

1989 NEWSPAPER DEVOTIONAL ARTICLES by Rev. Mike Jones

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9-06-89 WHAT'S YOUR CHOICE?

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I found a verse the other day that describes one of the most difficult things a Pastor has to deal with; People rejecting the path of Life for the Road to ruin- Jer 8:3 And death shall be chosen rather than life by all the residue of them that remain of this evil family. It breaks a Pastor's heart to see people deliberately destroy their life and the lives of those around them when he knows what wonderful things could be happening to them. Why would a person chose death over life??

Sometimes our Situation drives us to the edge- Job's wife asked him to "curse God and die". The problems of life seem to mount higher and higher until they are more than we can bear and the easy way out would be to choose death over life.

Sometimes the results of our Sins bring us to despair- Rev 9:6 talks of the day when men shall seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them. When sin finally finds a person out and they must face the public disgrace or physical disease that results; they always look for a way to wiggle out, even if it means choosing death over life.

The Good News is that Jesus said, (John 10:10) I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. You don't have to choose the path of Despair and Doubt and Death. You can come to Christ and find a life that worth living and that has no fear of dying!

The Choice today is yours- Deut 30:19 I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live:

9-13-89 JESUS WAS A SQUARE

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We're living in an age when raising a child is very difficult. Drugs, disease, peer pressure, etc make it hard to know what to do and every "expert" that writes a book only makes it more confusing. As in all cases, we need to go back to the pattern- Jesus. Luke 2:52 says "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man".

This means Jesus was "Four-Square". He developed Mentally, Physically, Spiritually, and Socially. This is the pattern for you to follow in developing your children today.

When we say Jesus increased in Wisdom (Mentally) we mean he learned to read, he learn at least 3 different languages (Aramaic, Hebrew, Greek), and he learned common sense to go with "book sense" (Most of His parables were drawn from the things He saw around Him).

His Physical development came from climbing the hills around Nazareth, helping Joseph in the shop as he learned to be a carpenter, and doing his "Chores".

His Spiritual development was helped by his regular attendance in the synagogue (Luke 4:16) and was highlighted at an early age as he questioned the scholars in the temple at Jerusalem. It's also interesting to note that at His first sermon he knew exactly where to turn to find his text so he must have been a daily Bible reader!

He also developed socially so that he could mingle with Pharisees as well as Publicans, with Lawyers as well as Lepers. His first miracle was done at a Marriage feast and much of His teaching was done around a "fellowship meal".

Parents today are faced with a choice, they can watch their children get "sucked up into the world's vacuum cleaner with the rest of the dirt" or they can practice the pattern set by Jesus.

9-20-89 BATTLE OF THE GODS

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We live in a society where we are constantly bombarded by conflicting claims; this deodorant is better than that deodorant, this cereal has more vitamins than that cereal. We have learned to "grin and bear it" and accept most advertising with a pretty large grain of salt. However, there is one claim that really needs to be put to the test, and that's the claim that God is the one and only God. If it's true then a lot of people are in a lot of trouble! And if it's not true then a lot of people are sadly deluded.

What if we could have a "battle of the gods" to determine which god is really the True God? If you could see that God was bigger and better than any other god would that convince you to worship and serve Him?

Let me tell you about some times God went to Battle with other gods and what the results were. 1) Israel had been captive in Egypt for 400 years and God was going to set them free. In order to do so He had to go to Battle with the gods of Egypt. In 10 different plagues He showed His power over every god of the Egyptians and delivered Israel from captivity (Exodus 1-12). 2) The Ark of the Covenant had been captured by the Philistines and they placed it in the house of their god Dagon. The first night God just knocked Dagon down but the next night He knocked off Dagon's hands and head (1 Sam 5)!

There were numerous other battles in the Bible but you get the picture. Let's skip to the Final and greatest Enemy- Death. Death was brought about by sin and the payment for sin is a pure sacrifice; which man couldn't make. The Devil thought he had God in this Battle until Jesus looked down from Heaven and said, "Father, I'll go". The Battle was furious and, as Jesus hung on a cross outside Jerusalem, Satan thought he had won; but 3 days later UP FROM THE GRAVE HE AROSE!! The God of Life suffered death (Heb 2:14-15) "...that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage".

In the "Battle of the Gods" I'm on the winning side. Are you??

9-27-89 THE MISSING LINK

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I was just trying to be nice to my wife. She wanted to watch two programs on TV at the same time so I thought I'd help her. I have a VCR in my office that I use to make copies of our Church services so I told her I'd tape one program while she watched the other. I made sure the time and channel were set correctly and went on with my work feeling good about myself; until later on that night when my wife wanted to look at the taped program!

The only thing we could find on the tape was "snow". I feared my VCR had gone bad until I checked a little further. Since I use the VCR to copy tapes I didn't have it connected to an Antenna! The VCR worked correctly, the settings were correct, and the show was being broadcast for me to receive; but it failed to function without the antenna.

That same thing happens in life very often. People have all the equipment they need to live a good life, they are educated enough to know how to use the wonderful things they have, and the good life is available for anyone desiring it. Yet they fail to make the necessary connection and live a life that's "snowy" instead of sunshine.

Jesus put it this way, "Having ears to hear they hear not. Having eyes to see they see not". The equipment is there, it's just not being used correctly. And the sad truth is that even many church members get so busy running the equipment until they fail to check their connection.

When God puts the tape of your life in His "VCR" will it show snow or an abundant life?? Remember, it doesn't matter how good your equipment or your intentions if you're not connected. Ask my wife.

10-04-89 PRIORITIES

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Isn't it amazing how people's priorities change?? 2 weeks ago if you would have asked most people what they needed most you probably would have gotten a "Christmas shopping list". 2 days after Hurricane Hugo went through most people's list had dropped to several basic things; Water, electricity, and food. I've seen people who took such pride and joy in their homes and cars smile and say, "There's a tree on my house and/or car but everyone came through safe!"

Hugo has been an extremely tough teacher, and I hope we never have to learn his lessons again, but I also hope we never again allow ourselves to give our priorities to the superfluous instead of the Spiritual. When the odor of broken pine trees finally fades away I hope we'll still find time to "smell the roses". When the temporal things of this world again try to wrap themselves around our hearts I hope we'll remember the prayers and promises we made to God during that dark stormy night and give our fidelity and Faith to God so we can "know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (II Cor 5:1).

10-11-89 THIEVES

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When I was 8 years old I used to steal Cigarettes "Butts" from my mother's ashtray and sell them to my friends. I only stole a few and it was soon forgotten; until one night after I was saved and preaching a Revival God told me to tell about those stolen cigarettes. Guess which night my mother decided to attend that Revival!!

God has blessed our Church and enabled us to maintain a multitude of ministries; so in the process of a year thousands of dollars pass thru my hands. Notice I said "Pass Thru". I never allow any of it to stick. The reason is simple, while I respect the Law and know that they might eventually find me out, I Fear the Lord and KNOW He would find me out.

The next time you're tempted to steal from the Government because it has plenty (It doesn't. It's billions of dollars in debt!) just remember that you can fool the Government some of the time but you can't fool God any of the time. The next time you're tempted to "fool" an insurance company (After all, you think you deserve it with the rates you're paying!) think of what you'll feel like when you stand before God and He reminds you that "No Thieves...shall inherit the kingdom of God" (I Cor 6:10). Do you think the few dollars you obtained will be worth the penalty you'll pay??

10-18-89 USE OTHER DOOR

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When I took an article to the "News and Post" the other day I noticed something Funny. They normally have a sign on one of their double doors telling you to "Use Other Door". Hugo had damaged that door so someone had put a sign on the other door saying to "Use Other Door". Now when you walked up BOTH doors said "Use Other Door"!

Does it sometimes feel like Life treats you that way? There is always more Month than money; All your efforts at Digging out simply seem to dig you in deeper; and when you knock on the Door of Opportunity someone calls from within, "No One is Home!" Do you feel like every time you get to a door, instead of being able to go through, you find a sign "Use Other Door"?

Let me tell you about THE DOOR- Jesus Christ. He's able to set you free from the Burden and Punishment of Sins. He enables you to become a New Person with new Purpose and direction in life. He

is able to Provide for you (I could tell you a thousand stories of how He has met needs in my life). And He will prepare a Place for you that will make the most expensive place on earth look like a dump!

If you're tired of always being told to "Use Other Door", why don't you answer Jesus' knock on your door and by Faith accept Christ who said, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, He shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture" (John 10:9).

10-25-89 BRASS SHIELDS

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From a distance they sparkled and shone in the sun. Like a beacon they seemed to draw your attention to the majesty and might of the king's guards. But as the guards drew closer and you were able to see them close up you realized that, although they shone like gold, they were simple Brass Shields!

Now instead of showing you the majesty of the King, they told the sad tale of "how the mighty have fallen". The King had drifted from God and, as a result, been defeated by his enemies who had taken the Golden Shields (II Chron 12:1-11). Unable to make new Golden shields, the King had to be content to make Brass Shields in order to keep up the charade that all was well. But everyone knew; and instead of restoring the King's glory the shields now served as a constant reminder of his failures.

The Brass Shields look good and probably work pretty good but ask any of the fallen TV Evangelist if they are as good as Gold Shields! Satan will tell you that the consequences of sin are only in the future but I want you to know that he'll take your "Golden Shield" and then laugh with the crowd as you are forced to carry a Brass Shield. Don't give up your "Gold" for "Brass", stay close to God and maintain your testimony. After all, when your body is brought before the King, do you want it carried on a Shield of Brass or a Shield of Gold??

11-1-89 THE GUIDE POST

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Sometimes being lazy can get you into trouble. While walking back from Church one night I decided to take a short cut across Mr. Buster's Pasture. There was enough moonlight that I could see the basics and everything was fine until I realized that I would have to cross the hog pen also. I realized this when I stumbled over the electric wire around the hog pen and was shocked into instant awareness! The problem compounded itself when I realized I had stumbled into the hog pen and had to get past that same wire to get out.

I decided to make the best of a bad situation by continuing across the hog pen and getting out on the side that was closest to the house. While I was walking I was praying and asking the Lord how I was going to get out without getting all tangled up in that electric wire again. I remembered a verse that said, I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye (Ps 32:8); and so I began to look for a way for God to guide me. I lifted my eyes from the ground, where I had been intently looking for the electric wire, and almost immediately saw the answer to my problem. The wire was attached to posts and all I had to do was go to a post and step over there.

There have been many times in life since then that I have found myself in difficult circumstances but I have always tried to find God's "Guide Posts" and that has shown me the way out. And it's wonderful to know that God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death (Ps 48:14). I'm glad I don't have to find my way through this world on my own. Thank God, He's my Friend and Guide.

11-8-89 CHANGING TIME

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While checking out of the IGA grocery store the other day I looked up and noticed that the clock above the cash registers was turned onto its side. Instead of the "12" being on top the "3" was now pointed up. I wondered at first if that was someone's way of dealing with Daylight Savings Time (!) but I finally figured it was just an accident that someone had not gotten around to correcting.

Sometimes it seems to me that the world we live in has gotten its "clock" all messed up also. Words that would have gotten your mouth washed out with soap 15 years ago are now the common vocabulary of almost everyone. A Fifteen year old knows more about sex today than a Fifty year old married person did 20 years ago. Politicians and Preachers are talked about in the same breath with Playboys; because they maintain the same standards. And the situation continues to deteriorate because someone has gotten the "clock out of kilter" and no one seems to really know what time it is.

Maybe it's time everyone took time to find out the real time! I believe it's the last days before Christ returns to begin sitting up His Kingdom of Righteousness and Peace. I believe, in a world that changes every minute, there is a God that is the "same yesterday, today, and forever" that we can believe in and depend on. And I believe that turning the clock on its side may allow us to justify our sin but it won't help when we're checked by God's Clock.

11-16-89 PRAISEFUL PERSONALITY

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Have you noticed that people have already put on the "Holiday Harried" look? It's not even Thanksgiving yet and people are already getting "stressed out" about Christmas. I want us to see today that the reason people feel so bad and look so tired at Christmas is because they have neglected Thanksgiving.

The Writer of Proverbs made it very plain that (15:13) A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken. The word "Merry" here comes from a combination of words that mean "Well in the soul" and is usually translated in our day by the word "Cheerful". So Solomon actually says, "A Cheerful Heart makes a Cheerful face"! If that's the case, then a lot of people must lose their "Christmas Cheer" as we approach Christmas!

Not only does a Thankful Heart help your looks but it can also help your Health- Proverbs 17:22 "A Merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones". Many people will be sickly and exhausted all during the Holidays because Thanksgiving is simply Turkey Day and Christmas is Bills instead of the Birth of the Son of God.

If you'll rejoice in God's Blessings and in the Birth of Jesus this Holiday Season then you'll know what David meant when he said in Psalm 42:11 for us to "hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." And you'll be a lot easier to live with and look at!

11-23-89 THANKSGIVING

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Thanksgiving is a time to "count your Blessings" and try not to count your calories! Thanksgiving is a time when Families get together and comment on how many hairs "uncle Ed" has lost, how many pounds "aunt Emma" has gained, and how marvelous it is that "cousin Sally" has turned from a string bean into a rose. It's a time of hunting and shopping and trying to "catch your breath" before the stretch run toward Christmas.

Oh Yes! It's also a time to say a brief word about being grateful for Health and Family and things not being as bad as they could be (They aren't as bad as they could be; ask a Turkey!). We all suffered from, but thankfully survived, Hugo; we live in a country that's not perfect but it's better than anything going, and we take more inventions for granted than any other generation has even seen.

We are not without trouble but we have much to Thank God for. I hope that this Thanksgiving we will develop the same kind of attitude that Matthew Henry had. He wrote in his diary one day after being robbed, "Let me be thankful first because I was never robbed before; second, although they took my wallet, they did not take my life; third, because, although they took my all, it was not much; and fourth, because it was I who was robbed, not I who robbed."

Remember that Thanksgiving does not come from what you have in your pocket but from what you have in your Heart!

11-30-89 ENJOY OR ENDURE?

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Have you ever listened to the tone of some people's testimony? They will describe in vivid lively details their life of sin and at the end will say, "and then I got saved" (But it really sounds like, "and then I caught the measles!"). They sound like Salvation is something you have to endure instead of enjoy; and wonder why they aren't very good soul winners!

Out of the millions of reasons why I'm glad I'm saved let me share with you three that will help you understand why I enjoy my relationship with the Lord so much.

1> Possession- Ps 4:3 "The Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself". I rejoice that I'm not simply one of the herd of humanity that struggles and dies on planet earth. I am the personal possession of the God of the universe; bought and paid for by the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus.

2> Prized- Zech 2:8 "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye." Not only do I belong to God but God actually thinks I'm something special!! Since God bought me He had the right to make me a slave; instead, He made me a Son! And promised me an inheritance in Heaven!

3> Protected- I Pet 2:9 "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people;". The word Peculiar here means "Encircled" or "Surrounded" and shows how God allows only those temptations and trials to come my way that are for my good and His glory. The storms of satan may lash the world but I'm safe in the "Rock" and rejoice in His care.

I'm guarded and guided by a God who thinks I'm special because I belong to Him. It's not the "measles"; it's majesty!

12-7-89 MARY'S MOTHER

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Was she dead?? Was she uncaring and unconcerned? Or was she one of the "unsung multitude" that watch friends or family become famous while they labor in obscurity? We really have no way of knowing because the Scriptures are completely silent on the subject of Mary's Mother. We don't know her name, her family background, or anything about her character (In case you're interested, we also know nothing about Mary's Father except his name (Heli) and that only because Luke lists the genealogy of Mary when Jesus began his ministry).

Whatever the reasons, we do know that when Mary was told by the angel that she would be the mother of the Christ child she immediately went to see her cousin Elisabeth with the good news instead of going to tell her mother. And when these two mothers-to-be of divinely predicted children met the

baby leap in the womb of Elisabeth and she was filled with the Holy Ghost while Mary uttered her marvelous Magnificat.

We don't know about Mary's Mother but we do know that God always provides Friends or Family for those who do His work (Mark 10:28-30). If God has called you to a difficult task this Christmas season remember that even if family forsakes you, God doesn't. Somewhere there's an "Elisabeth" that shares your Hurt and your Heart.

12-14-89 JOSEPH, THE FATHER

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One of the most forgotten figures of the Christmas Story is Joseph. Ask almost anyone about the Christmas story and they will tell you about Mary, the Shepherds, the Wise Men, and the Angels but seldom, if ever, will they remember to mention Joseph. Yet, this "forgotten Hero" played a tremendously important part in the early years of Jesus (He evidently died between the time Jesus was 12 and 30 because nothing is said of him during Jesus' Ministry).

He didn't have an easy marriage. He knew the pain of being a "social outcast"- While he and Mary knew that Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit, the small town of Nazareth was a buzz with gossip. He knew what it meant to face unemployment and homelessness since he had to leave his job in Nazareth just before Jesus was born and move to Bethlehem. He could not find lodging there so Jesus had to be born in a Stable- away from family and doctors and help (I can almost see Mary's face as she looked up from the pain of birth to see Joseph wrapping her new born son in the clothes used to wipe down animals!).

Several years later, when Joseph was finally getting back on his feet, he again had to make a sudden move to escape Herod's sword. So he and Mary had been married several years before he could return to Nazareth and live a "normal" life. There he instilled in Jesus the religious principles a Jewish father was commanded to teach his child (Carried him to the temple each year and instilled a "habit" of church attendance in him {Lu 4:16}). This meant that when Jesus began his ministry he was well instructed in the Word of God so he could withstand Satan's temptations as well as the wiles of the Pharisees.

Joseph raised a big family (5 boys and some girls- Matt 13:54-56) on a small town carpenter's salary so he knew how to "make ends meet". He also knew about family disputes (none of Jesus' brothers believed on him until after his Resurrection). But through it all Joseph shows us that God can take ordinary people and use them in extraordinary ways if they will simply put themselves at God's disposal. Remember Joseph this Christmas.

12-21-89 THE GIFT

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

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

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

Finally, It's a GIFT TO BE ACCEPTED. It's so sad to see so many people who desperately need what this gift gives but they're too proud or busy to accept it. What about YOU? Have you "opened" God's Gift yet? When you do you'll surely have a MERRY CHRISTMAS.

12-28-89 **LOOKING AT LIFE**

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As we enter the last decade of this century I think it's wise to reflect on what we want from Life. Our generation enjoys more privileges and products than any generation in history and you would think that it would be characterized by joy and peace and love. Instead, we seem to be overwhelmed with Disease, Drugs, Dissatisfaction, and Divorce. Never have so many had so much and enjoyed it so little.

What do people REALLY want from Life? There are 3 basic things that everyone craves:

- 1) SIGNIFICANCE- Meaning and Purpose to Life. In spite of all the gadgets and glamour of life today, most people think of themselves as a finger in a pail of water. When it's removed it ceases to have any effect. They want their life to count for something.
- 2) SATISFACTION- Peace in the midst of a stormy life. They don't expect to escape all trouble; they just want to know that they can conquer instead of being conquered.
- 3) SECURITY- A Place they can rest and recuperate and feel at ease. (Like "Home" used to be before it became simply a stopover place to heat a microwave meal between activities)

One of the great things about Christianity is that it provides all of these things- When a person accepts Christ they become part of the body of Christ and embark on God's Plan for their life. They not only get Peace With God but also the Peace Of God. And they can rest in the "Rock" that will never change or crumble.

Why don't you begin this New Year with a new heart? You'll find Purpose, Peace, and Protection; and 100 years from now you'll remember it as the best decision you ever made.