

NEWSPAPER DEVOTIONAL ARTICLES by Rev. Mike Jones

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January 11, 1990 MIDDLE AGE MIRACLE

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It was just another Prayer Meeting. Crowds thronged thru the door and people greeted friends and neighbors. There had been much excitement in the city in the past few months and everyone had a new tale to tell or rumor to spread. No one paid any attention to the beggar sitting at the front door; after all he had been there every day for as long as anyone could remember.

As Peter and John approached the church they probably were busy rejoicing in the many new members of the Church since the marvelous Pentecostal Service. They probably barely heard the beggar's first pleas but somehow the Lord broke through their absorption with self and circumstances and let them know that someone had a need they could meet. Let's notice the way Peter met this man's needs.

First Peter got his undivided attention (Peter "fastened" his eyes on him and requested him to do likewise). In a superficial world where men listen without hearing and see without seeing (knowing that the instant replay will show them anything they've missed!), it's important that we focus on other people.

Then Peter determined his real need- He didn't need a Hand Out, He needed a Hand up. Throwing money at the problem wouldn't help. Peter knew this man needed healing more than charity. So He told him the answer (Trust in Jesus' Name) and reached out his hand.

There are a lot of "40 year old failures" in the world today that need someone to show concern and give guidance. Will you toss them a quarter; or give them a hand??

January 18. 1990 REWARDS

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At a recent "Award" Ceremony for Church Workers some interesting Rewards were given out:

- Someone got a tube of toothpaste for having the cleanest smile.
- Someone else got a bottle of Vitamins for needing the most energy.
- The Teen Teacher got a bottle of mouthwash for being faced with the most offence.
- One got a bottle of "Brut" for being the toughest Teacher.
- Another got a tape measure for always measuring up.
- The Nursery Teacher got a bar of soap for having to deal with the dirtiest problems.
- One (who was always late) got a Turtle, while another (who always jumped from one project to another) got a jump rope.
- And, finally, the most satisfied Teacher of the Year got a pacifier while the Brightest Teacher of the Year got a Flashlight.

While these are certainly not the rewards these people expect to get in Heaven, they do show a great deal about what kind of personality other people think they have. If YOU had been a recipient of a reward at that Ceremony, what would you have received?? Remember, part of the wonder of the Gospel is that it can change you.

January 25, 1990 THE TRAIL

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The sign had warned us in capital letters "UNIMPROVED ROAD next 8 miles". Accustomed to the ease of modern driving, we thought this meant there would be some bumps in the road every now and then; instead we found narrow ruts that wound almost straight up along the edge of the mountain and

then plunged straight down again. Nowhere could we see over 100 feet in front or back without a curve blocking the way. You could almost touch the mountain on one side and the other side was a steep drop off.

We finally stopped beside a stream (No bridges, you had to "ford" each stream) to allow the car to cool some before tackling the next mountain. Dwarfed by the towering trees, overwhelmed by the majesty of the mountain, I stood beside the rushing stream and thought of those who'd come before me. What courage those early pilgrims must have had. I knew how far I had to go, I was driving a car stocked with food and clothes, and I knew that eventually someone else would come along if I broke down-- yet I admit I was a little scared. What fortitude those early men must have had to climb to the top of a mountain, see nothing but mountains ahead, and still keep going.

Life is sometimes like this trail. It's more difficult than you planned for, it's pretty scary as you travel, and the trail ahead looks even more difficult than the part you've just traveled. Thank God for a Savior that has traveled life's trail before me; and walks beside me even now.

February 1, 1990 STANDARDS

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We live in the day of the "Christian" Stripper (She doesn't want you to lust after her body, just admire how good God has been to her!), the "Christian" Pick-pocket (He steals your wallet with one hand while putting a gospel tract in your pocket with the other), and the sexually driven, money desiring, TV Preacher (No explanation needed!).

It seems that Christians act like the world, the world acts like the devil, and no one seems to know right from wrong except Oprah and Donahue! That's why I thought it would be a good idea to look at some distinguishing marks of Christians.

Christians can be recognized by their:

- LOVE- John 13:35 By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.
- LIFE- Rom 6:4 Therefore we were buried with him in baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.
- II Cor 5:17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.
- LIGHT- John 3:20-21 Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God. Matt 5:14 Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.

Do you meet the World's Standards or the Word's Standards for being a Child of God?

Remember who'll be the Judge.

February 8, 1990 WIVES

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By the time you read this I will just have celebrated my 20th Wedding Anniversary. While I'll admit that there are multitudes of things I don't know (or understand) about Wives, I believe I have learned a few things in the past 20 years of marriage that may help you in your marriage.

1) PRAY about who you will marry. As a pastor, I knew that in many areas of my life my wife could "make or break" me. I didn't know what she would be like in the future but I knew a God who did; so I

asked Him to lead me in choosing the right one. Because she was given by God, I'm not tempted to let man put us asunder.

2) "PET" your Wife regularly. Paul said Husbands were to "Love their wives as Christ loved the Church and gave himself for it". An unexpected box of candy or bunch of flowers will pay amazing dividend

3) PRIZE your Wife- Solomon said, "Whoso finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor of the Lord" (Prov 18:22). Value your wife and treat her special. She may not be perfect, but look at who she married!

February 15, 1990 GOD'S LOVE

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The greatest day in my life (second only to the day I trusted Jesus Christ as my Savior) was the day I became absolutely convinced that God loved me. It has been life transforming. Let me share with you 3 main areas that this Love has affected me:

- LOVE CALLED ME: I John 4:10 "Herein in love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins". My fear of Hell turned me toward the Father but it was His open arms that brought me into His family.
- LOVE COMFORTS ME: I John 4:18 "There is no fear in Love; but perfect Love casteth out fear". I began laboring for God thinking He was some far away, perfection demanding, "Boss"; but it changed my work from Pressure to Pleasure when I learned I serve a Loving Father who recognizes that I'm human while He's developing me into the image of His Son.
- It was this comforting Love of God that taught me the difference between a "Murderer and a Doctor"- One puts a knife into you to Harm you while the other puts the knife in you to Help you. Now I KNOW that all things work together for good to them that love the Lord.
- LOVE CONSTRAINS ME: Paul said in II Corinthians 5:14 that the Love shown to him by Christ "drove" him to sacrifice and service. I wouldn't do the work I do for the salary of a baseball player without the Love of God; but I'd do it for nothing because of the Love of God.
God's Love is marvelous; I hope you will experience it today.

February 22, 1990 SIGHT

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Without my Glasses I'm legally Blind, so they're the last thing I take off at night and the first thing I put on in the morning. I hear many people complain about having to wear glasses but they're a necessary part of life for me. I was 12 years old when I got my first pair and I still feel the excitement today that I felt then when I saw the stars in the sky for the first time; and was actually able to see the leaves on the trees as something more than a mass of green!

As you can imagine, I have a restriction on my driver's license requiring me to wear glasses when I drive. Once while I was driving down the road a bee got in the car with me and as I was swiping at him I accidentally knocked my glasses off. Children, if you want to know what "fun" is, then you try driving 50 miles an hour down a road when you can't see as far as the hood ornament on your car!!

My guardian angel put in for early retirement after that day but he did allow me to get the car stopped without hitting anyone or anything. I think of that incident a lot when I see people blundering through life blinded by sin (II Cor 4:4). They're all the time hurting themselves or others because they can't find the right way. The Good News I have is that Jesus is THE WAY, the Truth, and the Life. He is able to give light to eyes blinded by sin and direction to people wandering aimlessly through life. What a difference Life will be when finally you can see!

March 1, 1990 THE ANCHOR

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It had been a pleasant afternoon of boating. My Neighbor had just gotten a new boat and wanted to show it off so he invited me to ride around with him. We had ridden up and down the river and seen most of the features of the boat until we both started getting tired so he decided to stop for a while. The sun was very hot so he pulled up close enough to a tall bridge until the shadow of the bridge would cover us.

The water was running very swiftly there and I was a little worried but he cast out his anchor and then shut down the engine. We were just starting to talk when I noticed that the landscape was changing. We looked around and found the boat was being dragged by the current directly into the bridge pilings. We began to move faster and faster as my friend tried desperately to restart the engine. Finally, just as we were about to strike the bridge, the engine caught and we were able to pull away.

I learned several things about anchors that day. First of all, you must cast an anchor out of the boat if it's to do any good. Many people attempt to handle life's problems in their own strength and end up being battered by life's battles. Secondly, when you cast out the anchor MAKE SURE IT CATCHES on something that will hold you! I'm glad to know today that, in my spiritual life, my anchor holds and grips the solid rock.

March 8, 1990 THE JOURNEY

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It began its journey in a most beneficial way. A widow was in desperate need of food and a stranger came by and gave her a brand new \$20 dollar bill. It wasn't long until it ended up at the corner grocery where the manager knew of the plight of the widow and gave her \$25 dollars in exchange for the new \$20 dollar bill.

The manager then included the \$20 in his gift to the Church on Sunday Morning. The Church was receiving a special offering that day for a family whose home had burned and so the \$20 dollar bill was next used to buy some clothes for a child with nothing to wear. The clothing store manager used it as part of the pay for one of his most faithful employees who, in turn, used it to buy some candy being sold for the school band from the kid next store. The Band director turned it in to the school secretary who included it with the school's deposit that day.

Then is when the trouble began. As the bank clerk was counting the money she suddenly stopped when she came to this \$20 dollar bill. "Why this is counterfeit!", she said.

Counterfeit! But it had done so much good. Yet when it came to the test to determine its ultimate value it was found to be worthless. There once was a man who did many wonderful works and was well thought of in his community; but when he faced the ultimate judge....

March 15, 1990 CLAPS OR CONTENT

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I began preaching when I was 14 years old. The good part of a situation like that is that people attributed most of my beginning blunders to my youth and inexperience. The Bad part of a situation like this is that people were so nice and understanding until I began to believe their compliments and, being human, I was tempted to tailor my messages to their Praises instead of their Problems.

I won't go into all the gory details of how God broke my pride and molded my personality; I'll just say that God demanded a straight forward answer to this question, "Claps or Content?" Or, to put it another way, "Was I out to please God or men?"

Every man must answer this question correctly if he's to do an effective work for God. In today's TV Society it's just a small step from Evangelist to Entertainer and a man must guard his motives and methods closely lest he find himself more interested in men's applause than in God's approval. Don't let yourself become like the men Jesus talked about in John 12:43, "They loved the Praise of men more than the Praise of God". Keep the content of your ministry pure and God will provide the "Claps" when they're for your good and His glory.

March 22, 1990 GLUE AND SEWING TWINE

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Millions upon millions of dollars' worth of sophisticated equipment, thousands of hours of training, and now the entire mission was in jeopardy. Triumphantly the Astronauts had landed upon the moon and the world had watched in awe as they made their famous "giant step for mankind". They had now returned to their space craft for the journey home and we were to aid in their recovery.

The problem was that one of the radio operators had broken the switch on one of our main transmitters and we did not have another in stock. We could get another switch; but only after we returned to port; and that was too late!

The transmitter was vital, the part was not available, and we were in a bind. After trying everything I could think of, I finally removed the switch, glued the broken pieces together, and then bound them securely with sewing twine. It worked...and the astronauts returned home safely.

Sometimes Christians feel intimidated by the Technology and Talents of this present generation. Just remember, if I could fix a radio with glue and sewing twine, the God of the universe can do wonders with YOUR meager abilities...if you'll only make them available.

March 29, 1990 WEARYING GOD

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Almost everyone I meet right now has a bad case of "Spring Fever"; they're tired, sleepy, and/or their nose is running! Talking with someone about this the other day I commented, "At least God doesn't get tired". Later that night when I was reading my daily scriptures I came across a passage that said that God did get Weary sometimes and I had to revise my thinking.

I knew that Jesus was sometimes weary as a man- in fact, one of those times it led to the Salvation of the Samaritan Woman. He was resting at the well while the Disciples went into town for supplies and this woman came for water. He talked to her about her prejudice, her marriage, and her religious beliefs and she finally became a believer and a witness.

But what could make an all-powerful God Weary?? The Bible lists 4 major things that weary God- (1) Playing Church, (2) Disregarding His Word, (3) Continuing in our Sin, and (4) Pretending to Repent. All 4 revolve around one common theme; Using God instead of Loving God.

Do you Weary God or Worship God? Don't let God's Weariness develop into God's Wrath.

April 4, 1990 TRUTH AND TRADITIONS

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I want today to look at some of Easter's Traditions and then see the Truth about them.
SPRING HOUSE CLEANING

Tradition- The Jewish Passover is celebrated at the same time Christians celebrate Easter. Passover was when God delivered the Jews from Egypt by sparing the first born of all who had the blood applied to their doorpost. One of the requirements of Passover was that no bread be cooked using Leaven. Jewish women began the Tradition of "Spring House Cleaning" to make sure there was no leaven left in their house during this season. Other people picked up the Tradition (After all, it's a good time to clean up the house after the long winter of being closed in).

Truth- Leaven represents Sin in our lives. Leaven decays and corrupts and that is what sin does to us. Do you need to do any Physical "House cleaning" about your Spiritual life? Any Books, Records, Games, etc, you need to throw out??

LENT

Tradition- Originally the early Christians would ask those who wanted to join them to prepare for the hardships that would come with their public stand for Christ by, among other things, "Fasting" (Doing without any meat or eggs) for the 40 days prior to Easter. Because of the difficulties endured during the 40 days they began to be called "Lengthened days" and finally "Lent". (Mardi Gras has become the big blow out before this 40 day period begins. Originally 1 day {Mardi Gras means "Fat Tuesday"}) it is now several weeks long and includes parades, parties, reveling, and sin).

Truth- Easter should be a time we look at the seriousness of sin and what it cost Christ (Death on the Cross). It should also be a time we rejoice in the victory Christ accomplished for us over Death, Hell, and the Grave. It is not a time to "Pleasure the flesh".

Are you willing to give up a meal this Easter season and spend that time reading the story of the Crucifixion and resurrection?

EASTER EGGS AND BUNNIES

Tradition- One of the things the early Christians gave up during "Lent" was eggs. So on Easter day the other Christians would give them a few eggs (Possibly in a basket) to welcome them into the Church. These eggs were dyed Red to represent the shed blood of Christ and when they were cracked they represented Christ coming forth from the tomb. (Is this how the act of hiding eggs began; Because the early Christians looked for eggs on Easter?)

No one seems to know for sure how the rabbit came into the picture. Maybe because he lives in a hole in the Ground (Grave) and comes out at this time of year.

Truth- The tradition of Easter eggs and bunnies is pretend; but the reason for the season is Jesus' resurrection. Easter should be a time of rejoicing in the victory we have in Christ; not in finding Easter eggs.

WEARING NEW CLOTHES TO CHURCH ON EASTER

Tradition- In the Early Church many people wanted to be baptized the day before Easter to symbolize the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Then on Easter Sunday they would wear new clothes to Church to signify their new life in Christ.

Truth- New Birth should mean new Life. Does the world know you are a Christian?? Do you wear new clothes or have a new life?

[April 4, 1990 THE RESURRECTION](#)

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Do you know the most miserable man on earth?? According to First Corinthians 15:19 it is the Man who does not believe in the Resurrection of Christ. In fact, Paul says that if Christ was not

resurrected then our Preaching and our Faith are worthless! That helps us to understand the importance the Bible puts on the Resurrection.

It was faith in the Resurrection that changed "ignorant, unlearned" fishermen into world changing Missionary Preachers; It is faith in the Resurrection that delivers men from the fear of Death; And it is "believing in your heart that God has raised Christ from the dead" that is an essential part of a person's salvation (Rom 10:9). It is the Resurrection that shows that God does not simply forgive what I have done but He also gives me the ability to begin a new life- He didn't simply deliver me from being a slave to sin; He make me a son of God!

This Easter season look beyond the new clothes and the "Easter eggs" to the Dying Savior and the Resurrected Christ and allow God to Change you from the most miserable person on earth into a changed Child of God.

April 19, 1990 **Missing Bodies**

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One of the major ingredients in many Mystery plots is the "Case of the Missing Body". Someone finds a body, reports it, and then when they return with the police the body is gone. The Hero must then find the Body as well as determine "Who dun it". You may not know it but the Bible has several "Cases of the Missing Bodies" also.

The first of these is a man called Enoch. The Bible says he "walked with God and was not for God took him" (Gen 5:24). The writer of Hebrews says he was "translated" (changed into another form).

The next Missing Body is that of Moses. When he died he was buried by God in the land of Moab and "no man knows of his sepulcher unto this day" (Deut 34:6). It is interesting to note that Jude says Michael the archangel and Satan disputed about this body (Jude 9)

Then there was the Preacher named Elijah that rode to Heaven in a chariot of fire. His followers would not believe he was gone, however, and they looked for his body for 3 days (II Kings 2). And, of course, who could forget the fact that the body of Jesus was missing from the tomb on that first Easter Morning.

There is one final "Case of the Missing Body" to be considered. It hasn't happened yet but it could happen any time; and when it does it will happen in "a moment, in the twinkling of an eye"; as God raptures His Church. On that wonderful day, will you be a "Missing Body" or will you miss the rapture???

April 26, 1990 **FACING AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE**

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One of the most dangerous "Habits" I have is that I sometimes read a little as I'm driving on open roads (My members say that helps keep them ready to go as well as keeping me ready to go!). Several years ago I was on the way to the hospital early one morning to be with a Church member's family while she underwent surgery. I knew it would be a difficult wait because the doctors had hinted strongly that they might find cancer during the surgery.

As I was riding along, I was praying for God to give me something to help and comfort this family (While I'm driving I pray with my eyes open!). I then opened my Bible, laid it on my steering wheel, and found a verse that has become a mainstay for me in hospitals- Psalm 112:7 *He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.* What a marvelous message this verse has- "Don't be afraid of bad news; keep a steadfast confidence; maintain faith in God's Love and care" (By the way, it worked

very well for this lady. No cancer was found, the surgery was successful, and in a very short time she was back at home with her family).

If you're facing an uncertain future, and fear is freezing your heart, I invite you to hold to God's unchanging hand. I don't know what the future holds; but I know who holds me; now, and in the future.

May 4, 1990 RUMORS

Leviticus 19:16 Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people:

Gossip has suddenly become fashionable. "News" shows that expose secrets and open hidden doors are now among the most popular programs on TV. Everyone shakes their heads over the trashy gossip "newspapers" that adorn Check Out counters; and spend their lunch hours talking about what they saw in the one "cousin Clem" purchased. Everyone seems to be trying to find out something bad about everyone else; and the juicier the gossip the better they like it.

While this type attitude is to be expected (although certainly not condoned!) by the wicked world, I am saddened to report that it is becoming increasingly popular among the people of God. Preachers talk about other Preachers, members talk about other members, and the world looks on with wonderment as the church "Bites and devours one another, and is consumed one of another" (Gal 5:15). Most Church splits, many Church problems, and some decline in attendance can be attributed to this very problem.

Church Rumors can also having a major impact on a Business. The latest one making the rounds of Churches today is that Procter and Gamble is giving its profits to the Church of Satan and that it's symbol is a secret Satanic Symbol. IT IS TOTALLY UNTRUE but many Churches are now supporting boycotts of Procter and Gamble Products because someone gave them an anonymous petition.

Rather than ignore this, Procter and Gamble has sent most churches a packet containing signed affidavits showing this rumor to be false. It's sad that they had to spend this much money denying something the churches should have checked before they jumped on the Rumor bandwagon (They also included a "stick" along with the "carrot" in their mailing; a promise to prosecute anyone caught spreading this untruth).

Another popular UNTRUE Rumor is that Madeline O'Hare is trying to get all religious broadcasting removed from Radio and TV. It started nearly 10 years ago and, despite the fact that every major Christian magazine has exposed it as untrue, I still receive 3 or 4 requests a year to sign a petition about it.

When you hear a rumor the best thing you can do is check the facts. Remember, the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! (James 3:5). It's hard enough to live in a world where people are continually spilling gas; we certainly don't need anyone playing with matches.

May 10, 1990 TODAY'S MOTHER

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It is difficult for me to write articles about "Mothers". Everyone wants to say "Hi Mom;" and hear mushy things about how special and loving Mothers are; but I deal with Mothers in the 90s. Most mothers today bake biscuits out of a can, heat supper in the microwave, and think a Family dinner is the entire family going to a restaurant to eat! Then there are Addictive babies (born to mothers who think a

"high" is more important than a healthy child) and "latchkey kids" (whose vision of Mother is someone rushing off to work in the morning and returning exhausted at night).

Most Mothers have indeed "come a long way, baby"; but I wonder if it has been in the right direction?? Maybe this Mother's Day would be a good time for Mothers to take a long look at themselves in the mirror; and get their priorities in order. Then next year I might be able to write happy articles about Mom and Apple Pie, and a world changing for the better.

May 11, 1990 MODERN MOTHERS

It's difficult being a Mother in the 90's. Divorce hangs over many marriages, Drugs try to capture your children, and the Drudgery of working in an office all day, while keeping up a home at night, saps all your strength. You laugh about being "Super Woman" but you think sometimes that even a Super Woman would get exhausted on your schedule.

Even when you live in a good marriage with good Children it's still tough being a woman. A recent USA TODAY survey illustrates why. 4,500 men and women were asked about responsibility.

Women were responsible for:

1. Deciding what to cook for dinner and then for preparing it.
2. Managing the Household budget
3. Caring for the Children's clothes, sickness, and schedules (School, ball, recreation, etc.).

Men and Women shared the responsibility for deciding:

1. Where to go on Vacation
2. How much to spend on a major purchase
3. How much insurance to carry and where to buy it.

Men were responsible for:

1. Deciding what to watch on TV! (That's it. All other decisions were either made jointly or by the woman).

I think it's time some Husbands and Children heed the admonition of Proverbs 31:28 Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Make this Mother's Day special for your Mother. Don't just say, "I think you're great, Mom. What's for Dinner?!" Give her a hug; and then give her a hand with her work.

May 17, 1990 SOUP

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I keep finding simple little sentences that are actually short "mini-sermons". What I normally do is save them for a special service and give the people a "Soup Sermon" containing these sayings. I thought I'd do that with you today. They're short but sharp; and I hope they will speak to you.

- Anger is an acid which can do more damage to the vessel that holds it than to anything on which it is thrown.
- If religion has done nothing for your temper, it has done nothing for your soul.
- If you are too big to willingly do little things, you are probably too little to be trusted with big things.
- The Bible - There's a big difference between the books that men make and the Book that makes men.
- Circumstances make a person neither strong nor weak; they only show which he is.
- If you do not live it you do not believe it.

- Give your time to improving yourself, and you'll have little time left for criticizing others.
- We can easily forgive a child who is afraid of the dark; the real tragedy of life is when people are afraid of the light. Plato
- A happy wife sometimes has the best husband, but more often makes the best of the husband she has (My wife especially like this one!)
- The church that does not reach out fades out.
- A reputation once broken may possibly be repaired, but the world will always keep its eye on the spot where the crack was.

May 18, 1990 MILK JAR LESSONS

We were pretty poor when I was growing up and did not have many of the advantages of our neighbors. In order to compensate for that some of them would devise ways to help us. Uncle Ned and Aunt Sip had a cow that gave more milk than they could use so they let us gather moss for it to eat and, in return, they would give us milk several times a week.

We would carry gallon mason jugs to Aunt Sip's house and she would take a pan of milk out of the refrigerator and pour it into the jug. One day she was busy doing some baking and so she told me to pour the milk into the jug. It had always looked so easy when she did it but I ended up with milk spilt everywhere.

After we cleaned up the mess, Aunt Sip taught me a lesson that has helped me all my life. She said the reason I spilled the milk was that I was being too careful. In order to pour milk from a pan into a bottle you must Boldly hold the pan up above the bottle and pour it all in one motion. I was trying to keep from spilling any and ending up spilling a lot.

Paul gave the Hebrews some advice like that when he told them to boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me (Heb 13:6). I've always found that the best policy is to be 100% Christian if you're going to be one. Half hearted Christianity only makes you miserable.

Besides that, Bashful instead of Bold, Christians end up like the Civil war soldier who thought he'd be for both sides. He put on a Blue Coat and Grey Pants....and both sides shot him!

May 24, 1990 MEMORIALS

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The Bible is full of Memorials. Some remind us of events; The rocks removed at the crossing of Jordan. Some remind us of the actions of people; Mary's act of kindness in anointing Jesus' feet and Lot's Wife's act of rejection in turning back and becoming a pillar of salt. And some remind us of the Lord Himself; The "Lord's Supper" we celebrate until he come.

All of these show us that God thinks Memorials are important. That's because "He who forgets the past is bound to repeat it" or as the Bible says it, "The things that happened before this time were written for our learning" (Rom 15:4).

Most of us will celebrate Memorial Day Weekend with a thrilling sense of Freedom; but that Freedom will be Freedom from School or Freedom to Vacation! It would be marvelous this weekend if you would take the time to remember who the Memorial in Memorial Day is for- The sons and husbands and brothers that fought and died to give you the freedom to attend school or plan a vacation. Maybe if we will remember these men we will not need to remember others in days to come.

May 25, 1990 A LIVING MEMORIAL

At first I thought it was just "good Vibes" that suddenly came my way. But then I started noticing a weekly pattern. Out of the clear blue each week, at about the same time, I would sense this feeling of peace and comfort.

I tried relating it to the job I was on but that varied each week. Then I tried to tie it to my sleeping or eating habits; but they too varied each week. It was a pleasurable problem but one that nagged at my subconscious like a small stone does in your shoe.

The answer came in a single sentence in one of my Mom's letters. She simply mentioned in passing that my home church had special prayer each Wednesday Night for all of the community boys serving in Viet Nam. I added up all the time zone differences from where I was at in Viet Nam to my home Church and found the "special peace" swept over me at exactly the time my home Church would be gathered around the Church altar praying for me.

After the war was over, I looked back and, to the best of my knowledge, not a single person whose name was prayed over each week was injured during the war. Truly the "effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (James 5:16).

As we remember our fallen heroes on this Memorial Day I want to extend a special word of praise to Mill Branch FWB Church. It was their faithful prayer that helped me share this memory instead of being honored at a Memorial.

May 31, 1990 WAX

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While reading the Bible recently I came across 2 verses that contained the same word. The word is not found in normal conversation but it has a wealth of meaning in the context in which it's used. It is the simple word "Wax". Look at the verses it's used in first.

Matt 24:12 And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

I Chron 11:9 So David waxed greater and greater: for the Lord of hosts was with him.

Both examples show a condition that gradually increases; one gets worst and worst and the other greater and greater. That descriptive word "wax" shows that it happens a layer at a time (as if you put several coats of wax on your car or if a candle in burning dripped layers of wax on the floor).

The sad truth is that this is normally the way things happen in our life. Most situations do not drastically worsen or improve all at once. They "wax" better or worst thru time.

The key in these verses (and in life) is that it "waxes" better with the Lord and worst when you get away from Him. Which way is your life "waxing"?

June 1, 1990 HEART PROBLEMS

You could hear him coming for half a block. When he finally arrived at Church he would wheeze and cough and every mother there would agonize over his drawn face and blue lips.

Zach had been born with a defective heart valve and the doctors were waiting for him to grow a little more before performing corrective heart surgery.

The sad thing is that there are a lot of people who suffer from Zach's problem in their spiritual life. They aren't getting enough "oxygen" and, an otherwise fine body, is suffering with marital problems, professional problems, or personal problems. They try to deal with these problems by taking aspirins or home remedies but the only hope they have is to allow the Great Physician to do "Heart

Surgery" on them- (Ezekiel 36:26) "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh".

By the way, Zach has had his heart surgery. Thanks to a lot of prayers and some good physicians, he is doing marvelously now. In fact, he hit 2 home runs in a little league ball game last week. Life sure is great when your heart works right.

June 8, 1990 BROKEN FINGERS

I noticed it when I was paying for my order so I asked her about it. "Yes, It's a broken finger," she said. "Someone closed a door on it." She sounded a little irritated so I didn't pursue it any further. I just stepped off to the side and waited for them to finish my order. In the few minutes I had to wait several more people came to pay for orders. Every One of them also asked this girl about her broken finger.

Now I understood a little about her irritation. She was tired of having to tell everyone about an accident she couldn't help. As a pastor I can relate to her dilemma. I've had to continually explain to person after person why a "finger" of the body of Christ is no longer active.

Many times in church it's also an accidental door closing. The people meant no harm but someone said something or did something that injured a "finger". Sometimes it's circumstances instead of people that put a thorn in the finger and cause it to become infected with doubt or bitterness. And sometimes, sad to say, Saints act like Sinners and the outcome is a broken finger.

Whatever the reasons the finger was put in the cast, I hope the healing process will be swift and sure. Just remember this, if you're that broken finger, the rest of the body is hurt and hindered along with you. Let's make the body whole again.

June 14, 1990 FATHER'S TRAINING

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Every day when we came home from school there it was waiting on us. Dad had decided to clean up the acre of new ground beside the house in order to plant some peanuts. First we had to cut the trees down and saw them into fire wood. Then we had to burn the tree tops and dig up all the stumps. Finally, Dad took a subsoil plow and plowed the field in one foot squares so we would be sure and get all the roots up.

Some days it seemed as if it would never end but finally we had the land cleared and ready to plant. Two years later Dad decided that the land was too poor to grow peanuts and he had us plant Pine Trees on it! It took a long time for me to forgive him for that.

It was only in looking back that I was finally able to see what my Dad was really doing. He wasn't just cleaning up new ground, he was building up boys. Through years of chores like this he developed a work ethic in his sons that has paid tremendous dividend in their lives.

As we honor our Fathers this week I want to say a special word of thanks to those Dads who took the time to "Train up their child in the way he should go". The training was hard but the results are worth it.

June 15, 1990 SNICKER BREATH

Every Father knows the feeling. He had hid the Snicker bar in the cabinet because he knew if the boys saw it they would want it. Patiently he had waited until the night time rituals were completed and the boys had finally gone to bed. Then he eased into the kitchen, reached behind the cans, and retrieved his prized candy bar.

He went back to his easy chair where he leaned back and gently tore the wrapper away. That first bite was delicious and he was sitting there savoring it when he heard the patter of little feet coming down the hall. Just before his baby boy came into the room he reached down and quickly hid the bar of candy beneath a magazine.

The baby boy came right into his lap and was about to tell his dad something he had forgotten when suddenly his head jerked up and he said, "I smell a Snicker bar!". Caught!!

My brother learned again that night some of the fun of being a father. He learned that kids are always unpredictable. He learned that the things you think you hide from your children will eventually be found out. And he learned that Snicker bars always have to be shared.

In the many years I have been a Pastor, I have had the distasteful duty of dealing with many Father's "hidden Pleasures". They didn't think they would get caught but somehow the kids always find out.

As we honor our Father's this Sunday I hope they will realize the privilege and responsibility of being a Father. I also hope they will live in such a way that the only thing their children find wrong with them is "Snicker breath".

June 21, 1990 RAISING A CHILD

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This was her first child and she had been in labor for a number of hours. As the labor pains became very intense she gasped to the nurse, "Is the hard part over yet?" The nurse replied, "Honey, This is the easy part. The hard part will last for the next eighteen years!"

As one ad campaign says, "If Kids only came with instructions". The sad truth is that each one is different and the "rules" for one do not apply to the other. One child can be as sweet as pie and the next can be as aggravating as walking a mile with a rock in your shoe.

Here are some common guidelines you can follow, however, that will help in developing your child properly:

- (1) Each Child is a gift from God (Psalm 127:3) and should be handled respectfully and responsibly.
- (2) Each Child has a tremendous potential for good or bad, according to the directions they're given (Psalm 127:4 says they are like "arrows in the hand of a mighty man". Be careful with them).
- (3) The most important benefit you can give your child is a strong spiritual heritage. The circumstances of this life change but God is a Rock of safety and stability now; and forever.

June 22, 1990 HOW TO CATCH A MONKEY

Do you know how to catch a monkey? He's too fast to throw a net over. When bananas are put out as bait he normally will figure a way to steal the bananas and run away laughing. But a monkey is very easy to catch.

Get a large jar with a small mouth. Put an apple in the jar and sit back and wait. The monkey will come along, put his hand in the jar, grasp the apple, and then be unable to remove both his hand and the apple. Unwilling to let go of his prize he will sit there while you capture him.

This is one of those cases where man and monkey show similar traits. Time after time, Men, also, have been caught in a "greed jar". One man drown because he refused to let go of a money belt. Another man escaped from his burning house but ran back in and was later found with his burned hand grasped around his wallet. And there are numerous cases of bright intelligent people who lost family, friends, and jobs because they were caught with their hand in the "cookie jar". Is it any wonder that God made the last commandment, "Thou shall not covet"? Don't let money make a monkey out of you.

June 28, 1990 GOOD CITIZENS

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One of the things that should be obvious to anyone who reads the Bible is *Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people* (Proverbs 14:34). All throughout the Bible the nation of Israel was Blessed and protected by God when they obeyed Him. On the other hand, they were destroyed and captured when they went into sin.

The key to this seemed to be Leadership. When the Nation had a good King then the people followed God. When the King was evil then the people became evil also. That should do several things for us as we look toward our nation's birthday.

First, Recognize the responsibility of leadership example. A Nation's "Heroes" will manifest themselves in the attitudes and actions of the nation's people. Is there anything you can do to encourage the nation's leaders to act responsibly?

Second, Recognize the responsibility placed on you to be a good citizen- *Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God* (Romans 13:1). A leader can't lead if no one is following! Become an active involved citizen.

Finally, Pray for the leaders of the nation - 1 Timothy 2:1-2 *I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.*

America is Great as long as it's Good. Do your part.

June, 29, 1990 SPIDERS OR EAGLES

Everyone called him "Mac" but his name was McDermitt. He had the "IQ" of a genius but, like a lot of very intelligent people, he was shy around crowds. Since he did not like to "party" or drink, he didn't fit in very well with the rest of the Sailor Society. So he and I spent a lot of our Liberty time touring the museums and tourist attractions of the Far East.

I had guard duty the day before he was to fly to San Francisco for Discharge so some of the other men persuaded "Mac" to go to town with them. He finally agreed and they "shamed" him into taking a drink with them., and then another.... When they had all the fun they thought they could off him they left him to find his way back to the base alone while they continued their "fun".

They found his body the next day in the Ali Wai Canal. Sometime during the night he had fallen into the canal, hit his head on a rock, and drown. Everyone was so very very sorry but it was one day too late for sorrow.

Many people, like "Mac", have stood on the very brink of Liberty and then succumbed to the pressures of the Pleasure Crowd. At that moment the craving for popularity overcame their common sense and they fell into the web of the world. How sad it is to die with the spiders instead of fly with the eagles.

July 5, 1990 VACATION

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Vance Havner, the dean of America Preachers, often said at conferences, "People can either come apart and rest or they will simply come a part!". In the fast paced world of the 90s that's something we need to look at again.

The Lord did not design our bodies to be perpetual motion machines. He allowed darkness as well as light so that man would cease his labor every day. Then He instituted the Sabbath so that man

would take one day in seven to rest from even his daytime work. He even went so far as to tell the nation of Israel to celebrate the Jubilee year each 50 years as an entire year of rest.

Rest refreshes the Body, renews the mind, and gives us an opportunity to reexamine the course of our life. Many times marital problems, job problems, and even health problems can be traced to lack of rest and reflection. God said, "Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." (Isa 40:30-31).

Will you come apart or come a part??

July 6, 1990 FLOWER POWER

I used to travel through San Francisco during the time when "Flower Power" was the theme of a rebellious generation. Since I was going back and forth for my second tour of duty in the war zone of Viet Nam I didn't exactly appreciate the sentiments being proclaimed by these long haired hippies who were brave enough among the drug culture of California but who wouldn't have lasted a day in the real world of war.

Since then, however, I have seen what real "Flower Power" is all about. One of the Ladies in our Church brings fresh flowers to our services almost every week that they're in bloom. They brighten the sanctuary with their beauty and delight the senses with their fragrance. Her "Ministry" affects the entire congregation for good before a song is sung or a sermon is delivered.

Several months ago one of the ladies in the Church heard my wife say she would like to plant some flowers beside the Parsonage steps some day. Within a week this lady's husband had tilled the ground and added mulch so this lady and her daughter could plant some flowers. I don't remember a visitor who has come to the parsonage since then that hasn't commented on the beauty of the flowers.

Jesus said, "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.". There is power in the Flower; share one with a friend today.

July 11, 1990 FIRST IMPRESSIONS

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We had been at sea for several days and were anxiously awaiting some sight of land. Everyone was excited when we finally dropped anchor at Midway Island but the word soon passed that this was simply a fueling stop so no one would be allowed on the island.

We stood at the railing and looked on the most barren desolate stretch of sand you've ever seen. It barely protruded from the sea and the same thought occurred to everyone; a large wave would wash completely across that island. We left with a bad impression of Midway and thankful hearts that we weren't stationed there.

A little over a year later we passed by Midway again. This time, while we were re-fueling, I was allowed on the island to try to find a part for some broken equipment. The people were friendly, the island was much more complex than it first appeared, and I completely changed my opinion about Midway Island.

That same thing has happened with people. Seen afar off and under difficult circumstances, they appear one way. But when we take the time to learn something about them we find a common bond; and sometimes a good friend.

The Bible says, *A man that hath friends must show himself friendly:* (Prov 18:24). Don't stand off and get the wrong impression about people. Build a bridge and make a friend.

July 13, 1990 DO YOU SPEAK THE LANGUAGE?

His real name was Roy Herotao Mayosemoto but even the captain called him "Roy". Although his parents were full blooded Japanese, Roy was raised in Honolulu, Hawaii and never learned to speak Japanese.

When we received our orders for a tour of duty in Viet Nam we knew that we would have a stop off in Japan on the way. I bought a book on Japanese and began learning some of the basics of the language but Roy didn't bother.

That first night in Yokosuka, Japan was something else as strange sights and sounds flooded our senses. One of the things that stands out the most in my mind, however, was walking down main street with Roy.

It was obvious that he had a Japanese background and people would walk up to us and begin talking to him in Japanese. He would just get flustered and look over at me and say, "What are they saying, Mike. What are they saying?". It was funny!

A lot of people are like Roy. They look like a Christian but they don't know the language. They get by alright until they get into a situation where they really need to communicate. Often they just look funny or foolish but sometimes their failure to communicate is fatal. A person with a desperate situation doesn't need cliches and generalities.

Do you speak the language or do you simply look like a Christian? Do you wear a cross; or do you actually bear your cross?? When a dying man ask you for help will you give him a pat on the head or will you show him how to have peace in his heart??

July 19, 1990 CHOICES

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It used to be simple. You would go to a paint store and ask for brown, yellow, or blue paint and the clerk would give you the paint. Not anymore! Now you have hundreds of shades to choose from; none of which is the one you were looking for! And to doubly complicate matters the clerk will immediately tell you that the color you see on the sample is not the way it will look on your wall.

Sometimes life gets as complicated at buying paint. If everything was Black and White then it would be fairly simple. Life, however, is mainly misty shades of gray. And the beautiful theories of the classroom don't always work in the real world of life.

That's why we have to learn to make choices. We must choose between having a healthy body and being a "couch potato". We must choose between sharpening our minds with learning or dulling it with TV or Drugs. And we must choose either Faith in God or Faith in our own abilities.

The best advice I can give you as you're faced with life's choices is to "Trust in the Lord with all your heart; and lean not to your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and he shall direct your path" (Prov 3:5). It doesn't change the choices, but it does make the outcome a lot better.

July 26, 1990 PROBLEMS IN THE CHURCH

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One of the most difficult things for the world to understand is a church problem. They think that when a person becomes a Christian they become perfect robots that never make mistakes. Therefore, when a Christian makes a mistake, or when a Church has a problem, this causes some people to doubt that those people were really saved or that the Church is what it's supposed to be.

I think it's important that we see why even good Churches have problems.

Some will be caused by Personality Problems (3 John 1:9). The most common of which is the "Church Boss". A "Church Boss" can result from Family ties {My great granddaddy built this church}, Financial contributions {The Church couldn't survive if I stopped paying my tithes}, or False Pride {Everyone knows that I'm the only one at that Church that does anything}.

Some will be caused by Preacher Problems (1 Cor 1:11-12). Preacher Problems can result from a Pastor's Personality {Some like one Pastor while others like another}, the Pastor's Power {Pastors come and go but the Church's power base stays the same. And woe unto the Preacher that challenges it}, or the Pastor's Performance {One Pastor will visit "aunt Sally" more than another. One will be at a church during a time of sowing while another comes just in time to reap the harvest}.

Note that not a one of these dealt with a Pastor's Preaching. People accept almost anything from the Pulpit if they like the Person!

Some will be Sin Problems (1 Cor 5:1). Sometimes people who claim to be Christians aren't really Christians. Sometimes it simply because Christians are various spiritual "ages" and "accidents" happen as they grow up in the Lord. And sometimes Christians backslide and sin (David).

Some will be HONEST DIFFERENCES OF OPINIONS about what is the right thing to do. Let 2 people examine and describe the same coin. But let one describe one side and the other describe the other side. Same Coin but with two different perceptions. A Lot of life situations are like that; it depends on your perception. This doesn't mean one is "better" than the other; simply different. These differences of opinion make all of us grow because they cause us to examine and explain our beliefs.

The Thing to remember is that People have Problems but God has the answers. Keep your eyes on God and not on people.

July 27, 1990 LITTLE THINGS

I was sitting at my post in a half-sleep stupor when suddenly the radar operator startled everyone with a shout, "Contact". Quickly the word was passed to all lookouts and dozens of eyes tried to pierce the blackness as covers were quickly removed from guns. It had been only a week since the Viet Cong had slipped a boat down the Saigon River and attached mines to a boat anchored almost exactly where we were and everyone's nerves were on edge.

"The Contact is closing and Communications report no known activity on the river at this time" came the report from the Combat Center. Sweat began to form on hands that were gripping weapons as tightly as possible and every cricket sound from the river bank sounded like an army of marching men. Suddenly one of the lookouts reported movement on the river and just as over anxious fingers were squeezing triggers the sound came across the water, "Hey, you guys. Do you have any hot Coffee?".

It was only a couple of foolish Marines trying to relieve the monotony of guard duty (They weren't very bored when our Commanding Officer finished with them!!); but it had almost cost them their life. I was think about this incident the other day and wondering how many People end up in deep difficulties because they don't realize the seriousness of little things.

Solomon said, "The little foxes spoil the vine"; and, all too often, they also spoil a life. I wonder how many tawdry hotel rooms began with an innocent little touch? I wonder how many drug addicts began with one little taste? I wonder how many people today are limping through life because they failed to remove a pebble from their shoe?

The Good News from God is that there is nothing too little for Him to notice- "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of you head are all numbered" (Matt 10:29-30). So today, whether you have a "little Pebble"

or a life binding habit, God cares and He can help you. Why don't you come to Him today before your innocent cup of coffee turns into a life threatening situation.

July 27, 1990 RESPONSIBILITIES OF A LEADER

My wife's family recently went on a Vacation together. Only one member of the family knew where the house they were to stay in was located so he led a six car caravan through downtown Charleston. Children, That was exciting!!

Sometimes we would be driving 65mph through rush hour traffic trying to catch up with everyone and sometimes we would be crawling at 15mph (With traffic backed up behind us) trying to get everyone back together.

To keep from reading the lips of all those people who would pass us with clenched fist and very unhappy looks on their faces, I began to think about the responsibilities of a Leader.

A Leader should know where he is going and communicate that to his followers. The reason our caravan was so chaotic was the fact that only the leader knew where we were going and anyone who lost sight of the caravan was lost (doomed forever to circle the endless one way streets of Charleston!).

A Leader must sacrifice personal desires for the good of his followers. He can't make quick, unexpected, spur of the moment, decisions (like suddenly deciding to stop at a store). This satisfies his wife but it brings tremendous confusion to those following him.

A Leader must remember the difference between a Leader and a Signpost. A Signpost shows you where to go, a Leader shows you how to get there.

Two Parting Principles. First, Never let my brother in law be the lead car in a caravan. Second, Make sure whoever is leading you into eternity is leading you the right way.

August 2, 1990 ADVICE FROM ENEMIES

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People today seek advice from newspaper columnist, TV talk show hosts, and almost anyone else you can think of. Let me give you some advice from an unusual source.

As I read through the Bible I continually come upon the enemies of God trying to defeat the people of God. Their goal is all wrong but sometimes we can learn from their methods.

First- Destroy the source of your Problem. When the Roman general, Titus, captured Jerusalem he destroyed it so that not one stone was left on another (Fulfilling a prophecy of Jesus). Sin in our lives is many times like "nut grass"; if you don't pull it out by the root then it will return over and over again.

Second- Relocate the people of your Problem. When Assyria conquered Israel they deported all the people to another land. This made them much easier to control. In the same way, Christians need to get away from "friends" that would lead them the wrong way. We don't isolate ourselves but we do realize that friends of the fire always get burned.

Finally- Boast of your power over the Problem- A Giant had the entire army of Israel scared to fight by his boasting until a shepherd boy with a sling cut him down to size. Christians shouldn't be people of Pride but they should be people of Confidence- "I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength".

Turn the enemies weapons back upon him; and be a victorious Christian today.

August 3, 1990 MORE THAN CONQUERORS

I have learned through the years to turn bad situations into good situations. This keeps down frustration and aggravation while allowing you to be "more than conquerors". To be "more than Conquerors" means you not only defeat your enemy but you turn him into someone that benefits you.

An example of this was when a misfortune happened to my wife. This forced me to stay around home for several months. I couldn't get to my flock like I wanted so I began to look for a way to turn a bad circumstance into something that would benefit the Lord and the Church.

From that period of "captivity" has come a newspaper, newsletter, magazine, book ministry that allows me to reach thousands more people each week than I reached before.

Another example would be our Wednesday Night services. Many times we have a large number of children that attend our Bible Study Time. After a few minutes they become restless and increasingly active. I can become frustrated and deprive several adults of their Bible Study time by making them carry the kids to the nursery; or I can turn a negative into a positive. I do that by incorporating as many of the kids as possible into the lesson. This keeps their attention, increases their learning, and shows them that we really want them in our services.

You have a choice today. You can gripe and complain about the rock in your road. Or you can turn it into a stepping stone to bigger and better things. Why don't you learn to be More than Conquerors!

August 16, 1990 DEVILISH DELIVERY MAN

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Years ago an old woman had no money to buy food. She prayed, "Dear Lord, Please send me a side of bacon and a sack of corn meal." Over and over again she prayed the same prayer aloud. One of the town's unscrupulous citizens heard her pray and decided to play a trick on her. He dropped a side of bacon and a sack of corn meal down her chimney. It landed in front of her as she knelt in prayer.

Jumping to her feet, she exclaimed, "Oh lord! You've answered my prayer!" Then she went all over town telling everyone the good news. This was too much for the scoundrel who dropped the food down her chimney. He ridiculed her publicly and told her that God didn't answer her prayer; he did. The woman replied, "Well, the DEVIL may have BROUGHT it, but it was the LORD who SENT it!"

God's Ability to Supply our needs should never be in question. What is amazing sometimes is the Strange Delivery Men He uses to bring it.

Elijah, the prophet, received his food from the mouth of Ravens and a destitute Widow's empty barrel (I Kings 17). Jesus used a small boy's lunch of 2 fish and 5 loaves to feed 5000 (Matt 14:15-21). And God even used the morning dew to bring "Angel's Food" (Manna- Ps 78:25) to feed His people in the desert.

It is good to know that God is still on the Throne and able to meet the needs of His people; even if He has to use the "devil" as a delivery man!

August 17, 1990 MISSING MEMBERS

Sometimes pastors feel like the orchestra conductor who was quite upset over the fact that at every rehearsal at least one member of the orchestra was absent. At the last rehearsal he announced, "I would like to thank our first trumpet player. He was the only member of this orchestra who did not miss a rehearsal." The first trumpet player stood and bowed as the other members of the orchestra applauded. Then he said quietly, "It was the least I could do, considering I won't be able to be at the concert tonight."

One of the most difficult parts of being a Pastor is that he must run a fairly large organization with nothing but volunteer help. He plans and prepares all week and then on most Sunday Mornings he has to "run around like a chicken with his head cut off" because teachers, singers, and workers simply don't show up. There is no warning (and the flimsiest of excuses) but He has to make sure the "band" plays just right in spite of the fact that these "trumpet players" decided not to attend.

The Bible says that the requirements of a servant is that he be consistent in his work (1 Cor 4:2). When the "Band" begins playing this Sunday, will it be a thrown together combo or a well tuned orchestra?

August 23, 1990 HOPE

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The world seems to be full of depressed and down hearted people; people who have given up trying to make a difference and now go along with the crowd. Older people are leaving traditional moral values while younger people are seeking escape in the murky world of drugs, materialism, or Pleasure.

More than anything else these people need a Rock to hold to, a shelter in the storm, and meaning to the madness of life- They need HOPE.

Hope is not wishful thinking (I hope I get a million dollars today). It is Confident Expectation based on the Providence (All things work together for the good to them that love the Lord- Rom 8:28) and Power (My God shall supply all your needs- Phil 4:19) of God. It comes from reading the Word of God (Rom 15:4) and from the indwelling Holy Spirit (Rom 15:13).

A writer once said that over the "gates of Hell" was written "Abandon all hope ye who enter here". That's why the Gospel is Good News. It gives forgiveness for the past, help for the present, and Hope for the future. Don't give up; grab on to God.

August 30, 1990 LABORING

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Why is it that no one wants to labor on Labor Day?? Originally intended as a day to honor the "blue Collar" workers of America, Labor Day has become the "final fling" of the summer. So while you're deciding how much rest you're going to get on Labor day let's look at what the Bible has to say about Laboring.

Man's original task was to "dress and keep the garden" (Gen 2:15). This original Duty was turned into Drudgery as sin caused man to earn his living by the "sweat of his face" (Gen 3:19). In spite of this, the Bible admonishes us to hard steady labor as shown by the example of the ant (Prov 6:6). This labor is to be done with the expectation of a decent wage because the "Laborer is worthy of his hire" (Matt 10:10).

Although there is supposed to be a day of rest included in our work week; it is abundantly clear that everyone who can labor is supposed to do so (if they don't they're supposed to go hungry instead of "Preying on the Pity" of good hearted people- II Thess 3:10). This is because our Labor is more than a livelihood, it's a Light that allows men to see our good works and glorify our Father in Heaven (Matt 5:16).

I hope you'll determine that when you start laboring after Labor Day it will be a means of witnessing to your faith in God; as well as providing for you needs.

September 6, 1990 THE CLOCK STORE

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There were hundreds of them. Every size and shape you could think of. Big clocks, little clocks, electric clocks, and wind up clocks. I was walking around marveling at them when I decided to check on how accurate they were. That's when I was reminded of the saying, "A man with 1 clock knows the time but a man with 2 clocks is never quite sure!" None of them had the same time!

I asked the clerk about it and he said you couldn't stand the noise if they all went off at the same time so they were all set to a different time.

That's a lot like life today. We used to have one or two versions of the Bible and everyone agreed or disagreed with their contents. Now we have hundreds of different versions and no one seems to be exactly sure what to believe any more.

Then to make sure that things don't get too noisy among all these various beliefs each group interprets their Bible in the light of their particular wants and desires. That allows them to feel good about their sins and justify anything they want to do (I'm expecting a "Bible of the Honorable Thieves and Murderers" anytime. After all, David was a murderer and Paul said he robbed from one church to do service for another).

I think it's time we set all our clocks by the "Son Dial" so they'll be accurate and trustworthy. A clock that tells you it's high noon in the middle of the night doesn't help you; nor does it change the night into day. And wouldn't it be nice to finally know what time it is.

September 7, 1990 PROMISES

I can almost see the headlines in the Checkout line "newspapers", "Preacher invites family to church for wine party". The Nation of Israel was about to be destroyed by the Babylonian Army (Modern day Iraq) and God was attempting to show them the reasons they were being defeated.

He thought an object lesson would be appropriate so He asked Jeremiah the Prophet to invite the Rechabite family to the inner chamber of the Temple. Jeremiah poured each member a glass of wine and invited them to drink. They all refused, saying they had promised their father they would never drink wine.

God then used this to show the nation of Israel an important lesson. These men obeyed their earthly Father but Israel refused to obey their heavenly Father.

Is that the way it is in your life? Do you think promises to men are more important than promises to God? Do you consider it more important to go to work on Monday Morning that to go to Church on Sunday Morning? Do you find time for all your social activities but never have time to read the Bible or Pray?

I have heard many Pressure Promises (during a sickness, family problem, etc) that were forgotten within the week. I think it would be a good idea for these people to read Ecclesiastes 5:4 "When you vow a vow unto God, make sure you pay it; for God has no pleasure in fools; Pay what you promised".

September 13, 1990 PRIORITIES

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One Sunday, a minister began his sermon: "I'd like to make three points today. First, there are millions of people around the world who are going to hell. Second, most of us sitting here today do not give a damn about it." He then paused for several moments of stunned silence before he continued: "My third point is that you are more concerned that I, your pastor, said the word 'damn' than you are about the millions of people going to hell."

Have we really gotten our priorities that far out of order? Has the Church become so busy making sure it has the right brand of fishing boots or the right color fishing hat until it never gets to

catch any fish? Have we become so polite until we allow people to burn to death rather than act uncivil enough to yell "Fire"?

God doesn't expect Christians to go around dropping dynamite in every fishing hole we see (killing the fish instead of catching them). He does expect us to carry a "fishing pole" with us all the time, however, and to "be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:" (1 Pet 3:15).

It's nice to be polite. It's necessary to be concerned. Are You?

September 14, 1990 THE HINDERING HELP

One of the great blessing I had while serving in the Navy was that I was not prone to being seasick. Many of my friends had a terrible time every time we went to sea but it hardly ever bothered me.

One day, however, I was feeling a little queasy and asked one of my friends what he did when he started feeling sick. He said one of the best things he had found was to get a cup of soft drink from the drink machine. Something about the carbonated water seemed to help.

I tried his idea but got worst instead of better. And the worst I would feel the more soft drink I would drink. Soon I was really sick and, when I looked around, so were a lot of other men.

The doctor thought a flu bug was on board until the man in charge of the soft drink machine refilled it. When he started to refill the syrup container he found that the entire bottom of the container was covered with cock roaches! He had forgotten to seal it when he refilled it last and the roaches found that syrup much to their liking.

There was an important lesson for me in this. Sometimes the thing you think is helping you is actually doing you harm. How many promising careers have been short circuited because the person thought drugs or alcohol would help their performance but it ended up destroying them.

Ezekiel the prophet said, "Repent, and turn from all your transgressions; so iniquity will not be your ruin". Be careful that the thing you think is helping your life is not actually bring you to ruin.

September 20, 1990 THE WEED

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We were making all the preparations for Home Coming at the Church. Everyone was busy straightening up the Church, putting out old pictures and historical documents, and cleaning up the Church grounds. It fell my lot to run the Weed Eater around the Parking area and in the ditch at the end of the Church property.

The recent rains had allowed the weeds in the ditch to grow by leaps and bounds and I didn't look forward to tackling that part of the job but I knew it had to be done.

When I was about half finished I looked back and saw one lone weed that I had missed standing on the ditch bank. It irritated me at first because I had to go back for it but it also spoke to my heart about a lesson.

I didn't pay any attention to that single weed when it was surrounded by all the other weeds on the ditch bank. It was only when the rest of the weeds were cut that I noticed it.

That's an important principle for unsaved people to remember. When a person is not trying to live for the Lord you don't notice one more fault among a "ditch bank" full of faults. But when that person becomes a Christian and cleans up their life every "weed" stands out.

Becoming a Christian allows God to forgive all your sins but it takes time to "clean all your ditch banks". If you see a weed in the life of a Christian just remember that it probably troubles them more than it does you; and they'll cut it down as soon as they can.

September 21, 1990 THE HUMAN TOUCH

We went to bed when things starting getting rough. We felt sorry for the folks down at Charleston but expecting everything to be alright here. I was just starting to get to sleep good when the fan at the end of the bed stopped rotating. I knew that the power had gone off but decided to try to go to sleep anyway.

The wind kept getting louder and louder. Ever so often something would hit the side of the house with a "Woof". Finally my wife and I decided to get up for awhile. We went to the door facing toward downtown and watched as the rest of Lake City plunged into darkness.

Trees began to bend and sway, the wind continued to get louder and louder. We decided to sit down in the living room til the worst was past. I was sitting in my easy chair while my wife was sitting in her rocker.

I could see that my wife was a little frightened as trees began to fall and the wind continued to increase so I told her again about our confidence in the Lord's care and protection. Finally she left her chair and got into the chair with me. She said she knew the Lord would take care of us but she wanted me to hold her also!

Hugo taught us again that when God allows His power to be shown it's good to have a human to hang on to. Aren't you glad that God became a Man (Jesus) so that "we could have a high priest who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. Therefore we can come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb 4:15-16).

September 27, 1990 THE LITTLE VINE

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There is a parable told in India that illustrates the danger of little sins in our life.

The tallest and most majestic tree in all India stood proudly overlooking a large plain. Multitudes of people came from all around to admire the tree and stand in its shade. Through the years the tree had withstood the heat, the cold, and the stormy winds; and people looked to it as a permanent fixture in their country.

One day a small vine sprang up beside the Tree. Unable to stand on its own it asked the Tree if it could lean on it. "Sure", said the Tree. "I won't even notice a little vine like you".

Time passed and one day the Tree noticed that it was dying. Trying to determine what was the matter the Tree looked and found the vine had wrapped around it from its root to its top. All along the way it was sucking the life out of the Tree.

"Vine", the Tree said, "You must leave me. You're killing me". "I can't" Said the Vine. "I depend on you for strength and nourishment".

Once there was a big strong man who thought he could withstand anything. A little clinging sin came along and asked to lean on this man.....

September 28, 1990 LOST

It was a bright clear fall day and we were in the woods cutting some trees to use as fire wood during the coming winter. I was only five at the time and while everyone else was busy working I wandered off.

The woods were full of excitement as I found birds to look at and squirrels to throw bark at. I was as happy as could be until I looked around and realized I couldn't see any of my family. I started back the way I thought I had come but after walking for awhile I still couldn't find anyone.

I called and called but no one answered me. Lost and scared I simply wandered around. Several times I came to an open field (Which was the field behind our house) but I was so confused until I didn't recognize it and went back into the woods.

Nearly exhausted, I finally stopped for a moment. That's when I heard a whistle. I remembered that my brother had been playing with a whistle so I began to go toward it. Soon I could hear not only the whistle but also the shouts of my family.

What a glad reunion that was.

If you've wandered off into the woods of the world and are now walking around scared, confused, and lost; just stop for a moment and listen. That's Jesus calling you back to service and safety at the Father's house. Come on home, the family is waiting.

October 4, 1990 The Man With Four Lives

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It is often said that a cat has nine lives (if you've ever tried to get rid of one you'll know why!). Something that is not often thought of, however, is the fact that a man has Four Lives.

I. The Life the World Knows You By. The world knows you by superficial outward appearance- he's a classy dresser, or a charming person, or a nerd! Like ships that pass on the open sea they only see your outside appearance and that's how they judge you. That's why the clothing and appearance of a Christian are so important.

II. The Life Friends Know You By. Friends "walk around on the deck of your ship". They know what cargo you're carrying and some of the difficulties of your journey. They know why your "paint is peeling" or if the fresh paint is simply covering a layer of rust.

When your friends talk about you what do they say?? Does your character magnify your Christianity?

III. The Life Your Family Knows You By. Your Family has the run of the ship. They know all about the squeaking motors and the hard to open doors in your life. You hide very little from their constant inspection.

Are you leading so the Circle will be unbroken. Are do you break the hearts of those who love you?

IV. The Life God Knows You By. Reputation is what people think you are. Character is what God knows you are. God knows everything there is to know about you; from your bilges to the top of your mast.

Since He knows you then you'd better get to Know Him. After all, no matter how many lives you have, they all die one day!

October 5, 1990 DEADLY IDEAS

It was the fall of the year during that era when you used to have to "grade and tie" tobacco for sale. Those of us that were too young to tie tobacco had to take it off the sticks for the others. We would rush as hard as we could and get enough ahead so that we could go play while they caught up.

Several of us decided to play a game of hide and go seek during one of these breaks. The one who was "It" was to count loudly to 50 while the rest of us were hiding and then try to catch us before we made it back to "Home".

The Gas Drum for the farm machinery was centrally located so we made that "Home". The Boy who was "It" decided to make sure we heard him say "Fifty" so he opened the cap on the gas tank and shouted "Fifty" into it. It sounded like a bull horn!

When it came my time to be "It" I liked the sound of shouting into the gas tank so much until I decided to count into the drum. What I didn't realize was that I was breathing gas fumes the entire time.

I woke up in my Mother's lap. What had saved me was the fact that when I passed out I fell off the drum and began breathing clean air again.

Because something Sounds good does not make it good. Sometimes Great Ideas have deadly consequences. Remember, "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." (Prov 16:25)

October 11, 1990 LABELS

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I thought it was one of the best ideas I had ever seen. When we had a death in the community the local Mennonite group would normally help by bringing some food to the home of the deceased.

They were famous for their homemade pies but they made so many different varieties until it was difficult to tell one from the other. To help people distinguish them they would put the name of the pie on a little flag, attach it to a toothpick, and put it in the middle of the Pie.

It made everything go a lot quicker at the desert table when people could tell at a glance what type of pie they were looking at.

This Principle needs to be translated into the world we live in. A lot of people look like they're cherry "Pies" until you get inside and see that they're actually sour grapes! And many times that delicious looking chocolate is actually globs of mud waiting to be thrown at some unsuspecting person.

If your family and friends were to put a label in the middle of YOUR "pie" what would it say?? More important than that; what label does God put on you? Remember, it's easy as pie to be right with God.

October 12, 1990 UNANSWERABLE QUESTIONS

Life is full of mysteries. Some of them are relatively easy to explain- the reason some people have red hair while others have blonde hair is because of genes. Some things about life still continue to mystify me, however.

Why does a woman ENJOY shopping? She will look at every store in the mall before going back to the first store she stopped at to purchase the original item she looked at. A man shops by going directly to the store he wants, directly to the department he wants, and purchasing the item he came for. His idea of joy is to set a speed record in getting and purchasing the item.

Why do women buy shoes mainly on the basis of how they look? As soon as they get home and put them on they will say, "These shoes hurt my feet". When you ask why they purchased them they look at you like you're crazy and say, "But they look so good with my blue dress!".

Why do men (who are supposed to have short hair) hate getting a hair cut with a passion while women (who are supposed to have long hair) crave to get their hair cut?? Better than that, why don't women go bald instead of men so the women wouldn't have to worry about rolling and fixing their hair?

More puzzling than any of these, however, is how God can see the inconsistent and careless lives we live and still Love us. Anyone else would have closed down the earth a long time ago. I don't understand God's Mercy but I sure do appreciate it.

October 18, 1990 DIVINE WOODCUTTERS

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

Paul tells how a Christian should look at his circumstances in Philippians 1:12 "But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel". Paul wrote this as he suffered in a Roman jail awaiting execution!

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

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

What a difference it will make in your attitude (and actions!) when you realize God allows difficult times in your life in order to prepare you for service for Him. So let the woodcutters work. They're simply preparing a way for you to work and witness for the Lord. Soon they will have the road ready and you can enter into battle; and I've read the end of the book, it's a battle we win!

October 19, 1990 FIRST IN LINE

One of the saddest things about education today is that teachers are asked to educate the child's mind without being able to affect their morals. Thankfully, I went to school in a better time.

I have forgotten much of the class room instruction my teachers gave but many of the principles they taught are a major part of my life today.

One of the most important of these principles was learned after recess in the second grade. We were all pushing and shoving to get to the front of the line in order to be first back into class. The Teacher's stern voice of authority finally brought the line into some sort of order. She then did something that affects my life and ministry even today.

She said she wanted to teach us a basic Bible Principle, "The first shall be last and the last shall be first". She made us turn around so that the person at the back of the line went into class first while those of us that had tried to be first had to go in last.

Today this principle underlies all of the many branches of the Outreach Ministry of our Church. We believe the greatest thing we can do for Christ and for our community is to serve as many people as possible, in as many ways as possible, with the Gospel. It doesn't make us first in the eyes of society; but one day the line will be turned around and we'll find ourselves in the place those other people have been trying so hard to get. Thanks Teacher!

October 25, 1990 REFRIGERATOR WORK

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I awoke out of a sound sleep with a raging thirst. It felt like my mouth was full of dry cotton and I knew that I wouldn't be able to get back to sleep until I got something to drink.

The tepid water from the bathroom sink seemed very unappealing at the moment so I stumbled into the kitchen to get some cold milk. As I was opening the refrigerator door the Lord seemed to speak in an almost audible voice, "Mike, How does a Refrigerator work?"

I'll admit to you that I was not as nice to the Lord as I should have been. I tried to very patiently tell Him that it was 3 AM and I didn't know or care how a refrigerator worked. But the Lord is persistent!

Finally, I cleared my head enough to figure out that the refrigerator maintained a cool temperature and this, in turn, caused the items you put into it to become cool. That brought me to the point the Lord had been trying to make the entire time.

I had been praying with and working with some people about some sins in their life but I didn't seem to make much headway. Now I knew the reason. You don't have a hot heart when you remain in a refrigerator.

The people you associate with will either warm your heart or freeze your soul. What's YOUR temperature??

October 26, 1990 I DON'T DO MAGIC

It somewhat amazes me to see how the ministry had changed during the past 25 years. When I began Preaching many churches in the area had "Part Time" Pastors (They only preached 2 Sundays a month). Soon that changed so that most Churches had "Full Time" Pastors (They worked at an outside job during the week but they preached every Sunday).

Then Parsonages became the vogue and "Full Time" Pasturing meant to live and visit in the Community all the time. No one was exactly sure what the full time pastor's job description was but everyone knew it somehow meant he was to visit all the sick and old people, socialize with church members, witness to all the sinners in the community, and do all the odd jobs around the church that needed doing. Of course, he was also to spend all his time in the office preparing dynamic and challenging sermons each week.

In the past few years that has also changed. Both husband and wife work at an outside job in most households today and they no longer want the Pastor to show up unexpected (and uninvited) at their home. They want him waiting by the phone if they need him, or, if it's a personal contact need, they want to come to HIS office and talk about it (That allows them to control the time of the meeting and the duration of the meeting).

One thing has remained constant, however. Everyone expects the Pastor to have some "magic words" to give them to make their problems disappear painlessly. They want to come in, tell the problem, get a magic cure, and be able to go back home to a family that has suddenly changed from the Simpsons to Ozzie and Harriet.

I've got the cure, and it works like magic, but it's not instant; nor is it painless. It involves Denying yourself, Taking up your Cross, and following the example of Christ. That changes YOU (Which will in turn change your problems and circumstances).

So if you're looking for help, I don't do magic; but I do have the answer. And I'm waiting by the phone.

November 1, 1990 THE BEEPER

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I had the privilege of visiting a service in my home church recently. During the presentation of the special music I noticed that one of the singers had a "Beeper" on his belt. Evidently he was on call that weekend and had to keep his beeper with him all the time.

I have the same situation in the Church I pastor. Several of my people are involved in jobs that require them to take a duty week end. They bring their beeper to Church or leave the church phone number as a backup; and we're glad this enables them to attend the services.

As I was driving home from church that night, I began thinking about that Beeper on the singer's belt. It gave someone far away the ability to call this person at a moment's notice. It would have been somewhat embarrassing if it would have gone off in the middle of his song but that's a chance he took. He had to be ready to respond to its call at a moment's notice.

Christians may not realize it but we, too, carry "beepers" on us all the time. One day (Soon I believe) the Lord will sound the trumpet and activate our "beeper" as He calls us Home. Whatever you're doing, where ever you're at, you'll have to be ready to go at that moment. Are You???

November 2, 1990 I BELIEVE

The main thing about a Guide is that it must be trustworthy. If I'm going to give you "Guidelines for Living" then you need to know if I'm a good guide. One way to find that out is to determine who I am and what I believe.

I am a Christian. I believe Jesus Christ is God, who became a man, in order to die as a payment for the sins of mankind. I believe that He was raised from the dead on the third day, that He ascended to Heaven to await the completion of God's plan on earth, and that one day He will return to earth to claim His "Bride" (Followers).

I believe I should follow the example of Christ by always putting the will and work of the Heavenly Father first in every thing I do.

I believe Christianity is not an experience but a commitment. Its effects should be seen not only in my emotions but also in my attitudes and actions.

I believe that to try to do the work of God without the power of God is like trying to empty the ocean with a pitch fork; you'll work yourself to death and never accomplish anything.

I believe that the greatest thing any person will ever do on earth is to find his place in the body of Christ and function effectively there.

I believe it's not the will of God that any should be lost but that all should come to repentance.

I believe that the end of time is very very near and what I'm going to do for the Lord I need to do as soon as possible.

That's what I believe. What do YOU believe??

November 8, 1990 THE DEVIL'S PICTURE

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The story is told of a man who was very proud of one of the rooms in his home. Any time he had visitors he would make some kind of excuse to get them into that room. The reason for his pride was that the room contained the pictures of most of the famous preachers of his day.

He knew many of the Preachers personally and he would go around making little personal remarks about each of them. After the person had seen most of the Pictures he would say, "By the way, I also have a picture of the Devil".

Of Course, everyone wanted to see it so he would lead them into a darkened nook where he would place them right before the picture. Then as he turned on the light he would proclaim, "Behold, the Devil's Portrait." To their surprise they were face to face with a Mirror!

Shock, mild anger, and nervous laughter usually followed. The man then used this as an opportunity to share with his visitor that any person would fit into the picture when the light exposed

them for what they really were. He reminded them that even Paul said that *I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing:(Rom 7:18).*

He would then reach beside the mirror and pull a string which would cause a rolled up picture of Jesus to fall down over the mirror. The fact that the Gospel allows God to see the Savior instead of our sinful self could then be clearly presented.

When God looks at you; which man does He see in the Mirror?

November 9, 1990 SINKING SHIPS

He heard the alarms; but he had heard them before. It seemed as if they were always having some kind of drill or other. That was fine for public relations but it didn't get his work done. He decided to ignore it this time.

With some degree of pride that he had just been declared the best Steward on his deck, he went about cleaning the cabin as if it were his very own. When it came time for inspection he wanted every cabin on his deck to be the very best. He made the beds just right, cleaned the bath rooms spotless, and even fluffed the curtains by the port hold.

It was only as he was preparing to go to the next room that he noticed that the deck was slanting. Slightly puzzled and a little anxious, he left his tools in the hall while he went up on deck to see what was going on. As he opened the doors to the main deck he heard the screams and finally realized the ship was sinking!

We may well pity this poor steward on the Titanic who was so busy cleaning the ship until he didn't know it was sinking until we realize that most people are doing the same thing today.

God has declared that this world will get worst and worst until one day it will be completely destroyed by His cleansing fire. Instead of looking for life jackets and preparing to abandon ship, however, most people spend all their time re-arranging the furniture on a sinking ship. They think their clean cabin means they have a clean heart.

There is no hope for the ship; but there is hope for you. God has dropped a life line from Heaven. All He asks is that you grab it.

November 15, 1990 BOATS

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There are all kinds of boats in the world; big boats, little boats, fishing boats, pleasure boats. Each of these boats has its place in life; some are for recreation, some are for work, some are even "house" boats.

People are a lot like boats. They come in all sizes and shapes and they perform many different functions in life. Some seem to think their purpose in life is to be admired for their beauty, some simply go from one place of recreation to another, and some are like Tug boats (they do a tremendous amount of work for their size).

One of the problems these boats (and people) have is getting from one place to another. They do so by using one of three primary methods of power.

ROWBOAT People- They only go as far and as fast as their own abilities will carry them. Their lives are limited by their own strength and they can never venture very far from home.

SAILBOAT People- They use the wind to enable them to get from place to place. This gives them greater power and ability but it also subjects them to the whims of the wind. When they have a favorable wind they accomplish great things but when circumstances go against them they either sit still or turn around.

STEAMBOAT People- They have an internal power that enables them to travel for great distances without regard for the winds of circumstances or their own abilities. This is the kind of person Christians are supposed to be. They have an internal energy from God that enables them to keep going forward no matter what life throws at them.

Which Kind of Boat are You?

November 16, 1990 JOY OR HAPPINESS

As the Economy cools down and the threat of war heats up, it's sometimes hard to get into a Thankful mood. That's because the average person thinks we can only give Thanks when we're happy.

We need to recognize the difference between Joy and Happiness. Happiness is when things happen to happen happily. Anyone can be happy when they receive an unexpected check; but these same people are very unhappy when they receive a bill!

The Good news is that we can have Joy instead of Happiness. Joy is an inward state of being that allows us to rejoice in Trials as well as triumphs. It's the kind of thing that allowed Paul and Silas to sing at midnight even though they were wrongfully imprisoned and cruelly beaten.

This Joy comes from an abiding Trust in God's Love and faithfulness. We know that God cares about us and about even our smallest problems. He knows when a little sparrow falls to the ground and He even knows the hairs on our head (Although I am concerned that the angel that counts mine can only subtract!).

There are many things to trouble us this Thanksgiving season but there are many more things to cause us to be Thankful. Let the abiding presence of God bring Peace to your mind and joy to your heart.

November 22, 1990 THANK GOD FOR FLEAS

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Corrie Ten Boom in her book "The Hiding Place" relates an incident which is very relevant this Thanksgiving. She and her sister, Betsy, had just been transferred to the worst German prison camp they had seen yet, Ravensbruck. Upon entering the barracks, they found them extremely overcrowded and flea-infested.

Their Scripture reading that morning from First Thessalonians had reminded them to rejoice always, pray constantly, and give thanks in all circumstances. Betsy told Corrie to stop and thank the Lord for every detail of their new living quarters. Corrie at first flatly refused to give thanks for the fleas, but Betsy persisted, until finally Corrie gave thanks for even the fleas.

During the months spent at that camp, they were surprised to find how openly they could hold Bible study and prayer meetings without guard interference. It was several months later when they learned that the guards would not enter the barracks because of the fleas.

Most people will only Thank God for the Things they consider good during this Thanksgiving Season. Maybe there are some "fleas" you need to thank God for also!

November 23, 1990 A LIVING TESTIMONY

He slipped into the back seat right after the service started. During the songs and announcements I tried to remember who he was for I knew that I had seen him somewhere before. About the time I got up to preach I remembered where I knew him from. He was the salesman for the car dealer where I had purchased my new car several months before.

For several weeks in a row he would come like that; slip into the back seat when the service started and be one of the first ones to leave at the end of the service.

Finally one day he stayed after the service, we talked, and he became a dedicated Christian. Now he sings in the choir, helps teach the Adult Sunday School Class, and is one of the most faithful members we have.

When we talked that Sunday after church he told me about how he had come to attend our Church. It was because of my attitude and actions in the purchase of my new car. He was impressed enough to desire to make an effort to come hear me preach; and the rest is marvelous history.

On this busiest shopping day of the year, remember that your testimony is SEEN outside the Church louder than it's Heard inside the Church. The light you shine in the mall may be the most powerful sermon someone ever hears.

November 29, 1990 COOPERATION

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Last Spring the Church added a garage to the parsonage. It has been a real blessing- no more unloading groceries in the rain and no more getting into a scorching hot car or one covered with frost. It's a great asset to our home and we really appreciate the church building it.

Several months after the garage was built I noticed that one of the supporting posts was beginning to warp. As the weather became hotter and hotter it began to curve more and more. It finally got so bad until it was dangerous and had to be replaced.

I thought it was just a faulty piece of wood at first. When I was measuring the replacement post, however, I found that this post had a justifiable reason to bend. It had been cut nearly 1/2 inch too long and, as a result, was bearing almost all the weight of that side of the garage.

Sometimes that happens in Churches. There are always one or two people who are willing to do anything they can. Because they stand a little "taller" than the other people, most of the weight falls on their shoulders. Then during the heat of life they begin to bend under the pressure. Sometimes they bend so badly until they have to be replaced. What a difference it would make if everyone carried their own weight!!

November 30, 1990 UNINTERRUPTED POWER

I spend many hours a week in front of a computer. I write out three sermons a week, a Sunday School lesson, three newspaper columns, a six page bi-weekly newsletter, and I average publishing three to five books a year. I don't have a secretary so I have to do the typing as well as the thinking!

To me, A computer is a necessary tool; like a hammer to a carpenter. A carpenter could hammer nails with a stone but it's just a lot faster and easier with a hammer. I have done my work in days gone by using a typewriter but it would be physically impossible for me to do the volume of work I do today if I had to go back to a typewriter.

One of the problems I had with my computer when I first got it was living in Lake City! The power in Lake City goes off very often for no identifiable reason. That would play havoc with my computer work.

Last year I purchased an "Uninterruptible Power Supply" to use with my Computer. Now when the power goes off it doesn't bother me; the power supply kicks in and I don't lose a thing.

In a sense, That's what happened in my life when I became a Christian. I still have to face the same problems as before but now the Power of God kicks in when I have a problem and my life isn't thrown into chaos. I never have a power shortage now; and that's abundant life!

December 4, 1990 THE GARBAGE POT

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My sister-in-law was taking a pot of garbage out the other day when something claimed her attention and she set the pot in the luggage rack on top of her car. The next morning she drove 10 miles to school and as she was turning into the school yard another lady kept honking her horn at her.

When she stopped to find out what was the matter the lady told her she had a pot on top of her car! She was mystified to know how it had stayed on the car that distance, and embarrassed to know that everyone she passed that morning had seen her garbage.

It's always embarrassing when people see the bad things in our lives- a moral problem, an additive problem, a financial problem. We don't want or intend for people to find out but, like the garbage on top of the car, sometimes it shows up in the most unexpected way.

The good news is that God sees our "garbage" all the time and, while He doesn't like the garbage, He does like the Pot! And, if you'll throw out the garbage, He'll clean the pot so it can be useful and productive. Then it won't matter who sees your pot!

December 6, 1990 EMBARRASSED

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I thought I was really on target that morning. Everyone was paying extra attention to the sermon and I was thrilled to see so many people watching my every move. When I concluded the Sermon, however, I looked down and noticed that the fly on my pants was unzipped!

What an embarrassing moment (At least, I found out how to get their attention!). And to really make it interesting, I had to stand at the door and shake all their hands before I could go home and "wallow in my shame".

If you feel sorry for me, think about what it will be like when people stand before God and He exposes their idle words, their hidden thoughts, and their secret sins for all the world to see. After they've suffered that tremendous embarrassment they'll still have to face being cast away from God for ever.

I wouldn't be in their shoes for anything in the world. I'm glad to know that God has thrown my sins "as far as the east is from the west" and they will never be remembered against me anymore.

When you stand before God, will you be embarrassed; or excited about the Blessings awaiting you??

December 7, 1990 OUT OF THE MOUTH OF BABES

It was my Nephew/Godson's fourth birthday and we had already opened the presents and cut the cake. Now, we were riding down one of the main streets in Columbia on our way to pick up some shrimp dinners.

My nephew's dad and I were talking about the merits of different cars as we drove through traffic when suddenly my nephew looked at me with the most serious look on his face and said, "Uncle Mike, did you know that the Lord is going to destroy this world with fire one day. Then He's going to make a beautiful world with gold streets and a pretty river where everyone will be happy."

I looked at him in utter amazement and said, "I knew that son, but I didn't know you knew it". His dad was also amazed. He said they had read that in the Bible story they read each night but that it had been a long time ago.

We don't know what keyed that thought for him but I was reminded of the fact that God said several times that He would use "Babes" to carry His message. That's something we ought to pause and consider amidst all the hustle and bustle of this holiday season.

The reason for the season is that God became a baby to live as a man; and to die for men. Among all the chaos of the crowds have you heard the Baby's cry?

December 10, 1990 CHRISTMAS JOY

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This is the time of year when everyone should be singing Christmas songs, anticipating Christmas joy, and smiling about the decorations that fill our land. Instead, people are pushing and shoving at the mall, longing for Christmas to finally be over, and fearing that the next lights we see will be bombs instead of bulbs.

Christmas shopping has turned into a dreaded job instead of an anticipated joy because we have to spend money we don't have to buy presents we don't like to give to people who don't need them anyway! Kids don't care about the Love in your gift anymore; they want to know how much loot it cost!

The Problem is that we seem to have forgotten what happened on that first Christmas. God didn't receive a Gift, He GAVE one; His only son came to earth as a man to live and die for mankind (For those of you that don't know. The Wise men brought their gifts to Christ almost 2 years after his birth).

It's easy to put joy back into Christmas; simply put Jesus back into it! In the midst of buying all these presents why don't you accept the one God is offering? It'll make it the best Christmas you've ever had.

December 13, 1990 THE CHRISTMAS STORY

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One reason some people have lost the joy of the Christmas season is because the Christmas story seems old and jaded to them. Maybe that's because we think we know more than we actually do.

Here is a "Mistake Filled" version of the Christmas story that my wife made up for her Primary class. See if you can find the errors.

The Correct answers to this quiz (and other problems of life) are in your Bible. Read it again and find the joy you've been missing.

JESUS' BIRTH

LUKE 2:7-14

7. AND SHE BROUGHT FORTH HER FIRST BORN SON, AND WRAPPED HIM IN A BLANKET, AND LAID HIM IN A CRIB; BECAUSE THERE WAS NO ROOM FOR THEM IN THE HOTEL.

8. AND THERE WERE IN THE SAME STATE SHEPHERDS ABIDING IN THE PASTURE KEEPING WATCH OVER THEIR FLOCK BY DAY.

9. AND LO, THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD CAME UPON THEM, AND THE GLORY OF THE LORD SHONE ALL OVER THEM AND THEY WERE FILLED WITH JOY.

10. AND THE SHEPHERD SAID UNTO THEM, FEAR NOT: FOR, BEHOLD I BRING YOU GOOD TIDINGS OF GREAT GLADNESS, WHICH SHALL BE TO ALL ISRAEL, FOR UNTO YOU IS BORN THIS DAY IN THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM A SAVIOR WHICH IS JOHN THE BAPTIST.

12. AND THIS SHALL BE A SIGN UNTO YOU, YE SHALL FIND THE BABE WRAPPED IN A PINK BLANKET, LYING IN A BED.

13. AND SUDDENLY THERE WAS WITH THE ANGEL AN ENTIRE BACK UP BAND PRAISING GOD AND SINGING.

14. GLORY TO GOD IN THE HEAVENS AND ON EARTH CHRISTMAS PRESENTS FOR ALL PEOPLE.

December 14, 1990 UNEXPECTED GUEST

We really didn't know what to do. The "dinner list" to feed the Preacher had been posted for several months but no one from the family we were supposed to eat with had attended Church that day. If they had dinner all prepared and waiting and we didn't show up then they would be upset; and if they weren't expecting us they would be upset.

My wife and I talked about it and thought about it and finally decided that we'd better go to the home and see what the situation was. When we arrived it was obvious that we weren't expected so we eased out as graciously as possible.

It was a very difficult situation for them and for us; and one I wouldn't care to repeat anytime soon. I thought of it again the other day as I was thinking about Christmas.

God had announced His coming for thousands of years. He had told people where He would come and Why He would come but they became so busy with the work of life until they forgot the purpose of life. When He finally arrived there was "No Room" for Him and He had to be born in a stable.

Is God an unexpected and uninvited guest at your home this Christmas. Would you be embarrassed if He suddenly showed up at your door and reminded you who all the activity was supposed to be for? He promised over and over that He would come again. Does He have a place at your table??

December 17, 1990 NO ROOM

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You can almost read his mind. "Why did the maid take this week to get sick? Doesn't she know this is the biggest crowd we've had at the Bethlehem Inn since we opened? Now I have to tend to the rooms as well as tend to the guests and it's more than I can do."

It was about this time that he heard another knock on the front door. Tired and pressed for time he went to the door and saw another stranger looking for a room. He already had his "No Vacancy" speech down pat but this one looked especially pathetic; tired, hungry, and with a wife expecting a baby any time. He felt sorry for him but he didn't look like he'd be able to pay the rates he was charging this week, so he send him away into the night.

Later on he heard some wild stories about this couple spread by some ignorant shepherds but he was too busy counting his money to pay any attention to rumors. In fact, He had made so much until he decided to give a larger than normal offering at the temple this week so the Priest would know he was doing everything he could to prepare the way for the Messiah.

If Jesus knocked at YOUR door this week would you find time for Him or would you be so busy celebrating Christmas until you didn't have time for Christ???

December 20, 1990 FULLNESS OF TIME

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One of the problems a preacher has to deal with is time. If he could get time to pass as fast in the pew as it does in the pulpit then everything would be fine. The problem, however, is that it seems to the preacher that he has just gotten started as the clock approaches noon while the people keep staring at the clock and wondering if someone has unplugged it!

It sometimes seems that way in God's dealings with man also. God has a time table He goes by that is completely accurate and totally dependable. When people are facing pain or persecution, however, it seems that God has forgotten them or is unconcerned with their problem.

One of the many lessons from Christmas is that God became a man in the "fullness of time" (Gal 4:4). At just the right moment in history Jesus came upon the scene in a stable in Bethlehem. It was not a moment too early or a moment too late but exactly when God's Clock said it was time.

If life has you down because you think someone has "unplugged God's clock" and He's forgotten about you; let me assure you that in the fullness of time God will do exactly what's needed. Be patient, the clock's still running.

December 21, 1990 THE GIFT

Isn't it strange that at "Jesus' Birthday" Party we're the ones that get the gifts?? Sadly, we get so busy selecting and purchasing 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 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 too busy to accept it. What about YOU? Have you "opened" God's Gift yet? When you do you'll surely have a **MERRY CHRISTMAS**.

December 25, 1990 WORKING CHRISTMAS DAY

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Feeling left out this Christmas. Imagine how the Shepherds must have felt. The town of Bethlehem was buzzing with more activity than anyone had seen in years and they were stuck on a cold dark hill caring for dumb sheep.

The Roman government had decreed that everyone had to go to their home town to register for the tax census and Bethlehem was bulging at the seams. They had heard you couldn't find a room to rent for miles around and this would mean the local meeting place would be crowded and humming with the latest gossip.

That didn't help them, however. They were stuck in the middle of nowhere with only their dreams to comfort them. They had tried quarreling and complaining but that hadn't made any difference so now they were sitting quietly staring into the fire.

It was just then that it happened. The sky burst into light, the heavenly angels announced the birth of the Son of God, and an angel choir serenaded these lonely shepherds.

If you're one of those who have to work this Christmas you can spend your time complaining about your misfortune; or you can listen for the angels to sing. You may be surprised what's in store for you.

December 27, 1990 A NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION

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Now that you've given your children presents for a moment let's see how to give them principles for a life. It's a lot simpler than you think. Just determine that in 1991 you are going to take your family to a good Bible Teaching Church each and every week.

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

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

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

December 28, 1990 CONTINUAL CHRISTMAS

It's frustrating being a parent at Christmas. You have worked and sacrificed to buy your children more than you can really afford because you want to show them how much you love them. Then on Christmas day they open the tenth present and say, "Is that all?". Or the present you spent hours selecting is torn up and discarded before the sun rises Christmas morning. And you get the Blues.

When faced with post-Christmas Blues and Post-Christmas Bills; How can you keep the Christmas Spirit from being thrown out with the gift wrapping?? What can you do to make 1991 the year of continual Christmas?

You can begin by praying about your bills. Ask God for provision for the ones you have now and wisdom to know how to avoid more bills in the future. God will help an honest effort but He's not an unlimited Credit card!

Look at why you have the "Blues". Sometimes depression is a normal part of exhaustion (the Christmas schedule is VERY hectic) and can be cured with some regular rest.

Sometimes we have unrealistic expectation about what is supposed to happen at Christmas- that grouchy husband/wife is not suddenly going to become a Saint and kids are going to be kids regardless of what time of the year it is. Enjoy the good and endure the bad; like you do the rest of the year.

Remember that the real reason for Christmas is relevant the entire year. God came to earth as a man in order that man could go to Heaven with God. Celebrate His birth by being Born again; it will bring Peace and Joy to your heart that will last all year long.