

2017 NEWSPAPER DEVOTIONAL ARTICLES by Rev. Mike Jones

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January 3, 2017 GOALS

[Menu](#) He who aims at nothing normally gets nothing! Here are a few goals that can make your life better in the coming year. Remember, if you are satisfied being satisfied then you will probably never really be satisfied!

Find a friend: It is hard to like someone who does not make an attempt to be “likable”- A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: (Proverbs 18:24). Open up and let someone into your life. Yes, some people may puncture your pride or hurt your heart but friendly people find friends and “There is a friend that sticks closer than a brother”. A good friend is a lifelong treasure.

Make some money: Most people are not as rich as they WANT to be but most are as rich as they are WILLING to be- The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat. (Proverbs 13:4). Stop looking for excuses and begin looking for ways to profitably invest your time and talent for yourself and for others- The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing. (Proverbs 20:4). Having nothing is not nearly as much fun as having something.

Prioritize your “end game”; knowing the end is not the end- For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? (Mark 8:36). Your ultimate goal should be to be glad to meet God.

January 4, 2017 DECIDE

[Menu](#) Confusion breeds confusion. A presenter presenting a major game changing decision to an organization recently presented the decision as if it had not been completely decided and then asked the members of the organization to make major decisions basis on this undecided decision. A lot of confusion came out of that confusing meeting.

Once a decision is made and clearly presented to the people the decision is no longer about the decision but about the willingness of the people to follow the leader’s decision about the decision. (Democracy input about the decision should have been solicited and considered before the decision was made). Once the decision is made it can be tweaked or, if necessary, terminated but the decision is decided.

Joshua assumed leadership of a nation that God led from the bondage of slavery into the exhilarating freedom of the Promised Land. Now the nation had to learn how to be a winner after a win. Joshua clearly presented the choices before them and then asked the nation to follow his leadership about a decision he had already decided- “And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (Joshua 24:15).

What is your decision about this decision?

January 10, 2017 RELIGION'S HEART

[Menu](#) True religion comes from the Heart. We BELIEVE from the Heart (That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. Romans 10:9-10) and we OBEY from the Heart (But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Romans 6:17).

We SING from the Heart (Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. Colossians 3:16) and we GIVE from the Heart (Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. 2 Corinthians 9:7).

We LOVE from the Heart (Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. Matthew 22:37). and we REPENT from the Heart (The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. Psalms 51:17).

No wonder Preachers end sermons with the question, "Is your heart right with God?" Well, is it?

January 11, 2017 HOW TO CHANGE YOUR LIFE

[Menu](#) If your life seems like you are blindly sitting by the wayside begging then you need to follow the example of Blind Bartimaeus and break out of that rut.

1. Stop waiting for ideal circumstances. There will always be a "crowd" between you and a new beginning- "Jesus came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highway side begging". (Mark 10:46)

2. Take Charge of your change- "And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me". (Mark 10:47).

3. Do not let other people's doubts deter you- "And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, Thou son of David, have mercy on me." (Mark 10:48).

4. Walk away from your old ways- "And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus." (Mark 10:50).

5. Clarify your real need- "And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight." (Mark 10:51).

6 Believe you and God can do this- "Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way." (Mark 10 52)

January 17, 2017 DO NOT BE FOOLED BY FAME

[Menu](#) Being famous does not make you righteous. God can save the famous as well as the “failures” but being famous in the eyes of men does not make you right in the sight of God.

Being able to “sing” about rebellious attitudes and sexual activities with music so loud until it causes hearing damage may give you a hit song but it does not get you a seat in the heavenly choir. Being able to “dance” in public wearing very little clothes while mimicking music with your mouth may get you an award winning video but it will not clothe you in God’s robe of righteousness.

Doing a great job of pretending to be someone you are not on TV or in movies may make you a Star but your imaginary life does not impress God nor does it grant you immunity from the wages of sin. Winning the Super Bowl or the NBA Championship may get you an invitation to dinner at the White House but it will not guarantee you a place at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

Having thousands of followers on Twitter or thousands of “likes” on Facebook may make you a media success but it will not matter when God separates Saints from sinners at the great white throne judgment. Famous may be fabulous and it may earn you riches and respect but Fame does not impress God.

January 18, 2017 DOING WRONG IS NOT RIGHT

[Menu](#) Sometimes sin is “fun” but always sin is fatal (the wages of sin is death). When you are tempted to follow the cravings of the flesh instead of the commandments of the Father it would be good to remember what Sin does to your life as illustrated by the demon possessed man in Mark Chapter Five.

Sin poisons the atmosphere of your life- “And when Jesus was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among the tombs;”

Sin controls you- “and no man could bind him, no, not with chains: Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him.”

Sin causes you to hate and harm yourself- “And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones.”

Sin causes you to run from God when you should be running toward Him- “He cried with a loud voice, and said, ‘What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not.’”

Thankfully, when Jesus deals with sin in our life it changes us completely- “they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind:”

January 24, 2017 MAKE CHURCH MATTER

[Menu](#) Attending Church should be more than a routine; and certainly more than a rut. Every Church Service and every sermon will not be “super abundantly great” (Paul told preacher Timothy there were “in seasons and out of seasons” and to be faithful during both) but every service is an opportunity to meet with God and with the family of God so God can continue making and molding you.

If you just “show up and pay up” and then sit there trying to figure out where you are going to eat when the preacher finally shuts up then you will not be “glad when they say unto you let us go into the house of the Lord”. Here are a few things you can do to make Church matter to you this week.

Before Service spend time in reflection and repentance- “Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, “(James 1:21a). Remember that Sin will take you further than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay, and cost you more than you want to pay. It is hard to spend time with a Holy God when your life is filled with dirty deeds.

During the Service- “receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls” (James 1:21b). Listen to God speak in the Songs and Sermon.

After the Service- “be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves” (James 1:22). Church will matter when it matters in your life.

January 25, 2017 LOVE WITHOUT CONDONING

[Menu](#) One of the most difficult parts of the Christian life is showing compassion to sinners without seeming to condone their sin. Jesus was a friend of sinners but He did not make people comfortable with their sinful actions or complacent with their sinful lifestyle. His command was “Go and sin no more lest a worse thing come unto thee” (John 5:14).

A good example of this principle was when Jesus was confronted by a crowd holding a woman caught in the very act of adultery. Jesus made the condemners condemn themselves and slink away in shame before sharing forgiveness and hope with the woman (“Neither do I condemn thee”). But He did not tell her His compassion and forgiveness meant she could go back to being an adulteress. His command was “Go and sin no more” (John 8:11).

Churches should always be a haven of hope and help for sinners but Churches must remember that the Holy Spirit delivered message is to bring conviction about sin, “Now when they heard (Peter’s Sermon), they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37).

Jesus does not simply save us FROM sin; He saved us FOR an Abundant Life and that abundant life cannot exist if we maintain a sinful lifestyle of rebellion against God’s Word and Will. A surgeon shows compassion when he deals with sickness; not when he ignores symptoms so he can be a “good buddy” with the patient.

January 31, 2017 WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH

[Menu](#) Sadly, all of us come to situations in our life that are a “tough row to hoe” and we wonder how we can endure the circumstances ahead of us. Jesus faced such a situation on the night before his arrest and crucifixion. The principles Jesus used when facing this tough time in His life are principles all of us need when the going gets tough.

He sought the comfort of friends- “And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy.” Matt 26:37. He did not pretend everything was alright. He let his friends take a “peek at the pain in His heart”.

After He shared His sorrow He solicited their prayer support- “Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch [pray] with me.” Mat 26:38.

He prayed for alternatives but committed to continued trust in God’s Plan- “And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.” Mat 26:39. He prayed for God to help Him “out” or help Him through.

He received the help from God that he needed in order to accomplish the task God had put before Him- “And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.” Luke 22:43.

February 1, 2017 LIFE LIES

[Menu](#) To tell a lie is bad. To believe a lie is worse. To live a lie is deadly. That is why John, the beloved disciple of Jesus, included in his book about “love” severe warnings about the dangers of lying.

Do not lie about your “light life” if you are living in darkness- If we say that we have fellowship with Jesus, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: (1 John 1:6).

Do not lie about your real life by pretending you are too good to sin- If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. (1 John 1:8).

Do not lie about your religious life by being a hypocrite- He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. (1 John 2:4). He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked. (1 John 2:6).

Do not lie about your love life by hiding hate- He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. (1 John 2:9). If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? (1 John 4:20).

Jesus said, “Know the Truth and be set free”. Lies cannot live in the light of truth; but you should.

February 7, 2017 GET IT, GOT IT, GIVE IT

[Menu](#) Pastor Wayland Owens recently shared a devotion message at a Minister's Meeting which stated "I got God. Then God got me. Now make sure others get it also". What a concise way of sharing the evangelistic duties of a Christian.

You cannot share what you do not have! So the first thing must be your own relationship with God. You must believe IN God- "he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." (Hebrews 11:6). You must realize you are APART from God- "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" (Romans 3:23). Then you must "get it" by repenting of the things that keep you apart from God and trusting in Jesus Christ's payment for those sins-"as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:" (John 1:12).

Once you have God then you must be sure God has you. Salvation is not "allowing" God to save you. It is accepting God's mercy and forgiveness so you can fellowship with, and lovingly serve; God with all your heart, soul, mind, and body. You get salvation so God can get you!

Anything this good and this important should be shared with everyone everywhere. Witnessing is not an obligation you dread it is an opportunity to share "Good News" so others can get what you got!

February 8, 2017 SNEAKY SNAKE

[Menu](#) I heard a story recently about an interesting series of events. A man was taking a shower. The weather had begun to turn cold so his wife decided to bring in her plants. When she sat the plants down a small green snake came out of a plant and slithered across the floor.

Immediately she began to panic and scream. Her husband rushed out of the shower with only a towel wrapped around him and his wife told him about the snake. When he bent down to see if it had crawled under the couch his dog put his cold nose to the exposed rear of the man. The man thought the snake had bitten him and jumped against a table, knocking himself unconscious.

His wife thought the snake had bitten him so she called 911. When the medics arrived they assumed the man had been bitten by a snake so they loaded him onto a stretcher to transport to the hospital. As the medics picked up the stretcher the snake came out from under the couch causing one of the medics to panic and drop the stretcher, breaking the man's leg!

Satan is first shown in the Bible as a snake. The next time you allow him into your house through the means of books, TV programs, or video games remember this story. You may think that allowing a little snake into your home will not cause you much trouble but you will probably end up with a lot more hurt and misery than you expected.

February 14, 2017 NO SENSE LOVE

[Menu](#) God's love does not make any sense. It causes Him to forgive sinners who commit murder, abuse children, steal from the poor, and, in general, act like sinners. The human response to these people would be "abandon them; no hope" but God reaches out in Love and invites them to become His children and share in His riches.

Amazingly, God's love also allows Him to forgive Saints when they are more worldly than saintly. Some Christians spread more gossip than they do gospel, seek earthly riches more than heavenly righteousness, and even get so absorbed with life until they fail to worship and serve the source of life. Yet, the Love of God still sits patiently at the Father's house longing to help them exchange hog pen poverty for robes, rings, and eating fatted calves!

God's love does not make sense. The creator of all could create anything He desires to do His bidding instantly and forever. Why would He settle for weak humans who are prone to wander and who have nothing to offer Him except love and adoration? Is that it? Does God extend His Love to us because He wants it returned?

If Love is what God seeks then I want Him to find it from me as I enthusiastically follow His first rule- And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. (Mark 12:30).

February 15, 2017 SAINT SIGNS

[Menu](#) The apostle John listed five "telling traits" of a child of God. These "Saint Signs" help us clearly distinguish the "Saints from the Ain't". In a time of "fake news" when it is difficult to trust anything from anyone here are some Christian Characteristics that are forever true.

A Child of God does right things- If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him (1 John 2:29).

A Child of God does not have a pattern of doing wrong things- No one born (begotten) of God [deliberately, knowingly, and habitually] practices sin, for God's nature abides in him [His principle of life, the divine sperm, remains permanently within him]; and he cannot practice sinning because he is born (begotten) of God (1 John 3:9 Amp)

A Child of God loves God and God's children- Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God (1 John 4:7).

A Child of God believes in the virgin birth- Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him (1 John 5:1).

A Child of God has victorious Faith- For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith (1 John 5:4).

God on the inside will show on the outside.

February 21, 2017 WEARY OF LIFE

[Menu](#) Sometimes we get weary of life because of our circumstances: “And Rebekah said to Isaac, I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth: if Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, ... what good shall my life do me?” (Genesis 27:46).

Sometimes we get weary of life because of the sickness within us: Job said, “My soul is weary of my life; I will leave my complaint upon myself; I will speak in the bitterness of my soul.” (Job 10:1).

Sometimes we get weary of life because of stress and depression: Elijah went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, “It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life;” (1 Kings 19:4).

Amazingly, in each of these cases when they had nothing but God then God did something extraordinary- Rebekah’s concern eventually led Jacob to have the twelve tribes of Israel. God healed Job and gave Job twice as much as he had before (Job 42:10). And Elijah was led to claim a new disciple who eventually received a “double portion” of the Spirit and did twice as many miracles as Elijah!

Sometimes you feel like you cannot but remember you can “do all things through Christ which strengtheneth you.” (Philippians 4:13). So when you are weary in well doing just remain faithful and remember there is a “due season” of blessing coming!

February 22, 2017 KILLING YOUR KIDS

[Menu](#) Some people kill their kids with their sinful lifestyle: When Jeroboam’s wife sought healing for her child the prophet told her the sins of Jeroboam were so great until his son would mercifully die before God brought judgment on Jeroboam- “Arise thou therefore, get thee to thine own house: and when thy feet enter into the city, the child shall die.” (1 Kings 14:12).

Some people let their ambitions kill their kids: When Jericho was destroyed Joshua made this statement, “Cursed be the man before the LORD, that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho: he shall lay the foundation thereof in his firstborn, and in his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it.” (Joshua 6:26).

Later “Hiel the Bethelite build Jericho: he laid the foundation thereof in Abiram his firstborn, and set up the gates thereof in his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Joshua the son of Nun.” (1 Kings 16:34). (Don’t you know that youngest son went to his dad after the death of his oldest brother and said, “Are you sure this city is worth its cost?”)

Some people kill their kids by believing their preference after their pleasure is more important than God’s pronouncements- “Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward”. (Psalms 127:3).

Your life choices have consequences; on you and on your kids.

February 28, 2017 MODERATION

[Menu](#) The word “moderation” is found one time in the Bible- Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. (Philippians 4:5). It is from a Greek word which means “Limited lifestyle”. Paul uses it here to tell believers to limit things that limit their life so their testimony would show they were awaiting their Lord’s return and not being controlled by this present world.

Christians are not called to isolate; but they are told to insulate themselves from this world. Here are some ways that could apply to you today. Do not become addicted to News, Facebook, and other media madness. People used to wait weeks (and months) for news. Then TV brought News to us each day (mainly at 6:30pm). Now it is instantly available each moment and since it takes HARD work to find enough new news to fill that much news then “fake news” has become the new news! Moderate looking at news to no more than three brief times a day.

People used to “share information” (gossip) at church socials or bar room tables (depending on your spiritual inclination). Now they instantly share Too Much Information via Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. Moderate your time (and think before posting!) on this kind of media to twice per day (15 minutes Morning, 15 minutes night).

People notice when Christians spend most of their time talking about their circumstances instead of their Christ. And they wonder if that person really believes in, and is trying to prepare themselves for, the Lord’s soon return.

March 7, 2017 **KNOWING YOUR DIE DAY**

[Menu](#) Most people who die on Monday did not have death on their Monday agenda. Yet Death is an Every Person Appointment: "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). Here is some "die day" information you should know.

God has an exciting plan for your life before your "die day": "Behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ." (Luke 2:25-26).

God expects you to make preparation before your "die day": "In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet said unto him, 'Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live'." (Isaiah 38:1). Many people are not afraid to die. They are simply afraid to die Yet!

But sometimes God intrudes into your life party and announces your "die day" comes with a judgment. When Belshazzar disregarded and disrespected God he received a "writing on the wall" about his judgment and death: "Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. And in that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain." (Daniel 5:26-30). You may not know when, where, or how you will die but death is somewhere on your calendar. Will you be ready on that appointment day?

March 8, 2017 **TEAM GOD**

[Menu](#) When you and God get on the same page life is good. If you are tired of an empty heart and restless life then find out what God is doing and join the eternal God is doing something eternal!

Working for God is about "shining" not "selfies" (Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. Matthew 5:16). The purpose of light is to reveal something else; not to reveal itself. The good works we do FOR men will show God IN us.

Walking with God gives us a Testimony (Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God. Genesis 6:9) and builds Trust between us and God (Can two walk together, except they be agreed? Amos 3:3). Walking with God also makes us realize we are part of something bigger, and more important, than ourselves (The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way. Psalms 37:23).

Best of all, working for God, walking with God, and witnessing about God makes the "team captain" happy (Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. Malachi 3:16).

"Team God" is the winning team with a victory celebration that is out of this world! Team up today.

March 14, 2017 **CHRISTIAN FAILURES**

[Menu](#) “It is possible to be a Christian and yet be a failure” (A. W. Tozer). It is the job of Christianity to not only save our souls but also to save our lives by transforming us into victorious examples of God’s Grace and Mercy at work in a redeemed individual. Here are two ways we fail to be the Christian God intended us to be.

Christians fail to build for eternity when they are satisfied with wood instead of wonder: For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire. (1 Corinthians 3:11-15).

Christians lose influence when they lose love: Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. (Revelation 2:4-5).

God gives us the ability to be Fabulous; not a failure. Don’t “blow it”; be a Blessing!

March 15, 2017 **GOD TOOK ME**

[Menu](#) I was always the “no you take him” guy. You remember how it was when kids would choose teams during recess. It always came down to one final guy. One team captain would say, “You can have him” and the other captain would say, “No. You take him”. I was always that guy.

I was puny and sickly (missed the second half of second grade because of sickness) and a nerd (during the twelve years I attended Hannah School I think I read every book in our small library). Plus, the poverty of our family meant I did not get the glasses I desperately needed until the fifth grade (I am basically blind without my glasses). It was easy to see why I was that “no you take him” guy.

But on Monday night, March 19, 1962 the Spirit of God spoke to my heart in revival services at a small country church in Shimbonealley, SC and God said, “I choose you”. We were the “did not have time for God” family in our community so I did not know religious words and practices and did not have a clue how to respond to this God calling in my heart. The older neighbor who had brought me to church saw my distress and said, “Mike, just trust Jesus”.

So I chose to believe in the one who loved me enough to die on a cross for me and went from a “no you take him” guy to a Chosen Child of God on God’s winning Team. Glory!

March 21, 2017 JUST ASKING

[Menu](#) When you face the God of the universe with a sneer on your lips and scorn in your voice as you tell God you are the one to decide your destiny and you decided you wanted to live your life as you chose and God says that was a bad choice, whose decision do you think will finally decide your destiny?

When you contemptuously inform God about your disdain for “self-righteous Bible thumping Christians” and all their religious rules as you tell God you would never attend a church which contained such hypocrites; how will you feel about God showing you your future lake of fire home filled with real hypocrites and really bad people?

When you show God your large number of Face Book Friends and share with Him how you once said you “trusted Jesus” to get a pushy preacher to leave you alone; do you really think your good social standing and your mouth without meaning declaration will placate a God who watched His Son die on a cross as a payment for your sins? Do you really believe being “as good as” the crowd is as good as the cross?

When you tell God your professor told you your preacher was “less than smart” for believing in a supernatural God and antiquated scriptures instead of relying on modern scientific discoveries for life guidance; how will you answer God when He asks you if you called your professor or your Pastor when you were on your death bed?

Just asking.

March 22, 2017 GOD'S DAILY ANGER

[Menu](#) Everyone knows that God is a daily bread giver (Give us this day our daily bread) and a daily blessing benefactor (Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits) but most people do not consider that God gets angry with the wicked every day! (God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day. Psalms 7:11).

Why would a God whose character is Love, Goodness, and Grace get angry with wicked people daily? Just as any loving parent would become frustrated and angry if their children continually choose wrong and destructive ways so God is frustrated that people; instead of accepting His Love, daily choose to walk wickedly, love wrongly, and ignore and insult God's offer of forgiveness and mercy.

When wicked people put everything else before God and take God's name in vain God knows they are choosing a way which does them harm and separates them from Him. Why, God anguishes, would the wicked choose to be destroyed instead of enjoyed.

God does not want to be angry with the wicked. He gave his Son to die for them and sends His children all over the world to witness of His love and grace to them. He is “full of compassion, willing to forgive their iniquity, and destroy them not: yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath”. (Psalms 78:38). Accept God's love instead of stirring His anger today.

March 28, 2017 **WORRY'S SHADOW**

[Menu](#) Worry gives a small problem a big shadow. The word “worry” is not found in the Bible. The closest you can come is the phrase “Why take ye thought?” as used by Jesus to censure people who were overly concerned about God’s ability to care for them- “And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?” (Matthew 6:28, 30).

David was a young boy but he knew that even a giant’s shadow was not as powerful as God’s light in his heart. He walked in the light of this truth until one day he would boldly proclaim about Worry’s ultimate shadow: “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.” (Psalms 23:4)

The farther we are from the light the bigger a shadow becomes. Worry’s Shadow blurs a problem so that we see only darkness, doubt, and despair. Worry’s Shadow dims our faith in God’s ability to deal with problems and fills our hearts with paralyzing fear. Do you want to dispel Worry’s Shadow and live the abundant life God intended for you? Jesus is the Light of the world where shadows cannot hide.

March 29, 2017 **GROW UP GUIDELINES**

[Menu](#) You will never be great as long as you are satisfied being good. Here are some “grow up guidelines” that can help in your spiritual development.

Hunt for God by looking in the mirror instead of the meadow. You will never find God until you realize you are the one who is lost. When you open your heart it will open your eyes.

Hold out by learning to let go. Until you are willing to lose you will never be able to win: “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.” (Matthew 16:25). Stop trying to BE God and start BECOMING a child of God by completely trusting the Heavenly Father’s purpose and plan for your life.

Help God by ceasing to help God. Flesh cannot help flesh be anything but flesh and no matter how much better you make flesh it is still not good enough for God: “This I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption” (1 Corinthians 15:50). God did not say try to be better; He said be Born Again (and it was not an optional option): “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3).

And finally, Hunger for God with all your heart: “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.” (Matthew 5:6). Never get enough of God.

April 4, 2017 REPENT AND BELIEVE

[Menu](#) When God called me into the ministry 55 years ago the sermons I heard and preached mainly had a theme of “Repent and Believe”. This meant you were to realize that sin had separated you from God and turn from those sins. You were then to be “Born Again” by trusting Jesus’ payment for those sins by His death on the cross and begin a new life walking with God.

Today most sermons are about “Believe and accept”. Believe that God loves you and accept His forgiveness of your past mistakes so you can try to be a better person from this point forward. This gives people the impression they graciously accepted God instead of God’s Amazing Grace accepting them. Plus, now they get a “do over” (Which eases their conscience but does not change their character).

It is true that I am not “sinless” (If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 1 John 1:8) but becoming a Christian means I should “Sin Less”. This is possible because of the power of the Holy Spirit at work in my life since I asked Jesus into my heart (There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Romans 8:1).

Christianity changed who I was (sins forgiven), who I am (new creature in Christ), and who I will be (A Heaven dwelling child of God). Do not “believe and accept” anything less.

April 5, 2017 EASTER LOOKS

[Menu](#) I tell my wife sometimes, “Do not look at me in that tone of voice”. Everyone knows there is a language to a look. There is the “Love” look that couples share, the “you had better straighten up right now” look that parents give children, and the “are you sure you want to go there” look my wife sometimes gives me!

Looks often wear glasses. We overlook faults, failures, and flaws of loved ones by wearing love tinted “glasses”. We give others looks of disdain, distrust, and doubt as we view these same problems through tainted “glasses” of prejudice and personality. We tend to see what we want to see.

Knowing that “looks” matter; here are some “Easter Looks” you need to consider. The look of Disappointment Jesus gave Peter: “And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.” (Luke 22:61-62).

The look of Derision and Doubt of the crucifixion crowd: “And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God” (Luke 23:35).

Gloriously, there is also the look of Deliverance: “And they said, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulcher? And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away” (Mark 16:3-4). Death could not defeat Him. The Grave could not hold Him. Look and live today!

April 11, 2017 CANNOT BE SAVED

[Menu](#) Easter is about belief; not bunnies. Do not take the cross, and the salvation it purchased, for granted.

You cannot be saved when the notion strikes you- "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him:" (John 6:44). God is gracious and good and calls "whosoever will" but remember He also said, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." (Luke 13:24).

You cannot be saved by bargaining your belief. Telling God you will become a Christian in exchange for Him healing your child or delivering you from your present trouble does not impress a God who watched His Son die on a cross for you. Salvation is a gift you accept; not a bargain you make.

You cannot be saved unless you come to God by faith in Jesus Christ: "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." (John 14:6). God made the rules and He said all the good works you do, all the good intentions you have, and all the good religions you invent cannot save you if you do not enter by His door ("He that entereth not by the door but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber." John 10:1).

Do not get so busy hunting "eggs" until you fail to see how important Easter really is.

April 12, 2017 MISERABLE MAN

[Menu](#) Did you know the world's most miserable man is not necessarily your boss! According to the Bible the "Most Miserable Man" is someone who does not believe in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ- "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (1 Corinthians 15:19).

Without the resurrection a Preacher is a miserable man. His sermons and the "religion" he proclaims are worthless because they simply tell people how to be good instead of pointing them to a God who can conquer death, hell, and the grave. ("If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain" 1 Corinthians 15:14).

Without the resurrection a sinner is a miserable person living an empty life headed to a bad end. It is only when he "believes in his heart that God has raised Christ from the dead" (Rom 10:9) that sins are forgiven and eternal abundant life is bestowed.

Are you a "miserable man" today? Do you constantly live with heart ache when a resurrected Christ said, "Peace, I give you. My peace I leave you."? Are you continually controlled by a harmful habit when Christ promised you could be "more than a conqueror" because His death and resurrection defeated sin and Satan?

It is hard to be a miserable man when you are excited about life and cannot be defeated by death! The resurrection changed everything. Let it change you!

April 18, 2017 TRUST GOD'S LEADERSHIP

[Menu](#) I knew I was in trouble almost as soon as the meeting started. One agenda item at our Church Leadership Board meeting was selecting a teacher for the Teen Bible Study Class. As soon as the meeting started one of the men (bubbling with excitement) said, "I have thought about this a lot and I believe Sister Sue is the perfect person to be our Teen Teacher".

My problem- Sister Sue was a wonderful person, faithful to church, liked by everyone; and had just come to me the week before for help with her addiction to pornography! I could not tell this man this because it would violate people's confidence in pastoral communications. It would also put a "stigma" on Sister Sue and I believed (and was proven right) that this was a problem she could and would (with guidance and God) conquer.

When I suggested we let Sister Sue rest and involve some new people the man who had proposed her "went ballistic". He let me know that I was prejudice, power hungry, egotistical, and unwilling for anyone else in the church to make a decision. I let him rail, tried to be reasonable and calm, and finally was able to settle the situation.

Many times in life we "absolutely know" a certain job, person, or situation is the best thing for us and cannot understand why God refuses to see things our way and grant our request. Just remember, God knows things we do not know so learn to "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding" (Proverbs 3:5).

April 19, 2017 SURVIVE OR SHARE

[Menu](#) Famous preacher Vance Havner tells the story of a Civil War soldier who was asked how many of the enemy he had killed. "None" He replied. "But I got just as many of them as they got of me!" Sadly, that is the sentiment of many church members. Their goal is to "somehow make it to Heaven"; not to strive to get others to go with them. They want to be a survivor Christian not a sharing Saint.

I know it is important that we "take heed to ourselves, lest at any time our hearts be overcharged with debauchery, drunkenness, and the cares of this life, so the return of Christ comes upon us unawares" (Luke 21:34). But our relationship with God should not be so inwardly focused about being good until we fail to show others God!

No one craves bullets and battle scars so it is easy to "hide in a corner" and let others do the fighting while we simply survive. We blame our absence from the battle on our timid personality, our fear of rejection, or our lack of knowing all the answers to unasked questions. But the simple true is that evangelism is merely "one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread". It is about caring enough to share instead of hoard.

It is going to be difficult for Jesus to say, "Well done" if you have not done anything! Do not just survive; share.

April 25, 2017 **THIRD YEAR FAILURE**

[Menu](#) You do remember that the only thing Jesus cursed was a fruitless fig tree! Third Year fruit inspection is a critical time in the life of a Church. That is when the “Boss” inspects for fruitfulness- “A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?” Luke 13:6-7.

At this critical junction three measures are put into place to save the “fruit tree” from simply “cumbering the ground”-“He answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down” (Luke 13:8-9).

First, there is a Delay in Judgment (a fourth year). Second, the dresser of the vineyard Digs around the tree (Break up the fallow hard ground surrounding the tree so air [of the Spirit] and water [of the Word] can nourish the tree). Third, Dung is spread around the tree (Allow things we think are “waste” [circumstances and situation that look bad but God means for good] to fertilize and re-energize the tree).

American Churches have never had as many opportunities and resources as we have today. Yet many American Churches have a dusty baptismal. Just remember this story ends with if no fruit then “after that thou shalt cut it down”. I wonder what year this is?

April 26, 2017 **CONTEXT**

[Menu](#) What do I mean when I use the word “strike”? Is it a batter missing a ball or a bowler hitting all the pins? Is it workers refusing to work or is it a fist hitting a person? It all depends on the context in which it is used.

What is “wind”? Is it the movement of air, wrapping a cord around a stick, preparing a watch to work, or the erratic path of a road or river? It all depends on the context. (FYI. According to “Free Dictionary” the word with the most different meanings is “set”; used 464 different ways according to context- I set my gloves on the TV set as I watched a set of tennis and waited for the concrete to set).

The word “Christian” is used so out of context in today’s society until someone recently said, “I expect soon to hear about ‘Christian pickpockets’. They steal your wallet with one hand while putting a tract in your pocket with the other!”

Christian is not a description of Western Culture defined by its context. Christianity is founded upon certain unchangeable facts which demand belief and which are demonstrated in behavior.

Over twenty percent of people in America say they do not believe in a god. Most of them will not read this article or listen to a sermon but if they could see the Love, Hope, and Joy of Christianity displayed in your life then they would see Christianity in the right context. And that could change them into the amazing person God desires them to be. Try it this week!

May 2, 2017 AFTER THE GLORY

[Menu](#) What happened to Lazarus? After the glory of being raised from the dead by Christ you would have thought Lazarus would have been a prominent person in the early Christian Church built around a resurrected Savior. But, strangely, his name is absent from the history of the early church.

What about the widow of Nain's son (No name given for someone who had this amazing experience)? After the glory of being brought back to life while in his funeral procession did he out live his mother or did she have to "bury" him twice? Did he become a productive member of society or did he use his abilities for less noble purposes? (He still retained his free will) There is no record of him becoming a disciple or, if fact, doing anything.

And twelve year old Jarius' daughter (again no name); what happened to her? Did she become a beacon in the community? Did she marry and raise wonderful productive children? Or did she eventually break Jarius' heart?

Christians are people who were raised into newness of life through their faith in Jesus Christ ("we are buried with him by baptism into death: therefore as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" Romans 6:4). What will be OUR story after we experience the glory of God raising us into newness of life?

May 3, 2017 HALL SNAKES

[Menu](#) When I was a pastor in Florida, I normally walked to the Church office for my early morning Bible reading and prayer. One morning after my devotion, I walked back to the parsonage to get another cup of coffee. While I was there I thought I'd see if my wife was awake.

Walking down the dark hall to the bed room I felt something move under my foot. When I turned on the light I saw a snake coiled up in the middle of the hall! I didn't have anything to kill him with so I went outside to get a hoe.

When I returned, I couldn't find the snake! After looking for a while, I found him behind the bedroom door. I tried to hit him just hard enough to stun him so I could get him out of the house without making a mess on the carpet. That is when my wife woke up and asked me what I was doing. When I told her she was not a happy camper!

I got the snake out of the house without causing too much of a mess but my wife never walked down that hall again without turning on the light.

Snakes in the hall don't make for a happy home. There is always a little fear and apprehension. Think about that the next time you are tempted to allow filthy movies or dirty books into your home. The snakes of lust bring insecurity into your home haven and you will find yourself watching your every step instead of enjoying life.

May 9, 2017 MAD MOTHER

[Menu](#) I'm sitting here trying to remember if I ever saw my mother really mad. I've seen her aggravated because my hard headed brothers would not do right! I've seen her exasperated because my dad determined to do something without consideration of council, cost, or consequences. I've seen her cry tears of sorrow and I have seen her special smile of commendation; but I don't ever remember seeing her really get mad.

Mothers today are told to distrust men (does that include their husband and father??) because men only want to exploit them. They are told to "do away with" unborn children who are inconvenient or unplanned. And, failing to learn the historical lesson of failed fathers, they are told that having a successful career is more important than having a successful family.

I never remember seeing my mother mad. In spite of hard headed children and a stubborn husband. I think the only thing that would really make her mad would be for someone to tell her that she should have thought only of herself and not of her husband and children. That would probably have put some steam in her kettle!

I'm glad mother was more interested in being a Mom than in being Mad. That's what made her special; and that's why it is such a privilege to be able to honor a Mother on Mother's Day.

May 10, 2017 MOTHER HUGS

[Menu](#) If I could bottle and sell a "mother's hug" then I would have enough income until I would never have to ask for money for missions again! Anyone who has watched a Mother kiss a "boo-boo" and make it all better surely realizes miracles beyond medicine do exist!

I believe in Divine Healing by God (A body is made well beyond scientific explanation or understanding). I also believe in Doctor Help (The education and experience of medical professionals who use machinery, medicines, and good old common sense, to put things into or take things out of a person in order to promote the body's healing process). But one of the greatest remedies known to humankind has still got to be a "Mother's Hug".

I understand that a scraped knee is not the same as a life altering or life terminating cancer. But I am still astonished at how a Mother's Hug seems to make everything better. (FYI- Jesus knew the value of a hug- "Jesus took the little children up in his arms and blessed them" (Mark 10:16) and even in today's world numerous medical and news articles recently affirmed the value of a hug in the healing process. Google it).

The Bible tells us to "give and it shall be given unto you" so, if you can, give your mother a great big hug this Mother's Day. And when she hugs you back realize you are part of a "Mother Miracle".

May 16, 2017 BIBLE BLESSINGS

[Menu](#) Looking for a way to change your life for the better? Try reading God's Word each day. This will produce positive changes in your character and conduct. The Word of God in your life will:

- 1) Produce a Clean Life- Ps 119:9 "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word." Remember, the Word of God will keep you from sin or sin will keep you from the Word of God.
- 2) Give Victory over Sin- Ps 119:11 "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." You do not have to live in defeat and despair, victorious living is found in applying God's Word to life's problems.
- 3) Generate a Deeper Understanding of Life- Ps 119:104 "Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way." Life is a puzzle. Disease, death, and destruction come knocking on your door when you least expect them. You can grit your teeth and try to bear it or you can allow the Word of God to give you hope and help in the midst of all circumstances.
- 4) Bring Peace to your heart and life- Ps 119:165 "Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them." The Word of God produces Faith in your heart which gives you peace WITH God and fills you with the peace OF God.

God's Word can make a difference in your life. But only if you take the time to make it a part of your life!

May 17, 2017 REAL DEAL CHRISTIANS

[Menu](#) Some people impersonate Christians (hypocrites). Some people imitate Christians (Claim to be what they are not). Some people invest in Christians in order to advance their own agenda or needs (Join a church for business or social reasons). And some people are ignorant of Christians (In their minds all Christians are uneducated individuals with restrictive views and repressive values).

But real deal Christians are images of Christ in their character and conduct because their body has become the temple of the Holy Spirit through their faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. They are spiritual beings still living in a very human body.

An unsaved individual is not saved simply by ceasing to sin. He must be "Born Again". In the same way, a Christian is not spiritual simply because he withholds himself from worldliness. He is spiritual because he yields to the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit at work in His life. True Christianity is not about what I stop doing but about what I start becoming when I am rightly related to the Spirit.

Walking in the grace (unmerited favor) of God these Christians are at peace with God and themselves as they realize they cannot please God more than by simply being what God designed them to be. To them true Christianity is not suppression; It is expression. It is not holding in one's self; it is living out Christ. True Christians are not just religious; they are the real deal.

May 23, 2017 NO STRAW

[Menu](#) Sometimes things get worst in order to get better. When Moses came to Pharaoh and commanded him to free the nation of Israel from Egyptian Slavery, Pharaoh answered by commanded the Israelites to continue to make as many brick as before but without having straw supplied to them. This greatly increased their work because they now had to gather straw as well as make bricks.

Many of the people of Israel grumbled against God and Moses because it seemed things had gotten worse instead of better. Instead of bring them the freedom they anticipated, Moses' ministry had made their slavery more difficult. Not a good way to influence crowds and win converts.

Sometimes we ask God for extra money and the car breaks down or the kids get sick! And we think to ourselves, "My brick of a life was bad enough and now I must add "no straw" to my overloaded week! How can this be right?"

The most important verse in the Bible is "The Just shall live by Faith". No straw for the bricks really stretches that faith! As tough as it is; however, remember that straw-less bricks "paved the road" to the Promised Land. Beyond the bricks were the Blessings- remember that!

May 24, 2017 WINNING FAMILY MEMBERS

[Menu](#) (Acts 16:30) ... "Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, AND THY HOUSE."

I was the first person to become a Christian in my family. The joy and peace I found in Christ made me want every person in my family to experience the same salvation. Thankfully, my mother, father, brothers, and their spouses all became active Christians. Then I married a wife. She and all her family and their spouses are active Christians. Four principles led to this happy conclusion.

1) Determination of Objective- I did not want my family to "be better" and start going to Church. I realized my family was bound for an eternity in hell and I did not want that to happen! I wanted them to know the Abundant Life I found in Christ and spend eternity with me in Heaven.

2) Desire of heart- You must long for their salvation so greatly until it deprives you of food and drives you to your knees. Give God no rest (Is 62:7) until every person in your family is safely in the ark of Salvation. Make it your main mission.

3) Demonstration of Christ- Your life must be consistent and Christ like. You are not perfect but you are the pattern for Christ in your home.

4) Declaration of the Gospel- Quarreling, crying, or sighing will not save them. The good news of the Gospel must be plainly presented.

May God bless you to be able to say, "I am saved and my house".

May 30, 2017 GROWING A CHURCH

Menu There are two things every church (like every business) needs if it is to have an increasing “customer base”- Something to bring people into your building and something for them once they arrive that will make them want to come back. Your Church already has a Name (known for your sermons, singing, shouting, social activities, selling dinners, ...) and a Fame (a community reputation based on the actions, attitude, and articulations of its members). This reputation is more important than your “religion” (denomination) to most people.

A Growing Church must have a desire to grow (many churches are satisfied doing what they have always done and having who they have always had). Then ask these questions. 1) Why should anyone come to THIS church when there are over a hundred churches within ten miles of this church? 2) If I were a first time visitor would I feel welcome and would I want to come back next week? 3) If families bring their kids to this church will they feel good about how this church equips them for, and engages them in, life? Finally, is what this church stands FOR what people want their family to stand ON as they build their life and face their eternity?

Next Sunday will the people in your community wake up bored with nothing to do or will they think about your church and say, “I was glad when they said unto me let us go into the house of the Lord”?

May 31, 2017 SPIES

Menu God is not the NSA but did you know He spies on your calls and conversations- “every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment” (Matthew 12:36).

Did you know there is coming a day when family members will spy on and betray Christian family members- “brother shall betray brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death.” (Mark 13:12). A precursor of this is today’s PC Culture where teachers, businessmen, and politicians face a firestorm if they mention or exhibit Christian beliefs.

Do you know that deciding to spy killed almost an entire generation? God led Israel from Egyptian captivity with a cloud by day and with fire by night but when they arrived at the Promised Land they basically told God, “We got this now God. We do not need you to lead us anymore; we will do things our way and it makes sense to us to send out spies to get an idea of the opposition we face”. These spies brought back discouragement, doubt, and defeat and that generation of Israelites ended up dying in the desert instead of prospering in the Promised Land.

Your great life plan will be a disaster instead of the abundant life God planned if you depend on “Spy intelligence” instead of God’s guidance. We all want to see the unknown ahead of us but God followers have to walk by faith; not by spies!

June 6, 2017 SINNERS SIN

[Menu](#) Sin is what we are by birth (We are by nature the children of wrath Eph 2:3). Sins are the evil we do in life (“all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” Romans 3:23). All sin is deadly (“The wages of sin is death”) yet people each day “listen to the lies of the snake” and believe they can eat the forbidden fruit without suffering consequences.

Sometimes we enjoy “second hand delight” in sins and ignore the coming penalty because “everyone is doing it” (“Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.” Romans 1:32)

Sometimes we justify our sins by “watching thru the window instead of looking in the mirror”- (“Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.” Romans 2:1). Isn't it interesting that the wrong we do is a “mistake” but if “they” do the same thing it is a bad sin!

And we should never forget there is a “Sin with No Cure”- 2Ch 36:16 “But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against his people, till there was no remedy”. Prov 29:1 “He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.”

June 7, 2017 CAN GOD USE YOU?

[Menu](#) If God used a Dove to tell Noah when to leave the ark then He can use you. If God used Ravens to feed the prophet Elijah then He can use you. If God used a sparrow to preach on worrying about worry and a fish to pay Peter's taxes then He can use you. If God preached to wayward preachers with a donkey and a rooster then He can use you.

God is not nearly as concerned about our abilities as He is about our availability. It is not what we have that God can use. It is about what a mighty God can do with an insignificant person completely yielded to His will. It is not the hammer that builds the house; it is the hand that holds the hammer that accomplishes the work.

God used old men to lead nations, young men to defeat giants, and a baby born in a manger to save the world. Women were the first to announce the resurrection, a young slave girl told her master where he could find a preacher who could cure his leprosy, and a business woman helped start the first European church. Many of God's best servants spent time in jail and He even used a murderer (Moses) to lead His chosen people out of bondage.

Can God use you? Just give Him your heart and life and stand back in awe as a Great God does great things with a yielded vessel.

June 13, 2017 **BEEN DEAD, DIDN'T LIKE IT**

[Menu](#) I drove up behind a car recently that had this bumper sticker, "I have been dead and I did not like it". I do not keep up with music or movies so this may have a meaning I am not aware of but it sure did speak to me. I wanted to ride up beside this car and yell out my window, "Me too. I have been dead and I like being alive much better".

Paul told the Ephesian Church that a person without Christ is dead in trespasses and sin. Been there, done that, and didn't like it. I didn't like the crowd I associated with when I was dead in sin. Christians have failed me and sometimes even hurt me but I sure would chose the church crowd over the bar crowd any day of the week and twice on Sunday!

I didn't like the life I lived when I was dead in sin. The fleeting pleasure I obtained from sin did not come close to compensating for the heartaches, hangovers, health problems, and misery I received or the grief I gave to others.

I did not like the consequences I faced when I was dead in sin. Being dead in sin is a sorry way to live and a bad way to die! Heaven and Hell are real.

I have been dead and I did not like it. Thank God I have been resurrected to a new life through faith in Jesus Christ.

June 14, 2017 **REST**

[Menu](#) "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28). This is one of the great Christ promises that is seldom claimed or enjoyed by His harried and ever busy followers. In fact, many churches pride themselves on the busyness of their schedule! Someone needs to reminds us again that it was the sin of being too busy to take time to spend time with God that eventually led to captivity for the nation of Israel (As long as the land lies desolate it shall rest; because it did not rest in your sabbaths, when ye dwelt upon it. Leviticus 26:35).

One of the problems in our society today is that many people do not know what it means to "rest". They equate "rest" with entertainment, shopping, or taking time from the busy schedule of work to take on an equally busy schedule of amusements.

The word "Rest" used by Jesus in this verse comes from a Greek word meaning to Release, to Relieve, or to Refresh. Those terms describe exactly what a person should look for when they seek meaningful rest. Real Rest comes when you are able to Release your stress, Relieve the normal responsibilities that press you down, and Refresh your soul and body so that you are renewed and re-energized.

Real rest does not necessarily come from laziness (doing nothing). Real rest is when you "reconnect" with God and with yourself. I pray you find some way to "rest" this week.

June 20, 2017 FINISH

[Menu](#) You should not stop until you finish but you need to finish with a flourish when you finish! Stopping makes you a loser but finishing should be a time of celebration and relaxation.

Six days God worked to bring the earth from darkness into light; from “without form and void” into order and life. But when God finished His work He took a day off for rest.

Jesus on the cross could finally say, “It is finished” as he brought redemption’s plan to a conclusion. Then His body “rested” in the grave until His world changing glorious resurrection!

Multitudes of people needed to hear the good news about the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ but there came a day when the Apostle Paul said, “I have finished my course” (I have completed the task God gave ME). Now it is time to contemplate crowns and pass the responsibility to someone else.

Here are a few “Finishing Guidelines”. First: Do not allow a rest stop to become a residence! Rest and refreshment are needed along the road of life but never let a pause become permanent. Second: If you do not know where you are going you will not know when you get there! You never finish if you do not know what you are trying to finish (We call this having a goal).

Do not finish until you finish but finish with a flourish and celebrate what God has done through your committed service.

June 21, 2017 4 TREES

[Menu](#) (Gen 2:9) “And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.”

When God placed man in the Garden of Eden He put 4 kinds of trees in the garden with him. These trees represent the 4 areas of a man’s life that need constant cultivation.

1) Pleasant to the Sight= Beauty and Culture. Man does not live by work alone. He needs some things that exist simply because they are pleasant to the senses. Sometimes God simply wants us to enjoy the beauty around us.

2) Good for Food= Physical Development. Man was originally a vegetarian so God provided exactly the tree he needed for proper nourishment. Man today needs to learn that God wants us to eat the right foods, in the right proportions. If we did, what an amazing difference that would make in our health and wellbeing.

3) Tree of Life= Spiritual Nourishment. When we begin our faith Relationship with God we are “born again” into a new life that daily needs nurturing from God’s provided resources.

4) Tree of knowledge of good and evil= Moral Discernment. The ability to recognize right from wrong is a big responsibility. Yet God put this tree in our paradise so we would learn to seek the good, avoid the bad, and become children of God instead of robots of religion.

From the beginning God was concerned that we develop in all areas of our life. How amazingly awesome!

June 27, 2017 UPSIDE DOWN SPOONS

[Menu](#) I did not have any sisters so my three brothers and I had to take turns washing dishes. I did not like washing dishes. When I married a wife I gave up washing dishes except in an emergency or sickness. My wife doesn't try to preach for me and I don't try to wash dishes for her!

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

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

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

If sin is continually defeating you today, maybe you're facing the wrong way. Repent (turn from sin) and watch in amazement as those bad things "drain" from your life.

June 28, 2017 RIGHT PEOPLE IN WRONG PLACES

[Menu](#) While I was in the military we had a few days of R & R in Hong Kong. I did not do "bars and brothels" so I was wandering through Hong Kong taking in the sights. While looking over a department store I noticed a wide stairway leading to what I assumed was another section of the store and went down to investigate. Imagine my surprise when I walked into the Hong Kong headquarters for the Chinese Communist Party dressed in an American Military Uniform! Wrong Place for me!

The Bible has several incidents where right people were in the wrong place. Peter's curiosity about Christ's trial led him to waver at the world's fire where he became a wrong witness in the wrong place at the wrong time with the wrong crowd saying the wrong thing which got the wrong look from Jesus!

Lot was tired of the life of a nomad so he moved his family into Sodom where he became an important person but in the process of "dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, he vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;" (2 Peter 2:8). Trying to find happiness in the wrong place cost him his wife and his wealth and brought him to a drunken incest cave.

Right people in wrong places seldom ends well. Your language, looks, leanings, and loves can be shaped by the environment you put yourself into. Remember that about your life choices.

July 4, 2017 THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

[Menu](#) “Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” are the cornerstones of the American Dream. Yet, never have so many had so much and enjoyed it so little.

I recently asked a class of well educated, moderately successful young married couples to tell me what they were pursuing in order to find happiness. A deadly, and eventually awkward, silence filled the room.

You cannot pursue happiness if you do not know what it is! Pleasurable activities satisfy fleeting desires but you can only binge watch so much Netflix before your eyes start hurting. Or you can only enjoy the ocean so long before your skin wrinkles or your bronzed body begins to worry about the “C” word!

I believe the “pursuit of happiness” as envisioned by the constitutional constructors is the ability to find, afford, and obtain the things necessary to live a peaceful prosperous life while having some control over the things that control you (No taxation without representation).

Most Americans now have the things our founding fathers thought we should pursue to obtain Happiness: Prosperity (I know everyone wants more) and Politicians to represent us (Do not make me go there!) yet they still have not attained contented happiness.

True Happiness only comes when you find a way to fill the deep hole in your heart which contains darkness and misery without God’s light and love. Life, liberty, and the Happiness you pursue are found in a genuine relationship with God. So get with God so you can really enjoy the blessings of this great country.

July 5, 2017 PREACHER PRAYING

[Menu](#) As you pray for the person who has been called to minister to your community by sharing God’s word, explaining God’s ways, and being an example of God’s love and mercy here are some prayer guidance guidelines.

Pray for the Lordship of Christ in his life and the Leadership of the Spirit in his decisions. Pray for his time management as he attempts to study for sermons while comforting the bereaved, confronting the misbehaving, and being the dad/husband he needs to be.

Pray for his personal health as he ministers to the sick and as he works long stress filled hours dealing with other people’s problems and the enemy’s persecutions. Pray for the wealth required for his family needs so his thoughts will be about blessings instead of bills.

Pray for him to triumph over personal temptations (he is a person!) and for a hedge of protection to surround his family (Remember that if Satan cannot defeat you he will attempt to defeat someone whose defeat will defeat you).

Pray for strength and wisdom as he deals with cliques and controlling people in the church; and as he attempts to motivate people into changing their life style and abandoning the principles and practices being taught and followed by the world all around them.

Pray for your preacher’s motivation, inspiration, perspiration, and dedication. He is a vital “cog” in your community and you should want him to be the best he can be!

July 11, 2017 MUCH INCREASE

[Menu](#) Why be satisfied with a hundred dollars if God wants to give you a thousand? Why pray little prayers when God said He is able to do “exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think,” (Ephesians 3:20). If faith as a grain of mustard seed can move a mountain (Luke 17:6) then why are you a daily debt mountain climber?

Twice in scripture the phrase “much increase” is used. These instances show us two reasons we struggle to survive instead of enjoying the abundant life.

A sinful life style steals our blessings and gives them to others: “Howbeit thou art just in all that is brought upon us; for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly: Behold, we are servants this day, and for the land that thou gavest unto our fathers to eat the fruit thereof and the good thereof; and it yieldeth MUCH INCREASE unto the kings whom thou hast set over us because of our sins: also they have dominion over our bodies, and over our cattle, and we are in great distress.” (Nehemiah 9:33, 36-37).

We must be willing to deal with the problems that come with plenty? “Where no oxen are, the crib is clean: but MUCH INCREASE is by the strength of the ox.” (Proverbs 14:4). Making money may mean you have to shovel the manure that comes with it!

Are you able to be blessed and are you willing to be blessed? If you are, then believe in big Blessings from a great God.

July 12, 2017 I AM IS

[Menu](#) When you come to faith in Christ your life is not about existing on earth until one day you meet God the Father in Heaven. Faith in Christ means you invite God into your body (Your body becomes the temple of the Holy Spirit) and your life (Paul said, “For to me to live is Christ.”)

When Moses asked God for His name God said tell them, “I AM hath sent you.” [Ex 3:13-14]. When Jesus ministered His messages centered on “I AM” [He used it 23 times in John's Gospel].

The main thing we need to understand out of this is that Jesus’ message was HIMSELF. He did not come to PREACH the Gospel; He IS the Gospel. He did not come to GIVE Bread; He said, I am the Bread. He did not come to SHED light; He said, I am the Light. He did not come to SHOW the door; He is the Door. He did not come to POINT the way; He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

God’s program always centers in Fellowship. Jesus did not come to establish a new Religion. He came to establish a new Relationship. He did not die for your sins so you could simply “make it to heaven one day”. His blood paid your sin debt so “as many as believe on his name, to them gave he power to become the sons of God” right now! Glory!

July 18, 2017 **DROPPING THE BALL**

[Menu](#) Someone recently said past generations of believers had “dropped the ball” resulting in the church becoming as worldly as it is today. I understand there may have been some “sorry saints” in the past but I think we should also consider a contributing factor may be that this generation was taught but they would not learn! “Son of man, thou dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house, which have eyes to see, and see not; they have ears to hear, and hear not: for they are a rebellious house.” (Ezekiel 12:2).

Over and over Jesus used the “having ears to hear they will not hear” illustration in His teaching to warn people that God was in their midst and they needed to pay attention. And over and over the disciples were more concerned with how to feed people than they were with the truth of Jesus’ teaching; and forty years later God’s judgment fell so hard on this “deaf” nation until it ceased to exist as a nation for nearly 2000 years!

Maybe worldly churches are the result of deaf ears instead of dropped balls. Maybe it is time for the church to stop and listen as well as praise and worship.-“They have not hearkened to my words, saith the LORD, which I sent unto them by my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them; but ye would not hear, saith the LORD.” (Jeremiah 29:19).

July 19, 2017 **BAD BIBLE BEHAVIOR**

[Menu](#) A knife in the hand of an accomplished chef as he slices and dices is an amazing thing to see. The same knife in the hand of a five year old in the middle of a kindergarten class is horrible to contemplate.

In the same way, scripture can be dangerous when wielded wrongly. The Devil quoted scripture as the basis of all three of the temptations he used seeking to dissuade Jesus from carrying out His God given ministry and then going to the cross as redemption for mankind. All of the scriptures Satan used made “sense” and could easily “justify” the actions Satan desired but Jesus knew they were being applied incorrectly.

In the handling of the “sharp two edged sword of Scripture” (Heb 4:12) we need to see the content, know the context, and seek God’s guidance in the correct application of the rules and guidelines given. Randomly picked scriptures can be used to justify almost anything we want to think or do but correctly applied scriptures always fits God’s personality, plans, and promises.

The good news about studying scripture is that the one who inspired the writing of scriptural truths is also the one who instructs a believer in the interpretation of those truths- “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth” (John 16:13). Let this master “swordsmen” guide you into correctly and confidently using scripture to bless and build instead of justifying bad beliefs and behavior.

July 25, 2017 **THE "GOD CARD"**

[Menu](#) Playing the "God card" does not always produce a win. Sometimes being in jail brings a person to their senses and shows them they need to change their life. But when they try to use "sudden found religion" as a get out of jail free card they find actions can be forgiven but still carry consequences.

In First Kings (2:28-34) a man called Joab ran to the altar seeking to "hide behind God" and escape the death penalty. He had no qualms about killing others who begged for mercy. Nor did he have any discomfort about betraying God's anointed leader. But when his sentence of death was handed down he immediately ran to the altar looking for safety (not a savior). That is when Joab found government is guided by mandates; not mercy. He was dragged from the altar and his death sentence was carried out. Joab learned that the wrong we do has consequences that even the "God card" does not appease.

God covered the nakedness of Adam and Eve's sin with a blood sacrifice but they were still exiled from the Garden and had to earn their living by the sweat of their brows. A captured bank robber can have his sins forgiven and become a child of God but he will be a jailed child of God!

God's forgiveness of our sin debt does not alleviate our social debt. So determine to walk with God in joy so you will not need to cry to God from jail.

July 26, 2017 **DECEIVING YOURSELF**

[Menu](#) It is bad to be fooled. It is worst when you are the one fooling yourself. That is why it is important to look at ourselves in the mirror sometimes and see if we are deceiving ourselves.

You are deceiving yourself if sermons you hear never translate into the life you live- "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (James 1:22).

You are deceiving yourself when you rejoice in your full house but God mourns at your empty heart "For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself" (Galatians 6:3).

You are deceiving yourself if you think you can "talk trash" and still be considered a truth speaker- "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Corinthians 15:33). "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridled not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain" (James 1:26).

You are deceiving yourself if you think you will be the one who "gets by with it"- "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7).

People deceive themselves into believing they are "good enough" and their wrong is right. God calls them to come to the truth so the truth can set them free. Looking in the mirror is not easy but it is better than walking in public with dirt on your face.

August 1, 2017 **MAKE OTHERS GREATER**

[Menu](#) Sometimes when I write articles the “song” is better than the “singer”. By this I mean that the meaning of the article is much better than my conveying of the message of the article. As a writer I am abundantly aware that a good message reaches your mind but a great message touches your heart and stirs you to actions or emotional growth.

Great writing (like great songs) should resonate deep within us. This “light bulb moment” is shown in the fact that almost every successful person will point to a time in their life when someone said or taught something to them which was so good until it became a guiding practice or energizing principle for their success.

A statement by a South Carolina Teacher of the Year when I was a young teenager resonated in my life and became a guiding principle for me- “I want to teach in such a way until my pupils want to so eagerly learn until they eventually go far far beyond me.” Later I learned that Jesus said it like this, “The greatest of all shall be servant of all” [You become the best by helping others be their best]. This principle of “make others greater” became the foundation stone of most of what I do.

So be someone for someone today. Stop looking for accolades and begin looking for opportunities. Sing your life song so well until others start humming along; and become better because of the melody.

August 2, 2017 **WRONG COORDINATES**

[Menu](#) During the Viet Nam war we were firing ground support for some soldiers. Their spotter gave us the coordinates to fire our first shell and we waited for his confirmation to fire the remaining shells. After a length of time the spotter told us to go ahead and fire. We told him we'd already done so!!! Soon he came back with different coordinates and we were able to complete our mission. We never found out where, or on whom, that first shell landed.

That's the way many people go through life; listening to wrong information and "accidentally" harming many people. Fake News, Internet intrigue, and agenda oriented actors and activists (From all spectrums of society) give you “coordinates” and tell you to fire away. More often than not, however, their information becomes “Oops. Sorry about the innocent people we may have caused you to hurt.”

Christians are supposed to be guided by God’s truth; not their own preferences or prejudices. People brought Jesus all kind of “rumors” and gossip but He always sought to learn the truth and the LESSON of the matter (“those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Luke 13:4-5).

Giving wrong information can sometimes do much wrong; and that is just plain wrong!

August 8, 2017 **DIRTY DIAPER DISCARDS**

[Menu](#) The Apostle Peter tell us a growing Christian needs to discard the “dirty diapers” that smell up his testimony and, instead, seek things that will nourish and grow him into “big boy pants”- “Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:” (1 Peter 2:1-2).

Diapers on a baby are necessary but when they get nasty they turn grandmother’s sweet bundle of sugar into “Let’s give you back to mother for a while”! In the same way some character traits can develop in young Christians which make people want to avoid them instead of embrace them and they need to be discarded.

Malice means deliberate depravity. The Greek word can be translated “malignity” (think bitterness or bad thoughts eating at your soul). Guile means deliberate deceit. You cannot be trusted because you always have a hidden agenda.

Hypocrisies (where we get our English word “actor”) are pretenses of a piety that exist in public but not in private. Envy is being jealous of other’s blessings and coveting other’s belongings. Evil speakings are literally “slanders”. It is wrong words spoken with the wrong attitude, to accomplish a wrong goal. [Note that these three are plural. They have many manifestations].

Does your Christian life have the sweet savor of Christ (2Co 2:15) or do you need a diaper change?

August 9, 2017 **OVERSIGHT**

[Menu](#) Sometimes Pastors get so busy telling people who they need to be until they overlook the good that is going on in who they already are! A Pastor who has just finished “raking his congregation over the coals” for their lazy and uncommitted discipleship needs to consider that his congregation may have some dedicated and hardworking people he has overlooked (as he waits on his volunteer Treasurer to give him his weekly salary collected by volunteer ushers from hard working people who struggle with weekly bills but believe giving God’s His portion is important).

Sometimes a Pastor is so busy studying for a “you really told them” sermon until he overlooks the numerous volunteer Bible Study teachers in his church who week after week prepare and teach growth enhancing lessons to their students who voluntarily show up each week to learn how to become better followers of Christ.

Because babies are not crying and toddlers are not climbing over pews during his sermon a Pastor can overlook the fact that volunteer nursery and toddler workers miss the blessing of weekly worship in order to change dirty diapers and corral endless energy toddlers. And because the music, sound, and slides work seamlessly it is easy to overlook the media workers and the volunteer musicians and choir members.

Pastors, consider complimenting your congregation for the good they do this week as well as condemning them for their failures? After all, they are the ones who make you look good!

August 15, 2017 **STATIC**

[Menu](#) I once attended a service where the sound system was very bad. Circumstances dictated that I sit toward the back of the building and I could understand very little of what was said. I thought, "This is one of the worst services I have ever attended". Another minister, who was able to sit close to the front where he could hear everything, said it was one of the best services he had ever experienced!!

This is a good illustration of why some people come to Church and greatly enjoy the service while others come and get little out of it. They hear the words coming out of the preacher's mouth but they do not grasp the meaning or importance of what is being said.

There are many things that produce "static" in our listening experience. "Static" can come from Distractions (People, phones, pain, problems, places to eat), Distance (your feelings of isolation, anger, or loneliness wall you in), or Doubt (about God's willingness to help you or the church's concern for you). And a "static" church experience on Sunday will often result in people giving static about Church on Monday!

Paul said, "The Preaching of the Cross is foolishness to them that perish but the power of God to those that believe" (1Cor 1:18). Same sermon but some heard "static" while others heard from the Savior. What will you hear?

August 16, 2017 **FOUR "T" PARENTS**

[Menu](#) Parents have a tough job and need all the prayers and help they can get. Here are four principles to help in raising the precious children God has entrusted to your care.

A) TETHER (Anchor) THEM- "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" (2 Timothy 3:15). Life is the manifestation of character. Character is determined by decisions. Decisions are based on values. Values are built on Foundations. Foundation is established by Life Inputs (family, friends, and society). And foundation determines how people stand up to life's storms.

B) TRAIN THEM- Proverbs 22:6 in the Hebrew reads like this "Train up a child in the way he should develop in keeping with his individual gifts and character inclinations and when he is old he will not depart from it". Parents need to recognize the God given abilities and inclinations of their children and then train them to use those talents to build a life based on who they are as well as what they do.

C) TOUCH THEM- Physically with hugs of appreciation and mentally with family discussions about vital issues (Make them use their minds as well as their thumbs!)

D) TRUST THEM- "Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother" (Psalms 131:2). Give them wings as well as roots. Encourage them to develop into people of courage and confidence so that one day they can be a great parent to your grandchildren!

With God's help you can be successful as a parent. My prayers are with you.

August 22, 2017 NO COMPASSION

[Menu](#) It had to be one of the most heart wrenching times in the history of our Eternal God; the day God gave His people over to a king who would bring murder and mayhem and have No Compassion on the horrible circumstances they were going through.

“The LORD God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because HE (God) HAD COMPASSION ON HIS PEOPLE, and on his dwelling place: But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against his people, TILL THERE WAS NO REMEDY. Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and HAD NO COMPASSION upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age: he gave them all into his hand” (2 Chronicles 36:15-17).

It is an awful time when people reject God’s message and mercy to the place that the God of compassion has to turn them over to the death and destruction of a king with no compassion. But, like a doctor who has sent medicine and medics to a man with an infected leg (who each time refused their help), there comes a time the doctor must say, “If you would have listened to me you would be fine but you refused and now your gangrene leg must come off”

It is an awful thing when all compassion must turn you over to no compassion. But that decision is based on your decision!

August 23, 2017 FOOLISH THINGS

[Menu](#) Sometimes a “foolish” thing is good- “For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (1 Cor 1:21).

Most of the time, however, a foolish thing is a foolish thing. Here are some examples:

- 1) It is foolish to walk a Wicked Way with no regard for God: “The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. Corrupt are they, and have done abominable iniquity: there is none that doeth good.” (Psalms 53:1).
- 2) It is foolish to pretend to be a friend and then gossip about others behind their back: “He that hideth hatred with lying lips, and he that uttereth a slander, is a fool” (Proverbs 10:18).
- 3) It is foolish to laugh at Sin and think it is not serious: “Fools make a mock at sin: but among the righteous there is favor” (Proverbs 14:9).
- 4) It is foolish to despise parental guidance: “A fool despiseth his father's instruction: but he that regardeth reproof is prudent” (Proverbs 15:5).
- 5) It is foolish to stir the pot of contention: “It is an honor for a man to cease from strife: but every fool will be meddling” (Proverbs 20:3).
- 6) It is foolish to trust that your plan is better than God’s plan: “He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered” (Proverbs 28:26).

The Foolish mistakes we make; make us. Be wise in your ways.

August 29, 2017 WHEN LESS IS MORE

[Menu](#) In the words of Clint Eastwood, "A man has to know his limitations!" A profound statement that has spiritual implications. Multitudes of people struggle in their walk with God because they think they are supposed to do everything that needs to be done. Unwilling to accept the fact that they are just one part of the body of Christ (the Church) they attempt to do everything and end up exhausted and discouraged.

Look at these examples of good things that great spiritual leaders did not do:

1. John the Baptist did no miracles- "Many resorted unto Christ, and said, John did no miracle: but all things that John spoke of you were true" (John 10:41).
2. Jesus did no Baptizing- "When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,)" (John 4:1-2).

It is a great moment in your life when you joyfully accept God's plan and purpose for YOUR life. Learning your limitations gives you tremendous potential to do what you are supposed to do instead of living with the frustration and failure of attempting things that God did not plan for you to accomplish anyway.

When everyone knows their place and does their part then the Christian life is a joy to live and a wonder to behold. Do what you can, where you are, with what you have and rejoice in the fact that sometimes you do more when you do less.

August 30, 2017 HATRED HARM

[Menu](#) "But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes" (1 John 2:11).

We all know that hatred destroys relationships with others ("Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer:" 1 John 3:15) and with God ("If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar:" 1John 4:20). But did you know that hatred harms you also?

Hatred is a hard master. It impacts your health, your attitude, and your joy. It generates bitterness and depression ("walketh in darkness") while causing us to stumble, instead of succeed, in life ("knoweth not whither he goeth").

But hatred does something even worse- it brings you into blindness ("because that darkness hath blinded his eyes"). In a cave in the Smoky Mountains are some blind trout. When people began using the cave they thought it would be good to stock it with trout. Later they found trout who live in the darkness of a cave all the time actually lose their sight.

When a person hugs hatred to his heart he is in danger of becoming like these trout; living in darkness until darkness changes who they are and how they see. How utterly horrible to one day find you have allowed the darkness of hatred to blind your eyes for so long until you can no longer see God's light!

September 5, 2017 MAN AND WOMAN

[Menu](#) Did you know that God called Adam and Eve simply “Man and Woman”? Adam in Hebrew is simply the word “man”. God always called man “man” until he decided to find an helpmate for him and then the Bible shifted to using the word “Adam” (Gen 2:19) because they were to “be fruitful and multiply” and new people would require new name designations.

God called Eve “Woman” because she was the first to be created from another human. It was Adam who began calling her Eve after the fall in the Garden because she would now be the first in creating humankind- “And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living” (Genesis 3:20).

Eve means “beginning” and is probably derived from evening. We think the day begins at daybreak but God’s day begins at evening (Remember, there was darkness and then God brought forth light)- “And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day” (Genesis 1:5).

No matter the reason for your name the Good News is that God “knows His sheep by name” (John 10:3). You are not just a “man or woman” to God. God knows who YOU are and what you need and He has built a whole plan around the special person He created you to be- Glory!

September 6, 2017 BETWEEN DUST BECOMING DUST

[Menu](#) Man was created from the dust (Gen 2:7) and one day “the dust shall return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it” (Ecclesiastes 12:7). In between dust becoming dust is this thing called life. What you do during your “dust life” and where you go when dust goes back to dust are the important issues.

Finances are important but as far as God is concerned you leave this life in the same financial state in which you entered this life: “We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out” (1 Timothy 6:7).

Life is sometimes tough and seems to have more dirt than dust but how you handle dust storms here helps determine what you get up there- “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him” (James 1:12).

Most important of all you should consider that when life ends and the dust settles you will meet God with mud on your face or joy in your heart- “them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt” (Daniel 12:2).

You are born, you live, and you die; dust goes back to dust. Just be mindful that the “between” is what determines the after.

September 12, 2017 ONESIPHORUS FRIEND

[Menu](#) “The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain: But, when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me. The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day: and in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus, thou knowest very well” (2 Tim 1:16-18).

Death for Paul waits just around the Corner. As he looks forward to his coronation day in Heaven he also looks back at people who have impacted him. One of the friends he fondly remembers is a man called Onesiphorus. As Paul describes Onesiphorus he gives us some good guidelines for building friendships in our own life.

A Friend refreshes you. The friendship of Onesiphorus brought new energy and enthusiasm to Paul’s life and ministry. Just being together helped both parties.

A Friend is not ashamed of your struggles (even if they are “chains”). A true friend is the first to come, and the last to leave, when you have problems.

A Friend WANTS to be with you. When Onesiphorus visited Rome and Ephesus he made it his business to find Paul. Friends joy in each other’s company.

Friends pray for one another and build up each other. Each wants the other to prosper and each seeks ways to help (minister to) the other.

Friendship makes each friend a better person. Make it your goal to find someone you can be an “Onesiphorus Friend” to this week.

September 13, 2017 PERFECT PEACE

[Menu](#) “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee” Isa 26:3.

We live in a world of storms and strife. Nature is attacking us with hurricanes, wildfires, and earthquakes. Society screams at us about left and right violence, about the government’s ineptitude to do anything about anything, and about families all around us breaking apart. And we cannot do something as simple as find our car keys! Wouldn't it be great if there was a way to face all of life's circumstances with peace and stability?

The Hebrew word for “Perfect Peace” in our opening verse is actually “Peace Peace”. It is such a wonderful condition until the writer finds no other adjective to describe it except the very word itself! What could bring about such confidence and comfort?

Use the letters of Peace to show how such a peace is produced. “P” is for the Promises of God we cling to in all of life’s circumstances. “E” means God is everywhere so there is nowhere we go that God is not there with us! “A” reminds us that God’s love and care is not for a select few but for All. “C” is for the Care of God and reminds us that God numbers the hairs of our head and knows when even a sparrow falls to the ground. “E” stands for Eternal and helps us realize that God can be counted on now and forever.

Perfect Peace, the dream of all; the reality of those who continually rest in God’s love and care.

September 19, 2017 PEACE OF GOD

[Menu](#) Surprisingly, the Phrase “peace of God” is used only twice in the Bible. Once it assures us God will “guard our gates” (“And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep (guard) your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:7) and once it exhorts us to let God’s Peace “Stabilize our Heart” (“And let the peace of God rule in your hearts” Col 3:15).

We can confidently face life’s storms because God stations His Peace as a guard at our gates to keep our emotions (heart) and thoughts (mind) secure. This same Peace then regulates our actions because of our stabilizing trust in God’s protection and plan for our life (Rom 8:28).

Note that the “peace of God” was not tied to possessing possessions because the very possession of possessions brings anxiety. It was not the foolish peace of ignoring the realities of life. And it is certainly not a drug or drink induced haze that insulates our mind from the harsh reality of the world surrounding us.

The “Peace of God” comes when a person’s mind settles down into a state of complete confidence in the actions and attributes of God. We allow the Peace of God to guard our gates against doubt and disbelief and to stabilize our hearts with complete confidence in God’s love and care. The Joy of such a Peace is that it is not based on the absence of disturbance but on the presence of the Divine God!

September 20, 2017 IF THE WIND HAD NOT WON

[Menu](#) What do you think would have happened if the “wind had not won” when Peter walked on water- “When Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and began to sink” (Matthew 14:29-30).

What would have happened if Peter had ignored the wind and he and Jesus had walked on water back to the boat? Would Jesus have been diminished in the eyes of the Disciples? (This is the only place [until post resurrection] all the Disciples are recorded worshipping Jesus and saying, “Of a truth thou art the Son of God”). Would the world have changed because two people were now “water walkers”?

Would Peter’s status have been overly amplified? “Look at me; I can walk on water. What? You mean you can’t?” (Are you equipped to be successful with success? Sometimes lottery winners do not end up life winners).

Would the other disciples have followed Peter’s example or would they have experienced jealousy, envy, or discouragement about their ability? (How will success impact those around you? The fame of the famous sometimes becomes a fence).

Most of us have had times when “the wind won”. Do not let a moment of doubt defeat you. Keep growing in the Grace and Knowledge of Christ so the next time you will have the faith to defeat boisterous winds and the life preparation to successfully live a “walk on water” life.

September 26, 2017 HOSE HANKY

[Menu](#) Several years ago, before air conditioners were common in churches, a pastor and his family were driving to Church. Heat and humidity had already begun to cause perspiration to pour with every movement. Just as he got ready to leave the car the Pastor reached over into the seat, grabbed his wadded up handkerchief, put it into his coat pocket, and proceeded into church.

The pastor noticed people looking at him in an unusual way but he thought it was just one of those days. Soon after his sermon began he felt the need to wipe the perspiration from his brow. He reached into his pocket for his handkerchief and began to wipe his face. As soon as he did he realized he had accidentally picked up his wife's panty hose instead of his handkerchief! Now he knew why people looked at him so strangely as he walked around with a pair of women's hose hanging from his pocket!

Most of us face some hot situations in life. Just make sure what you pick up to help your situation does not make a hot situation even hotter! Be careful about the advice you get (and give!). Do not allow television personalities, Facebook Friends, or the "water cooler crowd" to cause you to pick up things that will end up embarrassing you more than helping you. Stick to the Word of God and you will be "cool" even in hot situations.

September 27, 2017 JAILBIRD BELIEF

[Menu](#) Early in my Christian life a preacher asked me an important question, "What do you believe in strongly enough until you would go to jail rather than betray that belief?" For me, that question moved Christianity from "pie in the sky" praise and worship into "denying yourself, taking up your cross, and following Jesus".

The Bible has many examples of men who had "Jailbird Belief": Joseph went to Jail over a purity principle. Daniel went to Jail (lion's den) over a prayer principle. The Apostles went to Jail over a preaching principle. And Paul went to Jail over Personal soul winning of a demon possessed lady. Biblical God followers believed there were some things worth going to jail for.

I value peace as much as anyone but I would not willingly violate God given precepts, or validate man devised principles, just to avoid jail. I would not (willingly) go to jail to protect ever changing Politically Correct principles but I would go to jail rather than put those PC principles above the principles taught in God's Word- "We ought to obey God rather than men".

A Prophet once asked this question, "If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses?" (Jer 12:5). I ask it like this, "If you are not willing to go to church WITH God; would you be willing to go to Jail FOR God?" Think about it.

October 3, 2017 DEER DROUGHT

[Menu](#) As the hart (deer) panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. (Psalms 42:1).

Are you thirsty for God? Imagine a deer fleeing for its life on a hot summer day. Finally the deer escapes the pursuit and comes upon a cool stream of water. Then think of how that deer would long to push its muzzle under the water and lap up the cool life giving water of the stream. That is the way David described the desire of his soul for God- a longing, life giving encounter that replenished his body, refreshed his soul, and met the greatest need of his life.

Imagine that deer wandering off to find food and a quiet place to rest. Soon, however, the thirst returns and the deer pants again for the refreshment and renewal of the water brook. In the same way life must be lived and we cannot spend all our time in a designated worship place "lounging by the pool" of God's water. But, like the deer, the drought in our soul should continually draw us back to partake of the divine living waters.

If your life is dry and disappointing then I encourage you to seek God and His living water-"O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is;" (Psalms 63:1).

October 4, 2017 HEART CLEANERS

[Menu](#) My brother once had work done on an electrical problem with his heart. Before the heart work the doctors wanted to check for blockages. When he came out to talk with the family he said they had found a fifty percent blockage in one artery but it was nothing to worry about. When my sister-in-law asked if there was anything that could be done to shrink the blockage the doctor said three things would help- "Eat like a rabbit, run like a horse, and think like a monk"

Sometimes Christians find themselves with a spiritual heart problem and they wonder what they can do to help their situation. This doctor's advice is worth considering.

"Eat like a rabbit" means to eat the proper food as you daily take in the word of God instead of the garbage of the world. "Run like a horse" refers to daily spiritual exercise such as witnessing about, walking with, and working for God. "Think like a monk" means to live at peace in your mind. Daily entering into God's presence by prayer and constantly trusting God's love in any circumstance brings the peace of God to the child of God.

If you feel spiritually lukewarm or you have lost your spiritual energy then something may be blocking your relationship with God. Correcting your problem may be as simple as eating right, exercising regularly, and entering God's Holy Place each day. Try it and see the heart changing difference it will make.

October 10, 2017 **PIE FLAGS**

[Menu](#) I thought it was a really good idea. Whenever we had a death in the community the local Mennonite group would bring food to the home of the deceased. Mennonites 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 attach a little flag with the name of the pie to a toothpick and put it in the middle of the pie. It made everything go a lot quicker at the dessert table when people could tell at a glance what type of pie they were about to cut.

It might be interesting if this “Pie Flag” principle were applied to the church world. Some of the “looks good on the outside Church Pies” might curb your appetite if their “pie flag” declared they were actually sour grape pies or mud pies which dripped discontent or gossip on everyone who got close to them! But what a joy it would be if you discovered the pie with the plain crust was actually filled with love, joy, and faith.

If your family and friends were to put a “Pie Flag” label on you what would it say? (Like our “Fruit Flags”: “By their fruit you shall know them”). Would your “Pie Flag” describe you as someone whom everyone would desire or would it embarrass you beyond words?

October 11, 2017 **Where are thy gods?**

[Menu](#) Do you remember how it was on Nine-Eleven? A Christian Radio Station received an unusual request on Tuesday, September 11, 2001. The local Rock and Roll Station in town was in a dilemma. After the terrorist attack they just knew in their heart that they should not be playing songs that blasphemed the name of God, glorified drug use, and continually used sexual innuendoes. They thought about using some “Christian Rock” but even that did not feel right. Finally, they called the local Christian Station and requested some hymns that told of God’s love and care.

The week before the terrorist attack several school boards rejected the idea of having prayer before ball games because it might “offend” someone. After the attack prayer was a vital part of almost all public activities. Before the attack, people thought sports heroes and sporting events more important than Sunday Church. After the attack the sport’s world cancelled many of its games in recognition of how insignificant they really were.

In light of all this one cannot help but consider God’s question for Israel. “You have turned your back unto me, and not your face and made you gods of your choosing. **But where are thy gods that thou hast made thee? Let them arise, if they can save thee in the time of thy trouble:”** (Jer 2:27-28).

Where, indeed, are thy “gods” in the time of trouble? Why then do you turn your back on God and serve them in the sunshine?

October 17, 2017 TRIUMPHANT OVER TROUBLE

[Menu](#) The trouble with trouble is that it is troubling! Trouble is a common visitor (“Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble” Job 14:1) but an unwanted guest (“We looked for peace, but no good came; and for a time of health, and behold trouble!” Jeremiah 8:15). How can we thrive instead of just survive when Trouble decides to visit us?

Sometimes trouble comes because we are human. Bad things happen to good as well as bad people (“it rains on the just and on the unjust” Matt 5:45 and “time and chance happen to all men” Ecc 9:11). Most of the time, however, trouble can be traced to wrong decisions, wrong companions, or wrong activities.

If it is a “common to all men trouble” learn to rely on and rest in God (“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” Ps 46:1). If trouble originated from wrong actions or attitudes then repent of the wrong you have done and ask God to forgive you and release you from the trouble produced turmoil (“When they in their trouble did turn unto the LORD God of Israel, and sought him, he was found of them” 2Chron 15:4).

God has promised us we can be triumphant in trouble (“Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me” Ps 50:15). Claim that promise today!

October 18, 2017 BUBBLE GUM BOXES

[Menu](#) As the little girl entered the store she accidentally stepped in a glob of bubble gum on the sidewalk. While her mom purchased an item she felt her foot sticking and promptly began wiping the gum off her shoe onto the carpet.

When she left the store the manager saw the mess on the floor and got someone to clean it up. Getting that bubble gum up was pretty difficult and left a wet slick place on the carpet. Not wanting anyone to get hurt, the manager used what he had available at the time and put a box on each side of the spot and then bridged across those boxes with a box on top.

Shortly after this a man came to the store to purchase something. When he came to the counter to pay for his purchase he ignored the entire length of available counter, walked up to the boxes, moved them out of the way, and stood in the wet spot to pay for his purchase! The manager just stood there in amazement.

God is aware of the mess sin causes in a person’s life. He erects barriers (sermons, scripture, and the Holy Spirit’s pricking of our conscience) to tell us to avoid those spots. Guess what mankind does when he comes to the wide open counter of life with boxes blocking the one area God wants him to avoid?

And that, my friends, is the primary reason Jesus came and Churches exist- To seek and to save “Box Movers”.

October 24, 2017 GOD'S GOOD PLEASURE

[Menu](#) The primary desire of every heart should be to make God happy. Several times in scripture we are told about things that give God "Good Pleasure" (Make Him Happy!). These are things we want to incorporate into our life.

It makes God happy when we depend on His Protection: Ps 51:18 Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem.

It makes God happy when we recognize and receive God's Provision for a better life: Lu 12:32 Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

It makes God happy when we realize God loves us and has predestined us to be part of His family: Eph 1:5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

It makes God happy when we accept God's plan and purpose for our life based on His great wisdom instead of our feeble efforts: Eph 1:9 Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:

It makes God happy when we do what we do because God wills it and we depend on His power to work it: Php 2:13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of [his] good pleasure.

Make God happy this week by being part of His "Good Pleasure".

October 25, 2017 BREAKING GOD'S HEART

[Menu](#) Sometimes children break their parent's heart! If the parent did not care about the child's actions or if they were not concerned about the consequences to the child they could just shrug it off but knowing what is coming down the road unless something changes brings groaning and grief beyond words. It is not lack of love but the depth of love that makes this heart break so heart breaking.

Now imagine this same scenario being played out by people who are loved with the tremendous depth of God's love. I have no idea how even God survives the heart wrenching pain He must suffer each day as people reject His Son and disregard His Love.

How it must hurt God when our life choices limit God's ability to bless us with the abundant life He longs for us to have (They turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel. Psalms 78:41). And what a heart break it must be when our trash talk and trash living cause God to say "Go to your room" instead of come walk with me (Ye have not hearkened unto me, saith the LORD; that ye might provoke me to anger with the works of your hands to your own hurt. Jeremiah 25:7).

So you have a choice today; you can bask in God's love or make decisions that break His heart. Just be aware that even a child knows it is not a good thing when you "cross that line" and a parent's love must be expressed in anger!

October 31, 2017 LET THE AIR IN

[Menu](#) I could write something negative about “devil’s day” (Halloween) when the emissaries of evil (witches, ghost, demons) are celebrated but I decided to give you a positive point instead. I would rather give God His Glory than the devil his due!

The lovely Princess Paula and I usually keep a two and a half gallon container of water in our refrigerator. We use it to fill small containers with fresh water. It occupies less space and is slightly less expensive than buying bottled water (When you live on social security pennies are important).

This container has a pull faucet on its front which allows us to easily obtain water. When we first purchased a container the water came out slowly and was a little bit aggravating.

I am a man so naturally I did not read the directions printed on the container! One day while getting some water I happened to glance at the directions and noticed that I was supposed to punch a small hole in the top of the container so air could come into the container as the water came out the faucet. Boy, what a difference that little hole made!

If the Living Water of God’s Blessings are trickling into your life instead of abundantly flowing then you might need to find what is blocking the “air” of the Holy Spirit from filling your soul and get it out of the way. It could be something as simple as playing with the devil instead of walking with God!

November 1, 2017 CHRISTIAN CITIZENS

[Menu](#) “The best contribution anyone can make to meet the needs of this world is to live a Christian life, build a Christian home, and radiate the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ”. [Adapted from a quote by John Stott in “Basic Christianity”]

How succinctly he describes the three main duties of a Christian who wants to be a good citizen.

1) **Live a Christian Life**- Can you think of a greater need in society today than pure and practical Christian living? Christians are the salt of the earth and if the “salt has lost its savor” Jesus said it was “good for nothing but to be trodden under the foot of men”! (Does that possibly explain the lack of influence by Christians in today’s society?)

2) **Build a Christian Home**- Society increasingly believes it is the duty of the government or of schools to raise children correctly. Christians know, however, that children are a heritage of the Lord and Christian parents are responsible for training them in the way they should go. The principles and practices taught in the Christian home are foundation stones for life.

3) **Share the Gospel Light**- Christian Citizens should not simply make the world better; we must make it brighter! A nation darkened by division, drugs, and degenerate living needs God’s light to shine and show them help, and hope, and heaven.

Christian citizens are in this world but not of this world. They do not just watch the news and complain; they live for Christ and make a difference.

November 7, 2017 PRAYER BARRIERS

[Menu](#) “Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.” (Mark 11:24)

Can this verse really be in scripture? Is it possible that God really WANTS to answer our prayers? The answer, of course, is that, like any loving Father, God wants the very best for His children and He delights in granting them their proper requests. (The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers 1 Pet 3:12).

Why then do so many Christians pray so much and get so few results? The answer lies in recognizing the three major barriers to consistently answered prayer:

- -the Iniquity in our Heart- (Psa 66:18) “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me”. Sin in our life breaks our fellowship with God and blocks our prayer line.
- -the Ignorance in our Mind- We do not know HOW to ask or WHAT to ask or even WHEN to ask. Like the disciples we need to say, “Lord, Teach us to Pray”.
- -the Infirmities of our Body- Sometimes you just don’t feel like praying (remember the disciples slept while Jesus prayed). Praying is very hard work so many are too lazy to pray and “we have not because we ask not” (James 4:2).

If few of your prayers are answered, it may be because you beg and hope instead of asking, believing, and receiving.

November 8, 2017 REALITY JESUS

[Menu](#) Most people think Jesus was a “hulky hero” wandering around righting wrongs and being adored by almost everyone. Scriptural reality paints a very different picture. [Scripture below is taken from Isaiah 53]

Jesus was not a good looking handsome dude whom all the girls wanted to date- “he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.”

Jesus was not the “life of the party” that everyone wanted to know and “hang” with. Nor was He insulated from heartache and pain- “He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief”.

Jesus was misunderstood by His family- (“neither did his brethren believe in him”- John 7:5) and judged by the establishment to be worthy of God’s anger and wrath- “we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted”.

And, instead of supporting Him, His disciples and the very people He was soon to die for abandoned Him or cried “crucify Him”- “we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not”

The reality is “He came unto his own, and his own received him not BUT (New Radical Reality) as many as received Him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name” (John 1:11-12). Make that your life changing reality today!

November 14, 2017

November 14, 2017 BUSHEL BELIEVERS

[Menu](#) Far too many Christians have become “bushel believers” (No man, when he hath lighted a candle, putteth it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light. Luke 11:33). They hide the light of their relationship with God under the “bushel” of busyness or bashfulness as if their Christianity is a private personal possession instead of a world changing, God revealing, lifestyle.

The world has convinced us that it is proper to talk about sexual exploits or sleazy gossip but we must never mention our private religious convictions. The world finds it “entertaining” for a person to go on national TV and reveal they are having an extramarital affair but the host would cringe with embarrassment if they instead revealed that they daily prayed for the salvation of their wife and children.

Jesus said the light of believers was supposed to shine from the mountain tops; not hide under bushel baskets. This does not mean we blind or burn people by sticking our candle into their face but it does mean the world will walk in darkness if our light is hidden under the bushel of busyness or bashfulness.

Christians can choose to be politically correct or biblically obedient with their light. But what a sad day it will be for “bushel believers” when they face the blinding light of a righteous God and try to explain the devouring darkness that enveloped this sin cursed world while they covered under cover.

November 15, 2017 VALUE OF PRAISE

[Menu](#) “But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel” (Psa 22:3). The amazing truth of this statement is that it is found in a Psalm describing the agony of crucifixion and beginning with the desperate cry “My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?” What a tremendous insight into the value and place of Praise in the tragedies as well as triumphs of life.

When you begin focusing on Praise instead of Problems then it changes a melancholy heart into a merry heart. This “Merry Heart” helps your health (Prov 17:22 “A merry heart doeth good like a medicine”), improves your looks (Prov 15:13 “A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance”), and elevates your attitude (Prov 15:15 “He that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast”).

Praise also pleases God (1Thess 5:18 “In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you”) and glorifies God (Ps 50:23 “Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God”).

The value of Praise is that it is life changing, God glorifying, and the beginning of conquering your most difficult circumstances. That is why you should make it your business today to Praise the Lord; even when you, like Jesus on the cross, have to begin some of your praise by asking, “My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

November 21, 2017 LIGHT PRAISERS

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

This Thanksgiving season rejoice that you are chosen by God to be His special treasure. He loved you when you were unlovable and He died for you when you were marred by sin, motivated by selfish desires, and mired in misery's mud. In spite of this, God chose you as His own "peculiar people" and redeemed you from sin's power and penalty so you could "show forth the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light".

Jesus did not die for you so you could live on an isolated island until one day you finally ascended to Heaven. He redeemed you from the darkness and despair of sin so the light of your praise could shine: 1) In Society: A Chosen generation, 2) In "Religion"- a royal priesthood. 3) In the World- a holy nation, and 4) in your daily life- a peculiar people. God did something amazing in you so His praise could shine out of you!

Be "Peculiar" today! Praise God for calling you out of darkness into His marvelous light. It might just be the lighthouse some "darkness dweller" is desperately seeking in order to avoid the shipwreck of sin.

November 22, 2017 GRATITUDE

[Menu](#) Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God (Philippians 4:6).

The cute little girl ran up to her granddad with open arms. The granddad leaned down and welcomed his grandchild into his arms for a great big "bear hug". Nestled in her granddad's arms the little girl leaned into her granddad's ear and whispered, "Granddad, I love it when you hug me. Do you think Grandmother has any ice cream in her freezer?" Guess who got ice cream that day?

God cannot be manipulated by insincere compliments (He knows exactly what is in each heart) but He is almost always moved by genuine gratitude and positive praise. That is why when Paul told the Philippians to "be not anxious about anything but pray about everything" he told them to add Thanksgiving (gratitude in the Greek) into the "grant me these needs" requests.

Gratitude is an attitude of appreciation for God's amazing Grace, astonishing Love, and constant care. It is not disingenuous platitudes or pious pronouncements ("O great God who exists somewhere up there"). It is a child saying, "Our Father which art in Heaven" from a heart grateful for a Father's love and with a firm belief that their heavenly Father always wants the best for them.

Gratitude is simply a way to "hug God's neck" and express your love for Him. And it often results in "ice cream!"

November 28, 2017 DRIVEWAY DISAPPOINTMENT

[Menu](#) Six year old Timmy looked at his parents one day and said, "I know exactly what I want for Christmas this year. A New Car!" The parents said, "Fine" and added "new car" to Timmy's Christmas list. Christmas day arrived and Timmy rushed past the presents piled under the tree and into the yard where he looked all around while asking, "Where is it? Where is my new car?" The Parents simply said, "Timmy, it is under the tree with your other presents."

Timmy really wanted; and had genuine faith that his loving parents would provide, a new car for him to drive. The Parents, however, filtered Timmy's request thru knowledge of his age and abilities and knew it was best for Timmy to get a model car under the tree instead of a real car parked in the driveway.

One Prayer Principles given by Jesus was, "If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent?" (Luke 11:11). Timmy was disappointed in the driveway but his parents knew giving him a "serpent when he really needed a fish" was not the best answer to his request. People who pray need to remember that God is even smarter than these parents!

November 29, 2017 DON'T BLAME CHRISTMAS

[Menu](#) I think most people will admit that Christmas has gotten out of control. It has evolved from a time of worshipping a babe in Bethlehem into a time when we feed our greeds, are overwhelmed with stressful needs, and overdo our feeds. It has backpedaled so far into October until many people have had about all the Christmas they care about by the beginning of December.

Even Thanksgiving Thursday has migrated into "let's get started early on Black Friday". People now gobble their gobble in order to stand in the cold and then fight crowd crush for that elusive bargain. It is time someone holds up a giant STOP sign to remind people that "no room at the inn" caused the crowd to miss the glory of God becoming flesh and dwelling among men!

The Shepherds brought no presents when they came to see the baby wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger. They simply came, stared, and then shared all around town what they had seen. It was almost two years later that Wise Men came with Gifts (Which were probably used to help the family escape to Egypt and avoid the killing wrath of the king).

It is not wrong to buy things for those we love but do not blame your greedy gift buying and your overwhelming January bills on God. Not something He asked for or desires.

Celebrating Christmas is great. Just do not let your gift getting overshadow God's gift giving.

December 5, 2017 GAS MAN GAS

[Menu](#) I pulled up at a gas station recently and noticed that a gas delivery truck was getting gas at the pump beside me. The gas man was getting gas!

Gas trucks are something we don't spend a lot of time thinking about. We assume gas just gets to the pumps so we can purchase and use it. We seldom think about how it gets from the oil wells to the gas pump at our local stores. Yet, a break down anywhere along that delivery route can produce shortages, increased prices, and empty car tanks.

In much the same way, we seldom think about where the Minister's message comes from on Sunday morning. People think the preacher simply stands behind the Pulpit and the message is automatically delivered. Little do they know that the message has to come in much the same way the gas gets to your local store.

Far away, in Heaven, God decides what message He wants a particular congregation to hear. Through Bible Study and Prayer the "seed" of that message is relayed to the Pastor. During the week circumstances, commentaries, and the Holy Spirit's leadership help the pastor add meat to the skeleton of the message.

Finally, Sunday arrives and the Pastor delivers his sermon cargo to waiting "cars" so they can receive the energy needed to travel Life's roads. But it only happens correctly if the "gas man" has taken time to get the "gas" he needs. Remember that as you pray for your Pastor this week.

December 6, 2017 A BABY CRIED

[Menu](#) For four hundred years God remained silent. Disease, war, and despair devastated the earth. World changing empires rose and fell. Israel again slipped into the bondage oppression of a foreign power and the people of God once again cried for God to show Himself and bring relief. But days passed into years as no new word was heard from God. The light of faith flickered and faded among the people of God as evil prevailed and hope seemed but a shadow.

Then one night a baby cried in Bethlehem and God became flesh and dwelt among men. The shepherds became aware of this baby's cry by angelic announcement and it changed them from sheep herders into savior seekers. Wise men "heard" this baby's cry via a star message which compelled them across thousands of miles to worship and adore Him. A baby cried and it moved men.

This baby's cry echoed through the halls of time and brought hope to hearts, meaning to life, and peace to multitudes of people. His birth became the reference point for time, the driving force for world exploration, and the foundation stone for countries and colleges. A baby cried and the world changed.

Kingdom leaders still wreak havoc and men still work wickedness but now there is hope and help because a baby cried and God opened His arms to invite mankind into His family. It is indeed a time to celebrate!

December 12, 2017 CHRISTMAS MEANS

[Menu](#) Christmas means Joy: The Psalmist proclaimed “In His Presence is Fullness of Joy” and he longed for that presence. Christmas means God became flesh and dwelled among men and we beheld His Glory as God changed from a faraway deity into a present with us Savior! No wonder we celebrate with such Joy.

Christmas means life: Christ came so that we might have life and that we might have it more abundantly (John 10:10). This abundant life is ours because “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). Life was God’s gift at Christmas.

Christmas means Peace: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” (Luke 2:14). The cradle led to the cross where the bondage of sin was broken by the shed blood of Christ. Because of Christmas we can now have peace with God and the peace of God. Peace was the present of that manger laid Messiah.

Take the baby out of the cradle and put Him in your heart today. Christmas is joyous beyond words when you let the reason for the season become the savior of your soul and the Lord of your life. And you will find this will turn Christmas from a “happy holiday” into a “Merry Christmas”.

December 13, 2017 CHRISTMAS CIRCUMSTANCES

[Menu](#) Talk about bad Christmas circumstances! At the time this newly married couple expected their first child they had to relocate many miles away from family and friends. And the economic pressure was tremendous as Joseph had to leave his job and journey many miles to Bethlehem in order to pay taxes!

When they arrived the housing market was so tight until the only place available to stay was a sheep stall! And I can almost see the panic in Joseph’s mind as he had to help deliver his first born child and then had to use stable clothes for a diaper and a manger for the baby’s bed!

I pray that your Christmas will be filled with peace and prosperity and plenty of time for family and friends. Sometimes, however, your Christmas contains more of the harsh circumstances of the first Christmas than the hazy dreams of your childhood Christmas. Sickness, accidents, monthly bills, and “family friction” do not take a holiday simply because it is December!

Regardless of the circumstances you face this Christmas, let me encourage you to rest in the fact that the God who knew (and foretold) the events of that first Christmas knows (and cares) about your Christmas circumstances today. He still loves you and reminds you of that first Christmas sermon: “Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord”.

December 19, 2017 GIFT GUIDELINES

Menu Determining what gift to give takes the joy out of Christmas for many people. When a person has all they seem to need or if you do not know a person well enough to know what they need then it is very difficult to get a gift for that person. It is not that you do not care but you do not know what is appropriate or needed. Here are some "Gift guidelines" that may help.

Be aware of the Potential of the Gift. A gift can be a tremendous blessing as it shows love and concern but it can also be a tremendous burden if it insults, injures, or invites a person to think or act wrongly. A gift should not empower weakness (no alcohol to an alcoholic), promote wickedness, or develop worldliness.

Be Practical in your giving. Employ the principles used by the Wise Men: 1) Gold- Money gifts to help with needs 2) Frankincense (perfume)- personal gifts for the individual 3) Myrrh- Service gifts that involve sacrifice (Example: IOU to baby sit or wash their car).

Realize the Preciousness of your gift- "A gift is as a precious stone in the eyes of him that hath it: whithersoever it turneth, it prospereth" (Proverbs 17:8). When people sense the love in your gift then they will delight in your care for them and your gift will multiply in meaning.

Do not allow the pressure and "politics" of gift giving to steal the joy that comes from sharing with others this Christmas.

December 20, 2017 HAPPY HELPS

Menu Jesus came on Christmas Morning "that men might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). Instead of Christmas being a "happy place", however, many people are discouraged, depressed, and debt ridden. Here are some "happy helps" that will make this Christmas better for you and for those around you.

Love out loud: At Christmas God proclaimed how much He loved us (John 3:16). In the same way, a sincerely spoken "I love you" or genuine words of appreciation can change the attitude and atmosphere of a home and make it a "happy place".

Look beyond self (Think window instead of mirror): True greatness is found in service to others (Mark 10:44); not in selfish absorption. Christmas means God did not simply preach about morality; He joined the human race so He could demonstrate divine service by healing, helping, feeding, and eventually dying. Show this kind of godly service this Christmas so people can "see God" in your Christmas celebration and be happy that God became flesh and dwelt among men!

Be shepherd smart: The Shepherds did not let their job keep them from hearing God's angel message or stopping what they were doing long enough to be amazed at the baby born that Christmas morn. Then their observation changed their conversation and filled a town with jubilation (A Happy Place!)

Christmas is about good tiding of Great Joy. Make experiencing and expressing that joy your goal this Christmas.

December 26, 2017 BLESSED BEYOND BIRTH

[Menu](#) When people ask me what I like about Christmas I tell them one thing I like is the “blessings beyond the birth”.

Great illustrations of these blessings are found in chapter five of Mark’s gospel. We first meet a “mad man” who was anti-social (lived in a graveyard), uncontrollable (broke all his chains), and self-destructive (crying and cutting himself in the mountains). But when he met Jesus his demons were removed and he ended up fully clothed preparing for a missionary ministry to his home town. That is a blessing beyond the birth!

Next Mark tells us about a broke and broken woman who “suffered many things of many physicians, and spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse,” When she touched the hem of Jesus’ garment, however, she was made perfectly whole and her life was filled with peace instead of pain. That is a blessing beyond the birth!

Finally, Mark tells us about a twelve year old desperately sick child whose father came to Jesus begging for her healing. Hope changed to despair as they received word of her death as they journeyed to her sick bed. But death met life and life won! That is a blessing beyond birth!

If Christmas is only about a baby’s birth then you miss the point of the story. Christmas is about God becoming flesh and dwelling among men so we could be greatly blessed beyond the birth!

December 27, 2017 USE GOD’S PRESENT

[Menu](#) All that beautiful (and expensive) wrapping paper is now a huge pile of trash. Family feasts have given way to football fanatics or bargain browsers. Most presents have been stored in the toy box, tool box, or underwear drawer (lol). Another Christmas has come and gone.

Some presents will be exchanged. Some will gather dust in a faraway forgotten corner. And some will be even more delicious, delightful, or useful than the giver ever imagined. My “present” question for you is, “What will you do about the divine present that is the reason for the season?”

Will you make use of God’s Present? Will it be a valuable part of your life and work or will you treat God’s Gift as something simply to reverence during an occasional Sunday visit? God did not give you the present of His presence simply to be worshipped in church buildings! Jesus came as God’s love gift (John 3:16) to redeem people from sin so He could build a Body of Believers who speak His words and do His works.

If you have not received God’s Gift then do so today. Then value God’s present and determine to do something great with, and for, God because you received it. Just do not let God visit your home and ask how you liked the gift He gave you and find you used His Golden Gift as simply a door stop to hold open Heaven’s door!