	CAPTIVE CULTIVATOR	October 10, 2012	TOLD ABOUT
April 17, 2012	CHRISTIAN STABILITY	October 16, 2012	LABOR FOR WIND
April 18, 2012	LOOKING FOR A LAP	October 17, 2012	KEEP THE FAITH
April 24, 2012	CLOSE YOUR MOUTH	October 23, 2012	THE WAY TO ESCAPE
April 25, 2012	CRITICISM	October 24, 2012	GIVER GUIDELINES
May 1, 2012	MIRROR CHECK	October 30, 2012	KASHAPH
May 2, 2012	TWO WARNINGS	October 31, 2012	NATIONAL CHARACTER
May 8, 2012	MOTHER'S DAY	November 6, 2012	CULTURE CHANGERS
May 9, 2012	GODLY MOTHER GUIDELINES	November 7, 2012	ACCOMPLISH GREAT THINGS
May 15, 2012	LEAVING LUKEWARM	November 13, 2012	ANTICIPATION
May 16, 2012	GOD'S MIRACLES	November 14, 2012	BEARING LIFE'S BURDENS
May 22, 2012	LIGHT PRODUCING LIGHT	November 20, 2012	THANK GOD
May 23, 2012	DIVERTED DEER	November 21, 2012	THANKS
May 29, 2012	WEIGHING THE WAY	November 27, 2012	CAST DOWN
May 30, 2012	SENTENCE SERMONS	November 28, 2012	LONELY LESSONS
June 5, 2012	THE CARPENTER'S SON	December 4, 2012	WORSHIP GIFT
June 6, 2012	GOD'S STABILITY	December 5, 2012	COMMITMENT GIFT
June 12, 2012	DELIGHTING THE DIVINE	December 11, 2012	WHY CHRISTMAS?
June 13, 2012	CHRISTIAN OBJECTIVES	December 12, 2012	GIFT BUYING
June 19, 2012	SERVICE SECTOR PEOPLE	December 18, 2012	CHRISTMAS BEHAVIOR
June 20, 2012	FALSE DAYLIGHT BLESSING	December 19, 2012	BIRTH, BELIEVING, BECOMING
June 26, 2012	LOOKING FOR GOD	December 25, 2012	WHAT CHRIST GAVE
June 27, 2012	CHRISTIANS ARE PEOPLE	December 26, 2012	WALK WITH GOD

## January 3, 2012      IMPACTING YOUR FAMILY

A good friend died recently; his battle with cancer brought to a close by the spread of the cancer and the weakening of his body. He fought well and tried to live life until the end. When he discovered he had cancer he told his wife he wanted to die exhausted and he did. A couple of things he did in his dying may be good things for you to consider in your living.

He continued his practice of writing a daily life journal. What a joy for his wife and children to be able to look at his journal during the final weeks of his struggle with death and see statements of his faith in God and his love for them. God says of the first man to die (Abel) "though he is dead, yet he speaks" (Heb 11:4). A Life Journal can help make that possible.

The second notable activity he did that made a tremendous impact on his family and friends was the production of a "things that made me happy" list. Over a period of time he added to the list until it contained 28 items. They included things he remembered from his youth (being thrown off a pony he got for Christmas 4 times in a mile but getting back on each time), from his teen years (winning the JV Player of the year award in the tenth grade), and from his family life- his marriage and the birth of his children and grandchildren. He also mentioned several happy moments that occurred in the achievements of his children and by his successes while hunting and enjoying other life activities.

What would people think of you if they read your daily thoughts and saw a list of the things that make you happy? Would it bring comfort or sorrow to those around you?

## January 4, 2012      CHRISTIANITY

Christianity cannot be taught, caught, or bought. It must be sought by man and it must be wrought by God. You can teach people about Christianity but no amount of knowledge about Christianity will make you a Christian- it is a birth thing; not a brain thing.

Christianity cannot be produced simply by "hanging with the Christians". Spending time with Christians and in church will expose you to the principles and people of Christianity but a pig living with sheep is still a pig.

Christianity cannot be purchased with loot or labor. Your large contribution may impress the church and even help the cause but it does not buy your way into God's family. Your great act of selfless sacrifice may make you a "saint" in some circles but "though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity (Love for and from God), it profiteth me nothing" (1 Corinthians 13:3).

Christianity must be sought by man. The Heavens declare the glory of God and Christians should declare the gospel of Christ but God will never force a person to accept the gift that He freely gives. He provides the resources and the reasons to join Him but the response must come from those he has called.

Christianity must be produced by God-*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.* (Ephesians 2:8-9). The eternal God makes us His children by a supernatural process called regeneration- *But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:* (John 1:12). Now you know.

## January 10, 2012    THREE WAYS TO AVOID SIN

It is better to build a fence at the top of a hill than to build a hospital at the bottom! It is better to look before you leap than to be a broken legged leaper. Avoiding an accident is better than having good insurance. That is why the Bible cautions us to "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away" (Proverbs 4:14-15).

Most people are aware that they should avoid sinful actions and attitudes but they find themselves echoing the statement of the Apostle Paul, "For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do" (Romans 7:19). If this describes you then let me give you some good news to help you avoid sin before it trips you up and sends you rolling down the hill into a disaster.

Three times in scripture we are told to do something "and sin not". A closer look at these scriptures will show us three ways to avoid sin.

- 1) The Awe of God discourages your desire for sin: (Psalm 4:4) "Stand in awe, and **sin not**: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah".
- 2) The Awareness of Right guides you away from sin: (1 Cor 15:34) "Awake to righteousness, and **sin not**; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame".
- 3) The realization of Human weakness guards against the subtlety of sin: (Eph 4:26) "Be ye angry, and **sin not**: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:".

God's glory exposes sin. God's word prevents sin. The power of the Holy Spirit at work in your life helps you overcome sin. Good news about living a good life.

## January 11, 2012    TOMBSTONE TESTIMONY

It began partly from curiosity and partly as a result of my "job." As a Pastor, I had to visit cemeteries on a regular basis; either helping with or attending funerals. The most prominent feature of a cemetery is the tombstones.

At first I just noticed them as obstacles to be avoided, but then I began looking for the messages on the tombstones. Some contain just the bare facts; name, date of birth, and date of death. That's helpful to some degree because it allowed me to determine how old the person was when they died (Lots and lots of people die very young!!).

If it was a husband and wife tomb it might also contain the wedding date of the couple. That allowed me to see how old they were when they were married (Sometimes people marry VERY young) and how long one lived after the other's death.

Sometimes, however, the tomb will also contain a short saying or a poem. Those are the ones that allow me to see how the person was perceived by their loved ones. In many of them you could almost feel the aching heart of parents for small children or the longing of a husband for a departed wife.

Tombstones indeed have a testimony. Among other things, they tell us that everyone has to die, that many die a lot sooner than they expect, and that those who are left behind will reflect on the way you have lived.

When the tombstone is placed over your grave will your family rejoice in the life you've lived or will it be just cold hard stone over a wasted life and missed opportunities?

## January 17, 2012    WORRY

Worry is a worry to a lot of people. People worry about their future, their families, their finances, and their fitness. This worry dampens their happiness and destroys their health- Often it is not what we eat that causes ulcers, but what is eating us! Like sitting in a rocking chair; Worry uses a lot of energy, but gets you nowhere.

Worry takes a speck of dust and explodes it into something large that blurs your vision. Worry takes a wrong thought and turns it into an emotional disaster- *He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him* (Proverbs 18:13). Worry is a small trickle of fear that wanders through the mind until it cuts a path into which all other thoughts are drained.

What is the answer to worry? How can I stop worrying? The word "worry" is not found in the Bible. In situations where we normally worry Jesus would say "Take no thought" (in the Greek, "Have no anxious concern") and then tell people to trust in God's plan and provision [Matt 6]. So the answer to controlling worry is trust God!

There are more than 8,000 promises in the Bible, and 85% of these promises are given by God to man. God has promised to provide for us, to be with us, and to empower us. Worry is lack of faith that God will do what He said He would do. A great preacher once said, "Worry is placing a question mark where God has placed a period."

We must not allow the circumstances of today, nor the fears of tomorrow, to cause us to lose sight of God's love and care. Worrying won't help; trusting and obeying God will.

## January 18, 2012    CORRUPT CONNECTIONS

My wife's dad is 92 years old and she stays with him a lot. One Saturday recently she was at home and I convinced her to sit in her chair for a few hours and read instead of spending her day cleaning our home. When I asked her what she wanted for supper she surprised me by saying she wanted a pizza. Even I can make a pizza; the number to the local pizza place is listed on advertisements we get every week.

When I arrived at the pizza place the parking lot was full. Inside several birthday parties were going on, kids were everywhere, and the waitresses looked frazzled. My call in pizza was ready, however, and I was soon on my way back to my car. When I arrived I noticed an obviously pregnant lady with the hood up on her car looking completely bewildered. She had left her lights on while at the pizza birthday party and now her car would not start.

Thankfully, I carry a small battery unit in my car in order to jump off cars (can you say, "he was a pastor for 50 years"). It was a simple thing to hook up my unit and wait for her car to start- but it didn't. She tried to crank the car several times but it just would not turn over. Finally, I took time to clean off her battery connections and this time when she turned the key the car started immediately.

If your life is at a dead end and you cannot find the energy to go forward you need to renew your relationship with God and allow Him to re-energize you. If you are having problems reestablishing that connection then check to see if some cleaning needs to be done before the connection can be established.

## **January 24, 2012 PRAYER FOR OUR NATION**

Heavenly Father

We acknowledge our sins and humbly seek your face this day. Our Government is crippled by debt and many people are mired in poverty and despair. We know you said in your word that the sin that separates us from you also causes you to withhold your blessings from your people. Humbly we repent of these sins and pray for a return to fellowship with you and a fresh outpouring of your blessings.

Yet, we do not pray simply for prosperity because we recognize that one of the main sins to seize thy people today is Greed. This Greed has led many to worship gold instead of God. People now measure their worth by the size of their bank account, the symbols on their shirts, or the name on their tennis shoes. Our heroes have become men who make millions playing sports instead of the Lord Jesus who gave up the riches of Heaven to die as a pauper on earth for the sins of mankind. O Lord, Forgive us we pray.

Help thy people to find honest decent work that will support their families while honoring your wonderful name. Touch the hearts of employers so they will want to pay just and reasonable wages. Touch the hearts of workers so they will honor you by giving an honest day's work for their pay.

Give us day by day our daily Bread. Provide for the physical needs of your people. Turn America from its sinful ways so we can again be "one nation under God". You are the source of our life and we look to you to meet our needs. Forgive our sins as we commit ourselves afresh to you. Heal our nation and prosper thy servants we pray.

## **January 25, 2012 WHO IS THE GREATEST?**

At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 18:1-3). I like the way Jesus handles this. He told the disciples they would be better off worrying about getting into the kingdom of heaven than worrying about being the greatest there! What a cool way to deal with their prideful attitude.

Most problems in churches come from people trying to determine or demonstrate "who is the greatest" in the church. How easy it is to forget that Christians are all part of the body of Christ who are given their place in the body as determined by the Holy Spirit, not by natural abilities or personal preference (1Cor 12:7-11). Did you know that Matthew was a tax collector who was trained with handling money but Judas was elected as Treasurer? Or that "doubting" Thomas had the courage to say, "Let us also go, that we may die with him" when Jesus went into hostile territory to raise Lazarus from the dead (John 11:16)? Or that Peter is always listed as the number one disciple but it was his brother, Andrew, who came to Jesus first and eventually brought Peter to meet the Messiah (John 1:40-42)?

Greatness is the humbleness of a child lived out in the life of a man. It does not come from getting my way but from walking in God's way. It is arriving in Heaven and seeing a smile on God's face.

## January 31, 2012    FRUIT OF THE RIGHTEOUSNESS

(Prov 11:30) *The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise.*

The word of God and the sacrifice of Christ dictate that Christians make every effort possible to win someone to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Soul winning is our greatest obligation; and should be our greatest effort. Why then do so many Christians go an entire year without leading one soul to trust Christ for the pardon and forgiveness of sins?

"He who aims at nothing normally hits it!" If we don't make it our goal to share our faith each week with someone along life's journey we will not take advantage of the opportunities God puts in our path. Here are a few methods to help you.

Share the Burden- Next Sunday night pass out slips of paper at Church. Have everyone write the name, address, and phone number of someone whom they are concerned about on that slip of paper. Then have each side of the church exchange their names with the other side of the church. Everyone is to take that name, pray over it, and then seek an opportunity the following week to share their testimony (Letter, phone, personal) with that person and invite them to church.

Seek a Sinner- Pray for God to put someone in your path that you can tell about what God revealed to you in your devotion that day. Gossip about the good service you had Sunday.

Talk about God- Ask someone what they think the weather is like in Heaven today! Talk about the coming tribulation and ask them how they will deal with it. Share your excitement about God's work in your life and circumstances and ask them how they handle life's troubles.

He that winneth souls is wise. Are you seeking to be wise?

## February 1, 2012    THE X-RAYED HEART

Several years ago I had a heart Catheterization to determine if I had any blockages. I watched on a small TV above my head as the doctor pushed a catheter up one of my veins into my heart and then injected dye to see how it would disperse. When the doctor was finished and I was waiting to go back to my room I told one of the nurses I could clearly see the truth of my morning devotion now- I Samuel 16:7 "For the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart".

Just as the x-ray machine showed the doctor the inside of my physical heart so God sees the Heart of my soul and requires that I "keep my heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Prov 4:23). The work "keep" here means I am to place a guard at the door of my heart and screen the words and the sights that go into my heart.

Jesus said that words reveal the condition of a person's heart- O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh (Matthew 12:34).

All of this means that I am to take good care of the heart of my soul by guarding what goes into it and by looking at what comes out of it. Just as my physical heart demands proper food and exercise so my spiritual heart must be properly cared for if it is to be healthy. And that is important because it is the "pure in heart shall see God" (Matt 5:8).

## **February 7, 2012    ONE INVITATION**

I did not become a Christian because of family expectations or pressures. At the time of my conversion no one in my immediate family was a follower of Christ and we seldom attended church services. My family's week end normally revolved around resting, recreation, or relatives. We did not mess with that "church crowd" and, sadly, they pretty much left us alone also.

We were not really "bad" people. My brothers and I got into plenty of boyhood mischief but not a lot more than the other kids in our neighborhood. Our parents were not part of the correct social circles in our community but they were good parents and they did the best they could with the limited income my dad earned while my mother stayed home and tried to care for my three brothers and I.

Then one day our next door neighbor extended an invitation to me to attend a revival at the church he attended. He added enough of a bribe (I will let you play with my boys Sunday afternoon) so that I accepted his invitation. I did not understand a lot of what was going on at Church but I did understand very well when the preacher started talking about the empty place in your heart that exists because sin separates you from God. In some wonderfully divine way, God worked past my ignorance that night and allowed me to understand enough to repent of my sins and accept His magnificent gift of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

I am still in awe of how God brought me to Himself. I stand amazed at what God has done in my life and the life of my family since I became part of the family of God. And it all traces back to one man inviting one boy to one church service.

## **February 8, 2012    THRILLED TO BE THANKFUL**

I am excited about walking with God, I am thrilled to be working for God, and I am thankful that I have a life changing and eternity enhancing relationship with God. The Apostle Paul must have felt much the same way- "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:" (Colossians 1:12-14).

In Plain English this means Paul was excited about 1> Being part of God's family- "Partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light" and 2> Being delivered from Satan's power and punishment- "Who hath delivered us from the Power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear son. In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sin."

In the real world this translates something like this- my life was a mess as I stumbled through daily existence trying to make as few mistakes as possible but ending up making the same goof ups time and time again. I just couldn't seem to get it right in life and I was beginning to worry about what would happen when breathing stopped and eternity began. Then God invited me to be part of His family. This put light into my life so I could see how to avoid the wrong and learn how to do the right. And then He told me He liked me so much until I would live with Him when I stop living down here. No wonder Paul was so thankful!



## February 14, 2012 GOD'S LOVE IN YOUR LIFE

Most people think of Love as an emotion or a passion. Those who find real Love realize that Love is more than a feeling we experience; it is a Life we enjoy.

The Bible speaks of three kinds of Love; "Eros" love- Emotional love based on our attraction to another person. "Philo" love or "Brotherly love". This love gives the same kind of love it receives.

"Agape" Love- This is Divine love that gives and expects nothing in return because it originates in the heart of the one loving rather than in the actions or attraction of the one being loved.

All of these "loves" are involved in a person's relationship with God:

- 1) Godly Emotional Love: Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love (1 John 4:7-8). As we get to know God we form an emotional bond.
- 2) Godly Brotherly Love: By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another (John 13:35). This is shown in action: But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth (1 John 3:17-18).
- 3) "Agape" love causes us to trust the heart of God- There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love (1 John 4:18). This love brings peace in any circumstance or situation Life brings our way.

## February 15, 2012 LOVE THOUGHTS

Most people think of Love as an involuntary emotion that over whelms a person and causes them to look with "starry" eyes at another person. In reality, Love is a lot more complex than that.

Love can change when circumstances change- The most hateful hate I have every witnessed is when a married couple who were once deeply in "love" stop loving one another and want a divorce.

Love can be commanded - These things I command you, that ye love one another (John 15:17). Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; (Ephesians 5:25).

Love can be earned; it is often brought about by the actions and reactions of others- We love him, because he first loved us (1 John 4:19). In fact, Jesus commanded us to be careful this aspect of Love did not lead us to do wrong: Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; (Matthew 5:43-44).

The greatest aspect of love, however, is that God's love is permanent- The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee (Jeremiah 31:3).



## **February 21, 2012 GOD'S TIRE CARE**

My lovely wife seldom drives during the day and never at night except in emergencies. When she does drive she is the personification of the "old woman driver" – looking out through her steering wheel with eyes straight ahead driving 45mph as she ignores everything around her in total concentration on her driving.

Recently she had to drive to her sister's home while I stayed with her dad. When she arrived at her sister's home my brother in law noticed that her back tire was almost flat. He removed the tire, plugged the hole, and replaced it on the car- Glory! It happened that day that things went long and darkness descended just as my wife returned home. Had my brother in law not seen her tire then she would probably have discovered the problem on a lonely back road with darkness fast approaching.

The Psalmist declared that "The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way (Psalms 37:23). Over and over in our walk with the Lord my wife and I have seen the providential hand of God protecting and providing. Sometimes it is a "pre-emptive" blessing such as this tire. Sometimes it is unexpected, but desperately needed, income that keeps "the wolves away from our door". And sometimes it is just the right answer at just the right time so we can better enjoy the benefits and blessings the Lord has already given us.

It is wonderful to walk in the steps of the Lord and to experience His care and love. I never tire of seeing how He even looks out for our tires!

## **February 22, 2012 WHAT DID GOD SAY?**

Are you listening to what God is saying? It is easy to show up in church on Sunday and "sit through the service" without actually hearing anything significant from God. And that is one of the worst things that could happen in your week!

Sometimes you do not hear what God is saying because the preacher gets in the way. Either he did not take the time and the effort to hear from God (In the preaching of every sermon someone must suffer. Either the preacher will suffer before the sermon or the congregation will suffer during the sermon) or he is so busy presenting his personality or pet peeves until he does not have a place for God in his message.

Sometimes you fail to hear from God because you are listening to the words of the message instead the message of the words. Some Sermons you enjoy. Some sermons you endure. Some sermons break your heart. Some sermons break your habits. Some sermons bring comfort to your soul. Some sermons bring conflict to your mind.

Sometimes our hearing is dull (Matt 13:15) or distracted. Sometimes our hearing is divided (Wonder where we will eat when the preacher finally finishes). And sometimes we simply turn a deaf ear to what God is saying- hearing they hear not, neither do they understand (Matthew 13:13). God does not always say what we want to hear so sometimes we do not hear what God wants to say.

Faith comes by hearing (Rom 10:17). No wonder Jesus continually proclaimed, "He that has ears to hear, let him hear". When God speaks this Sunday, will you hear what He says?

## February 28, 2012 GUIDELINES TO GOD BY

The nineteenth chapter of Leviticus is a tremendous discourse on living the way God wants you to live. It begins by saying we are supposed to live right because this is the character of God (Be holy because I am holy). Then it gives us numerous guidelines to follow in order to make this happen. Here are twelve of those guidelines.

(1) Show respect for authority by obedient to your Parents and honor for God's Day. (2) Let nothing physical take the place of the spiritual God. (3) Give to God's work because you love God. (4) Share with others. (5) Treat others the way you want to be treated- do not steal from them or mislead them. (6) Do not curse or disrespect God. (7) Be honest: do not borrow and not return nor hire and not pay. (8) Respect those who have infirmities: Do not curse the deaf or trip the blind. (9) Do not be prejudice; judging people by the clothes they wear or the money they possess. (10) Do not Gossip: do not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people. (11) Do not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself: I am the LORD. (12) Translate what you believe about Godly separation into what you wear and what you plant- Let your outside life show how much you value God on the inside.

Your behavior reflects your beliefs. Do people see God in the guidelines that shape your life?

## February 29, 2012 GREATNESS FORMULA

Although there is no "formula" for greatness in the Bible it intrigues me to see what makes some people great workers for God. One of the great men in the Bible is the Prophet Samuel (He is mentioned in the Hebrews eleven "hall of fame"). In the case of Samuel there are four things that stand out in his life.

1. He was dedicated to the Lord from his youth- Therefore also I have lent him to the LORD; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the LORD. And he worshipped the LORD there (1 Samuel 1:28).
2. He was a student of the Word of God- And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground (1 Samuel 3:19).
3. He lived a consistent Godly life before others- And all Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the LORD (1 Samuel 3:20).
4. He communicated with God and built a relationship with God- And the LORD appeared again in Shiloh: for the LORD revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the LORD (1 Samuel 3:21).

Samuel was a great man because God touched every area of his life. That is a good formula for a great life.

## **March 6, 2012 LIFE ALTERING CHANGE**

When faced with a life altering circumstance we can throw our lunch up in fear, we can throw our hands up in failure, or we can throw our prayers up in faith. Like it or not, however, life altering circumstances do not come with an “ignore me” choice. Pretending the doctor did not say the dreaded “C” word or your wife did not say the “D” word does not change the fact that in that moment your life changed.

Your fear of facing a life altering circumstance may paralyze you into inactivity but that does not change the fact that the life altering circumstance will produce change; that is why it is called life altering! Your apparent lack of ability to deal with the change that is coming your way may overwhelm you with doubts or immobilize you with indecision but freezing up in front of an oncoming train does not stop the train. Sometimes “hiding your head in the sand” is not an option.

When circumstances change your world here are some truths to maintain stability. This change is not outside the control of God, the plan of God, or the love of God (Rom 8:28). The God who said, “I will never leave you or forsake you” (Heb 13:5) will provide the wisdom and strength you need to deal with this circumstance. When the storm finally passes those who have built their house on the Rock will still be standing.

## **March 7, 2012 GUARDIAN ANGEL STORY**

I can almost see the Angels as they gathered around the coffee pot in Heaven that Wednesday Morning. Gabriel looks over at one of the Guardian Angels and noticed how exhausted and shaky he looked so he asks him, “Aren’t you Mike Jones’ Guardian Angel?” “Yes,” he replies, “and is there any way possible I can get another assignment!”

It all began with the “perfect storm” of circumstances. I had gotten up early to prepare for a meeting I was attending. Then I carried my wife for a doctor’s appointment before packing and embarking on a 150 mile trip. Tired, sluggish, and driving seventy miles per hour in three lane rush hour traffic my cell phone rang. I looked down for a second to see who it was and when I looked back up the sitting sun suddenly shone directly into my eyes blinding me. By the time I could get my hand up to block the sun I saw that the three lane road I was on was becoming a two lane road in the next hundred feet.

Two lanes full of traffic on my right and my lane ending. I was a wreck waiting to happen. Some way my Guardian Angel allowed me to squeeze into a space that did not appear to exist and I was able to avoid a major wreck. My Guardian Angel put in for early retirement and I am still praising the mercy and goodness of God.

## March 13, 2012      BEDROCK PRINCIPLES

This is a unique year for me. I became a child of God on Monday, March 19, 1962 at the age of fourteen. This year the 19th of March falls on a Monday again as I once more celebrate the marvel of being born again into the family of God. During these fifty years of living for God I have developed four bedrock principles that have allowed me to Know Christ as my Savior and Show Christ in my changed life.

- 1) I know I am absolutely sure about my relationship with God- "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (2 Timothy 1:12).
- 2) I know that I am part of God's Plan and that makes me special- I "know that the LORD hath set apart him that is godly for himself: the LORD will hear when I call unto him" (Psalms 4:3).
- 3) I know that problems and pain do not change God's love for me- "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).
- 4) I know that Jesus is coming for me or I will be going to Him- "For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth:" (Job 19:25).

On that Monday Night I began to walk with God and work for God. One day soon I will be able to live with God. What a difference a day can make when you encounter God.

## March 14, 2012      DUTIES TO ONE ANOTHER

Here are 7 duties, responsibilities, and obligations that Christians have to one another.

1. Love one another: *A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another* (John 13:34).
2. Pray for one another: *Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much* (James 5:16).
3. Help one another: *Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ* (Galatians 6:2).
4. Comfort one another: *Wherefore comfort one another with these words* (1 Thessalonians 4:18).
5. Care for one another: *That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another* (1 Corinthians 12:25).
6. Forgive one another: *And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you* (Ephesians 4:32).
7. Encourage one another: *But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin* (Hebrews 3:13).

Christians are called to wake up to the world's needs, lift up our eyes to the harvest, confess up our sins to God, pay up our tithes, and take up our cross of discipleship. Let us be different so we can make a difference.

## **March 20, 2012      IS GOD SATISFIED?**

If your religion does not motivate you to spend Sunday with God at His house do you really think it can be counted on to stimulate you to spend eternity with God in Heaven?

If people prayed as hard for their minister to be successful in his sermon each Sunday as they pray for their sports team to score the winning points maybe we would see much greater results from the sermon; and in the lives of people.

If Christians are really the heart through which Christ loves, the voice through which Christ speaks, and the hand through which Christ helps then that may explain why Christ and His claims are scoffed at so much by society.

If Society were given the choice between a radical leader rejected by governmental and religious leaders or a charismatic leader with dashing "Robin Hood" ways would we once more choose Barabbas over Jesus? Would an "American Idol" be chosen over a humble preacher who simply went about doing good?

If God did as much for you as you do for Him would you be hurting for certain? If you were on trial for being a Christian would there be enough evidence to convict you? If you were one of eleven men left with the job of reaching the world with the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ would the world be turned upside down by your dedication?

I am satisfied with God. Is God satisfied with me?

## **March 21, 2012      CHURCH NAME**

Recently a Home Missionary asked me to suggest a name for the new church he is establishing. After thought and prayer I came up with a name that I probably would not have considered earlier in my ministry- Jehovah Free Will Baptist Church (using the key verse: That men may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the earth- Psalms 83:18).

In the past I would probably have thought that name a little pretentious. Having traveled to mission works in Spain, Brazil, Japan, and India; and having seen the confusion that now exist in the United States over who God really is, I now think having His name as part of my "marque" would be a positive thing.

Getting people to believe is no longer a problem; they will believe almost anything they see on TV or hear about on the internet! Our problem now is getting them to believe the right thing. And for that you must get them to see beyond the god of their imagination or their good intentions and realize that Jehovah God is God even when He does not follow their thought patterns in His decision making nor act the way they think He should act in life's circumstances.

It is time Christians came back to clearly proclaiming, "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song;" (Isaiah 12:2). It is time people declared only one God whose son is named Jesus.

## **March 27, 2012      BE STILL**

“The only escape from indifference about and isolation from people is to think of them as our most cherished resource instead of something to be avoided. We need to work hard at re-establishing family fun, having meaningful mealtimes, establishing evenings that are electronic free (no TV, iPod, Internet), and engaging in non-superficial conversations if we are to actually become involved with people.” (Adapted from a quote by Chuck Swindoll)

The very thought of Silence sends some people into anxiety attacks. They cannot conceive of being comfortable with calmness and quiet. They fear that actually looking someone in the eye and talking with them (instead of talking at them) may reveal how lonely and fearful they really are and they would rather be isolated than rejected.

When Jesus was about to face torture by politicians, rejection by religious leaders, and denial by His followers He knew He needed quiet time with God the Father so He made His way to a prayer garden with His closest friends. What an example that should be for each of us.

God commands us to “Be still and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10) and to “Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still” (Psalms 4:4). God knows that the only way we can survive the storms of life is to spend time sheltered in the stillness of the Rock. That is a personal and a family lesson we all need to learn.

## **March 28, 2012      THE CALL OF THE CROSS**

God could have looked at the mess mankind made on the earth and decided to end the rebellious race of humans. Had He done so, the Angels in Heaven would have lifted up songs about the righteousness of God in ending the cancer of sin that had corrupted earth. Instead, God became a man and walked the dusty streets of small towns in a country under the brutal thumb of a conquering army. God became flesh and dwelt among men so He could demonstrate His power and love to people who needed to see both.

God established rules to make life good for humans and they broke all they did not ignore. God could have shrugged His shoulders and said, “I gave you a chance and you would not take it, Tough!” Instead God proved His love by dying on a cross to pay the sin debt of mankind. He died for us so that we could live with Him.

God is reaching His hand and His heart out to you from a cross today. You can curse His name and ignore His call or you can stop running from God and kneel at the cross where abundant life begins. Isolating yourself from God’s love and mercy will only mean you are isolated from God forever. And that, my friends, is a fate worse than death.

## **April 3, 2012 COST OF THE CROSS**

Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: (1 Peter 2:24). What a glorious thought- dead to sin's control and condemnation and alive unto the joy of righteous living.

Years ago I heard an illustration in a sermon. I cannot remember the preacher but I have never forgotten the illustration. He said that a man was designed like the tabernacle in the wilderness with an outer court (body), a holy place (soul), and a holy of holies (spirit). He said there were five entrances into the body (sight, smell, hearing, taste, touch) and there were five entrances into the soul/mind (imagination, conscience, memory, reason, affection) but there was only one door into the spirit/heart of a man and that was his will. Over and over I have seen the validity of this illustration as I have witnessed men plead with God to heal their outer body or ask God to make them a better person on the inside while stubbornly refusing to submit the control of their life (their will) to God.

The Cost of the Cross was not just the pain of suffering; it was also Jesus kneeling in a garden saying, "Not my will but thine be done". Eve ate the forbidden fruit because she believed her desires were more important than God's directions. The cross is about trusting God enough to surrender our will to Him and allow Him into the most secret and private part of our life. A hard decision but just remember, the cross is simply the door you pass through on your way to Resurrection.

## **April 4, 2012 HOPE FOR THE FUTURE**

"And thou shalt be secure, because there is hope;" (Job 11:18). Hope is an indispensable part of life. Without hope men wither and die as despair and despondency quench their spirit and drain the energy from their life. As long as there is hope then men fight on with zeal that is beyond human reasoning.

Hope in the Resurrection is an indispensable element of the Christian Life- "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (1 Corinthians 15:19). Christianity is not about making the world a better place by making people better (although that is a tremendous byproduct of Christian teaching and example). If the teachings of Christ were all that the world needed then Jesus could have accomplished His mission by living until a ripe old age teaching at a world famous university. The cross and the resurrection were always in the plan and on the mind of Jesus.

A little child asked her father one day, "Daddy, Is God dead?" "What do you mean?" said the father. "Well, I used to hear you talking to Him, but I never do now!" If Jesus did indeed die on a cross as a payment for sins and was resurrected from the dead then our belief in that fact should manifest itself in everything we are and everything we do.

Christians live better because the hope and the power of the resurrection stretch before us. Death has been defeated, sin's debt has been paid, and Heaven is on the horizon. No wonder the early disciples turned the world upside down preaching this good news.



## April 10, 2012 GARDENING FOR GOD

Something stirs within the heart of people this time of year. They feel the need to dig in the dirt and plant something. This is because man's original job was to be a gardener- *And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it* (Genesis 2:15). Even after man was expelled from the Garden of Eden he was told to be a gardener- *Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken* (Genesis 3:23). Excuse the pun but gardening goes to the very root of man!

Most people today buy their food from grocery stores or restaurants so they know little of the hard work of gardening that leads to the great joy of harvest. As food prices continue to escalate people may try their hand at raising some of their own food. With that in mind, let me share several gardening tips that also have spiritual applications.

It matters WHAT you plant (Spiritually we sow the word of God- Mark 4:14). You reap what you sow so do not expect to get tomatoes from potatoes; nor blessings from bitterness.

It matters WHERE you plant your garden. The Bible talks about how good seed will have drastically different results depending on where it is planted; in rocky ground, in weed infested ground, or in good ground.

The important thing to remember, however, is that you do not get the satisfaction of a harvest unless you plant a crop- *He that tills his land shall be satisfied with bread* (Prov 12:11). So plant a garden, or sow some seed for God, and enjoy the bounty of God's blessings.

## April 11, 2012 CAPTIVE CULTIVATOR

*When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him* (Psalms 126:1, 5-6).

When the Psalmist wanted to talk about being released from captivity he used the illustration of the joy that comes to a farmer when he is able to plant a crop and anticipate the harvest of that crop. What a unique way of expressing long term hope.

Due to the bondage and control that sin has in the life of a person many preachers use these verses to emphasize soul winning: The Go in soul winning (He that goeth forth), the Broken Heart of soul winning (and weepeth), the Word of God in soul winning (bearing precious seed), the Certainty of soul winning (shall doubtless come again), and the Joy of soul winning (with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him).

This makes for a good sermon but the Psalmist is really talking about the confidence that comes to a person who is delivered from captivity and now can begin planting, cultivating, and expecting a harvest. This is the kind of hope that is desperately needed in America today; a hope that stirs us to dream again and anticipate a stable future. Will you join me in praying for this kind of leadership?

## **April 17, 2012 CHRISTIAN STABILITY**

Dr. Tom Malone preached a famous sermon on “Things a Christian should not do” - Fret Not, Fear Not, Forget Not, and Faint Not. Good advice and much needed in today’s society.

People of God are commanded to “Fret not thyself because of the evildoer who prospers in his way” (Psalm 37:7). Do not be agitated or anxious because wicked men seem to prosper in their wrong activities. There is a just God who will judge justly so remain stable in your service for Him.

Life can be filled with anxiety unless you learn the constant command given by heavenly visitors when they appeared on earth, “Fear Not”. Strange and unusual things bring dread or terror to our mind which can incapacitate us unless we are resting in the stability of God as our Rock.

“Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits:” (Psalms 103:2). As we remember to remember the blessings of the Lord our lives are transformed by faith in God’s promises and praise for God’s blessings.

Finally, we are commanded to “faint not” (And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not Galatians 6:9). Waiting on the Lord gives us the strength to faint not (Isaiah 40:31) and depending on the inward power of the Holy Spirit gives us the courage to faint not.

Christian stability comes when we learn to Fret Not, Fear Not, Forget Not, and Faint Not. Activate these principles in your life today.

## **April 18, 2012 LOOKING FOR A LAP**

During a recent church service I noticed a four year old child get down from her seat and stand in front of her brother who was seated beside her. She looked at him for a moment before grasping his crossed leg and putting in on the floor. He looked at her inquiringly until she climbed back up onto her seat and then climbed up on his lap. She was tired and she was looking for a lap to rest in.

Later that day some family members were visiting us for lunch. After lunch my twenty year old niece sat down on her mother’s lap and told her mother she needed to be held for a few moments. She was looking for a lap to bring her comfort.

Early in my Christian life I learned a principle that has proven invaluable. Often the cares and conflicts of the day would come to my mind when I finally rested my head on a pillow and I would find myself becoming worried or agitated as they swirled through my mind. Finally, I learned that by picturing myself crawling up into God’s lap and asking Him to deal with all these troubles that I could then sleep like a baby resting in God’s love and care.

All of us, from the scientist to the street person, are looking for a lap where we can find rest and comfort. May you realize that God’s open arms are inviting you to rest in the lap of His love today.

## April 24, 2012 CLOSE YOUR MOUTH

One of the most common problems endured by humans is the dreaded “foot in mouth disease”. This problem comes when we talk too much or at the wrong time or with incorrect information. It infects almost everyone at one time or the other and the results can be as devastating as a fire (*Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!* James 3:5) or as deadly as poison (*But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison* James 3:8).

Here are a few times you should keep your mouth closed: 1) When you do not have all the facts- *He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him* Proverbs 18:13), 2) When your words may damage others- *The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly* Proverbs 18:8), or when it is time for the talking to stop and the action to begin-*In all labour there is profit: but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury* Proverbs 14:23).

One of the wisest men who ever lived said, “Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding” (Proverbs 17:28). He also said, ‘Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof’ (Proverbs 18:21).

God gave you two ears and one mouth. Think about that this week before you open mouth and insert foot.

## April 25, 2012 CRITICISM

Open rebuke is better than secret love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful. (Proverbs 27:5-6).

Criticism is sometimes necessary but let it be done as a loving friend instead of a deceitful enemy. Make sure it is viewed as an act of love rather than an attack or an accusation. Otherwise, these “wounds of a friend” can become infected with bitterness and resentment and do great damage. Here are a few guidelines to help you in the delicate task of delivering criticism.

Criticism is easy to give but difficult to receive. Look at the long term results of criticism before giving it. Sometimes the criticism does more harm than the conduct it seeks to correct. Jesus said it was better to let the “tares grow with the wheat” because of the damage that would result to the wheat if the tares were pulled up (Matt 13:29-30).

The goal of criticism should be to build up instead of to tear down- “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted” (Galatians 6:1). The giver of criticism should have a meek spirit and an awareness of how easily this “shoe” could be on their foot.

When Jesus corrected the seven churches of Revelation He used this formula- Compliment them on something positive they were doing, criticize a wrong action or attitude, and then present a corrective action. Good guidelines for all of us to follow.

## May 1, 2012 MIRROR CHECK

The Church I attend has a mirror in the vestibule area as you enter the church. Almost everyone stops in front of that mirror to check windblown hair, crocked ties, or other areas of personal grooming. I think it would be a good idea to check ourselves spiritually as well as physically when we enter the house of God. Here are a few items to consider in your spiritual checkup.

Sin caused Adam and Eve to hide from God instead of enjoying His fellowship. What are you hiding from God, from others, or from yourself? Pretending you do not have a problem does not solve the problem; just as ignoring your windblown hair because you will not see it after you leave the mirror does not prevent everyone from noticing your windblown hair instead of that new dress you are wearing.

Mirrors make us look at ourselves instead of others and it is much harder to worry about the splinter in our neighbor's eye when that beam is so obvious in our own eye. God wants us to shape up at church instead of simply show up. In what area of your life is the Lord working? What steps are you taking to make the changes God has revealed to you?

Mirrors reveal problems but you need to deal with their revelations. Ignoring the mirror can lead to a Sunday of embarrassment instead of blessing but correcting any problems can make you look and feel your Sunday best.

## May 2, 2012 TWO WARNINGS

1) Beware of Money- *It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God* (Mark 10:25). Money is dangerous in the Pleasure of making it, in the Pride of possessing it, and in the Peril of spending it. Money can purchase a house but it cannot produce a home. Money can get you out of debt but it cannot keep you from facing death. Money can secure you a position of honor but it cannot provide you a place in Heaven. Money is a great blessing for you to have but it is a tremendous burden when it has you- For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows (1 Timothy 6:10). Money is a great goal but a horrible god.

2) Beware of Religion: Religion will make you righteous in the eyes of the world but not in the eyes of God. Religion thrives when the Church gets too lazy to love, too busy to bless, and too callous to care- The Church has gone from Heart burn caused by walking with Jesus (Luke 24:32) to Itching Ears that demand new and exciting teachers (2Tim 4:3). She had gone from Christ being the door (John 10:9) to Christ standing at the Door knocking for entrance (Rev 3:20). When the church becomes Religion instead of Righteous she is ridiculed by the world and rejected by the honest seeker. The cure for Religion is repentance (Rev 2-3)- a broken church demands broken hearts seeking the face of a holy God.

## **May 8, 2012 MOTHER'S DAY**

It is difficult being a wife, mother, worker, and woman. Especially when the husband is insensitive, the child is rebellious, the boss is demanding, and "me" time is more of a dream than a reality. Sometimes Mothers long to be pampered and honored more than one day a year.

I do not know that anyone has a greater glow than the mother of a new born child. In some mysterious mother way they believe the wrinkled bundle of flesh they hold in their arms is the sum of all blessings. Time after time, I have heard mothers longingly wish their children would stay in that huggable, lovable, infant stage. During that stage a child seems to be ninety-nine percent pure Love.

Alas, time passes and children learn to walk, to break things (Including mother's heart), and to want less and less of mother's control. Trying to do right by the child becomes as difficult as building bricks without straw- You never seem to have the wisdom or wealth you need to hold things together.

If you are a Mother who is feeling overwhelmed with demands and responsibilities let me remind you today that God loves you even more than your husband and children love you. The aches in your bones and the aches in your heart are all known to God; and He cares about all of them. So schedule a few quiet moments with God each day and you will soon learn that with God every day is Mother's Day.

## **May 9, 2012 GODLY MOTHER GUIDELINES**

One of the great joys of motherhood is that Mothers have the privilege of continually exposing their children to the Word of God- from the Bible stories they read them as an infant to the guidelines they teach as the child grows. Here are some principles to encourage Mothers to dedicate themselves to teach God's word to their children.

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).

Do not simply 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).

## **May 15, 2012 LEAVING LUKEWARM**

Jesus made an astonishing statement to His Church- I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth (Revelation 3:15-16). "Lukewarm" must be serious if God says He would rather you be bad than mediocre. Yet this middle ground is the goal of many Churches; they simply want to meet and eat and enjoy the warm fuzzy feeling they get from knowing everyone in their little church group.

Realizing you will never be great as long as you are satisfied being good let me give you several principles that can help you leave lukewarm and become the great church God intended. 1) Become dissatisfied with being satisfied. 2) Determine your destination- Growth comes from tangible reachable goals. 3) Make growth a treat instead of a threat- Inspire people with a vision instead of with fear. 4) Expect excellence from everyone. Provide the information and resources that people need and then marvel at what happens when everyone "rubs the ball". 5) Change is about change- you cannot remain where you are if you are going to walk with God. 6) Change must be embraced instead of endured in order to produce lasting growth. 7) Holiness is spiritual health; not just increased activity- corporate America can teach you how to grow a business but it takes the leadership and power of the Holy Spirit in order to grow the body of Christ.

Lukewarm satisfies many people but it makes God sick. That makes leaving lukewarm a needed goal.

## **May 16, 2012 GOD'S MIRACLES**

God does not need my approval or my acceptance in order to be God. If I totally ignore, actively oppose, or completely believe in God it does not change the fact of His existence. God does not need to fit into the "box" of human reasoning or emotional expectation in order to prove His divinity. God's reality is not hindered by people's bias or blindness and His stability is not shaken by time or circumstances- "I am the Lord, I change not" (Mal 3:6).

God is not required to justify Himself to anyone in order to work exactly the way He desires, at exactly the time He decides, to work. Many people doubt God because He does not "come to their rescue" or help someone they care about when they sincerely believe the need is real. Because they are powerless to make God use His power for their own personal use they are disappointed in or disbelieve God. What an ego they have!

God performs miracles sovereignly based on His divine plan. God performs miracles selectively based on His own considerations. God performs miracles universally based on His love and mercy- He provides "rain" on the just and unjust (Matt 5:45).

When you need God's miracles, pray. When you see God's miracles, rejoice. But never confuse the miracles of God with the existence of God.

## **May 22, 2012 LIGHT PRODUCING LIGHT**

When Light produces light it is a marvelous event. Stephen is the pastor of a church which is located in a very isolated area of north India. The church's location makes electrical power unavailable now; or in the foreseeable future. A Pastor's life is very busy so many times it is after dark before Pastor Stephen can return home to his wife and young child. Snakes and other predators are prevalent in this area so the darkness is a danger as well as an inconvenience.

Several Christians in America learned about his situation and contributed the funds necessary to purchase a solar system to provide the energy needed to power two lights and a fan. Not only did it enable the family to enjoy a better life but it also illustrated an important principle about how God works in the life of His people.

The light from the sun produces energy that is stored in order to provide light when the sun is not shining- The Light produces light in the darkness! In the same way a Christian depends on the power of the "light of the world" in order to produce the light they need to shine in the darkness of a sin cursed world. The light in the dark is the product of the "Son" shining in the heart of the Christian.

Light producing light is amazing. Light producing darkness is disastrous- "But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" (Matthew 6:23).

## **May 23, 2012 DIVERTED DEER**

My wife's dad presently requires constant supervision. That means my wife spends a great deal of time as her dad's home. This means I drive a 40 mile round trip to help her several days each week. The main thing I dread about the trip is coming home at night through back woods roads which are heavily populated with deer. Normally I take time for prayer each night as I leave my father-in-law's home and ask the Lord to protect me from deer, dogs, damage, distractions, and delay. Recently I saw a unique answer to this prayer.

It was a dark rainy night and, although I thought most of the deer would be snuggled warm in their deer beds, I was still being vigilant as I traveled. One area of the road I travel is unusually intense with deer sightings and as I approach that area I usually slow down. Just as I was thinking about slowing down a deer suddenly burst out of the woods and leaped toward my car. Some way my guardian angel got that deer's attention and he changed course in midair (it was amazing to see!) and landed beside my car instead of in front of my car.

Had it not happened exactly as it did I would have experienced deer, damage, and delay. As it was I went merrily on my way and was at home finishing my Bible reading fifteen minutes later. How great and marvelous it is to serve a God who guards the going of his children!



## May 29, 2012 WEIGHING THE WAY

It is interesting to notice some things in the Bible that God weighs- the wind and waters (Job 28:25), the dust of the earth, and the majesty of the mountains (Isaiah 40:12). It is also revealing to see some of the things about people that God weighs.

1. What we do- our actions: *Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed* (1 Sam 2:3).
2. Why we do things- our motivation: *All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the LORD weigheth the spirits* (Proverbs 16:2).
3. Where we go- our daily walk: *The way of the just is uprightness: thou, most upright, dost weigh the path of the just* (Isaiah 26:7).
4. How we deal with life situations- our character: *Let me be weighed in an even balance, that God may know mine integrity* (Job 31:6).
5. Our response to God's plan for our life- Our righteousness: *Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting* (Daniel 5:27).

During biblical times weighing something involved placing the object to be weighed on one side of a scale and known weights on the other side until the scales became level (hence our term for something being right meant it was "on the level"). When God weighs the various components of your life against the principles of the word of God will He find you are "on the level"?

## May 30, 2012 SENTENCE SERMONS

Sometimes it is good to put a sermon into a sentence. Sentence sermons are easier to hear, easier to remember, and easier to comprehend.

- Friendship is a strange thing- you must be willing to give it in order to get it: *A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly*: (Proverbs 18:24).
- There are bad days and there are good days. This is one of them. (When God turned the destruction of the Jews into the elevation of the Jews it was a day "turned from sorrow to joy, and from mourning into a good day:" Esther 9:22. The people who missed their flight on 9-11 thought it was a bad day but...).
- A bad conscience is a bad companion- *The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion* (Proverbs 28:1). Some people waste their life running from something that is not chasing them because they are unwilling to confront a problem.
- Life must have goals but goals cannot be your life- *For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?* (Mark 8:36).
- If you do not take charge of your life then someone else will. Jesus called men to a definite decision about what they wanted from life. No man can "serve two masters" (Matt 6:24) but neither can they choose none.

## June 5, 2012 THE CARPENTER'S SON

*Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? (Matthew 13:55).* Have you ever wondered why Jesus was trained as a carpenter instead of a shepherd? I think one reason was because God wanted His Son to learn some valuable carpenter lessons:

Building requires a Goal (Plan). You do not begin building without knowing what you want to accomplish. Jesus was "single minded" in His desire to accomplish God's will for His life.

A Building needs a good Foundation- so Jesus was able to teach about the disaster of building your life on the sand instead of the rock (Matthew 7:24-27).

A Building requires good building materials- *Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is (1 Corinthians 3:12-13).*

A Carpenter must use Accurate Measuring- Using the "that looks about right to me" measurement to cut your material will cause major building problems just as ignoring God's standards will cause serious life problems.

When God makes His final inspection of what you have built with what He has given you will there be a smile on the face of the "Carpenter's Son"?

## June 6, 2012 GOD'S STABILITY

Martin Luther said, "Your thoughts of God are too human". Attributing human characteristics to God leads people to believe that God changes as society changes or as scientific knowledge increases. Here are some things you need to know about our unchanging God:

- Nothing that man does or invents changes what God determines to do: *There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand (Proverbs 19:21).*
- God acts independently of all outside forces: *And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and God doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? (Daniel 4:35).*
- Nothing takes God by surprise: *Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world (Acts 15:18).* God sees everything from beginning to end at one time. He does not need to adapt because He was aware of all circumstances when He made His plans.

The unchanging Love of God makes sure all things work together for good to those who love Him (Rom 8:28). The unchanging Justice of God eventually defeats evil and insures that right prevails. This should be a tremendous comfort to the people of God and a great warning to the enemies of God.

## June 12, 2012 DELIGHTING THE DIVINE

It is always good to be on God's "good side". Here are a few things that delight the divine:

- It delights God when we seek to understand Him and have a real relationship with Him: *Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD* (Jeremiah 9:23-24).
- It delights God when we obey His Heart as well as His Word: *And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams* (1 Samuel 15:22). When will we learn that God does not call people to "make a Decision for Him"? He calls them to "become His Disciples". It is not simply having Faith to believe Jesus is the Son of God. It is about Faith producing Works which will carry forth the plan and purpose of God.
- It delights God when we show His Character in our everyday life: *A false balance is abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is his delight* (Proverbs 11:1).
- It delights God when we communicate with Him: *The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright is his delight* (Proverbs 15:8).

## June 13, 2012 CHRISTIAN OBJECTIVES

In the midst of one of the greatest Pastoral Prayers ever recorded, the Apostle Paul listed three goals he desired for Christians- *That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;* (Colossians 1:10).

- 1) Walk worthy of, and pleasing to, the Lord means you conduct your daily manner of living in a way that pleases and honors God. In other words, "making God look good" is the motivating force in how you interact with other people.
- 2) Produce fruits of good works because of your relationship with, and responsibility to, God. Fruit is a natural occurrence as we allow the Holy Spirit to function in our life. Good works are the result of the fruits of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: Galatians 5:22-23) at work in our character and conduct. Simply put, we work for God because God is at work in us.
- 3) Increase in the knowledge of God means we seek a fuller, deeper, clearer acquaintance with, and recognition of, God. Knowing God becomes much more important than knowing about God.

Paul did not pray for faithful church attendance or consistent giving. He prayed for people to live in such a way until the world would see God in their life. Is that your goal?

## **June 19, 2012 SERVICE SECTOR PEOPLE**

I travel a lot and I see a lot of “service sector” people (waiters, waitresses, clerks, etc). Most treat me very nicely, some very obviously tolerate me, and a few make it apparent that my presence in their world is not appreciated. I realize that the “general public” is a very temperamental person who can be rude, demanding, and very aggravating at times so I try to be nice to these service sector people by being as patient as possible and by tipping good service well.

If your job brings you into constant contact with others in a service roll here are some thoughts that may bring you encouragement on those days when “John Q. Public” is not as nice as he should be. First of all rejoice in the fact that Jesus said he that is servant of all would be the greatest of all (Mark 10:44). Jesus thinks your job makes you “number one”.

The Bible also declares that patience helps complete us as a person and that one way to acquire patience is to go through difficult situations (James 1:4). Admittedly, I do not like that part of the growth process either but I still realize that “trying people” are part of God’s way of developing my character and compassion.

If you serve others each day I salute you and pray that you will “have a good day” as you are always proclaiming for others.

## **June 20, 2012 FALSE DAYLIGHT BLESSING**

The “perfect storm” of circumstances allowed me to be in Maine for a few days recently. I had the privilege of staying at a home where the CIA resides when they are in the area. It was situated on the coast with a panoramic view of a bay leading into the Atlantic Ocean. It was an extremely nice home for a man who normally lives in a mobile home in South Carolina!

I had worked a very hard week before I left for this trip and had driven over 1200 miles in two days in order to get to this special house. Finally able to get to bed around midnight of our arrival day I was looking forward to sleeping late (no activity planned for my first day there). Imagine my surprise, and slight annoyance, when the Lord woke me up shortly after 3:30am on that first night and told me to go into the living room.

When I got there and looked out the main windows, however, I saw the reason I was awakened. The early morning sunrise over the bay of water in front of our home was absolutely amazing. Magical colors of movement and brightness were simply breathtaking.

When I talked with someone about it they told me sunrise did not take place until 4:30am and what I had seen was an extremely rare false daylight phenomenon. Thank you, God, for inviting me to the show. You made me feel special.

## **June 26, 2012 LOOKING FOR GOD**

An increasing number of people are confused about the existence of God because the world does not work as they think it should with a loving God in Charge. Devastating storms and debilitating sickness seem to happen in some erratic pattern that has no meaning or method- tsunamis kill multitudes of poverty stricken people who were no worse than multitudes of other people or small children die of horrible diseases which bring agony to their body and anguish to their parents. Where is the justice in this?

Popular preachers have feet of clay. People who belong to churches cannot get along with one another and split into “my way is better than your way” sects. The economy cannot seem to mend, politicians cannot quit quarreling long enough to help, and retreating into the unreal world of “reality TV” offers the only escape for multitudes of people.

As the world spins out of control around them many people now believe there is no “higher power” in charge of the universe and life is simply “accidental encounters” with chance circumstances in a world of unpredictable outcome. To them God does not exist or does not care.

Christianity was born in a time of unjust slavery, rampant disease, and savage dictatorial governments. In the midst of this Jesus came to the earth and said He was God come to visit the world and die for everyone so they could have a personal relationship with God. He showed God love and His followers “turned the world upside down”. The world waits with longing hearts for believers like this to step forward again and show them God.

## **June 27, 2012 CHRISTIANS ARE PEOPLE**

Have you ever wondered why Churches have problems and conflicts despite being made up of people who meet to worship and work for God? A recent family vacation may give you some insight.

My wife, three of her sisters, the husbands of these ladies, and several grown children journeyed together to a vacation home for a week of rest and relaxation. Each member of this group is a Christian, active in church, and shares a genuine love for one another. In spite of that we had some interesting “discussions” about our various religious beliefs, about acceptable personal behavior, and about individual preferences concerning where to go and what to eat. No one got mad and a good time was had by all but everyone was glad this was a week of vacation together instead of a permanent living arrangement!

Members of a local church come from diverse backgrounds, have varying degrees of religious education, and have distinct personalities that God uses to shape them into different parts of the body of Christ. In spite of their love for one another and their common Christian goals they do not always see things the same way. The often used quote “in essentials, unity; in doubtful matters, liberty; in all things, charity” is the standard used to keep the peace.

Christians enjoy working together for God even though they do not always agree on everything. And they remain glad that even in Heaven each of them has their own mansion to live in!

## **July 3, 2012    AMERICA'S WIND**

Along the coast of Maine it is not unusual to see trees with their limbs extended toward the direction of the prevailing wind or trunks bent as if in supplication to this same wind. Even the might of these great trees cannot stand before the constant pressure of the invisible, yet powerful, wind.

Jesus said, "The wind blows where it wants to blow, and you hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going: so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8 paraphrased by me). When the Holy Spirit formed the church on the day of Pentecost the arrival was described as the rushing of a "mighty wind" (Acts 2:2).

America was established with the desire to allow the "wind of God" to shape the character of the country. Provision was made for "rocks" to deny or defy the wind and live as they desired but the founding fathers knew the prevailing wind influence of God needed to shape the direction of our country.

Minority elements have decided that America needs to be "wind proof" because they think if they do not like the breeze then no one should enjoy its cooling comfort. These clueless people who want to make America "windless" fail to realize this creates an America which is purposeless and powerless. It is time people of faith stand together, like the disciples in the upper room, and plead with God to send the "mighty wind" once again.

## **July 4, 2012    FORGOTTEN GOD**

Recently I had the opportunity to talk with several people from various areas of our nation. The most disturbing aspect of our conversation was the absence of hope expressed by these people. These individuals were from various social, racial, and economic backgrounds yet they held a common belief that the political, economic, and moral compass in America was not only broken; it was beyond repair! That is an extremely troubling assumption.

Everyone has an opinion about the reason America is where it is today. I personally believe we can trace our troubles back to the time America began excluding God from the educational, entertainment, and governmental arena. Because America has forgotten God then God has "forgotten" America- "Because thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation, and hast not been mindful of the rock of thy strength, therefore shalt thou plant pleasant plants ... but the harvest shall be a heap in the day of grief and of desperate sorrow" (Isaiah 17:10-11).

I have not forgotten God or abandoned hope but I am aware that if the militant minority who is determined to make America a godless country get their way they will sow the wind but we ALL will reap the whirlwind (Hosea 8:7). And "desperate sorrow" is not something I anticipate with joy! May God help us to remember "Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance" (Psalms 33:12).

## July 10, 2012 WHERE GOD WALKS

God “treadeth upon the waves of the sea” (Job 9:8), which expresses God’s divine power. “He walketh in the circuit of Heaven” (Job 22:14), which tells of the immensity of His presence. He “walketh upon the wings of the wind” (Psa 104:3), which signifies the amazing swiftness of His operations. [Pink, Arthur W. (2010-04-05). The Attributes of God (p. 47). Kindle Edition].

God walks on water (as demonstrated again by Jesus Christ- Matt 14:25), He strolls around the vastness of Heaven, and He “hops and skips” (Jones translation) on the wings of the wind. God is not some senile old man sitting stoically on a throne in Heaven viewing the affairs and antics of mankind like a child watching ants climb over limbs and leaves. He is active in His creation and keenly concerned about what is happening to the people He created.

One of the greatest demonstrations of this love and concern was the fact that each evening God would schedule a visit with Adam and Eve to “walk in the garden with them”. He could have walked in the “circuit of Heaven” with angelic hosts or sailed through the wind with flocks of eagles (How neat that would be!) but He elected to enjoy an evening walk and talk with Adam and Eve.

A broken washing machine, a broken arm, or a broken relationship may have ruined your week. God longs to walk and talk with you and help you through this time. The main thing to remember is “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” (Amos 3:3).

## July 11, 2012 NO POWER; NO CHURCH

A violent Sunday Afternoon storm came through our area recently blowing over trees and cutting off electricity to large areas. This necessitated the canceling of our Sunday Night Church service. No power; no church is a good motto if you do not have electrical power or if you do not have spiritual power!

Many people look at Christianity as a psychological mind game that creates positive thoughts in order to produce religious change in a person. They think you can learn the teachings of Christ, adopt them in your life, and become a “good” person. The landscape of the Church is littered with people like this who put on a good front but retained their child abusive or greedy for gold ways in spite of their best mental reformation efforts.

The Apostle Paul said, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth” (Rom 1:16). It is this power of God working in a person that produces a “new creature in Christ”. Operating in the power of God brings awareness that there is no prayer is too hard for God to answer, no need too great for God to supply, no temptation too powerful for God to deliver from, and no darkness of soul so ingrained until God’s light cannot bring beauty out of the ashes.

No power; no church. No power; no change. *God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God* (Psalms 62:11).



## July 17, 2012 THINK ABOUT IT

Have you ever thought about thinking about what you think about? [*As a man thinks in his heart, so is he*-Proverbs 23:7]. Every day thousands of thoughts “ramble” through our brain. They tell us we are hungry or thirsty. They combine together to turn facts and figures into a report or a decision. They crystalize into conviction that we like or dislike someone. They tempt us to believe we can make it through that intersection before the light turns from yellow to red.

Thoughts are the track that the train of life runs on. And, like a train track, they limit where life takes us and even our eventual destination. No wonder the Bible writer said that thoughts determine the essence of a person.

The Bible declares that Love does not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; (1 Corinthians 13:5). Love is not simply doing right for a person; it also involves what you think about a person. Be careful when you always think the worst about what your mate says or does.

Paul told us 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 Corinthians 10:5). When you think wrong about God you begin to go wrong in your life. This is why Satan spends so much time producing false propaganda about God in music and media.

Today might be a good day to think about what you think about and realize the impact it has on your life.

## July 18, 2012 YOUR UNFRIENDLY FOE

You think Satan is your friend. You think he wants you to have a “good time” with party and pleasure. When God removed His fence of protection around Job Satan destroyed Job’s sheep and camels (livelihood), caused a wind to overthrow the home of his family (killing all his children), and covered Job’s body with boils. With friends like that who needs enemies?

Listen to how Jesus described Satan and those who follow him- “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it” (John 8:44). Murderer and liar; not a pretty picture.

Satan wants you to disobey God’s laws, doubt God’s love, and destroy God’s creation (you!). God offers abundant life; Satan offers agonizing pain in eternal flames. Satan lures you with lust and then destroys you with disease, divorce, and debt. He offers you the freedom of the “party life” while laughing when you suffer the captivity of drugs, alcohol, or abuse.

When a Christian friend invites you to church this week he is not trying to harass you or hinder your good times. He simply wants to offer you a different road and a different ending than the one Satan has planned for you.

## July 24, 2012 MENACES TO MARRIAGE

Almost all marital problems can be traced back to one of the “four menaces to marriage”. These marriage obstacles destroy marital bliss and undermine the foundation of families. Recognizing and avoiding these dangers can keep the honey in the honeymoon and preserve the pleasure of the partnership.

1. **Income-** Normally income problems revolve around the Amount of income (free spenders produce constant stress or marriage partners are so busy making money until they have no time to make a life), the Application of Income (one wants to splurge while the other is a saver or money is spent on pleasure instead of payments and the debtor becomes servant to the lender {Prov 22:7}), or the Authority of Income (the two who became one suddenly become two again when “my” money should be spent as I want).
2. **In-Laws-** When you marry someone you “inherit” their family which means you must juggle Thanksgiving, Christmas, and family reunions as well as deal with interfering mother-in-laws.
3. **Intimacy-** The heart is a lonely hunter seeking only love. Men seek sex while women seek romance and both crave companionship: Sorrow can be endured alone but Joy must be shared. Neither partner wants to be used, abused, or overlooked.
4. **Interest –** At first love is your focus but soon things that interest you become divided (she wants to watch cooking shows while he wants to watch “swamp people” ) or your interest in communicating with each other diminishes.

God is able to help you navigate through these menaces to marriage. Seek His help today.

## July 25, 2012 VIEWING SPIRITUAL RICHES

I do not have stacks of money to constantly count and gloat over but as a child of God I have great spiritual riches that I like to look at some times as I marvel at what God did in my life when He called me into a relationship with Him. When God called me He called me to His:

- **Flock-** I was a lost sheep that was easy pickings for the wicked wolf but the Lord took me into His flock and became my good Shepherd. As such He protects me, provides for me, and leads me into green pastures- Glory!
- **Family-** “To as many as received Him to them gave He power to become sons of God” (John 1:12). I have brothers and sisters in Christ who love me, support me, and pray for me. I have hugged people all over the world who spoke a different language and who were a different color but we were all family. What a Joy.
- **Fortune-** A mansion is being prepared for me in my Father’s House and one day I get to enjoy all His riches and glory. An inheritance that is incomprehensible!

Jesus said we were to lift up our eyes above the muck and misery of this life and see the glory He has bestowed upon us when we trusted our life and soul to Him. Let God open your eyes to the greatness of His blessings today.

## July 31, 2012 A GOD DAY

Today is a very special day- This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it (Psalms 118:24). You awoke this morning, dragged yourself out of bed, and grumbled your way through cereal on your way to what you thought would be another dull day. I can almost see God's face twitch with suppressed laughter as He anticipates the goodness He has prepared for you today.

It could be that red light that suddenly flashes on your dash. It happened that way to my brother in law recently. In the middle of "nowhere" with the outside temperature hovering around 105 the red light flashed on and the car turned off.

Standing helpless and hot beside his car as he awaited the tow truck he wondered why God had allowed this to happen when suddenly a complete stranger pulled up, offered him a cold bottle of water, and then allowed him to sit in his air conditioned truck until the tow truck came. When I arrived at the garage to pick him up so he and his family could stay at our home while the car was repaired he was so excited talking about the good things that had happened to him until it took a long time to get him to tell me what was wrong with the car.

My wife and sister in law used the time waiting for the car to be repaired to put up vegetables and jelly. It started as a red light day but it ended as a red letter day because God made it and we can rejoice in it.

## August 1, 2012 GOD FACTS

God is an awesome God who is worthy of honor and worship. Here are a few practical things about Him that will help you relate to Him better. God is so complex until it took four gospels to tell about thirty years of His existence on earth and it takes four creatures to try to describe His character (Ezek 1:10).

The eternal existence of God is so difficult to comprehend until God told Moses to simply call Him, "I AM THAT I AM" (Exodus 3:14). There is never a time God can declare "I was" or "I will be"; He always is the "I AM".

God owns every beast of the forest and the cattle on a thousand hills (Ps 50:10). His care for them is such until "Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them." (Matthew 6:26)

It is impossible for God to lie (Titus 1:2) yet with God all things are possible (Matt 19:26). God is solid as a rock yet as unseen as the wind. His voice is like the sound of a trumpet, His eyes are like flames of fire, and His garment is light (Rev 1, John 3, Ps 104).

God has all the treasures of the universe at His disposal but "if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people:" (Exodus 19:5).  
Amazing!

**August 7, 2012**

## **PLACE OF SOJOURN**

Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is in Jerusalem. And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem (Ezra 1:3-4).

These verses describe the plan of God for building His kingdom. Some were asked to leave family and friends as they journeyed to a distant land. They would impact the culture of their new country and they would influence the people of this distant land because of their doctrine and demeanor but their main purpose was to build a house for God.

Some could not make this journey and had to remain in the place where they sojourned. This did not relieve them of their responsibility, however. They were asked to contribute of their silver, gold, and goods in order to provide for those who were going forth to build God's house.

They had different responsibilities but I believe each obtained part of God's reward for accomplishing God's will in building His house in a distant land. Goers and Senders working together to accomplish God's will in missions. Each is vital to accomplish the task.

**August 8, 2012**

## **FROM GRUMPY TO GLORY**

It started with a grumpy nephew who was the Media Director of a local church. He came to my office upset because he had prepared 60 special DVDs for distribution and people were supposed to give five dollars for each DVD to help cover the extra expense of this special DVD. When he opened the donation box for the DVDs it contained \$23 dollars. After listening to him talk for a while I finally told him I felt the Lord would miraculously provide \$150.00 to help with this need.

Next morning I prayed and earnestly asked God to meet this need. Around 11 o'clock that morning someone knocked on my door. When I opened the door a lady said she had been searching for me for over an hour. God had told her to carry some money to Mike Jones and she only knew my address from my newspaper devotions. She was thankful to find me and be able to give me the check God had instructed her to give.

When I shared this story on Sunday Morning at Church it inspired several people to begin trusting God more. That led to 100 people trusting God to supply them an extra One Hundred dollars each (\$10,000!) to give to a church building project in Brazil.

It began with a grumpy nephew but it ended with many people giving glory to God. Amazing what God can do when we trust His provision and become part of His plan.

## August 14, 2012      **SUCCESSFUL WALK**

Here are three principles that will help you have a successful walk with the Lord. First, Expose yourself to the Word- *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord* (Colossians 3:16). The more you are in the word the more the word will be in you. Never turn on your TV until you have spent time in the word of God.

Secondly, Be Expectant in your Prayer Life- *But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed* (James 1:6). When you pray to God you must believe God is able to Help and God is willing to Help: *But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him* (Hebrews 11:6).

Finally, become Excited about Christ- *For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.* (Philippians 1:21). Christianity is the “Christ Life”. Everything you do should point to your worship of Christ, your work for Christ, or your witness about Christ. Christianity is not about how happy God can make you; it is about “Christ in you, the hope of Glory” (Col 1:27).

You will make a difference when you are different. Walk well and do great things.

## August 15, 2012      **PRAYER PATTERN**

My wife’s favorite Bible verses are Hebrews 4:15-16 “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:15-16). She likes these verses because they show God’s concern and empathy for her and because they list the pattern for prayer she tries to follow.

Verse sixteen first describes Who should pray “let US”. My wife constantly deals with an inferiority complex. I remind her that Elijah was a man of like passions as we are and yet God gave him great prayer answers (James 5:17). Then we are told How to pray- “therefore come BOLDLY”. God does not like whiners and complainers. He wants us to come to Him fearlessly and confidently.

Where should we bring our prayers? “Unto the THRONE OF GRACE” (Realizing the things we receive from God are unmerited and unearned) where we “may OBTAIN MERCY (for our failures), and FIND GRACE to help (God standing with us in life’s situations). And finally we learn when we receive our prayer answers- “in time of NEED” (Not simply because we want it but because God realizes its importance in our life).

My wife is a powerful prayer warrior. Her prayer pattern would be good for you to emulate in your devotional life.

## August 21, 2012      WHATEVER IT TAKES

People come to me from time to time worried about the spiritual condition of family members. Usually, they are concerned about the present wicked activities or the future eternal destination of the person. They want me to give them a simple solution that will cause the family member to start living and doing right. They routinely look shocked when I tell them it sounds like an extremely serious situation which requires the most dangerous prayer a person can pray for a family member.

The most dangerous prayer is “Lord, bring this person into a proper relationship with you no matter what it takes!” This opens the hedge of protection placed around your family member because of your previous prayers and your relationship with the Lord (For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband:- 1Cor 7:14). This may mean you must sit on the porch while your loved one throws away all of their resources, runs with the wrong crowd, and ends up eating hog food until they finally “come to themselves” (Prodigal Son). It may open the door to a dreadful disease (Moses’ sister, Miriam: Num 12:10) or even some form of captivity (God allowed this for nation of Israel). Regardless, you are willing for God to do “whatever it takes” in order to change the heart of the person.

Normally, you deal with people in love and kindness. When they are drowning and fighting your attempts to save them you do “whatever it takes”.

## August 22, 2012      TRUE TO YOUR CALLING

Writing is not what I do; it is what I am. For over forty years I have written Bible Study Courses, church and denominational newsletters, and weekly devotionals with little attention and no financial benefit. I know if I died today most people would not notice my weekly writings were missing. I do not say this to solicit your praise or encourage your pity. I believe the “itch” to write within me was given by God and He is the “editor” who requires my efforts and who will ultimately judge my work. I write because God has put it in my heart and as His servant I long to faithfully do the task He has assigned me.

I expose myself like this because I know there are multitudes of others who labor consistently, with even less notoriety that I have, to fulfill the purpose God has placed in their heart. They constantly battle the foes of tedious effort, minimal impact, and self-doubt about the effectiveness of their efforts. Yet week after week they prepare meals for bereaved families, or write encouraging cards and letters, or labor in a Sunday School class full of kids who seem not to know or care about the effort they put in each week to shape minds for good.

I salute these people who do what they do because they are what they are. Continue to be true to your God given calling. You are very important and your work is not in vain.

## **August 28, 2012      BALLOONS**

Denying problems in your life is like trying to hold a balloon under water- you will fight it all the time and from time to time the balloon will pop to the surface. The effort required to constantly try to hide your problem will consume your energy and the continually re-occurrence of the problem will encourage self-loathing and destroy the joy of life.

Facing problems realistically is a challenge for most people. People tend to minimize their problem (an alcoholic will often say he drinks just a few drinks when week after week he gets drunk out of his mind) or exaggerate their problem (if you had to deal with the sickness, spouse, situation I have then you would do worst things than I do).

The Bible tells us to confess our problems, not cover them, in order to become the person God desires us to be.- 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). Confess here means “to agree with God about the nature of your problem”. It is not just admitting you have a problem; it is admitting to God that you need His help in dealing with the problem. It is then that God can show you the root, instead of the fruit, of the problem and life changing change can begin.

If you are weary of constantly keeping your balloon under water then ask God to “pop your balloon” and help you face the real need. The difference will be dramatic.

## **August 29, 2012      GOD’S GREATNESS**

God is not obligated to help people because of their Misery (If God was swayed by the horrible misery of people then the heart of God would cause the hand of God to heal them all. But He does not. Why? Because it is not God’s purpose to do so since these miseries are His way of showing the results of mankind’s disobedience -Gen 3:).

God is not obligated to help people because of the Merits of their works- All of our good works are as filthy rags before God (Isaiah 64:6). God is totally self-sufficient. There is nothing anyone can do for God that God cannot do for Himself. For example, God created the universe in which we exist simply by speaking words!

God give mercy and benefits to people based exclusively on His own desires: [God] said to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion (Romans 9:15). There is no force or event outside of God which can compel God to do anything (If so, that power would be greater than God’s power; which is impossible).

Many people talk about God as if He were some hired servant who is not performing up to their expectations. They blame Him when bad things happen and ignore Him when life is good. What a shock it is going to be when they face God and realize God will be judging them instead of being judged by them.



## September 4, 2012 WRATH OF GOD

“Not only is there no imperfection in God, but there is no perfection in Him that is less perfect than another” (Athur Pink).

Many people look at the wrath of God as a “necessary bad part of a good God”. It would amaze them if they knew the Bible speaks about the wrath of God more frequently than the love of God. God’s wrath flows from the heart of God and the character of God with the same degree of perfection as the attributes of mercy and grace. God is the same great God when He pours out His wrath as He is when He wraps penitent sinners in His loving arms.

David sang of the wonder of God’s wrath- “He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble, by sending evil angels among them” (Psalms 78:49). Even Angels proclaim the righteousness of God’s wrath, “And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy. And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments” (Revelation 16:5-7).

It would be well to remember “... God is angry with the wicked every day (Psalms 7:11) and that Jesus said, “I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him” (Luke 12:5). God’s wrath is perfect, and you need only fear it if you provoke it, but it is real.

## September 5, 2012 OUT OF THE BOX

When you put God in a box you end up boxing yourself out of the blessing of knowing the greatness of God. You box God in when you regulate Him to Human rules: “These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself:...” (Psalms 50:21). Humans find it almost impossible to act without selfish considerations but God always does the right thing in the right way. Humans will fail you and make judgment mistakes; God will never do either.

You box God in when you reason that He reasons like you reason- “my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD” (Isaiah 55:8-9). God does not think the way humans think. Humans think with limited perception and fleshly prejudice. God is able to see the end at the beginning so God never says, “Oops”. God’s character is absolutely perfect so He never reasons wrong.

Sometimes life seems very confusing as we deal with pain, problems, and unreach potential. It is easy to doubt because God does not operate within the guidelines you give Him. These limits you put on God do not hurt God; they just limit your faith in God which limits your blessings from God. If you can think “outside the box” and let God be God it will amaze you what God can do.

**September 11, 2012**

## **LIGHTHOUSE LESSONS**

The first lighthouse built in the United States was the “Boston Light” constructed in 1716. It is located on Little Brewster Island in outer Boston Harbor. It was captured by British forces in the Revolutionary War and destroyed by them in 1776. It was reconstructed in 1783 and served with an active light keeper until it was automated in 1998. Its light can be seen for 27 nautical miles (Information obtained from Coast Guard Web site).

For a long time the work of a lighthouse was a prominent part of many sermons and Christian songs. Its importance in helping keep people from the “rocks of sin” was understood by most members of the congregation and had great imagery in songs. Most people in today’s generation know what a lighthouse looks like but they are a little “foggy” about the importance of such an antique.

Here are a few lighthouse lessons that I think all of us can understand. First, you do not build a lighthouse in the desert. The purpose of a lighthouse was to help ships avoid rocks and other dangers in foggy or stormy weather. Building a “lighthouse” within shouting distance of ten other churches because you cannot get along with other Christians is not a wise use of God’s resources.

Second, an unlit lighthouse is one hundred times worse than no lighthouse. A church which becomes a social club instead of using its resources to shine a light for God is a serious problem. Men need the light to warn them about life’s dangers. May all of us be a bright shining light on a hill.

**September 12, 2012**

## **PATHS OF THE SEA**

The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas (Psalms 8:8).

Matthew Fontaine Maury (1806-1873) was nicknamed “Pathfinder of the Sea” due to his extensive research and writing about the effect of winds and currents on the ocean. Although it is believed that mariners knew about many of the ocean currents, it was Maury who finally compiled information from hundreds of ship’s logs and published a book (Physical Geography of the Sea) in 1855 that described these “paths of the sea”.

Matthew Maury was raised by a religious father who made his children memorize scripture. While serving in the Navy he remembered Psalm 8:8 but could not understand how there could be “paths of the sea” until his investigation revealed oceanography information which has since changed the way ships travel and climate is predicted.

The “Paths of the Sea” (a well-known example is the Gulf Stream) are caused by surface winds, water temperature changes, and interaction between the ocean and the continents. The “fish of the sea” use these currents in their migration and the “fowls of the air” follow them for the food that floats along them on the surface.

Mr. Maury (a naval officer) eventually became the first superintendent of the United States Naval Observatory and was honored by being buried between Presidents James Monroe and John Tyler in Richmond, Virginia. Isn’t it amazing what can happen when a father teaches a child a bible verse?

## September 18, 2012      THE RIGHT TIME

King David had within his ranks "men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do;" (1Ch 12:32). We desperately need men like that today. Here are some times that such understanding men would warn us about.

It is time to WAKE UP (Rom 13:11) "And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." Too many in the church are asleep on duty (Remember the disciples who were supposed to pray with Jesus). As a result, the devil is destroying families, churches, and individuals. Church members need to wake up from their lukewarm living and make a difference for God.

It is time to SHAPE UP (1 Pet 4:17) "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" Many in the world have lost respect for the church and for Christians because of non Christ like actions and attitudes. It is time the Church pulled the splinter out of its own eye so it can see clearly how to help get the grain of dust out of other people's eye (Matt 7:5).

Finally, it is time to LOOK UP (Luke 21:28) "And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh." Our King is coming! Be encouraged and be ready.

## September 19, 2012      WHAT GOD EXPECTS

Here are some Christian actions that God expects from each believer. They are presented in a way to make them easy to remember so put them in your mind, meditate on them in your heart, and practice them in your living.

God expects us to GROW (2 Pet 3:18) But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

God expects us to GO (Mat 28:19) Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

God expects us to GLOW (Mat 5:14) Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

God expects us to SOW (Mark 4:14) The sower soweth the word.

God expects us to SHOW (1 Pet 2:9) But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light:

God expects us to KNOW that we have a correct relationship with Him (2 Tim 1:12) For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.

**September 25, 2012**

## **PROVERBS EIGHTEEN PRINCIPLES**

The book of Proverbs has thirty-one chapters filled with great wisdom. A great practice is to read the chapter in Proverbs each day that corresponds to the day of the month. You are about to enter into a life enriching experience!

Today I want to share a few Proverbs Eighteen Principles that will help you see the wisdom that awaits you.

Cutting a person down can be worse than cutting a person up- The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly (Proverbs 18:8).

A closed mind and an open mouth is a prescription for a red face- He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him (Proverbs 18:13).

Hurt feelings are worse than hurt bodies- The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear? (Proverbs 18:14). A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city: and their contentions are like the bars of a castle (Proverbs 18:19).

You chose your friends, you inherit your family, and sometimes the friend you pick is better than the family life drops you into- A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother (Proverbs 18:24).

Sweet to know and marvelous to contemplate- The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe (Proverbs 18:10).

**September 26, 2012**

## **FRET**

The dictionary defines fret as “to feel or express worry, annoyance, or discontent”. It is also used to describe a “fretting” baby who acts irritable and cries no matter what a parent does. In adults fretting characterizes people who worry and wring their hands about the circumstances of life. These people allow fretting to eat away their energy, wear away their peace, and corrode their confidence.

The word “fret” in the Bible comes from a Hebrew word meaning to “rub until it glows”. It literally means to allow something to rub you the wrong way until sparks fly! So if you have a burr under your saddle that is making life miserable for you and for those around you let me give you some advice that will make life more enjoyable to you.

King David wrote in Psalm thirty-seven that you should “fret not yourself in any wise to do evil” (Ps 37:8). That tells us that fretting has the potential to cause us to make wrong decisions and do wrong actions. The first thing you need to know is that fretting can do more harm than good.

David also said we were not to fret because of evildoers who prosper (Ps 37:1, 7). Becoming agitated and envious about the fact that others are not suffering like you or are prospering more than you does not help your situation.

You can fill your life with fretting or with faith. Just remember, fretting adds pain to your problems while faith brings peace to your life

## **October 2, 2012      JOB DESCRIPTIONS**

The Bible contains several sections which are basically lists of names that are extremely difficult to pronounce. In a book in which the dot of the “i” and the cross of the “t” are important (the “jot” and the “tittle” of Matt. 5:18) it is sometimes difficult to understand why God would use so much of the Bible listing these names.

There are basically three types of name groupings listed in the Bible. First is Genealogy: Showing the Family Tree of a person and their relationship to main Bible Characters or the line of Christ. Second is Fellow Workers: Describing activities and relationships of those who labor with the writer (see Romans chapter sixteen for an example). The third grouping is Job Descriptions: a good example is First Chronicles twenty seven- “Jonathan David's uncle was a counsellor, a wise man, and a scribe: and Jehiel the son of Hachmoni was with the king's sons: And Ahithophel was the king's counsellor: and Hushai the Archite was the king's companion:” (vs 32-33).

Listed in the Job Descriptions of this chapter are Treasurer, Supply Manager, Field Worker Directors, Production Managers, and Livestock Custodians. Under “helpers with the oversight of the Kingdom” are listed Office Manager, King's sons “nanny”, Advisors, Personal Assistant, “flunkies”, and General of the Army. It takes many people, with varied abilities, to run a Kingdom!

You may feel inadequate or unneeded today. Just remember, every person helping to build the Kingdom of God is known by the King and will be honored by the King. That is what He wants you to realize when He puts all those names in His Book.

## **October 3, 2012      PRAY OR PRAISE**

Although I cannot think of a specific example I will admit there are some sorry preachers on the landscape of Christianity-Men who are more interested in money than ministry or more interested in building their kingdom than in building God's Kingdom. There are even some wolves in shepherd's clothing that prey on the flock to satisfy their lust or their wicked desires.

I wish all Preachers (and politicians and policemen...) were without defect or moral failing but bad people are bad people no matter what label they put on their office door. Sometimes it is easy to be blinded by the badness of these people to the point you miss seeing the good things done by a vast majority of preachers. Today I am asking you to pray for the bad but do not forget to praise the good.

October is Pastor Appreciation Month. A good opportunity for you to do something special for those people who were called of God to lead His church- Bake him a cake, offer to keep the kids so he can take his wife on a date night, write a note thanking him for his work and listing at least one time he has impacted your life recently, or give him the universally appreciated gift of money.

The Bible declares that “praise is comely for the upright.” (Psalms 33:1). God thinks it is a good idea to praise a good preacher and so do I.

## **October 9, 2012    OTHER SIDE OF RESURRECTION**

The problem with most Christians is that they live on the other side of the cross instead of the other side of the resurrection. They become so enamored with the fact that the sins of their old life were paid for by Christ on the cross until they fail to appropriate the power that is available to live the new life because of the resurrection. As a result, their new life becomes simply a better dressed version of their old life where stress or temptation exposes their old actions and attitudes.

Being Born Again is not just a “do over”; it is becoming a new creature in Christ as a result of the goal of your life, and the control of your life, being turned over to God. It is not just realizing the penalty for your sins has been paid at Calvary; it is recognizing that the power that raised Christ from the dead lives within you and can transform you into the exact person God designed you to be.

Christianity is not about struggling to do better; it is “Christ in you, the hope of Glory” (Col 1:27). It is not being conformed to this world (adapting to society’s standards) but being transformed by a renewed mind (Rom 12:2). It is not a bone wearying, mind numbing, daily struggle to do better; it is being kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation (I Pet 1:5). It is realizing that because He lives I can face tomorrow with confidence and courage. It is living on the other side of the resurrection.

## **October 10, 2012    TOLD ABOUT**

“Imagine going through life believing you are a Christian because someone told you that you were; then you die and find out you were not.” (A.W. Tozer).

Salvation is the most expensive “item” in the world because it required the death of God’s son, Jesus Christ, to pay its redemption cost. Yet, “whosoever will” may freely accept its benefits. Paid for my God so it can be freely accepted by man; who could ask for a better plan!

Problems develop when men, in their eagerness to convey this great salvation, seek to change people’s mind instead of allowing God to change their heart. We must always be aware that Salvation cannot be taught, wrought, bought, or caught. Neither can it be inherited from parents, bestowed by church membership, or earned by meritorious or sacrificial works. It is a divine work in the heart of men by the power of God.

Salvation is not words in your ears; it is Christ in your heart (Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? 2 Corinthians 13:5). Words change your mind, Christ changes you. Multitudes of people live miserable “Christian” lives because their trust is in the reasoning of a man instead of in a redemptive relationship with Christ. Hard way to live and a bad way to die.

## **October 16, 2012    LABOR FOR WIND**

When you get to the end will the end be worth getting to? Solomon asked the same question in an intriguing way- “What profit hath he that hath labored for the wind?” (Ecc 5:16). What a vivid illustration, you labor all your life and find at the end you have been working for the wind- “Behold, they are all proud of their pride while in reality their works are nothing: the things they worshipped and worked for are wind and confusion” (Isaiah 41:29 adapted).

The Bible also declares that you “Sow the wind and reap the whirlwind”. Not only do you “labor for the wind” but you find the harvest is much worse than you had anticipated- You thought your work was more needful than time with your family and now your job does not need you and your family has no time for you! (He that troubleth his own house shall inherit the wind: Proverbs 11:29).

You can spend your life seeking passing pleasures or treasures that slip through your fingers like grains of sand or you can look for a city that has foundations whose builder and maker is God (Heb 11:10). If a reality show were made of your life would your life be a joke that people would laugh at and wave away like the wind or would you inspire others to build on the rock where stormy winds cannot destroy or defeat?

## **October 17, 2012    KEEP THE FAITH**

Keep the Faith and the Faith will keep you. Walk with God and God will walk with you. All things are possible with God so allow God to do something extraordinary using you-Grab God’s hand, become part of God’s Plan, and expect great things from a great God! (Use this simple prayer: O Lord, many times my vision is clouded by confusion and inward conflict but, always, my eyes are upon you. I trust your heart and I rest in your love and care. You are a great God and I give myself to you today with complete commitment and the unreserved yielding of my heart, soul, mind, body, and strength to your service).

A great person is one who recognizes his limitations but rises up and does the impossible in spite of them. In life, you can make excuses or you can make excellence. May God help you to do something so extraordinary until people will know that it was not you but God that did the work!

Jesus offers healing for our soul (Psalm 41:4), help for our journey, and Heaven for our home. His love brought Him to the cross, His power delivered Him from the dead, and His glory will be worshipped throughout eternity. Do not allow the world to disrespect Him because your life is mundane when it could be magnificent!



## October 23, 2012 THE WAY TO ESCAPE

*There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it (1 Cor 10:13).*

The major problem Christians face is overcoming temptations. The main reason many lost people give for not becoming a Christian is because they “could not hold out” (They do not think they could withstand the temptations they would have to face). Temptations are a problem!

The truths about temptation in our Scripture verse will help you.

- 1) Temptations are Common to man. You are not alone in your fight. Everyone has a battle with something.
- 2) Temptations are limited. God will not suffer you to be tempted above your abilities to cope with the temptation.
- 3) Temptations have a WAY out. God always provides an escape hatch so you can get away before you are defeated. The Way out of temptation is always available but you must look for the way out. Then you must leave by the way provided. God opens the door but you must walk through it. (Some people are more interested in giving in than in getting out!)

You cannot escape being tempted but you can triumph over temptations and live a victorious life. Trust in God’s care and look for God’s way out. It will always be there!

## October 24, 2012 GIVER GUIDELINES

I spend a lot of time talking with people about missions and mission projects. I also have oversight over several non-profit organizations that depend exclusively on donations for survival. Regularly dealing with contributors has taught me four things about contributors that are absolutely imperative to know.

First, Contributors only want to give to a clear understandable need. If you cannot articulate what you need and why you need it then you are not likely to get anything more than “mercy money” for your organization.

Secondly, everyone wants “bang for their buck”. People want to know that their gift is accomplishing something that has impact and meaning. If you are asking for money for God then you must show where God is at work in the need.

Third, and this is extremely important, people want to give with no strings attached. Most people who refuse to give to a need do so because they are afraid that if they give something then someone will constantly harass them about giving more.

Finally, needs touch people differently. I daily weep for people and needs in India. Most people in my community never think of India but they are concerned about other people and projects-Different people, different perspectives, and different priorities equal different giving.

If God is in the project then God will burden people with the need. Do not beg people for money; allow them to join God in His work.

## October 30, 2012 KASHAPH

The Bible is very clear about its attitude toward those who practice or promote “black magic”- Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live (Ex 22:18). There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer (Deuteronomy 18:10-11).

The word “witch” is from a Hebrew Word “Kashaph” meaning to whisper a spell, i.e. to enchant or practice magic. It is translated as “sorcerer” in Exodus 7:11, Second Chronicles 33:6, and Daniel 2:2 and was used to describe those who gave political advice to Kings and Rulers. (I will let you draw your own conclusion from that!)

“Kashaph” is lumped with fairly common sins in Malachi 3:5 “And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers (“Kashaph”), and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the LORD of hosts” (Malachi 3:5). As in America today, evidently this means sorcerers had become a common part of the culture.

The Bible commands us to “believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God:” (1 John 4:1). Advice we would do well to heed.

## October 31, 2012 NATIONAL CHARACTER

The Character of a nation is demonstrated by its attitude toward God and its actions toward the underprivileged. On both counts America is in trouble. Let me give you three examples of this gleaned from the seventeenth chapter of Proverbs.

- 1) A society that makes fun of the less fortunate and laughs about the failures of others is headed for trouble- *Whoso mocketh the poor reproacheth his Maker: and he that is glad at calamities shall not be unpunished* (Proverbs 17:5).
- 2) A society where people of character are disrespected while winning at any cost is applauded is destined for doom- *Whoso rewardeth evil for good, evil shall not depart from his house* (Proverbs 17:13).
- 3) A society which idolizes the “brazenly bad” while condemning those who stand for good is like a child playing with fire in a fuel depot - *He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the LORD* (Proverbs 17:15).

I have traveled from sea to shining sea in America and I have met some tremendous people who make me proud to be an American. Recently, however, we have allowed our national character to be defined and determined by news and entertainment personalities who seem determined to destroy this great nation with the cancer of moral corruption. We can give in or we can “man up” by determining God will be our guide and righteous living our goal.

## **November 6, 2012 CULTURE CHANGERS**

Christians can “curse the dark” or they can light a candle. The culture war in America will not be decided by who is elected as president; it will be determined by the actions and attitudes of the people of America. Presidents do not prevent people from showing Godly love, Christian character, and Spirit controlled living. It is true that the political and judicial structure in America is biased against Christian teachings and values but there are still ample opportunities for dedicated and determined Christians to make a difference in their homes, in their workplace, and at their schools.

There is nothing preventing Christian teens from sharing a Biblical truth they learned in their devotions instead of talking about the latest Twilight movie during lunch or recess. Why can't men talk about how Sunday's sermon helped them deal with an issue in their life instead of spending all their time talking about multi-millionaire sports figures winning or losing athletic activities? And who would not like to see strong godly women wearing modest clothes and exemplifying Christian character at the office and in the mall.

Culture is simply a mirror of what people believe and how they live because of that belief. Early Christians turned the world upside down by showing and sharing God in their daily life. That same opportunity is available today as you show Christ in your character, your conversation, your conduct, and your concern. You can complain about, compromise with, or change your culture. Your choice.

## **November 7, 2012 ACCOMPLISH GREAT THINGS**

Within each of us is the desire to accomplish something of meaning that will cause others to appreciate our work and recognize us as a person. This striving for significance, often called “Ego”, is a two edged sword. When Ego drives us to self-glorifying pride or the desire for power at any cost then it destroys us and those around us. When Ego energy is used to drive us out of apathy into sustained and/or sacrificial efforts for God and those around us then the results can be extremely beneficial.

Few things are more detrimental to Christian work than a self-centered individual using his influence and efforts to advance his pride, his profit, or his agenda. But that does not mean it is wrong for a person to want to do the very best work for God that they can do- I prefer to hear a singer who has practiced, a teacher who has studied, and a preacher who has taken time to hear from God before telling me how God wants me to live.

Here are three principles to guide you as you seek to do a great work for God. First, seek God's face until you are sure that it is God, not self, seeking to accomplish this work. Second, determine how God wants you to join Him in this work. Finally, give God a chance to get the Glory. It is amazing what can be accomplished when our goal is to glorify God instead of exalt ourselves.

**November 13, 2012**

## **ANTICIPATION**

When faced with a life ending sickness or a life changing situation people normally go through five stages: Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, and Acceptance. Because of Christ, I always add a final stage to this list called Anticipation. Anticipation is the place a Christian arrives at where they look in faith to God to work the situation in such a way that the sickness or circumstances brings Good- *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose* (Romans 8:28).

It is the Anticipation stage that allows us to stop fixating on where we are and start training for where we are going to be! *[Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but 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* (Philippians 3:12-14)].

Life changing sickness and situations can defeat us, discourage us, depress us, or disassociate us (at a time when we desperately need others) until they paralyze our mind and control our life. Or they can bring us closer to God as we move from Acceptance to Anticipation.

**November 14, 2012**

## **BEARING LIFE'S BURDENS**

God promises us a way out of Temptation so we can bear it and be victorious over it (1 Cor 10:13) but He only promises us that His Love will never fail us in the problems of Life (Rom 8:35-39). That is an important truth. Temptation is a conflict within us brought about by Satan or Self. Problems of life, on the other hand, come because we are human, because we sinned, and/or because we fail to follow God's instructions concerning our food, our family, our friends, or our finances.

All of us (put me at the top of the list) want to escape the pain and problems of a life problem. As the pain and the perplexity of the problem weighs on our heart and mind day after day we find ourselves more and more asking God to change our circumstances, remove the problem or, like Rebekah and Job in the Bible, we become so discouraged until we say, "I am weary of my life" (Gen 27:46, Job 10:1).

Always remember that God's Love only allows pain in our life for a reason: God does not want to raise "brats" so He disciplines us for our sin. God wants our life to be productive so He prunes the vine branches. God allows us to suffer consequences so we will realize we should not disobey or disregard His instructions in the Bible. Never allow the pain in your body to cause you to doubt the love in God's heart.

**November 20, 2012**

**THANK GOD**

I thank God that even though I have seen people fail God, I have never seen God fail people. I have wept over people's pain, worried over people's problems, and wrestled over people's perplexing personalities but I have never had a time that people's failures made me doubt God faithfulness.

I thank God that even though I have not always been faithful to God; He has always been faithful to me. I am thankful that I cannot remember a time since I came to know Christ as my Savior that I have not experienced the wonder of His presence. I have been in some extremely dangerous and difficult places all over the world but I thank God I have never had to face them alone. Over and over I have experienced the peace of God's presence and the power of His deliverance. I thank God that walking with God means God walks with me.

I thank God that when my wife was raped and almost killed that we were able to experience His overwhelming care and support through the entire process. I thank God that when my wife battled cancer that God provided friends and finances and showered us with His healing touch.

I thank God that even though I am the least of His servants yet He continually overwhelms me with His love and mercy. He is a great God and I thank Him for choosing to choose me to be one of His children.

**November 21, 2012**

**THANKS**

It is easy to get "sloppy sentimental" at Thanksgiving while ignoring the reality of the real world. It is a good thing, however, *to give thanks unto the LORD, and to sing praises unto the name of the most High*: (Psalms 92:1). So with full awareness of reality I want to share a few things for which I am thankful.

I thank God for my wife. I have counseled some bad marriages and there are even some times Princess Paula quarrels as me but I thank God I still believe he who *findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD* (Proverbs 18:22).

My wife and I do not have children but we have "helped raise" hundreds of children during our ministry and I thank God for the love they show us. They face an unstable economy and a changing moral landscape but they have been given a firm foundation to build on.

I thank God for Friends. Everyone has people they know but I thank God He has sent people into my life that know me and still love me! Friends are special and it is special to me that some people call me friend.

I thank God for you. God created the unique you, Christ loved the sinful you enough to die for you, and the Holy Spirit craves the rebellious you enough to call you to repentance and eternal life. Thank you for allowing me to share a Great God with you.

**November 27, 2012**

**CAST DOWN**

*Ps 42:5 Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.*

Three times the Psalmist uses almost the exact same words (Ps 42:5, Ps 42:11, and Ps 43:5). Must have been a really depressing time! If you, too, are facing the “winter blues” try the Psalmist Prescription to bring up a cast down spirit.

“Hope thou in God”- Look for ways to interact with God: Snack on Scripture by keeping a devotional calendar on your desk or kitchen counter and look at the verse often each day. Keep a bible near your phone so time spent on hold is not wasted. Post a verse on your bathroom mirror and the dash of your car and try to memorize a different verse each week.

Sing songs about God’s goodness- “I shall praise Him”. My wife likes classical music; I like contemporary. She listens to beautiful music as she does housework or irons clothes. I have numerous Christian stations programed into my web browser so I have internet music playing almost constantly in the background as I work. We are both amazed at the difference good music makes in our work attitude.

Focus on God’s presence- “the help of His countenance”. Knowing God is in charge will pick up a cast down soul and calm a disquieted spirit. It is hard to be depressed when you are being blessed!

**November 28, 2012**

**LONELY LESSONS**

This is a lonely time of year for many people. Cold weather cabin fever and holiday blues make for long days and lonely nights. Here are some tips to help put some joy in your journey and turn that frown upside down.

Get enough sleep. Sleep restores and provides vitality. Do not allow TV to dictate when you go to bed. The Lord made the nights longer in the winter so we would sleep more because He knew our bodies needed to recharge.

Do not spend your time feeling sorry for yourself, spend it fellowshiping with God through prayer and reading His word- *But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint* (Isaiah 40:31). The light of God will not allow the darkness of depression to overwhelm you.

Reach out to others; the holidays are a great “excuse” to make contact- *A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly*: (Proverbs 18:24). Cook a cake [let me know if you need my address!], write thank you and appreciation notes, or do something special for a shut-in or sick person. Go sit in a chair in the middle of the mall and ask God to send someone your way who needs encouragement. It will amaze you how encouraging others will encourage you!

Recharge, renew, reach out and be amazed at your reinvigoration.

## December 4, 2012 WORSHIP GIFT

The wise men could afford to bring gold, frankincense, and myrrh to worship the babe in Bethlehem but the Shepherds only had their presence and their pronouncements (They “made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child”) to give as presents to the newborn Son of God. This shows that, no matter what our financial status, each of us has something we can give this Christmas.

As you consider Christ at Christmas (remember, it is His birthday!) try to build your gift around the true meaning of Christmas- worship and adoration of God. Here are some guidelines to help give a gift of True Worship.

True Worship puts God at the Center (It is about God, not about you), includes others (the Church is an interdependent “body” with many parts), reveals your heart (the light of God exposes the real you), celebrates God’s uniqueness (Christians who are filled with God rejoice with the use of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs), and leads the worshipper to actions that demonstrate their love.

This is also a good formula to use in buying gifts for others. The gift should be about the person receiving the gift not an obligatory chore, it should consider the recipient’s position (I would give a gift to my wife I would not give to someone else’s wife), it should increase bonds of fellowship, it should bring joy to giver and receiver, and it should reveal your love. Happy gift giving!

## December 5, 2012 COMMITMENT GIFT

Tis the season to think about gifts. A gift can come from your pocketbook or from your heart; as a duty or from devotion. Your Gift can be a common gift or it can be an unusual, unique, and never forgotten gift. Since the original purpose of Christmas gifts was to show adoration for the Son of God, let’s give God the unique gift of the commitment of our heart and soul this Christmas.

- Commit the purpose and plan of your life to God- *Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass* (Psalms 37:5). Before you were conceived God had a plan for you. God’s job is to design the path; your job is to walk that path with commitment and trust. Life becomes tough when you wander from God’s path and start walking your own road.
- Commit your achievements to God- *Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established* (Proverbs 16:3). God never call you to do something you cannot do but He does expect you to do the best you can with the abilities He has given you.
- Commit your future hopes to God- *Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator* (1 Peter 4:19). God’s plan comes with a promise. The destination is worth the trip!



**December 11, 2012**

## **WHY CHRISTMAS?**

The reason for the season seems increasingly to elude people. Christmas decorations go up in October, pocket books empty out by November, and stress settles in by December! Pressure, Parties, and Picking Presents sap our strength and stress our soul and even "joy to the world" begins to grate on our nerves. No wonder the cries of the Christ child get lost in the sounds of the season.

Let me refresh your mind about why there is a Christmas. God loved the world so much until He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to be born in a stable so He could be raised by peasant parents until the age of thirty when He "went about doing good" and proclaiming the coming Kingdom of God. After living a sinless life, Jesus died in our place on a cross in order that we could find forgiveness of sins and miss the judgment of God. Faith in what Christ did for us 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.

Sadly, most of you reading this know that last paragraph by heart and it will have little impact on your attitude or your actions this Christmas season. You are trapped in the gift buying, party attending, home decorating cycle and nothing I can say will break your bondage. My only hope is that the shock of that last statement will make you pause, reflect, and apologize to God for excluding Him from His birthday party.

## **December 12, 2012 GIFT BUYING**

I talked with people in November who were convinced they had to have all their Christmas shopping done by Thanksgiving! Gift giving has become tremendously pressure packed and expensive. You no longer buy a gift to show your love and appreciation for someone. Now you are given a list that must be matched to perfection; even if that means going to five different malls in four different towns.

Let's be real about gift buying. Relax a little: Jesus did not get his "birthday" gifts until nearly two years after He was born! (The shepherds didn't bring any gifts and it was nearly two years later before the wise men came). Think about at least one "I O U" gift for your children. Then after Christmas (when the sales are on) take your child shopping and get them the gift they wanted at half price; while enjoying some quality time with your children.

Restrain a lot: The merchants and the kids are counting on you to spend a lot more money than you have but you are the one who makes the spending decisions. I would rather see a child pout for ten minutes because they received the blue instead of the red version of the toy they wanted rather than spend six months paying for something I knew I could not afford when I bought it.

Real love does not have to buy its way into a heart. Relax, restrain, and rejoice with January's bills as well as with December's gifts.

**December 18, 2012**

## **CHRISTMAS BEHAVIOR**

All year long a person's motives and manners matter but at Christmas they seem more manifestly exposed. I give bigger tips during the Christmas season. I feel free to interact more joyfully with people during the Christmas season (Only a politically correct Scrooge would resent me smiling at them and saying, "Hope you and your family have a very Merry Christmas").

I enjoy the fact that I can share love for people more freely at Christmas. Christmas allows me to pay for a complete stranger's meal without them thinking I am doing something suspicious or degenerate. Christmas lets me send cards with little "love notes" inside so I can share without shame how much I appreciate people.

Christmas behavior gives the Christmas season such powerful potential for good. Even non-religious people know that Christmas behavior visible in a generous spirit, a loving heart, and a joyful attitude are great to enjoy and would be wonderful to experience every month of the year. So let your joy show-I marvel with amazement during the Christmas season because even though I am an astonishingly bad singer I still feel free to hum Christmas music as I shop in a crowded store and people just smile in understanding at me. Give generously, unexpectedly, and without thought of reward or recognition.

If you would put "Christ in Christmas" this year simply let people see Christ in your life by the way you behave. It will be the best gift you can give.

**December 19, 2012**

## **BIRTH, BELIEVING, BECOMING**

To most people Christmas is about Gifts, Glitter, Going, and a little something to do with God. It involves packed malls, horrendous traffic, and the stress of buying something for someone who seems to need nothing but expects everything! Finally it evolves into Christmas parties, traveling to "grandmother's house" for food and presents, and trying to put up with "Cousin Clem" for a couple of hours before you can finally return home to the ball game or the movie marathon. Seeing the rear lights of "Santa's sleigh" as it disappears into the bowl games of the coming year seems the perfect end to Christmas.

In reality, Christmas is about Birth, Believing, and Becoming. Christmas celebrates the birth where God became flesh and dwelt among men so we could behold His glory. The celebration of the Birth of Christ is so important until western culture uses His birthday as the reference for all historical dates.

Christmas is about believing that unto us is born this day a savior who is Christ the Lord. He was not a prophet among prophets or an extraordinary man among many great men; He was Emmanuel, God with us, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin. Christmas is about becoming; the world changed that first Christmas morning in order for mankind to experience a world of change. God's presence became God's present so that men could become people of hope, help, and heaven. No wonder we sing "joy to the world".

**December 25, 2012**

**WHAT CHRIST GAVE**

Reflect on the mind of Christ when He became flesh and dwelt among us- “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:5-8).

This is the Gift Christ gave us:

1. **HIS ROYALTY**- He left the splendors of Heaven for the squalor of a stable so that you and I could inherit a Heavenly mansion. He who is spirit trapped himself in flesh so that you and I could stop being slaves to sin and enjoy freedom as a child of God.
2. **HIS REPUTATION**- He became of no reputation so men could stop living in “prodigal pig pens” and begin enjoying the abundant life at the father’s house.
3. **HIS RIGHTS**- The Son became a Servant so the servants of sin could become sons of God.
4. **HIS LIFE**- He who was life experienced death in order for those who were dead in sin to have life. He who had everything gave those who had nothing the chance to inherit it all- Glory! Christ has given the greatest Christmas present possible. Accept it today.

**December 26, 2012**

**WALK WITH GOD**

What happens TO a person is not as important as what happens IN a person. You cannot stop the rain but you do not have to live all wet! You can get better or you can become bitter. It all starts when you realize that change means change and you will not get change unless you are willing to change- if you do what you have always done then you will get what you have always gotten.

Discipleship is a decision to allow God to live His life through you. It is a radical life transforming action that deals with your past failures while providing power and principles that will transform a miserable existence into an abundant life. Far too many people, however, come to God desiring forgiveness for their past but with no desire or determination to commit their present life to God’s will and service. They want to use God to make things better for them but they do not want God to be God and take control of their life. If no major sickness or bad circumstances are happening in their life they would be happy if God and Satan would just leave them alone to enjoy life in their own way.

You can walk with God each day or you can walk toward a vague God in Heaven. You can trust God to forgive your sins or you can trust God with your life. The difference makes a big difference.