

### 1995 NEWSPAPER DEVOTIONAL ARTICLES by Rev. Mike Jones

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## January 4, 1995      LIFE

While I was in the hospital for some test recently I had some excellent nurses. One of them, DEBRA HOWLE, shared a short article she had written with me. I thought the article dealt with a subject that would be an excellent choice to begin the New Year so I asked her permission to use it in this article.

Life... just a short, simple, four letter word

...yet... its meaning seems to be a great mystery still unknown to man.

Why is that? Why is it that ever since God placed life on this earth, no one has yet to be able to understand it, to comprehend it, to define it?

Life?

The most powerful minds ever known have accomplished far more complicated and challenging endeavors yet, this one word that applies to all of us is perhaps the most difficult question to answer.

But why?

Why is life such a mystery?

I have so many questions.

Why is life shorter for some and longer for others?

Why is life sometimes taken away suddenly?

Why do some take their own life away?

Why do some take away the life of others?

Why does life have to end?

What does life expect of us?

Will these questions ever be answered? Perhaps not.

Maybe for each of us, life has a different meaning and we just have to search deep within ourselves to find it.

Maybe life is what we make of it.

Maybe life is what we take of it.

In my opinion, life is a gift, a gift from our Creator. We should accept this gift and cherish it like no other.

It is an extremely powerful gift and we may never know what all this gift is capable of-- The possibilities are endless!

We may not always understand why some things happen the way they do in life but, we have to accept the fact that there is always a purpose and a reason.

Life...

What do I want to do with my life?

What do you want to do with your life?

Very thought provoking article isn't it? My only comment is this- Only one life, will soon be past, only what's done for Christ will last. Let HIM be your life and live your life for HIM.

## **January 10, 1995    ACCEPTABLE GIFTS**

My wife is one of the most wonderful women in the entire world. She is also an extremely difficult person to buy presents for. All of her clothes must be tried on before they can be purchased. Perfumes and powders are out until she smells them on her skin. And, after 25 years of marriage, she has all the kitchen gadgets she can use. But it still is one of my greatest joys to give her a present she really likes.

That's the way I feel about giving service to God. I want whatever I give God to be something He likes and wants. So when I came across several Bible verses that told me what gifts pleased God I became excited.

The First verse was Psalm 51:17—"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." When I come to God with an humble and repentant heart, God is well pleased; no matter what I bring in my hand! That means God is more interested in the Attitude of my Giving than He is in the Quality of my Gift.

Do you grumble about coming to church? Do you mutter about giving your tithes and offerings to the Lord? Do you dread listening to His word proclaimed? If so, your entire church attendance is not the kind that pleases God.

The Second verse was Hebrews 13:16 "But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." God is pleased with people living together in harmony and love. In fact, He said that when we help each other we are actually helping Him! What a challenge for the New Year.

These are the gifts that please God. Give them to Him today; and every day.

## **January 11, 1995    WIFE, WORKER, WITNESS**

How does God expect you to live? Are we to be like the little Dutch boy and plug holes in the dam of life until we run out of fingers and toes? Is the Abundant life actually only abundant in the rules and regulations we have to learn in order to live correctly?

Basically, there are three things God expects out of a Christian. He wants us to be a good wife, a good worker, and a good witness.

The Good Wife comes from the fact that Christians are the Bride of Christ. Christ expects His bride to be pure (avoid the things of the world that would defile us) and chaste (Not flirting with the world or running after other loves). That's easy to understand. These are the same things you want out of you husband or wife.

Secondly, Christ expects us to be good Workers. A good Worker is someone who comes to work on time every day, who gives an honest day's work for an honest day's pay, and who does his job without complaining. Simple ideas that should apply to your place of employment as well as your place of worship.

Finally, Christ expects us to be a Witness. Witnessing is not throwing someone in a corner and making them believe as you believe. Witnessing is simply telling people the difference Christ has made in your life. Sharing answered prayers should be as natural as sharing an exciting news item from the newspaper. Sharing your love for Christ should be as easy as sharing your devotion to the Gamecocks or the Tigers. It's simple to witness when Christ is the main focus of your life.

What should you pray today? Pray that God will make you a good Wife, Worker, and Witness.

## **January 17, 1995    EXPENSIVE TIPS**

The Church recently gave my wife and I some money for Christmas. Normally, we purchase a dress for my wife and a suit for myself with money like this so the people can see where their money went. We decided to go to Charleston to shop for them. I wasn't sure if the stores would take a personal check in Charleston so I got several hundred dollars bills to take with us. My wife found her dress but I was unable to find any suit on sale that met my needs.

Before we left town we stopped at a restaurant for supper. After the meal I reached into my billfold for a tip and was about to leave when my wife told me to check out my tip. I'm used to having dollar bills in my wallet instead of hundred dollar bills and I had left the waitress a one dollar bill and a hundred dollar bill! (And my wife thought that was an excessive tip for the service we received!).

After I got over the feeling of relief for having caught my error, I began to think about another Expensive tip I had seen a man leave by mistake. A preacher left the scene of a confrontation by squealing his tires and leaving rubber on the road. He didn't know it at the time but that rubber cost him his reputation with a number of young people. A high priced tip left by mistake.

The next time you're tempted to give someone a piece of your mind or to do your own thing regardless of what others think it might be a good idea to consider the consequences. A tip given without thought can sometimes be very expensive.

## **January 18, 1995    NO ACCIDENT**

A man once caught the great preacher, George Spurgeon, and exclaimed to him excitedly about how the Lord had preserved him. As the man was walking down a London street he slipped on an orange peel and was about to fall when he felt the undergirding strength of the Lord keeping him upright.

Mr Spurgeon rejoiced with the man in the Lord's deliverance but he also declared that he had himself walked that same street hundreds of times and he was tremendously excited that the Lord had prevented him from ever slipping on an orange peel!

One of the Deacons in our Church is forever reminding us of that same fact. Many times, during testimony time, he will thank the Lord that he didn't get sick that week or have an accident. He's happy that the Lord kept him from trouble instead of delivering him from trouble.

How about you? Do you take God's goodness for granted? Do you only pray to God, or give praise to God, when you are in a difficult situation? Why don't you make today a day of thanks to God for all the things that haven't happened to you?

"By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name." (Heb 13:15)

## January 25, 1995    HAND PRINT

I keep a note pad in my bathroom at home. I also keep one beside my bed, in my car, and by the kitchen table. I never know when I will need to write down some inspiration or information.

Recently, I noticed that my note pad in the bathroom had the outline of a hand traced on it. My niece had stayed several days with us recently and she had evidently traced her hand one day while she was in the bathroom. It was very easy to tell it was her hand. It was smaller than the hand of either my wife or I and it was traced with purple ink (Her favorite color right now).

From time to time something special or unexpected happens in my life. That's when I begin to look around for the hand print of God. Sometimes it's so easy to identify until you would think it were drawn with purple ink. Other times the outline is so faint until you wonder if an angel simply laid their hand on the problem and all that's left is a tracing from stardust.

God is continually at work in the lives of His people. Sometimes it a dramatic miracle that shakes us to our very roots. Most times, however, it is simply the imprint of His hand on the incidents of life. Either way, whether in prints or power, He is showing us His love and care.

Learn to recognize the distinctive outline of God's hand as He continually protects and prods you. And Rejoice that one day you will be able to grasp the hand behind the hand print and thank Him for His wonderful works on your behalf.

## **January 31, 1995    SCRAPS**

Recently, I took a worn scrap of paper out of my wallet. Twenty-Two years ago when I first came to Grace FWB Church one of the clerks at the Post Office wrote the combination to box 1003 on a scrap of paper so I would be able to get the Church mail. At first I looked at it regularly but in the past 20 years or so I've never removed it from my wallet. But I continued to keep it there, just in case.

With the recent change to a key system at the Post Office I no longer need that scrap of paper. I'll never have to remember that combination again.

One of these days I am going home to Heaven. This old aching body that I've carried for all these years will be thrown away and a brand new body will be given me. It will be free from pain, sorrow, and sickness. In fact, I don't think I'll even remember that old body when I've received my new one.

It will be like a scrap of paper containing a useless combination. And I won't need to remember that combination anymore because I now have the key to abundant and everlasting life. That, of course, is my faith and confidence in Jesus Christ as my Savior and Lord.

Don't come to the end of life with only scraps in your hand. When you face God you will find that the combination you have used for years will no longer work. You've got to have the key. Do you??

## **February 1, 1995    GENERATIONS**

Recently my barber was commenting on hearing part of Sunday's sermon on the radio after he left his Church. He said I was really letting the members have it as I told the older members about turning duties over to the younger generation and then dropping out of active service. Then he made a comment that stuck with me. He said you can't get an older person out of a position they hold in the public sector but they're always trying to give jobs to the younger generation in Church.

He hit on a very puzzling situation. People who say they love the Lord and are committed to serving Him will look for any excuse to give up their job in the church. You get the idea they feel tied to some ball and chain situation and can't wait to get free.

It wouldn't always be bad if they would transfer the job to the younger generation and then do all they could to train that young person and encourage that young person in the job they have been given. But they will not only give their job to the younger generation; they will then begin missing services on a regular basis as if their responsibility is over. You almost get the attitude, "I had to learn it the hard way. Let them learn it that way also."

Throughout the Bible the principle of the older Generation teaching the younger Generation is stressed. How did we get away from this foundational principle? How did we get to the place that our job for God is a burden we pass to others instead of a Blessing we look forward to transferring to another generation to enable them to continue to advance the cause of Christ?

Do we need to again raise the chilling warning, "Christianity is only one generation away from extinction."?

## **February 7, 1995 TWO FOR LIFE**

There are two life changing statements EVERY person needs to make. They will change your eternal destiny as well as your earthly character. They will bring pardon to your soul and peace to your life. And, on top of everything else, I have never met anyone who was sorry they made them.

These two life changing statements are: "I am a Sinner, God" and "I Surrender, Lord". Simple, yet profoundly life changing.

"I am a Sinner, God" is your way of telling God you realize you have broken God's law as well as His heart. It admits that you don't deserve to be saved; as well as acknowledging that you cannot earn the right to Heaven. It's your way of telling God that the only hope you have of escaping the torments of Hell is the sufficient sacrifice of God's beloved Son, Jesus Christ. It's agreeing with God about your rebellious state and seeking His mercy and grace.

The Second life changing statement is "I Surrender, Lord". This is one every Christian needs to make. It signifies that you have turned control of your life over to God's direction and control. You are now willing to deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow God's plan for your life with complete confidence in His love and care. It will bring a peace and joy to your life that will pass all understanding.

Would you like to change your life? Then make these two life changing statements today- "I am a Sinner, God. Save me". "I Surrender, Lord. You are the Master and I am the Servant and from this day forward I will serve you".

## **February 8, 1995 LOVE AND SEX**

Tis the season to celebrate Love. Valentine's Day is almost upon us. Time for candy, flowers, and the free exchange of love notes. It's a great season to celebrate; if only someone would explain again the difference between love and sex.

The easy explanation is you MAKE Love and you HAVE Sex. Love is when two people share their most intimate and personal being with one another. Sex is when two people use each other to bring satisfaction to themselves. Love involves giving; sex involves taking.

Maybe the change that has taken place in today's society can best be described with this illustration.

A young boy was talking with his grandfather. He commented on the fact that his grandfather's generation did not have to contend with all the sexual diseases and complications that bother society today. He then asked his grandfather what kind of protection he used to have safe sex. His grandfather replied, "A Wedding Ring."

Grandfather remembered the words of Hebrews 13:4 "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge."

We can celebrate Love or we can be conquered by lust. The choice we make will effect our Family, our Fortune, our Fame, and our Future.

## **February 15, 1995 OLD AGE ATTITUDE**

In Psalm 71:9, the Psalmist prays a prayer that every older person prays at one time or another "Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth." This is the heart cry of someone who fears rejection or is faced with the possibility of being "put out to pasture".

It is also the problem many people face as the years go by and their mind and body begin to betray them. They have built their life on being accepted because of what they can DO. Then when they cease to have the ability to function as they could in their younger years they think life no longer has meaning.

They fail to realize that God stresses through out the Bible that we are accepted because of what we ARE; not because of what we can (or cannot) do. When we accept Jesus Christ as Savior we become a new creature. The reason that happens is because we develop a new character as a result of the indwelling Holy Spirit. What we do is simply a result of what we are.

If you feel weak and worthless in the work of God remember that God saved you because of Love; not labor. And remember the promise that He has given us in Isaiah 46:4 "And even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you."

## **February 22, 1995 THE BOX**

Once upon a time the master of a plantation came by a slave chopping wood. The slave was saying over and over again, "O Adam. O Adam." The Master asked the Slave, "Sam, why do you say 'O Adam' all the time while you work?"

Sam, the Slave, replied, "It's because of Adam's sin that I'm having to earn my living by the sweat of my brow and I'm just blaming him."

The Master thought for a while and then said, "Sam, I want to see some changes around here. Come up to the main house with me."

Once there, the Master told Sam his days of being a slave were over. He was to have anything he desired as he lived the life of ease. The only stipulation was that Sam couldn't open a box on the hall table.

Sam really enjoyed his new life for a while. Sleeping late, eating like a king, doing anything fun that came to his mind. Soon, however, the new wore off and Sam became restless. Every time he would pass that box in the hall he would wonder what was in it. Finally, when the master was away, he went into the hall and opened the box.

As soon as he did a bee flew out. Try as he might, Sam could not catch that bee. Soon the master returned home and the first thing he did was shake that box. When he did not hear the familiar buzz of the bee he knew that Sam had disobeyed his instructions and opened the box.

Sam was immediately sent back to the fields as a slave. Now when the Master walks by Sam as he works he hears, "O Sam. O Sam!"

There once was a garden where man met with God every day. The only stipulation on man's life of ease was that he not eat of a tree in the midst of the garden. But that is another story.



## **February 28, 1995 WRONG HOUSE, RIGHT MAN**

A friend of mine was visiting some new church contacts recently. When he arrived at one home he found that he had been given bad instructions and he was at the wrong home. Trying to make the most of an awkward situation he decided to ask the young girl who answered the door about her church attendance.

About this time the man of the house came to the door to see what was going on. When my friend asked him about his Church attendance he noticed an unease that come over the man. This led my friend to investigate a little further and he found the man had drifted away from a relationship with the Lord. Just a short time of prayer later another prodigal had come back to the loving arms of the Heavenly Father.

Isn't it amazing how the Lord can lead, even if it's sometimes to the "wrong" house? That's because the Lord's ways are not our ways and His thoughts are not our thoughts. We may have one thing in mind but the Lord may have something else all together that He wants to accomplish.

Remember that the next time you can't understand why certain circumstances are happening in your life. You may think everything is all wrong but God may have a plan to make it end up just right.

## **March 1, 1995 LOVE IN ACTION**

We live in a society in which Love has come to mean either a sexual encounter or a mushy emotion that causes a person to act somewhat irrationally. Let me you show you how to really understand love as defined in the word of God.

(1 Cor 13:4-8) Love is patient (Long suffering), love is kind (Considerate). It does not envy (It desires good for others), it does not boast (It is more than words), it is not proud (Humbleness). It is not rude (Courteous toward others), it is not self-seeking (Serving instead of selfish), it is not easily angered (Has an understanding attitude), it keeps no record of wrongs (Lives with a forgiving heart). Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth (Sincerely wants the best for you). It always protects (Always wants to keep you from harm), always trusts (Believes in you), always hopes (Confident of your commitment), always perseveres (Is the same in sickness and in health; for better or for worst). Love never fails (It is a permanent force in your life).

This is the kind of Love God has for you. It should be the kind of love you have for others. It is not produced by your glands or the stars on a summer evening. It is produced in your heart by the Spirit of God and becomes a life changing force in your relationship with your family, your friends, and the Lord God.

## **March 7, 1995 RUBBER BAND CONVICTIONS**

We live in the day of "Rubber Band Convictions". No longer do we stand, and having done all, stand. Instead of being a rock in the midst of a stormy sea we are driven with the wind and tossed like the foam on the waves. Instead of steady service we, like the rubber band, stretch our convictions to fit the circumstances we are in at the moment.

Rubber band convictions justify live in lovers as simply a sign of the times instead of calling it adultery and fornication.

Rubber band convictions sit hour after hour in front of a TV which is spewing cursing, corruption, and sex and never consider turning it off. Then you self righteously moan the next day at work about how bad the world is becoming.

Rubber band convictions call Sunday the Lord's Day; unless company comes, or you get tired and think a day at the lake would relax you much more than an hour in Church; or you find you haven't been able to do all the shopping you want to do during the other six days of the week.

Rubber band convictions believe in tithing your income; unless finances are a little tighter than normal this week, or you don't like something someone at the Church did or didn't do.

Many many people have rubber band convictions today. I wonder what they are going to do when the rubber band stretches so tight until it breaks. Maybe they'll see that rubber band convictions is just another way of saying lukewarm Christians; and lukewarm Christians make God sick.

## **March 8, 1995 FORGOTTEN SUIT**

As a former Pastor, he was excited to be given the opportunity to return to his former church. He was assisting in the wedding of one of the young girls he had helped raise while pastoring and he was almost as proud as the parents. The long drive to get to the church was well worth the effort as he visited with former friends and members during the rehearsal time on the night before the wedding.

It was not until the next morning, as he began to prepare for the wedding, that he realized he had forgotten to put his suit in the car! And he didn't think this young girl would be excited about his performing the wedding in blue jeans and sports shirt.

He thought about borrowing a suit from the father of the bride but he was much smaller than the Pastor. Closer and closer came the time for the wedding as he ran down the list of everyone he knew in the community who might be his size. Finally it came down to a neighbor who was confined to a wheel chair. When he arrived at his home to ask if he could borrow a suit he found the neighbor in the wheel chair only had one good suit and he had already put it on as he prepared to go to the wedding.

Acting with all the zeal of a Good Samaritan, the man in the wheel chair took off his suit, gave it to the Pastor, and wore a sports coat to the Wedding. And the wedding went off without a hitch.

Jesus told a story about a wedding in which someone forgot to wear a wedding garment. Only in Jesus' story the man who did not have a wedding garment was cast into outer darkness. Remember, when it's time to go to the wedding supper of the Lamb it will be too late to borrow a suit. You need to get your Robe of Righteousness today.

## **March 14, 1995      COUNTING STARS**

God telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names.(Psa 147:4)

There are approximately 1 sextillion (1,000,000,000,000,000,000) stars in the galaxies of the visible universe. And God knows the name of each of them!

It used to bother me when I thought about the fact that at 11am on Sunday Morning millions of people in thousands of church were all praying to the Lord at the same time. But that is no big deal to a God who knows the name of 1 sextillion stars.

I used to wonder if I could ever “slip through the cracks” with God since there are nearly 5 billion people on the earth. Would it be possible for God to forget me or fail to protect me from Satan’s attacks or miss a need that I have? A Billion only has 9 zeros but God knows the name of a sextillion (21 zeros) stars! He won’t forget me or lose me.

Not only does God know the names of the stars; He also measures them with the width of His hand- (Isa 40:12) Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, or with the breadth of his hand marked off the heavens? Who has held the dust of the earth in a basket, or weighed the mountains on the scales and the hills in a balance?

That is the same hand that Jesus said would be my place of protection from anything life could throw at me (John 10:28-29). So the next time you wonder if you can count on God, look up at the stars; God knows them, and you, by name.

## **March 15, 1995      METHODS OF SERVICE**

Christian Service is the most important work anyone can do. Sometimes people become confused, however, because of the different methods that are used in Christian service. Let’s look at four of the main illustrations used in the Bible to describe Christian Service.

1) FARMER- A Farmer sows seed and trusts God to give the proper weather to cause it to grow. He must be a man of Faith because most of the circumstances he encounters are beyond his control. This is the Christian worker who uses Gospel tracts, Radio, and books to spread the seed of the Gospel; trusting God to produce a crop.

2) LABORER- A Laborer is someone who does a job with the expectation of pay for his work. He assumes that if he works hard he will be paid well. This is the Christian worker who teaches classes, sings in the choir, and does all the “odd” jobs around a church with the expectation that people will appreciate their work and God will use it to build the Church.

3) MERCHANT- A Merchant is someone who trades for a living. He trades a produce for a price or he trades a service for an income. This is the Christian worker who is people oriented. They trade a meal for the chance to invite someone to church or they trade encouragement for a change to evangelize.

4) Finally, there is the SOLDIER- A Soldier must be given specific orders and engages a definite enemy. He does not entangle himself with the affairs of this world. This is the full time Christian worker who makes the sacrifices needed to defend, protect, and advance the Christian faith.

Four methods of service. Use the method God had given you.

## March 21, 1995      SAINT'S SPEECH

The prayer of every saint of God should be like the one found in the eighth verse of Psalm 71- "Let my mouth be filled with thy praise and with thy honour all the day."

In order for this to be a reality there are three aspects of Speech that every Saint should recognize and incorporate into their daily speech. SPEECH SHOULD:

1. Have a **GOAL**-(Mat 12:35-37) "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. {36} But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. {37} For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."

Many times people talk simply because they like the sound of their own voice or they fear the silence of a situation or they desire to dominate the discussion. When you realize you are accountable for your words it will make you consider before you speak them.

2. Be **GUARDED**-(Psa 141:3) "Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips." Many many times we wish we could take back words about a half second after they leave our mouth. But we all know it's too late then. Ask God to engage your mind before you put your mouth in motion. You will be amazed at the trouble it will prevent.

3. Be **GRACIOUS**- (Eph 4:29) "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers." Words can instruct or destroy. Pray for God to make your words wonderful instead of wounding.

## March 22, 1995      SPEECH SCRIPTURES

All of us should be aware that Speech can either Instruct or Destruct depending on how we use it. If you don't believe that think of the difference it would make if you cuddled up to your wife and whispered "I hate you" instead of "I love you" in her ear!

If you have tongue trouble then read and heed these scriptures every day. You'll be amazed at the difference it will make.

Your speech should bring comfort to the troubled-(Isa 50:4) The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned.

Your Speech will reveal the truth of your relationship with God-(James 1:26) If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.

Running your mouth increases your chances of running into sin-(Prov 10:19) In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise.

(Prov 26:20) Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth.

The Tone of your speech is as important as the words of your speech-(Prov 15:1) A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.

Speech is a deadly weapon. Handle it carefully-(Prov 18:21) Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.

God gave you two ears and one mouth. Remember that-(James 1:19) Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:

## **March 28, 1995      GOAT POLICE**

While engaged in my morning prayer time recently, I heard a car come roaring into the church parking lot. It stayed a minute, roared away, and then came right back. My curiosity overcame my spirituality and I went to the door to investigate.

Sitting beside my front porch was a police car with both front doors open and no one in sight. I eased out the door, trying to be very careful, because I didn't want to end up in the middle of a gun battle or hostage situation.

About that time two police officers came around the corner of the house. Looking a little sheepish, they told me not to worry, they were just chasing a goat that had wandered downtown. They were trying to herd him back to the country and he had decided to stop on my front porch.

Jesus said that one day He would also be a "Goat Policeman". He said He would "gather all nations: and separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from his goats" (Matt 25:32). The sheep would inherit the kingdom but the goats would be cast into everlasting fire.

According to this scripture, the difference between sheep and goats was the way they treated Christ and His people. Using that standard, if the "goat police" saw you would they consider you a Sheep or a Goat??

## **March 29, 1995      BROUGHT IN FOOD**

I was eating lunch at a local restaurant recently when I noticed an employee of another restaurant bringing food to the employees of the restaurant in which I was eating. It made me think twice about the food I was eating when I realized the people who were serving it were eating from someplace else!

I asked the employees about it and they said they just got tired of eating their own cooking and wanted something else for a change. That was understandable but it still make me pause and think about my meal.

A similar situation takes places in our relationship with God if we aren't careful. The Prophet Jeremiah said the people of God "committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (Jer 2:13). In other words, they had not only forsaken God, they had "Brought in" something else to replace God.

Maybe it was wealth, or pleasure, or recreation; but, whatever it was, they had brought in something to satisfy their hungry because they weren't satisfied with God. How sad that they had given up a continual fountain for a broken bottle. How sad that they were spending all their energy and time trying to find satisfaction with something brought in instead of eating the meal God had already prepared for them.

Don't give up the bounties of God for brought in food. Brought in food may satisfy for a moment but it will eventually lead to destruction and despair. Eat what God gives you, it will indeed be the bread of life.

## **April 4, 1995 SALVATION FAITH**

I was not raised in Church. I was given moral values as I grew up but I was completely ignorant about most of the doctrines and beliefs of the Church. That's why it was so difficult for me when I first came to accept Christ as my Savior. Some people would tell me to "hang on". Others would tell me to "let go". And still others would tell me to "Give God my heart" but I found it difficult to do self-surgery.

Finally, someone told me to "Trust Jesus". That's what I did and I have been living by "trusting Jesus" ever since. Let me tell you what that really means.

First, It means a PERSONAL TRUST in the fact that Jesus Christ died to pay your sin debt to God. The wages of sin is Death and Jesus gave His life to pay that debt for you. You must personally trust that He died for YOU in order to pay YOUR debt.

Second, it is a CONFIDENT SURRENDER to Christ. It is yielding control of your life to God's Plan and Power trusting in God's love to always lead you in the right way. It is turning away from your old sinful habits and character and beginning a new life under God's Direction.

Finally, It is a FIRM RELIANCE on God's Power to give you victory over sin, self, and the Devil. This is not based on your emotion, circumstances, or ability. This reliance is based on your belief that God is able to Help you and God is willing to help you.

That's what it means to Trust Christ for Salvation. Have you done so?

## **April 5, 1995 NO TIE**

It was another busy Wednesday morning. Sermons to prepare, letters to answer, phone calls to return, and newspaper articles to write. Most mornings I put on my tie first thing in the morning but this Wednesday I knew I would be working in the office all morning so I decided to put off putting on my tie until later. Besides, it was a beautiful spring day and I wanted to really enjoy the weather.

Then the phone call came and I found my relaxed morning was not going to be as relaxed as I thought. I started scurrying around trying to finish those projects that had to be completed right away. Among that list was delivering my weekly article to the newspaper office.

I normally just walk in, drop my article in its slot, and ease right out again. No need for a tie to do this. As soon as I walked in the door, however, one of the secretaries grabbed me and said they had to have a photo right away. I told them I wasn't dressed for a photo but that didn't faze anyone. So now I'll smile out at people from my column each week tie-less!

Jesus said His return would be in the blinking of an eye. One day, as you rush around with life's activities, Jesus will return for His Bride. There won't be time to find a tie; or to get right with God. That means you need to live right every day. Because every day may be the day you meet the Lord face to face; ready or not.

## **April 11, 1995 CHECKING TUNNELS**

Robert Hughes tells of his father who was a coal miner in the northeastern hills of Pennsylvania. His job was to check the mine for deadly methane gas before the rest of the men entered the mine to work. Each morning he took his safety light and descended alone into the mine. There he would check every tunnel and shaft to determine if there was any methane gas present. If the safety lamp's light would flicker, he would run as fast as he could because an explosion from methane gas was possible at any time.

After checking the mine, he would walk up to the surface and the miners would gather around expectantly waiting for him to announce, "It's ok, it's safe, you can go down into the mine. I've checked it for you."

That's what Christ did for us on a dark Friday afternoon. He died as payment for our sin debt and entered into the dark corridors of death. There He conquered our enemies; death, hell, and the grave. Now when the darkness of death begins to envelope us and we fear what awaits us we simply look to Jesus who tells us not to fear. He has gone ahead of us and now we have no reason to fear. The sting has been taken from death, the fear has been taken from that tunnel that troubles us. It's ok, Jesus has been there ahead of us. What a wonderful Lord we serve!

## **April 12, 1995 THE MASTER'S THERE**

Rev James Harnish tells the story of a doctor who was visiting a dying patient. As the doctor prepared to leave, the sick man inquired if he would get well. When the doctor hesitated the man knew his situation was serious. Fear began to grow in the man as he began to look death in the face.

About that time the doctor heard a scratching at the door. As he opened it a dog sprang into the room and leaped on the doctor with delight. The doctor had left his dog in the car but he had somehow gotten out and came to find the doctor.

Turning to his patient, the doctor said, "This is my dog. He has never been in your house. He did not know what was inside here. He only knew that his master was inside and so he jumped in without fear."

"That's it," said the man. "I don't have to fear what is on the other side. Jesus is my master and he waits on the other side of the door of death. Whenever He opens the door, I can pass through without fear into His presence."

When YOU come to the door of death, and it's opened by your master, will you leap in with joy or scream with agony? If Jesus is your master then you can rest in the fact that He had already gone through the door of death and He has come back victorious. There is nothing to fear if He is your master. He awaits you with open arms.



**April 19, 1995**

## **BLAMING BLAME**

We were cleaning up after our very most excellent Easter Play (It was so good until I thought I would use one of the young people's descriptions!). In the process of moving one of the props I hit the front door of the fellowship building and put a dent in it. And of all things, my wife was not at church right then.

What does my wife being at church have to do with a dent in a door? If she would have been there then I could have found some way to blame her! But we finally thought of a way to blame her anyway. We finally concluded that it was my wife's fault that I put the dent in the door because she should have been at church in order to tell me to be careful so I wouldn't have been careless enough to hit the door and put a dent in it!

Sounds silly doesn't it? Yet, that same situation happens all the time as people blame their problems on other people or difficult circumstances. One of the primary principles of the Christian faith is the fact that you need to repent of sin as you place Faith in Christ for the Forgiveness of sin. That means you acknowledge that YOU are the problem that God needs to correct.

Am I saying that you may not have been abused or rejected or misused by others? Absolutely not! What I am saying is that you must stop blaming them because you do wrong and come to Christ asking Him to Help YOU. Accepting Christ and receiving the power of the Holy Spirit enables you to experience God's cleansing Love. Then you can stop blaming Blame and start living life as a new creature.

## **April 25, 1995 THE TWINKLING OF AN EYE**

Some people are great procrastinators. They put everything off until the very last moment. They pay their taxes at midnight on April 15th. They do their Christmas shopping the week before Christmas. Or they pack for vacation the night before they are to leave. Does that sound like you?

Let me tell you one thing, however, you should never put off; that is making sure everything is right between you and God. The Spirit of God could cease calling you because of your rebellion and hardness of heart and that would be awful. Or you could have a sudden sickness or an accident that took your life before you were able to prepare to meet God. Or the rapture could take place today.

The Rapture is Christ coming back to claim His bride, the Church. His coming back will take place "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye". The twinkling of an eye is a time so quick until the eye does not recognize what takes place during that time (The same principle that turns still pictures into a motion picture- they move pass you eye so fast until you can't see the pause between them). That means if you are unsaved you will be looking as Christians one moment and they will be gone so quickly until they will simply seem to disappear.

Putting off salvation is the most dangerous thing you can do. You are not guaranteed tomorrow. You are not promised that God will give you advance warning of your death or of the rapture. So you better get ready to meet God today; because you won't have time to do anything "in the twinkling of an eye"



**April 26, 1995**

## **WEARY IN THE WAY**

(Gal 6:9) And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

Sometimes Christians get weary as they work for the Lord. Today I want to look at 4 factors that produce this weariness and then show some encouragements to help you overcome the weariness.

### **SOME FACTORS THAT TEND TO WEARY US:**

1. The Vastness of the task- We are so few and there is so much work to be done. Sometimes we are just overwhelmed when we see how large the fields are that we need to harvest.
2. The Unconcern of the Lost- We invite people to come to Church or to come to Christ and they look at us as if we are crazy. Or they tell us they will be in Church on Sunday and allow anything from a hang over to a family visit to keep them away. They just don't seem to care that they are fast falling into the pits of Hell.
3. The Unfaithfulness of the Saved- Ninety percent of the work in the average church is done by twenty percent of the members. People who claim to be dedicated Christians won't teach or tithe or even attend Church regularly.
4. The Slowness of visible results- We look back at hard work and see extremely little fruit. We want to change the world and we can't even win our neighbor.

### **SOME FACTORS TO ENCOURAGE US ABOUT OUR WORK:**

1. We are probably accomplishing more than we realize. That is why we walk by faith.
2. Every servant stands or falls to his own Lord- We are not to compare ourselves with others. God expects us to do the task He has given US. It's not a contest; it's a commitment.
3. A sovereign God sits on the throne and right will prevail. In Due Season we will reap and be rewarded. Hold on, God is still in control.

## May 9, 1995 SEEKING GOD

The Preacher had preached long and hard about the need of having a close relationship with God. After the service a young man came to the Pastor and said he really wanted to know the Lord but he didn't know what he needed to do. The Pastor was on his way to a baptismal service at the local creek so he asked the young man to come with him.

At the creek the Pastor asked the young man to come with him as he entered the water. Once they were into deep water the Pastor grabbed the young man and held him under the water. When the bubbles began to come up the pastor let the young man up for a moment and then pushed him back down again. Again the bubbles started coming up and the young man was raised to the surface.

Then, for the third time, the pastor forced the young man below the water. When he finally came to the surface the young man was strangled and grasping for air. Looking at the Pastor he asked why he had continually forced him below the water.

The pastor replied, "You wanted to know how to have a close relationship with the Lord. When you seek the Lord the way you sought air when I forced you below the water; then you will find him"

*(Deu 4:29) If thou shalt seek the LORD thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul.*

## May 10, 1995 WORDS FOR WIVES

A lot of good things will be said about wives and mothers this week as we give them some of the honor they so richly deserve. They need our praise; and they should get it much more often than once a year!

Along with this Praise, however, are some principles taught in the word of God that EVERY wife needs to know. In fact, Paul told the older women that it was their responsibility to teach these things to the younger women in order to keep the word of God from being brought into reproach.

Many Christian women today have been caught up in the modern philosophy that puts the feelings and pride of the woman ahead of her responsibility to God and her family. By doing so, these women are unconsciously saying that God's word is incorrect in it's guidelines for mothers and not relevant to today's situations in society. That is an extremely dangerous position to take since it puts your opinion above the eternal, unchangeable word of God.

With that in mind, let's see what guidelines Paul said the older women were to teach to the younger women to enable them to be the wife God intended. These are taken from Titus 2:3-5 in the Amplified Bible.

"Bid the older women similarly to be reverent and devout in their deportment, as becomes those engaged in sacred service, not slanderers or slaves to drink. They are to give good counsel and be teachers of what is right and noble, So that they will wisely train the young women to be sane and sober-minded (temperate and disciplined), and to love their husbands and their children; To be self-controlled, chaste, homemakers, good-natured (kindhearted), adapting and subordinating themselves to their husbands, that the word of God may not be exposed to reproach (Blasphemed or discredited)."

## **May 16, 1995 HATING THE HATER**

I recently read an article about how upset a columnist was about how certain groups and individuals were using their influence to stir up hate like the hate that blew up the bomb in Oklahoma. He waxed eloquent about how such fringe groups were using their words as weapons and then were amazed when someone took them at their word and made weapons.

As he continued to berate these people for holding a viewpoint contrary to his viewpoint, he decided the best thing he could do was consign everyone of this persuasion to destruction! And he ended by saying he would pull the switch that sent the Oklahoma bomber to the lowest level of Hell!! Sounds to me like a painfully good illustration of the very thing he was trying to condemn.

As Christians, we have learned to hate the sin while loving the sinner. We hate sin and its consequences, and it would indeed be a joy to consign sin to the lowest part of Hell; but we want to make every effort to save the sinner before we do so. Throwing out the baby with the bath water may get rid of the dirty water; but it sure is rough on the baby!

Be careful how you view people who do wrong. You may end up hating the hater; and find yourself together in the same boat.

## **May 17, 1995 THE REAL ENEMY**

The wife of the Drunk thinks the problem is that her husband just doesn't have the strength to turn down a drink. If she could just be the kind of wife he wants then he would love her more than he loves alcohol and stop drinking.

The father of the drug addict thinks the problem is will power. If his son would just buckle down and stop trying to run away from life he could conquer his drug problem. Then he could become the son the father has always wanted.

The teacher of the student whose only goal is fun, sex, and excitement believes the problem is ignorance. If she could just give her students the proper education they would learn to have "safe sex", say no to drugs, and eventually turn into responsible adults and successful contributors to society.

It's time we learned the heart of the problem is the problem of the heart. Christians know that we "wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." (Eph 6:12). The real enemy does not live in their hands or their head, it is the evil that controls their heart. And God is the only one who can change the heart.

If you try to change people with affection, admonition, or education you will get many headaches from butting your head against a brick wall. Recognize the real enemy; and realize only God can defeat him.

## **May 24, 1995 FALLING LEAVES**

A woman with cancer was told that she only had a few months to live. She asked her Pastor to break the news to her 10 year old son. The Pastor took the boy outside and tried to find the right words. As they sat under the shade of a tree in the back yard the Pastor finally said, "Son, you know that your mother is very sick. We've done all we can do and it appears that by the time the leaves on this tree fall you mother will leave this life."

The boy seemed to accept it well but the Pastor noticed that often when he would visit during the summer the boy could not be found. One day the Pastor asked the mother where the boy was. She replied, "I don't know, Pastor. He spends a lot of time outside now."

The Pastor went outside and called for the boy. Finally, he heard him answer from the top of the shade tree in the back yard. Walking over to the tree, the Pastor asked the young boy what he was doing up the tree. He replied, "I'm tying the leaves on this tree, Preacher, so they won't ever fall!"

Many people wish they could "tie the leaves in the tree" when it comes to death. Death, however, is an appointment we all must keep. No matter what we do we can't keep the leaves from falling. Instead of spending our time tying the leaves on the tree, we must make preparation for the time when death knocks on our door. We can't stop death, but, by resting in Christ, we can be ready to meet it.

## **May 31, 1995 GAS LESSON**

It was one of those pity party days. The first of the month bills had to be paid. We were out of groceries and company was coming. And when I started to town I noticed I was almost out of gas.

As I stood at the pump putting in ten dollars' worth of gas (and thinking how expensive gas had become with the summer months) I glanced over at a log truck that was filling his tank. As my pump slowly approached the ten dollar mark I noticed that his pump was just about at the one hundred dollar mark!

Curiosity got the best of me and I stood there to see if he would make it to one hundred. Sure enough he did (I had never seen a meter go past one hundred dollars before). Then he laid the hose down, crawled across the truck and began putting fuel in the tank on the other side! When I finally went to pay for my gas he was approaching the two hundred dollar mark.

I hope you got the same lesson I received that day. If you think you have troubles, look around. It won't be long until you realize your problems are not so big after all. With just a little bit of thought you'll see many reasons to count your blessings instead of party with pity.

## **June 6, 1995   WHY YOU DO IT**

Have you ever asked yourself why you do things the way you do them? Have you every wondered what prompted someone at home, work, or school to act the way they act? After losing and gaining 100 pounds on diets, have you finally realized that looking in the mirror is not enough to make you stop eating?

The Key to all of these situations is determining what motivates a person. Motivation is the driving force in a person's life and relationships. It determines what we do; and how often we do it.

Advertisers learned this lesson a long time ago. They learned that their job is not just to get you to buy a single soft drink. They must get you to believe that that type of soft drink is the only one you should buy. They want that soft drink to become a way of life for you.

This also explains the lack of commitment and dedication by many Church members. Their motivation is to be served by God and the Church instead of being servants of God and workers in the Church. The desire of their heart is self-fulfillment instead of Godly worship. That also explains the friction and factions that disturb Churches; actions are determined by self-interest instead of scriptural principles.

Ask yourself this question, why do I go to Church each week? An honest answer will tell you a great deal about your relationship with the Lord.

## **June 7, 1995   WHEN KIDS MISBEHAVE**

Many of you are approaching Vacation Bible School right now. One of the problems you will face is the fact that the children will not always be as well behaved as you would like. It may be helpful if you recognize the four main reasons kids misbehave.

1) Desire for ATTENTION- When I make funny noises everyone pays attention to me; suddenly I'm the center of attention and I like that.

2) Determination to have POWER- I'm the boss at my home and I'm determined to show everyone that I can get my way here also.

3) Deeds of REVENGE- John called me a name so I called him a name back. Susy made a face at me so I threw a piece of paper at her.

4) Declaration of INABILITY- I can't read so I'll disrupt the class so no one will find that out. I don't know the answers to the questions so I'll distract the teacher so she won't ask me.

If you see these problems beginning to manifest themselves take a long look at your teaching methods. Include the children in the lesson so they will all get attention. Be on time and be ready with the lesson so the pupils will know who is in charge. Use revenge times to teach relationship attitudes. And be aware that each student has unique abilities and disabilities; Start where they are and build from that place.

Vacation Bible School is not just about teaching lessons; it about teaching life under the principles and power of Christ. Hope you have a great one this year.

## **June 13, 1995 SENTENCE SERMONS**

From time to time I like to share some of the sayings I pick up from various books and newsletters. Hope they will bless and inspire you.

Two people cannot hate each other if both of them love God.

Choice, not chance, determines human destiny.

Joy is the by-product of obedience to God.

One who believes he cannot is just about always right.

The difference between catching men and catching fish. You catch fish that are alive and they die. You catch men that are dead and they are brought to life.

Men may spurn our appeals, reject our message, oppose our arguments, and despise our persons; but they are helpless against our prayers.

Where death finds you is where eternity keeps you.

Have you paused in your busy schedule to praise God for your busy schedule?

What is the difference between taxes and hell? Hell is not inevitable!

If we believe as we should; why do we live as we shouldn't?

No one is so old until he cannot live another year, nor so young until he cannot die today.

Sin will always take you farther than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay, and cost you more than you are willing to pay.

## **June 14, 1995 HOW TO GO TO HELL**

Many people do not want to believe that God sentences people to the eternal fires of Hell but this is clearly taught in the Word of God. Sinners who don't seek forgiveness for their sins through faith in the shed blood of Jesus Christ will face eternal separation from God. And if that does not bring fear and dread to your heart then you are indeed a very foolish person!

It doesn't take a genius to go to hell. It doesn't take fame or fortune or a life of intense sin. The gate to hell is opened by one of three keys- Rebellion against God's Will, Ignoring God's Conviction, or Rejecting God's Call.

What does it mean to Rebel against God's Will? The Children of Israel who left Egypt for the Promised Land rebelled against God's Directions and died in the Desert. One third of the angels rebelled against God's authority and were cast out of Heaven.

How about ignoring God's Conviction? It happens almost every Sunday in many churches. People hear the Gospel, the Holy Spirit convicts their heart, and they decide to start thinking about the Sunday afternoon ball game or the hypocrites in the Church in order to quench the Spirit.

Well, what about rejecting God's Call. These are the people who hold to the back of the pews or ease out of Church when the invitation begins. They know God is calling them but they deliberately decide to go their own way instead of bowing before God.

Going to Hell is not a pleasant thought, or experience! Don't rebel or ignore or reject God's call. Doing these things is the way to go to Hell and I don't think that is your goal.

## **June 20, 1995 IRON POLISH**

I was eating supper recently with my wife's uncle when he told me an interesting story about how his wife once ironed his shirt. It seems the can of spray starch and the can of lemon furniture polish were side by side on the shelf and looked a lot alike. That was the reason his wife ironed his shirt using the furniture polish instead of the starch!

He said he did not have to worry about body deodorant when he wore that shirt because everyone said he smelled like lemon! And when he sat down beside a table he had simply to rub his arm across the table and it had a sparkling shine!

I know some people who have made the same mistake this lady made with their spiritual life. They have mistakenly used religious activity, good works, and social acceptance instead of salvation. It produces a pleasant smell for awhile and it even seems to make life around them cleaner. But it is the wrong answer to their problem and will get them into trouble instead of fixing their situation.

Sometimes the devil hides his substitutes in packages that look a lot like the real thing. But furniture polish is not starch; and religious activity is not salvation. You may not notice the difference but the people around you will; and so will God.

## **June 21, 1995 CLOGGED DRAIN**

My wife's constant nagging finally paid off. I decided to find out why her kitchen sink was draining so slowly. When I disconnected the pipe from the sink to the drain line I found it so clogged until we both wondered how it had drained any water. Twenty five years of accumulated grease and dirt had formed an almost impassable barrier.

I thought about trying to clean out the pipe I had and replace it but the metal was getting flimsy and brittle so I decided to put in a new piece of plastic. It was surprisingly easy to replace and now my wife exclaims with satisfaction every time she lets out dish water.

This was not a sudden problem. It had been coming on for many years as the clog got thicker and thicker. Only when it began to really irritate my wife did I do something about it. And then only after I had spent twice as much for drain cleaners (that didn't work) than I did for the new piece of pipe to correct the problem.

Is that the way things are in your life? Have you been battling sin and it's damaging effect on your life for years while things get worst instead of better? "Drain cleaners" won't get the job done. It will take a brand new "piece of pipe". And that only comes when you come to Christ, trust Him to forgive your sins, and let Him make you a new creature.

What a joy it will be when your life is not clogged up with sin any more. It will put a song in your heart every day as you see life's problems drain merrily away.

## **June 27, 1995 PARSONAGE PERSPECTIVE**

What would you think of guests who showed up at your home bright and early on Tuesday Morning and announced they were going to stay until late Wednesday night? What would you do about going to work? Would you leave them alone in your home while you and your wife went off to work or would you feel obligated to stay out of work and entertain them?

How about the kid's ball games? Would you feel good about making the children miss their games in order to play with the children of your guests?

Those are some questions you need to ask the next time you decide to spend the week end at the parsonage. Sure, Saturday and Sunday are your days off work; but they are two of the busiest days in the week of a Pastor. He has sermons to complete, meetings to arrange, and activities to coordinate. Much of which cannot be put off, regardless of who comes to visit.

And when do they schedule family reunions or family activities? You're right, it's on the week-end. It's almost like people fall into the mindset that a pastor doesn't "really" work. He just shows up in Church on Sunday, delivers a talk off the top of his head, and doesn't have a care in the world.

If you have a pastor in your family, look at things from the parsonage perspective the next time you plan activities. You can't change your way of life; but it might be well to consider his. Maybe something can be done to make the situation work well for everyone.

## **June 28, 1995 BETWEEN HEAVEN AND HELL**

We recently put on a play at Church that told the wonderful story of Jesus' ministry. It related His death, His resurrection, and His victory over death, hell, and the grave. In order to show the various scenes we put up our Heavenly scene on the back wall behind the choir and our hell scene below the pulpit area. The morning before the play I told the church I was preaching between Heaven and Hell!

Fact of the matter, I always do that. Every time I preach I stand between Heaven and hell for the congregation. I'm attempting to get those who are going to hell to change directions, trust Christ, and go to Heaven. I'm also attempting to get those who are on their way to Heaven to remain steadfast in their walk toward that heavenly home so they will never look back, or turn back, to the pits from which God has delivered them.

The responsibility of preaching between Heaven and hell is tremendous. Every time I preach I need to paint hell so real until those who listen feel the flames and see the smokey chasm opening below them. At the same time I need to proclaim Heaven so sweet until they can't wait to go there; no matter how hard their journey may be through this sinful world.

You are also between Heaven and hell. All you have to do in order to go to hell is simply do nothing. Just ignore God's call and slip down the broad way to destruction. Or you can turn right and go through the door (Jesus) to the straight and narrow way that leads to Heaven. But you need to make your choice; one day you won't be between, you'll be at, Heaven or Hell.



## **July 4, 1995    AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL**

I have just returned from a 9000 mile trip across America. From the Sand Hills of South Carolina to the Deserts of New Mexico. From the soft grandeur of the Smokies to the harsh granite of the Tetons. From the majestic Redwoods to the awesome display of Old Faithful. From the awe-inspiring depths of the Grand Canyon to the astonishing miracle of the petrified forest. America is indeed beautiful beyond description.

Yet, these are not the only beauties I saw. I drove through parking lots that had car tags from almost every state in the union and everyone I spoke to would speak back (Just like they had been raised in South Carolina!). I stood with crowd after crowd of people as we grasped together at the wonders of God's creation and found a companionship that astonished everyone. And I worshiped in churches across this nation in which people loved the Lord, enjoyed singing His praises, and welcomed me as a brother in Christ.

There is a lot wrong with America according to the national news. It would do you a world of good, however, to turn off TV and see for yourself what God is doing in this wonderful country. There are multitudes of good decent people in America just waiting to meet someone just like you.

## **July 11, 1995    BALONEY AGAIN**

Two construction workers sat down to eat their lunch. One opened his lunch box and began to scream angrily, "Baloney again!! This is the third time this week that I've had baloney and I hate baloney!"

His friend tried to settle him down, "Take it easy. If you don't want baloney sandwiches why don't you just tell your wife to make something different?"

"Wife?" replied the first man, "I make my own sandwiches." And that is a fact we all need to recognize; most of the baloney in our lives, we put there ourselves.

Peter said in his first epistle that the reason we don't hunger for the Word of God as we should is because we fill ourselves with the husks and hog slop of the world. In other words, we eat baloney sandwiches instead of feast on the milk and honey that God provides.

If you find that you don't have time or inclination to read the Bible as you should then you need to check what you are eating in place of God's word. If it's baloney instead of the Blessings of God then you need to find out who is preparing your meals!

## **July 19, 1995 POCKETBOOK BLESSINGS**

Recently, one of the ladies in my church became ill while at the grocery store. She paid for her grocery as quickly as possible and loaded them into her car. In her pain and anxiousness to get home she left her pocket book in the shopping cart after she had unloaded the groceries.

It was only after she returned home and began looking for her medicine that she realized she had misplaced her pocket book. Even then she didn't remember where she had left it. About that time the phone rang and someone asked her if she had lost a pocket book.

A lady missionary had seen the pocket book in the cart, realized it was lost, looked inside at the checks to get a phone number, and had called to find how to return it. The lady from my church was too sick to go get it but she arranged for her daughter to meet this missionary and collect the pocketbook.

She also instructed her daughter to look in the pocketbook and give the missionary some of the money she had as a reward for being so honest. When the daughter gave the missionary the money she was overwhelmed. It seemed the missionary was broke and had been asking God for gas money.

Now both ladies rejoice in the way God worked in this pocketbook. One got a blessing from losing it and recovering it. The other from seeing God meet her needs as she obeyed Christian Principles.

## **July 25, 1995 GUIDING CROSS**

Many days I will go over to the Church just before I go to bed in order to say good night to God, make sure everything is turned off at the Church, and make sure everything is locked up. In the process of doing this I will normally come down the hall leading to our Sunday School rooms. When I get to the end of the hall I will turn off the hall light.

This makes it completely dark in the Church but it allows me to determine if any lights remain on in the Fellowship Building, in the Sunday School rooms, or in the Church. I could turn on a Church light and then turn it off at the main door but I've done this so many times until I just walk through the Church in the dark.

The first time I tried this I ended up with a bloody knee from walking into one of the pews. That was when I learned to find something to guide me. Just over the main doors to the Church is a stained glass cross. Our outside light shines through this at night and I have learned that if I head directly for the cross I will avoid all those painful pews and arrive safely at the door.

If you are stumbling through life, bloody from all the obstacles you keep running into, let me give you some advice. Head for the Cross; that's where the door you are look for is found.

## **July 26, 1995 WORD HAND**

The Speaker at our recent VBS gave an illustration of Bible Usage using your hand as a model. Each finger represents an important part of making the Bible relevant in your everyday life.

The Little Finger represents Reading the Bible. That is the first step in anything you are going to do with God's Word. As long as your Bible collects dust on the shelf it is powerless to help you.

The Ring Finger represents Hearing the Word of God. As we hear the Word of God being read Faith is produced in our life. This hearing can be in sermons or in your own proclamation of the Word.

The Middle Finger is Studying and Meditating on the Word. This is the only way you will ever develop as a Christian Soldier able to stand the trials and temptations of life.

The Index Finger is Believing the Word. Until the Word is believed it is powerless. The Word produces Faith but it takes Faith for the Word to become effective in your life.

The Thumb represents Living the Word. Grasp a piece of paper between any of your fingers and it is easily pulled out. Only when you grasp it with the thumb can it be held. In the same way, The Word must be put into practice in your everyday life if it is to have a firm hold on your life.

Get your "hand" on the Word of God today. Heaven and Earth will one day pass away but the Word of God remains permanent. Don't let it slip out of your grasp.

## **August 1, 1995      BIRTHDAYS**

Today is my Birthday, the one I don't celebrate. You see, I was born into this world 48 years ago today. But I was Born Again on March 19, 1962 (33 years old in the Lord and loving every minute of it!). That's the birthday I celebrate.

I was born to a wonderful father and mother who gave me every benefit they could on their very limited budget and despite the fact that they did not have available to them all the books and programs that exist today to help parents raise their children in a socially acceptable way (It's amazing to me that the more parents are taught to "resolve" conflicts and "adapt" to their children's behavior the worst children become!).

My parents gave me great moral training and attempted to instill lasting and beneficial character traits in me. But I was born a sinner and sin ended up corrupting my attitude and controlling my actions. That first birth destined me to die and brought the destroying influence of sin into every fiber of my being.

When I was Born Again, however, I received forgiveness for my past, hope for my future, and power to change my present. When I became a child of my parents I was destined for destruction; but when I became a child of God I was bound for Glory! That's why I celebrate my Spiritual birthday instead of my physical one.

Which Birthday do you celebrate? Remember, if you are only born once you must die twice, but if you are born twice, you only die once!

## **August 2, 1995      YES, LORD??**

I had to go to a meeting recently so I asked my wife, "Do you want me to change clothes or just wear the ones I'm now wearing?" Her answer, "Yes".

I don't know about you but that answer confused me! I knew she wanted me to do something but I wasn't sure what it was.

I'm afraid that is the same kind of "yes" answer many people give the Lord when He ask them for commitment. Their lips will answer in the affirmative but their live shows their answer was a matter of interpretation.

I see it in teachers who take a Sunday School class and then fail to study, fail to promote, and, sometimes, fail to show up. They answered "yes" but they seemed to be confused about what that "yes" meant.

I see it in Christians who come to an altar of commitment and tell God He will now be the Lord and Leader of their life. Then they fail to make the necessary changes in their life, fail to continue to seek a closer walk with God, and, sometimes, even fail to make it to the next church service!

When you tell God "Yes" make sure you and He both know what you really mean. After all, God has some stern warning about people who tell God something and then fail to follow through- "When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools' pay that which thou has vowed." (Ecc 5:4)

## **August 8, 1995      FILL HOUR-HEART**

One of the prayers I pray before I begin a church service is that God would help me to fill people's hearts instead of simply filling an hour. That because I get the impression from some people that they would rather me get through the hour instead of getting through to their heart!

Life is too short, and eternity is too long, for us to waste the few hours we have to proclaim God's word each week. We need to enter each service with the knowledge that it may be the last opportunity some lost soul will have to escape eternal separation from God. We need to be aware each service that Christians in the congregation are facing trials and temptations that are ready to overcome them. And We need to be aware that many in the congregation are desperately looking for help and strength to face life in the real world where the hero doesn't always win in a half hour just before the final commercial.

When you arrive at Church this week do you really want to waste another hour? Wouldn't it be better if you filled your heart instead of filling the hour? God is ready to open up the windows of Heaven and pour out a blessing so great you will not be able to receive it. He's just waiting for you to mean business instead of play church.

## **August 15, 1995      THE TWO WORST SINS**

If I asked you to name the two worst sins, what would you say?

Some would immediately name murder and robbery. Others may say Adultery or bigotry or religious Hypocrisy or child abuse or anynumber of other things that stir your repulsion and anger.

Jesus, however, made the matter crystal clear. He told the religious scholars (lawyers) that God's wrath would come on them because of two particular sins- (Luke 11:52) Woe unto you, lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge: you entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in you hindered.

There you have it. The two worst sins are (1) Failing to enter Heaven yourself. And (2) Hindering those who wanted to enter from doing so.

Those who failed to enter in themselves Failed to Trust Christ, Failed to Follow Christ, and Failed to learn from Christ. Opportunity was rejected as they chose their way over God's way.

Those they hindered were prevented from entering in because of the way they Presented God (as a dictator instead of a Father)and by the way they Represented God (Angry agonizing life instead of abundant life).

Are you guilt of these two worst sin? If so, it is time to repent and trust Christ. Then you can Help, instead of Hinder, others.

## **August 22, 1995      SUNDAY WORSHIP**

I would venture to guess that well over 50% of the people in Lake City do not attend Church on any given Sunday. What do they do that is more important than worshipping God? Why is it important to go to work on Monday but not important to go to Church on Sunday?

The answer is the great god "Self". Many of the people who don't attend Church are too busy sleeping. Saturday night was their night to howl so now they think sleep is more important than salvation. "Self" deserved some fun so they went somewhere to drink a little, mess around a little, and stay out until an ungodly (what an appropriate word) hour. Now "Self" demands the worship of sleep as the hang over slowly pounds in their head.

Other people worship "Self" as they head for the Beach or lake. Life is so full of stress until they just have to take Sunday to swim, fish, or lay around at the lake. "Self" has convinced them their relaxation is more important than God's work. If they could just realize that life would not be so stressful if they didn't have boat payments or lake loans.

Everybody worships something on Sunday; either Self or the Savior. Which category do you fit in??

## **August 23, 1995      THE WORKING WORD**

When Paul wrote to the church at Thessalonica one of the things he thanked God for was the fact that the Word of God was effectively working in the lives of the people- (1 Th 2:13) "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe."

Every true Christian wants that same thing to happen in their life. They want the Word of God to be effective in their personal, public, professional, and family life. They want to be real genuine Christians, guided by Biblical principles, so they can make an impact for God both now and for eternity.

Which brings us to the critical question- What will make the Word of God effective in my life? After careful study of the Bible, and the examination of my own Christian experience, I find 3 things are necessary to make the Word work.

First, we must KNOW the Word, for how can it work in our lives if we don't know it? (Do YOU have a daily time to read God's Word?). Second, we must BELIEVE the Bible is in fact God's Word, otherwise we will put it on the same scale as other material. Finally, we must OBEY/APPLY the Word, for everyone knows that faith without works is dead.

God's Word works if we give it a chance. But it will never become effective if your Bible gathers dust on the shelf as you spend your time learning life principles from the trash being taught on talk TV.

## August 30, 1995      SCRIPTURE READING

Today we begin a new feature with this column. We will begin putting a Daily Scripture reading at the bottom of the column to encourage you to read the Bible. Some weeks we will list a short chapter for each day and some weeks (like this week) I will use just a few verses.

If at all possible, I will group each week's scripture around a central theme. Hopefully, that will make your Bible reading more understandable.

This week's theme is "The Roman Road to Salvation". These should be very familiar scripture Scriptures to everyone. In fact, you should do more than read this week's scriptures; you should memorize them. They form a solid foundation from which to witness for Christ and have been used by countless soul-winners to win countless souls to Christ.

Rom 3:10,23 show that all are sinners and separated from God. Rom 5:12, 6:23 show that the consequences of sin is death (Separation from God). Rom 5:8 shows that God loved us in spite of our sin. Rom 10:9-10 show that the way of Salvation is Faith in the sacrifice of Christ and the public proclamation of that Faith. Rom 12:1-2 show that salvation changes your conduct and your character. Rom 8:37-39 show that the problems and persecutions of life cannot separate us from our new relationship with Christ. And Rom 8:28 shows us that if we belong to God then we can be at peace in the midst of any circumstances.

The Bible has the answer you need. I trust you will read it every day.

Scripture Reading for Aug 30- September 5

Wednesday, August 30	Rom 3:10,23
Thursday, August 31	Rom 5:12, 6:23
Friday, September 1	Rom 5:8
Saturday, September 2	Rom 10:9-10
Sunday, September 3	Rom 12:1-2
Monday, September 4	Rom 8:37-39
Tuesday, September 5	Rom 8:28

## September 12, 1995      EVIL OR EXHAUSTED

"If we cannot locate energy to accept grace for ourselves, we surely cannot feel it for others; not because we are evil, but because we are exhausted." Lew Smedes

Sometimes I just feel numb. I watch war torn bodies flashing across the evening news and ask my wife to pass the salt. I visit hospital rooms with desperately sick people and have to fight to keep from praying mechanical prayers instead of heart felt intercession.

And I'm not alone. I preach about the dangers and agony of Hell to congregations of people who are much more concerned with how they will pay to heat their home than they are about the flames of Hell. Or I try to motivate people to commit their time and talent to the work of God whose main motivation seems to be trying to stay awake for the 30 minutes of the sermon.

It's not that people lust to do wrong. It's just that they are physically, emotionally, and spiritually exhausted. "Been there, done that" is an apt slogan for people today. We've seen so many dead bodies and 911 TV shows until catastrophes and disasters entertain us instead of motivating us.

If we allow this scab of indifference to continue to form around our heart, we will find we not only ignore the disasters around us; we will also cease to hear God. Isn't it time you ask God to break the crust around your heart so it can hurt with the things that hurt the heart of God?

## September 13, 1995      WHICH SIDE ARE YOU ON?

When I talk politics with someone it doesn't take me very long to learn if they are Republican or Democrat. When I talk racing with people it doesn't take me long to determine if they are a Ford or a Chevy Fan. And when I talk football it's obvious almost immediately if the person is a gamecock or tiger fan.

Why isn't it that simple when it comes to finding out if you are on God's side or not? Why do many people who claim to be Children of God live like the Devil is their Father? And why do many of the people who serve the Devil try to act as if they were really on God's side?

If a man is going to reject God's offer of forgiveness by the sacrifice of Christ, live for the Devil, and Die and go to Hell; why doesn't he just say so?? Why does he pretend he's a Ford fan if he drives a Chevy?

And if a man believes Jesus is the Son of God who died for his sins. If he believes God has forgiven him, the Holy Spirit indwells him, and Heaven awaits him; why does he live with his attention centered on this world and its activities? If he has declared his allegiance to Carolina and sends his money and his kids to Carolina; Why does he seem to covet Clemson orange every chance he gets?

I think it's time you decide which side you are on. If God is God then make up your mind to serve Him wide open. Because I'll guarantee you this; you won't spend eternity with your feet in Hell and your head in Heaven.

Scripture Verses for:	Wednesday, September 6	Exo 32:26.	Thursday, September
7	2 Kings 9:31-32	Friday, September 8	1 Chron 22:18
9	2 Chron 14:7	Sunday, September 10	Job 1:10
	Psalm 118:6	Tuesday, September 12	Luke 8:12-15



## **September 19, 1995      MEDITATION**

Due to some medical problems, my doctor advised me to take 3 or 4 10 minute breaks during the day. This allows my eyes to rest from reading or viewing a computer screen and my heart to take a short break from the stress of the work I do.

One of the side benefits of this break is the fact that I get to meditate on what I was doing when I decided to take the break. Many times this break will come during work on a sermon, book, or newspaper article and that will allow me to “step aside” and look at the message in a different way than I could if I would have stayed at work. Some times the break will come after a phone call about a sickness or problem and the meditation time will allow me to pray about the need or consider other options for the problem.

The Psalmist said he “meditated on God during the night watches” (Psalm 63:6). I have found that it is good to meditate on God during the day’s work as well as the night watches! Why don’t you try it today? Take ten minutes to turn off all the noise in the world and center your mind on God. You will be astonished at what God will show you during that time; and at the strength you will receive from God as you wait on Him.

## **September 20, 1995      SILENCE**

One of the most commented on sermons I ever preached was one I didn’t preach!

Our 11am Service is normally broadcast live over our local Radio Station so we are always conscious of the time during that service. Several years ago, for some reason, we were not going to broadcast our service one Sunday.

I decided to try something different (I’m known for trying something new at the drop of a hat). I thought since we weren’t on the radio that I would simply preach a short devotion and let the people go home early. Bad mistake! Some people thought I had taken sick. Some thought I had been too busy to study. And some even thought I was mad at some one!

Isn’t it amazing that people get more out of what you don’t say than they do out of what you do say! By the way, this principle also works sometimes in our communion with God. Give it a try. Instead of spending your prayer time telling God how to run your part of the universe, try simply being silent before God. It’s almost guaranteed to get His attention; and you will find words aren’t necessary after all.

DAILY SCRIPTURE:

Wed- Psalm 50:3

Thur- Psalm 39:2

Fri- Ecc 3:7

Sat- Psalm 94:17

Sun- I Tim 2:12

Mon- Isaiah 62:6

Tues- Rev 8:1

## September 27, 1995      CLEAN DOORS

A famous Philosopher once said, "Let everyone sweep in front of his own door and the whole world will be clean".

I know many people who have basically given up on trying to make a difference in this world. The dirt and foul language of this world is so overwhelming until they think there is nothing that can be done. The problem is just so big, and they feel so inadequate, until they have given up all hope.

Maybe it's time you realize God didn't call you to change the world in your own strength, He called you to sweep around your own front door. And that is something everyone can do.

God brings change precept upon precept, line upon line; here a little and there a little. Yes, it's true that God can move mountains, but He normally works through His people moving a pebble at a time.

So if you want a better world, Look around and see what needs cleaning at your own front door. You might not be able to feed all the starving children in Africa, but you might be able to feed a hungry boy on your own street. You might not be able to clean all the filth off TV but you can turn off the TV and visit that desperately lonely Senior Citizen across the road.

Make this your motto this week- I can't do everything but I can do something; and what I can do, by God's Grace, I will do.

### WEEKLY SCRIPTURE:

Thursday- Gal 6:1-4

Friday- Rom 15:1-3

Saturday- Isaiah 58:6-12

Sunday- Matt 22:36-40

Monday- Prov 21:13-15

Tuesday-Rom 14:10-14

Wednesday- Ezek 18:5-9

## October 3, 1995      MARRIED TO GOD

Many of the Principles that make a successful marriage also apply to our relationship with God. That's because Christians are the Bride of Christ. Today I want to share 7 Guidelines for a Happy Marriage that will help you be a Faithful Christian.

- 1) Listen to what your mate has to say/Read the Bible with Interest so you can really hear what God is saying.
- 2) Communicate (Talk) to your mate/Prayer time should be more that telling God what to do. It should be real Communication.
- 3) Make your mate feel Special/Give God Gifts (Offerings) and Attention (Worship)
- 4) Care for your mate as a Person/Make it your ambition, like Paul, to KNOW Christ, no matter the cost.
- 5) Be Stable- Don't be in and out, up and down. Be Faithful in sickness and in health, in poverty and in wealth- in marriage and in serving God.
- 6) Love unconditionally-(Mark 12:30) And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.
- 7) Have Lots of Children/Make it your goal to win as many people as possible to Salvation in Christ.

## October 4, 1995      WIDOW WORDS

One of the Widows in my church recently wrote about some of her experiences in daily living. I thought it would be good to share her thoughts with you.

"Sometimes the troubles and trials of this life are so hard and long.

My soul cries out with heaviness and it drives me to my knees; for there I find my only source of peace, a peace that passeth all understanding. It is there that I claim My Lord's Promise that He gave when He left, I will send the Comforter to you.

My friends, if you find yourself discouraged and defeated on this journey, I urge you to keep your eyes on the Savior and remember the words of II Corinthians 12:9- My Grace is sufficient for thee. Then add that to the wondrous thought in verse 10- For when I am weak, then am I strong! Praise His Holy Name.

God really spoke to my heart through these verse to help and encourage me. I hope that my sharing them will help and uplift someone else along the way. For I know beyond a shadow of doubt that God is a very present help in time of trouble." (Mrs Billie Ard).

Isn't it wonderful to see that God is at work in the very difficult circumstances of life to bring people to a greater awareness of His Power and Presence. Look for Him today, You'll find Him.

This week's scriptures are about helping those in need.

<b>WEEKLY SCRIPTURES:</b>	Thursday	James 1:27
Friday Prov 21:13	Saturday	Isaiah 1:16-19
Sunday I Timothy 5:1-6	Monday	Exodus 22:21-27
Tuesday	Deut 24:19-22	Wednesday Malachi 3:1-6

## October 10, 1995 CIRCUMSTANCES

Jesus listed 3 circumstances that determine our ability to fulfill our function in (Mat 19:12) For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.

Admittedly, in this case, He was talking about marriage but the principles are some that will help us determine why some people do one job in a church and some do another.

1) NATURAL- Some Eunuchs are so born from their mother's womb. Some people NATURALLY have the ability to teach a class, or sing in the choir, or put on dramas. But this natural ability will limit some things you are able to do.

2) CIRCUMSTANCES- Some eunuchs were made eunuchs of men. Every Church has its "Wounded Warriors" (Hurt by the attitude or actions of people in the Church, they no longer are able to joyfully do a work for God) or "Weighted Workers" (Job or Family Responsibilities are so burdensome until they are unable to give time and energy to Church work).

3) DEDICATION- Some made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of Heaven's sake. Every worker must realize that they need to do the job God has called THEM to do- A man who tries to do everything ends up doing nothing.

The important thing is that you learn to do what you can, where you are, with what you have. When God opens a door of service let "him that is able to receive it, receive it."

## October 11, 1995 CHANGING FOCUS

One of the great joys (as well as burdens) of being a Pastor is the fact that people call me for counsel and comfort. It's a great responsibility because you know that the advice you give these people will many times affect them, and their actions, for life.

One of the "secrets" I have learned in counseling through the years is the need sometimes to change the focus of the person's problem. That's because few people realize God did not heal Job and restore his riches to him until he took his eyes off his own problems and began to think about others-(Job 42:10) And the LORD turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before.

The problem with problems is that all we see is the problem. It blinds our eyes to God's plan, power, presence, and peace. It blocks out our compassion and concern for others as we see only ourselves.

Most times, we will not begin to get healing for our hurt until we begin to look past the problem to the place of serving God. And this service is often in helping the hurt and pain of someone else (Ever notice how ladies who come to a home where a death just took place want to clean or cook instead of comfort. They don't want to major on grief. They want to lend a helping hand.)

The next time someone around you starts sinking into despair or doubt because of problems give them a little comfort and a lot of challenge. You will find the key to breaking the bonds of captivity is not found in searching your mind but in sharing your heart and hands.

This Week's Scripture is on PEACE- Thursday John 14:27 Friday Psalm 4:8  
Saturday Prov 16:7 Sunday Isa 26:3 Monday Psalm 34:14  
Tuesday Is 9:6-7 Wednesday John 16:33

## October 17, 1995 REVELATION REVEALED

Many people think of the book of Revelation as a great mystery that is extremely hard to understand. It's easy, however, when you have the key to the book; and that key is to look for Jesus. John begins the Revelation by describing it as the Revelation of Jesus Christ. Therefore, if you look to see Jesus in it's pages it will be a "revelation" to you.

Chapter one shows Jesus as the Glorified Lord showing the past, present, and future to His people. Chapters two and three show Jesus at work in His church throughout the Church age. Chapters four and five show that Jesus was the only one in Heaven who was worthy to be both Savior and King in order to redeem man and the land.

Chapters six through twelve show Christ choosing out a select group during the first three and one half years of Tribulation. Chapters thirteen through sixteen show man willing to worship an Antichrist while continuing to rebel against Christ. Chapters seventeen and eighteen show God's judgment on a religious and economic world system that turned it back on Christ.

Chapter nineteen shows the wondrous return of Christ to the Earth. Chapter twenty describes the 1000 year reign of Christ on earth and the judgement to follow. And, finally, Chapters twenty one and twenty two show Christ at home with His people in the new Heaven and new Earth.

If you look for a mystery you will find yourself confused but if you look for God to reveal Christ then Revelation will be one of your favorite books.

## October 18, 1995 BACKWARD SAW

Have you ever noticed how one job leads to another? I recently obtained a new work desk for my office and was able to throw out the board I had been using as a work station. But, in the process of moving the old desk out and moving the new desk in I had to move a lot of papers and projects that had gotten stacked on the floor.

Well, My wife thought this would be a perfect time to clean up some of the mess in my office so I ended up having to move and remodel many things in my office. A simple little move turned into a major project.

In the process of reworking some of the shelves for the office I had to saw them off and adapt them to a smaller space. I got out my saw, my square, my ruler, and all the other things you have to get out in order to do a ten minute job. Finally everything was marked and ready to saw.

That's when I noticed that I had put the saw blade on backward! Everything was available to do the job but if I would have tried to saw those boards with the blade on backward that ten minute job would have taken all day.

A lot of Christians are like that. They start to do a job for God but they get things backward. They put all their effort into it and, only after a long tiring struggle, do they realize God's Power hasn't been applied. That's when they decide to put God first and, in essence, turn the saw blade around. And that is when the job gets done with the speed and ease that it was meant to take.

This week's Scripture is on the WRONG USE of POWER      Thursday      Deut 8:13-18  
Friday 2 Kings 17:33-41      Saturday      2 Chron 25:5-9      Sunday      Ezra  
4:18-24      Monday      Job 1:9-22      Tuesday      Luke 4:5-8      Wednesday      Rev  
13:1-8

## October 25, 1995    FALL PRAISE

Don't you just love this time of the year when the heat of summer has broken and the cold of winter has not yet set in?? Isn't it great to be able to open your windows and allow fresh air to invade your home? Doesn't it feel good to go out to get the morning paper and feel a little nip in the air? Isn't it just good to be alive right now?

Isn't it marvelous to see the leaves turning from green to gold? Isn't it great to know you will probably only have to cut the grass one more time this year? And how about being able to go outside now and not always be swarmed with gnats, flies, and mosquitoes? Don't you just love the fact that God made seasons in the year instead of every month being the dog days of Summer?

The next time you wonder about the ups and downs in your life consider God's reasons for the seasons. Summer is nice at first but it gets too hot after a while. Winter is great because it drives people inside and allows them to slow their activities; until the cabin fever of February arrives and you feel if you can't get out you will suffocate!

In the same way, God provides changes in your life so you will continue to grow as a person and enjoy the good moments (like these Fall days) that come your way. Just remember in all circumstances of life a simple Bible phrase, "It came to Pass" and consider that change is part of God's plan.

This week's Scripture is about SEASONS

THURSDAY    Gen 8:20-22

FRIDAY Lev 26:1-12

SATURDAY    Gen 1:14-19

SUNDAY    Dan 7:19-26

MONDAY    Ecc 3:1-8

TUESDAY    Acts 14:14-18

WEDNESDAY    Jer 5:22-25

## **October 31, 1995 LEFT HANDED GUN**

I am right handed. I write right handed. I shave right handed. I do everything right handed. Except shoot a rifle. I shoot a rifle left handed.

The reason I shoot a rifle left handed while doing everything else right handed is simple, Jessie James. When I was a young boy, growing up, I went to a movie in which Jessie James shot left handed. It was about this time that Dad began allowing me to go hunting. Since we hunted with a rifle instead of a hand gun I learned to shoot that rifle left handed so I could model after Jessie James.

People today tell me it doesn't matter that we allow our Children to dress like demons and witches. They say that video games filled with fighting and killers don't have any effect on children. And, of course, it does them no harm to go to movies or rent videos full of sex and bloodshed.

I could give you many Biblical principles to reinforce my opinion about the harmfulness of these activities but you don't want to hear a sermon today. So let me just share a simple fact with you. I shoot a rifle left handed today because as a boy I went to a movie where Jessie James was left handed. I rest my case.

## **November 1, 1995 SOAP OPERA SERMONS**

While it is true that some sermons are just as silly and meaningless as Soap Operas(!); that is not the reason I called this message "Soap Opera Sermons." Nor does it come from the fact that some Sermons, like Soap Operas, never seem to end.

Basically, Good Sermons are like Soap Operas in two ways. First of all, Good Sermons (like Soap Operas) carry a continuing theme. The theme of Soap Operas is Troubles in families as people totally disregard moral and spiritual values. The theme of good Sermons is God's plan for Man's Salvation and service through Jesus Christ. That is why every sermon that does not point men to Jesus Christ has missed its purpose.

Secondly, good Sermons, like Soap Operas, can be joined during any presentation and the story line will be easily evident. I have not seen a Soap Opera in years but I could start watching today (If I were dumb enough to do so) and pick up the plot almost immediately. That's also the case with good Sermons. You should be able to walk into Church this week and immediately pick up on God's Message as if you had been there for months.

So why don't you give it a try it as you attend Church this week! You'll find something that will bring peace and joy into your life instead of spending all your time viewing life through the marred microscope of the Soap Opera.

This week's Scripture is about FAMOUS SERMONS

THURSDAY EXODUS 20

FRIDAY GEN 49

SATURDAY DEUT 31

SUNDAY JOSH 24

MONDAY MATT 5-7

TUESDAY ACTS 17

WEDNESDAY MATT 24

## **November 8, 1995 WAY GOD SEES MAN**

It is important for us to stand back from time to time and see mankind through the eyes of God. Mankind thinks of himself as basically good with just a few faults that need to be corrected or changed. We think that if we just had a little more education or opportunity we could become the perfect people we want to be.

But that is not how God sees us. Listen to how He describes us in Romans 3:10-18 "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: {11} There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. {12} They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. {13} Their throat is an open sepulcher; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: {14} Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: {15} Their feet are swift to shed blood: {16} Destruction and misery are in their ways: {17} And the way of peace have they not known: {18} There is no fear of God before their eyes."

God sees us with no redeeming value whatsoever. He realizes He cannot just tinker with what we are and make us perfect. He knows the only hope for man is for him to be "Born Again" with his past forgiven because of the Shed Blood of Christ and his future enabled through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

God wants to change you today. Sadly, He must begin by showing how bad you are before He can show you how good you can become by trusting Him.

## **November 15, 1995 BLANK BULLETINS**

Like most people, I generally pick up a bulletin when I enter a Church. It informs me about what is going on at the Church as well as allowing me to get new ideas for my own use. So when I attended a night service at a church recently I picked up a bulletin to read when I got to my seat.

Imagine my surprise with I opened the bulletin and found it was blank except for a written note about a local singing. I wondered what was going on until I talked with the Pastor following the service. Seems they had run out of bulletins in the church foyer during the morning service so the Pastor had collected some from the pews that afternoon for use in the foyer. In the process of doing that he had picked up the blank bulletin that his secretary had used to write him a note reminding him about a local singing.

Every Monday Morning, when you return to work or school, people try to "read" you. Do they find you blank about God's activities in your life during the week end? Or do they see a life full of work for God as you served the Lord on the Lord's Day? Remember, you are the only Bible some people read. Don't let them see anything but blank pages.

This Week's Scripture is on WRITING GOD'S MESSAGE.

Thurs. Rev 21:5-7, Fri. Ex 17:14, Sat. Num 5:23, Sun. Is 8:1-4, Mon. I Jn 1:4-10, Tues. Hab 2:2-4, Wed. Jer 30:2-3



## **November 22, 1995      THANKSGIVING**

Sometimes it is good to Thank God for what you DON'T have! In Psalms 106 verse 15 the psalmist said God gave the people their request but sent leanness into their souls. In other words, God gave them what they asked for but it turned out to be harmful instead of helpful.

One of these Harmful/Helpful things is Money. Money is a wonderful servant but a horrible master. Many people crave it but once they finally obtain it they find it destroys friendships, family relationships, and spiritual zeal. So it may be a good thing this Thanksgiving for you to tell God how grateful you are that He has not put you through the trial of having excessive money!

Another Harmful/Helpful thing is a trouble free life. Remember that a land of all sunshine and no rain becomes a desert! Troubles develop us. Troubles drive us closer to God. Troubles enable us to really enjoy the good times. So maybe it's time you praised God for the fact that you don't have a trouble free life.

Do you see what I'm talking about? Thanksgiving is not just praise for possessions. Thanksgiving is giving thanks to God for working out His plan in your life.

This Week's Scripture is on THANKSGIVING.

Thurs. Col 1:12-14, Fri. 1 Chr 16:8-10, Sat. Ps 18:46-50, Sun. Ps 30:4-8, Mon. Ps 92:1-5, Tues. Dan 6:10-11, Wed. Heb 13:12-16

**November 28, 1995**

**REMEMBER JESUS**

My ankles and knees hurt so badly until I could only walk with the help of a cane. But I knew I needed to make the effort; so I struggled out to the mail box to get the mail. Imagine my disappointment when I found the Shopper had failed to print my article for the third week in a row (I submit an article every week but space limitations keep them from being published some weeks).

Pain and disappointment make me want to curl up in a corner and quit; until I thought of Jesus. Jesus was scorned by his family, forsaken by the people he had just miraculously fed, and persecuted because He cared enough to heal people on the Sabbath day. Even His Disciples were more concerned with their position in a new Kingdom than they were in helping Him promote God's Plan on Earth. No wonder that His prayer times sometimes brought forth sweat drops of blood.

Sometimes the work gets hard and the journey gets long. Sometimes you wonder if you have the strength to hold out and the motivation to go on; and then you think about Jesus. He went through all of this BEFORE me and now He has sent back the Holy Spirit to be WITH me. And I can make it after all.

**November 29, 1995**

**DANGEROUS SLEEP**

Located at the rear of the Ship, it was called the Emergency Conn. It contained an emergency radio transmitter and a hand driven steering mechanism. If the Bridge and CIC (Combat Information Center) were hit by enemy fire then this was our fall back location.

During General Quarters aboard ship everyone has an assigned position. I always wondered why the leading Electronics' Petty Officer chose that location for his assignment; until I had to ask him something during General Quarters one time. That's when I found he slept during General Quarters!

He knew that Emergency Conn would only be used in extreme emergency so he felt he had an easy job. That is, until our new Captain decided to pretend the Bridge and CIC were hit and came back to Emergency Conn to take control!

Many Christians are also asleep at the wheel when we need to be prepared for action. Because we are not in times of active persecution we think we have nothing to worry about. But one day our Captain will come to check on us. Wouldn't it be horrible if He found us asleep as the ship drifted aimlessly on life's sea?

This Week's Scripture is on DANGEROUS SLEEPING

Thurs. Jud 4:17-21, Fri. Jonah 1:-, Sat. Matt 26:37-46, Sun. Jud 16:16-20, Mon. Prov 6:8-7, Tues. Luke 9:28-32, Wed. Acts 20:7-12

## **December 5, 1995 SUPER PASTOR**

At a recent Minister's Breakfast, one of the Pastors said he had something he wanted to show us and began unbuttoning his shirt. Underneath was a "Superman" T-shirt; only this was one was emboldened with a "Super Pastor" emblem.

This Pastor's Church had recently given him a Pastor Appreciation Day (What a nice thing for a church to do) and he was showing off one of the props from a skit during that special time. And it was obvious he was thrilled about the love and concern shown by the Church.

He told us that the skit had really told the battle a Pastor has to face as he seeks to minister to people with various expectations. When "Super Pastor" first came out one of the ladies said she really liked him because of his long hair; but then another man said he thought long hair looked bad on a Pastor so "Super Pastor" had to take off his wig. Another said she thought he looked so young and could relate to the young people but another said he didn't look distinguished enough so he had to put on glasses.

On and on it went as "Super Pastor" tried to accommodate everyone's desires; until finally he looked more like a clown than a "Super Pastor". And that is always the way that works. When a man of God tries to be a people pleaser instead of a prophet of God then he always comes off looking like a clown; who entertains people instead of enlightening them.

Pray for your Pastor today. He's not "Super Man" but he should be God's Man; and, if he is, then he's really super!

## **December 6, 1995 UNHAPPY CHRISTIANS**

They ought to be the happiest people on earth; but many times they seem depressed, discouraged, and down beat. Why are so many Christians unhappy instead of living the Abundant Life? The Bible gives 4 reasons Christians are unhappy:

1) THEY LOVE THE WRONG THINGS- The Bible tells us to Love not the World nor the things of the world. Sadly, many Christians say their heart belongs to God while giving their bodies to seeking the things of the world. And that only brings misery.

2) THEY TRY TO IMPRESS THE WRONG JUDGE- Many Christians allow Society's Standards to determine their conduct. And they stay unhappy because those standards change every day. Have they forgot that God is our Judge and His word is final?

3) THEY FOLLOW THE WRONG PLAN- The world says strive for money, fame, and success. But all that will pass away one day! God is trying to develop you for eternity; and that brings joy no matter what life throws our way.

4) THEY PROFESS CHRIST BUT ARE NOT COMMITTED completely to Him. And a half hearted Christian is of all men most miserable.

This Week's Scripture is on FULL JOY Thurs. Jn 15:10-11, Fri. Jn 16:20-24, Sat. Psalm 16:11, Sun. 1 Pet 1:3-9, Mon. Neh 8:10, Tues. I Jn 1:-, Wed. Psalm 30:1-5

## **December 12, 1995 ANTICIPATION**

For some people it is getting together with family and friends. They anticipate the Holiday season so they can see long separated Friends and get together with their Family.

For some it is the Festivities and Food of the season. They enjoy all the Christmas parties and the ample supply of food that stretches all the way from Thanksgiving to Christmas.

But, for far too many people today, the thing they anticipate the most about Christmas is when IT'S FINALLY OVER!! I hear that sentiment expressed in malls, in banks, in grocery stores, and, surprisingly, in Church. I see that sentiment expressed by ladies who can't wait until dinner is over on Christmas day so they can take down all the decorations. And I feel that sentiment expressed by the attitude of people who want to have Christmas parties and plays the first week in December so they can be done with them.

No longer is Christmas a time of celebration as we remember our Savior coming to earth. No longer is it a time of joy as we anticipate the look on a child's face as they get that special gift they have longed for. Stress, Debt, and Crowd Pressure have caused us to long for Christmas to be over instead of long for it to come.

And there is no one to blame but ourselves! For Christmas is exactly what WE make it! And for Christians, we must again make it the celebration of the birth of our Savior; the Savior who we anticipate coming back for His church any day.

## **December 13, 1995 CHRISTMAS JOY**

(Neh 8:10) Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength.

This verse in Nehemiah was used to calm the people after they began celebrating the feast of Tabernacles and heard the Word of the Lord read to them. The people finally began to understand the greatness of the God they served and that in turn led them to mourn and weep as they saw how sinful and slack they had been living.

I am reminded of those same circumstances when I read the Christmas Story. Over and over the angels had to tell the people involved in the birth of Jesus to "Fear Not" because God's plan was a time of joy and celebration.

Christians need to remember that wonderful fact again. We have allowed the world to steal our Joy in the Birth of God's Son and replace it with the stress filled celebration that the world calls Xmas; because to them it is only a celebration of sales, not a celebration of the coming of a Savior.

Christmas is a time of rejoicing in God's Gift and sharing gifts with others. Don't let it become a time of stress and dread.

This Week's Scripture is on PROPHECIES ABOUT HIS COMING. Thurs. Gen 3:14-19, Fri. Is 7:14, Sat. Is 9:6-7, Sun. Micah 5:2, Mon. Luke 1:31-35, Tues. Matt 1:20-21, Wed. Dan 7:9-14

## **December 19, 1995**

## **WHO IS THIS CHRIST?**

Everyone is going to a tremendous amount of trouble and expense to celebrate the Birth of a poor Jewish boy nearly 2000 years ago. Who IS this Christ that Angels sing about, Shepherds talk about, and Wise Men travel hundreds of miles to see?

Like most things, it all depends on your perspective:

To the artist he is the One altogether Lovely (Song of Sol. 5:16)

To the architect he is the chief cornerstone (I Pet. 2:6)

To the astronomer he is the Sun of righteousness (Mal. 4:2)

To the baker he is the Bread of life (Jn 6:35)

To the banker he is the hidden Treasure (Mt. 13:44)

To the builder he is the sure foundation (Isa. 28:16)

To the carpenter he is the door (Jn. 10:7)

To the doctor he is the great Physician (Jer 8:22)

To the educator he is the new and living way (Heb. 10:20)

To the farmer he is the sower and the Lord of harvest (Lk. 10:2)

But to the average Christian in the average town in America today He is our Life and our Lord. He is our Savior and our Strength. And one day soon He will be our returning King. And HE is the Reason for the season.

## **December 20, 1995**

## **WHY JESUS CAME**

In the Old Testament we have man made in the image of God (Gen 1:27). In the New Testament we have God made in the image of man (John 1:1,14). The question we must ask ourselves is why God would come to earth as a man (Called the incarnation).

Harold Willmington gives 12 reasons for the Incarnation of Christ:

1) To Reveal the Invisible God- No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him. (John 1:18)

2) To Fulfil Prophecy- Gen 3:15

3) To guarantee the Davidic Covenant- Luke 1:31-33

4) To Make a Sacrifice for our Sins- I John 3:5

5) To Reconcile Man to God- 2 Cor 5:19

6) To Provide an Example for Believers- 1 Pet 2:21

7) To Provide us with a Heavenly High Priest- Heb 2:17

8) To Destroy the Devil and his works- I John 3:8

9) To Defeat Sin and Death- Rom 5:12, Rom 6:23

10) To Heal the Broken hearted, To set at Liberty them that are bruised, to Proclaim God's Acceptable time- Luke 4:18

11) To Give Abundant Life- John 10:10

12) To Glorify the Father- John 17:4

This Week's Scripture is found in the context of the article. Read each one to get the full meaning of this message

## **December 26, 1995 END OF THE ROAD**

I was scheduled to give a devotion at a local Christian School recently and was running a little late because of some emergency phone calls. It was a cool foggy morning and visibility was limited.

The Church I was to speak at is situated right in the middle of a curve so as I drove down the road it suddenly loomed up out of the fog directly before me. It was a mystical magic moment as it appeared the road ended at the front door of the church.

The application is obvious; when the fog of life clouds your way keep your eyes open for the Church! A good Church is a place where you can find comfort from the Word of God, Strength from the companionship of fellow Christians, and Peace in a world of chaos. It is there that you will find encouragement in dealing with life's problems, education for life's Journey, and Hope for life's end.

Don't drive around in the fog during 1996. Find a good Church home and make it a part of your life each and every week. You will find that when each week's journey ends at the Church, life will take on a whole new meaning.

## **December 27, 1995      CHRISTIAN GRAFFITI**

I don't know how it is in Ladies rest rooms but some men seem to only have a writing ability when they are in a strange rest room! And the subject of their writings show that sin indeed depraves and destroys men's thinking process.

From time to time I will see a "Christian" message included in all the sexual smut and pornographic pictures. While it encourages me to know that everyone who uses rest rooms is not a sexual pervert it also brings us an important point. Is it right to combat wrong by doing wrong??

If it is wrong for men to write their perversion on strange rest room walls (and it is. How would you like it if your guest wrote all over your rest room at home!!), then it must be equally as wrong to write a "good" message on the walls. And can any lasting good come from doing wrong; even if you have good intentions?

Two Suggestions- Leave tracts so they will have something to read and won't be so tempted to write. Second, Pray for the people who wrote the graffiti, they desperately need help. That way you turn an obstacle into an opportunity to work for God.

Beginning with our Jan 1 Scripture we will be giving scriptures that will allow you to read the entire Bible through in 1996. Join us as we explore the best book in the world together.

Scripture reading- Mon. Jan 1- Gen 1-2, Tues-Gen 3-5, Wed-Gen 6-9