

2019 Devotional Articles by Rev. Mike Jones

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March 27, 2019 RECIPROCAL RESPONSE

What will you do today that will impact what is done to you? Reciprocal response (Actions produce reactions) is a standard Bible Principle concerning our attitude toward others [*I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: (Genesis 12:3). Them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed (1 Sam 2:30)*]. The way you respect and respond to other people will have a big impact on the way other people respect and respond to you.

Your Actions toward other people have consequences also. You reap what you sow (*As thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head Obadiah 1:15*) so what kind of harvest is headed your way? If other people do unto you as you have done unto them will you be happy with what is going to be done unto you?

We now live in a world where “news”, talk shows, and even “comedy” shows have become pulpits for venomous anger and constant criticism. It is easy to let this anger and animosity bleed over into the way you think about and act toward other people. Instead, why not become the one who changes this negative conversation into positive conduct by *Sowing in righteousness so you will reap in mercy (Hosea 10:12)*.

April 3, 2019 YOU DO YOU

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You can accomplish any task God has given you to accomplish! When God assigns you a job He assigns it according to your personal Ability (And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability- Matthew 25:15). God only expects you to do what He has given you the ability to do (If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: 1 Peter 4:11).

You fail, or become frustrated, when you try to be something God did not call you to be or accomplish something God did not expect you to accomplish! If God would have wanted one person to accomplish everything then He would have created only one person. Instead, He created Adam and Eve and told them to “be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth”- Many hands to accomplish many tasks!

The ticket seller at the theater is not as famous (or as rich!) as the star of the movie but the star would not be rich or famous if ticket sellers did not do their jobs. God made you the unique person you are so you could accomplish HIS special purpose for your life. You do you, with the abilities God gave you, and then be happy with what you do!

April 10, 2019 AVOID SIN

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Many people have spent the last few weeks avoiding certain things in order to increase their awareness of the “sins which do so easily beset us”. As they transition back into a “normal” life it is good to consider four “hedges” which may prevent them from wandering off the path of life and, once again, getting dirty in the ditch!

1. **Reflect on God’s Holiness:** *Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still (Psalms 4:4)*. God commands us to be holy because He is holy. Avoid sin because it hinders your relationship with God.
2. **Watch your mouth:** *I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: (Psalms 39:1)*. A thought which is thought before a spoken word can be a sin saver.

3. **Practice living Godly principles:** *Awake to righteousness, **and sin not**; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame (1 Corinthians 15:34).* Examine your daily activities and replace bad habits with positive principles.
4. **Regulate fleshly impulses-** *Be ye angry, **and sin not**: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: (Ephesians 4:26).* Do not allow a momentary impulse to produce permanent problems. You may not be able to keep the bird from flying over your head but you can prevent it from making a nest in your hair!

April 17, 2019 ONE TREE

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Iceland identifies as containing only 3 species of trees. In the temperate forest of North America there are about 400 species of trees. On the island of Madagascar there are more than 2000 species of trees! The TALLEST living tree is Hyperion (380 feet 1 inch), a redwood tree in the Redwood National Park. The LARGEST (Volume) known living tree is the General Sherman Redwood tree (275 feet high, 25 feet wide with an estimated age of 2,300–2,700 years).

But the ONE Tree that changed the world is the one upon which Jesus was “cursed” in order to bring “whosoever will” into the pardon and peace of God’s family-*Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree (Galatians 3:13).* His tree of death gave us access to the tree of life!

This ONE Tree also CHANGED godly living from laboring to live within the law into a Spirit empowered Abundant Life: *Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: (1 Peter 2:24).*

There are multitudes of beautiful trees to see this time of year but the ONE Tree that changes Easter into an Exclamation is the Cross upon which Jesus died. Do not be bunny blinded into missing this ONE Tree.

April 24, 2019 JOINING GOD

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One of the great secrets of Christian living is “find out where God is at work and then join Him in His work”. It is life changing when you stop trying to “be God” with your life and just join God as He uses HIS Power to accomplish HIS Plan. This changes your “burden” into simply “being”!

Here is how that worked in the life of Noah: “By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith” (Hebrews 11:7).

- a. Noah’s motivation: Fear of God’s coming judgment (Not personal opinion or desire).
- b. Noah’s work: Prepared an ark (His work was in agreement with God’s plan).
- c. Noah’s goal: the saving of his house (He warned the world but he built a refuge for his family!).
- d. Noah’s witness: by the which he condemned the world (He joined God in voicing Judgment).
- e. Noah’s reward: Became an heir of the righteousness which is by faith (Joining God by faith on earth meant he got to join God for eternity in heaven!).

You can exhaust yourself struggling to do your best or you can enjoy an abundant life by joining God at His work and coming in out of the rain!

May 1, 2019 WHAT JESUS LEFT WHEN HE LEFT

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Jesus has victoriously returned to Heaven but it is important to remember four things He left when He left:

1. **His personal Possessions:** Jesus died on a borrowed cross (Barabbas), borrowed someone to care for His mother (John 19:26-27), and was buried in a borrowed tomb (Joseph of Arimathaea). He lived with nowhere to lay His head (Matt 8:20) and died without even a shirt on His back! [His Robe was gambled for at the cross]. Even His burial clothes were left in the tomb! Shouldn't that make you reassess your priorities?
2. **A Plan to change the world by changing people:** Jesus left us with a Plan to reach the world with Good News, the promise of coming Power (Holy Spirit), and a Place of service in His Body. Now we are somebody with the power to do something!
3. **A Promise of a prepared Place:** *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you (1 Peter 1:3-4).* He left us hope for a home in Heaven.
4. **A perfect Pardon:** *For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.* (Hebrews 10:14). It is finished! Jesus left us with the knowledge that it is not God's fault if you face God with your faults.

May 8, 2019 LOVE WORKS AT LOVE

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Love is the heart throb of any real relationship. Without Love, people exist in the same house as a corporation instead of for companionship (Corporations seek to profit from others. Companionship seeks a heart sharing partnership). Without real love family members end up in the same room staring at a TV, or a phone, or an iPad building walls of isolation instead of bridges of intimacy.

It does not have to be this way. Solomon said (Song of Solomon 8:7) that "if a man would give all the substance of his house for love" the price would be worth the result! Love will work if we work at love.

Find time to spend time with those you love. I understand that to many people a long leisurely talk on the porch sounds good but they are so busy they cannot even remember if they have a porch! Just remember that ten minutes of heart to heart with loved ones will have a much greater impact than six hours of "reality" shows, Snapchat, or killing a thousand aliens in a game.

We can keep the Light of Love burning brightly in our lives when we take time to "stroke the fires of love". No matter how big your home, or how fancy your possessions, they are simply "things" without love and companionship. Make time for those you love (especially on Mother's Day!) and joyfully see love making a difference in your life.

May 15, 2019 **WONDER**

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All around us are wonderful wonders which can elevate and inspire us. Simply lift up your eyes “unto the hills of goodness” surrounding you instead of focusing on the mud and muck of media driven “drama” depressing and disheartening you.

The springing forth of nature from its winter drab into blooming flowers and trees is certainly a wonder and awe inspiring but I want to look at wonders that are a little deeper than that. I want to look beyond “eye candy” and wonder at the wonders of life.

The Timelessness of Time is a wonder. People are born and die. Nations rise and fall. But day after day there is day after day. There is coming a day when “there shall be Time no longer” (Re 10:6) but until that glorious day we should wonder at Time and use it wisely.

The fact that God put the earth into exactly the right orbit, in exactly the right universe, so it could support and sustain life, is a wonder. The marvel of Adam “knowing” Eve producing a world changing world of people on this earth, each with a unique personality and potential, is a wonder.

But the most wonderful wonder is that God would love a sinner like me, allow me to be born again into His family, empower me to live victoriously here, and then tell me I get to spend eternity in a wonderful place He has prepared me. No wonder I wonder at the wonders supplied by a wonderful God!

May 22, 2019 **MEMORIALS**

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The Bible is full of Memorials. Some memorialize important events (The rock memorial at the Jordan River to remind Israel of their marvelous entrance into the Promised Land). Some memorialize the actions of people (The good action of the woman who anointed Jesus' feet {Verily I say unto you, Whosoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her Mark 14:9} or the wrong action of Lot's wife {Pillar of salt}).

Godly memorials can be erected by our devotion to God (When Cornelius looked on the angel, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And the angel said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. Acts 10:4) or by our celebration of the “Lord’s Supper” (As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come 1 Corinthians 11:26).

Memorials remind us of our past and encourage us to a better future. Which is why it would be a marvelous Memorial Day if people would take time to remember who the Memorial in Memorial Day is for; the sons and daughters, husbands and fathers, who fought and died to give us the great freedoms we enjoy as citizens of the United States. May the memory of their sacrifice and service unite and inspire us to be “one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all”.

May 29, 2019 **SINS THAT WE SIN**

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There is something wrong with what is wrong. Society almost daily moves wrong things into the “it is now right column” and the sins that we sin are now brushed aside as normal human failings or wrongly conceived ideas from an uneducated past. Few acknowledge sin as serious or a “God problem” anymore. But Sin still breaks God’s heart and there are some truths you need to know about it.

Sin is common (All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God-Romans 3:23), costly (The wages of sin is death- Romans 6:23) and very complex. Sin can be something INSIDE our heart or mind

(lust, covetous) or OUTSIDE our body (murder, robbery). Sin can be the WRONG we do (think Ten Commandments) or the RIGHT we fail to do (“Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin”-James 4:17). Sin can be disrespecting others (“If ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin”-James 2:9) or disregarding personal faith (“whatsoever you do that violates your faith is sin”-Romans 14:23). And Sin will find you out; some sooner, some later (“Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after” 1 Tim 5:24).

God’s Grace is Good News about our sins. This does not mean, however, that we should “continue in sin, that grace may abound” (Rom 6:1). God thought Sin was so serious until He allowed His Son to die to pay its penalty. That’s intense!

June 5, 2019 RECEPTION DESK PRAYERS

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I was sixth in line waiting to check in for my Doctor’s appointment. Each person in front of me had a special need or request that had to be dealt with by the receptionist. When I told her I simply needed to check in you could see the relief on her face. I told her she was a wonderful person, doing a great job, to be able to handle the multitude of requests or satisfy the various needs of so many people each day.

Sitting, waiting to be called into my doctor’s office, I thought about what a tremendous job God has each day (and night!) as He sits at “Heaven’s Prayer Reception Desk” and listens to the multiplicity of prayer requests coming at Him from billions of people. Some come with hurt feelings or hurt bodies. Others come with family problems, financial needs, faith doubts, and on and on it goes. And, remember, God never gets a day off or a holiday weekend.

Listening to the problems, pains, and other prayers of over seven billion people is a task only a great God could accomplish. Having the wisdom and wealth to deal with all these problems testifies to the awesomeness of God.

But if you think this means God gets tired of hearing your prayers just remember this Bible verse: “the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints” (Revelation 5:8). God values and preserves your prayers and only regrets the prayers you did not pray.

June 12, 2019 A FEW GOOD MEN

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God and your family are looking for a “few good men” who will show leadership, love, and loyalty. May God give you the courage and conviction to me such a man.

Enoch was a man who “walked with God.” Are you a man of consistent Christian character leading your family devotions and church attendance and who daily has time with, and for, God?

Abraham was a man known as the “friend of God.” Are you a man who stands out as a person of faith and confidence in God because you have a relationship with God built on trust and assurance in His promises and plans?

David was known as a “man after God’s own heart” because of his dedication to knowing the heart of God. David expressed this intertwined heart relationship with God in songs and poems which displayed his personal faults, failures, feelings, and faith. Are you a man who is able to express your “real” heart to God; and to your family?

Noah was a man who “found grace in the eyes of the Lord.” I call Noah the “common man” who lived his life, did the job God called him to do (build an ark), and ended up saving his family! What a joy to know you can do what God wants you to do by simply doing what God wants you to do!

God is looking for a “few Good Men.” Will you answer His call?

June 19, 2019 GOD’S RICHES

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God is the creator of gold, silver, and precious stones yet look at what He considers His riches.

1. **God is rich in Glory:** *But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus* (Philippians 4:19). The awesomeness of the Almighty is amazing!
2. **God is rich in Goodness:** *Or despisest thou the riches of God’s goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?* (Romans 2:4). You can trust a good God to do the right thing no matter the circumstances.
3. **God is rich in Wisdom:** *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!* (Romans 11:33). Our all-knowing God knows all!
4. **God is rich in Mercy:** *But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,* (Ephesians 2:4). Jesus on a cross dying for mankind’s sins- need I say more?
5. **God is rich in Grace:** *That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus* (Ephesians 2:7). I could not earn it or deserve it but God’s Grace brought His love and eternal life to me!

So Rich, yet the “Jewels” in God’s treasure vault are redeemed people, Glory! *(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. And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels Malachi 3:16-17).*

June 26, 2019 BUMPY ROAD BUMPS

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If you choose to ride a bumpy road you can expect some bumps in your life. For example, God told people not to choose a promiscuous life style because He knew it could lead to a lot of “bumps in the road” [disease, divorce, distrust {If they will cheat with you then in the back of our mind they will cheat with someone else}, or depression {Why do people want to use me instead of build a committed relationship with me?}]. Bumpy roads can be rough.

God desires a smooth road for your life instead of bumpy bruises. When John the Baptist proclaimed the coming Messiah he quoted this verse, “Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough (Bumpy)ways shall be made smooth” (Luke 3:5). Jesus wants to bump the bumps from your life!

In “idle conversation” with several Christians this week I have heard about God moving in situations or circumstances to make their life “smooth” instead of bumpy- A medical appointment was unexpectedly moved to a better time by a Christian nurse, someone behind them in line asked if they could “pay forward a blessing” by paying for their groceries on a day money was really tight, etc. It is thrilling when you see God fill in valleys by moving mountains!

You can choose bumpy roads or blessed roads. But the road you chose will determine your ride; and your destination.

July 3, 2019 CHRISTIAN PATRIOTS

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America is as good as the “god” it serves. Christian Patriots seek to represent God correctly in order to get our nation to follow and obey Him. There are a thousand “little ways” to do this but the “boss” (Jesus) summarized them into 2 principles: Love God above everything and Love your neighbor as yourself (Mark 12:29-31) “And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: 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. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.”

How does this work in real life? How do we demonstrate our love FOR GOD? Jesus made that simple- (John 14:15) “If ye love me, keep my commandments.” We show America we love God by living as God told us to live.

How do we show America our God is the Best God? We love people the same way we desire to be loved. Love is the “currency of Christianity” impacting those who give it and those who receive it. Love is like a mighty magnet drawing people together and to Christ.

Do you want to be a Christian Patriot? Simply look for opportunities to love God and love your neighbor and be amazed at the difference in your life and in our nation.

July 10, 2019 WHOSE FAULT?

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Who is at fault for the thorns in life’s roses? A prickly subject but consider these three reasons life does not always go as we think it should.

GOD’S “FAULT”: Some things happen because God has a plan and people are part of it: *As Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him* (John 9:1-3). When faced with family death and life altering circumstances Job proclaimed that trusting God was more important than “cursing God”. It is called living by Faith.

NO PERSON’S FAULT: Time and chance happen to people (*I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favor to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all* Eccl 9:11). When it is what it is you can blame life or you can rest in God’s loving heart.

Faulting God and circumstances is easy but sometimes it is **YOUR FAULT:** *The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him* (Ezekiel 18:19-20). Accepting personal blame allows us to seek God’s pardon and avail ourselves of God’s life altering power. And this can change everything!

July 17, 2019

THANKFUL FOR NO THANKS

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Have you ever been thankful that you had some things not to be thankful for? I have a friend who reminds me about this regularly. He will smile and say, "Thank God, I have not had to call upon God to heal me from a sickness or deliver me from a crisis today." He is thankful that he can spend his time praising God for Life's goodness instead of crying to God about his troubles.

I try to maintain this same thankful attitude. I thank God regularly that I do not have a handicap parking sticker for my car. I'm glad I can walk those few extra steps from a regular parking spot. And if you have been in as many hospital rooms as I have you will know why I thank God that I am the one visiting in the hospital instead of needing to thank God for someone taking time to visit me.

I am thankful that I do not have to thank God that one of my family members finally made a decision for Christ because all of them became Christians years ago. I am thankful that I am too fat instead of having to thank God for a found scrap of food. I am thankful I can sleep in the same old bed in the same old house each night instead of being thankful I found an unoccupied cardboard box for the night.

I am thankful God has blessed my life so there are many things that I do not have to be thankful for.

July 24, 2019

LIFE LADDER

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There are many rungs in the ladder of life of a Christian. Let me present them in a way that will make them easy to remember so you can meditate upon them in your heart and practice them in your living.

God expects us to **GROW** (2 Pet 3:18) "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." God expects us to develop a relationship; not dry up in a religion.

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

God expects us to **SOW** the word of God (not our opinions and prejudices) everywhere we go (Mark 4:14).

God expects us to **GLOW** (Mat 5:14) "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid." If the world is dark around you whose fault is that?

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

God expects us to **KNOW** that we have a correct relationship with Him (2 Tim 1:12) "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." It is wrong not to know you are right!

Are you climbing Christianity's "life ladder" to a better life and testimony?

July 31, 2019

BE NOT AFRAID

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Six times Jesus used the phrase "Be not afraid" to calm people's fears. They show us we should never be afraid to join God in life.

1. **When a "God Thing" is unexplainable** (Jesus came to them walking on the water): "Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid" Mt 14:27.

2. **When a “God Revelation” makes you view God differently** (mount of transfiguration): “And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid” Mt 17:7.
 3. **When your plans need to convert into “God’s Program”** (Women expected to prepare a body but they were told to “preach” about an empty tomb!): “Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me” Mt 28:10.
 4. **When hopeless needs “God’s Help”** (People told Jairus his daughter was dead so it was no use for Jesus to come): “As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe” Mark 5:36.
 5. **When fearful fear needs “God Confidence”**: “Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do” Lu 12:4.
 6. **When doing right results in being done wrong and “God Encouragement” is needed**: “Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace” Acts 18:9.
- When life comes roaring at you do not cower in a corner. Hold God’s Hand and “Be not afraid”.

August 7, 2019 **ACKNOWLEDGE PROBLEMS**

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One reason for the lack of converts in many churches today is that most sermons are about forgiveness FOR our problems without naming anything that IS a problem. Jesus did it differently. When He “must needs go through Samaria” in order to meet and bring a life change to the woman at the well He confronted her about her husband problem and brought her to this confession, “Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?” (John 4:29). Jesus made her face her darkness so she would realize her need of coming to the light.

When Philip was called to be a follower of Christ he thought about his good friend, Nathanael. He invited Nathanael to join him in following this man from Nazareth but Nathanael’s bias against Nazarenes made him skeptical until Jesus revealed his “fig tree secret” and Nathanael felt compelled to say, “Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.” (John 1:49). Jesus had to expose Nathanael’s prejudice and pride before Nathanael would submit to life changing leadership.

The problem with many people’s problem is that they do not want to admit they have a problem. They would rather come for water in the hot midday sun or hide under a fig tree. Jesus loves them too much to allow this to happen. He makes them face the fact that they will never really rejoice about an empty tomb until they realize the entrance to the tomb is a cross.

August 14, 2019 **FAILURE’S FAULT**

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Sometimes a small church is not the Pastor’s fault. Sometimes the person you dated does not seem related to your spouse. Sometimes good parents raise two good kids and one heartbreak.

Sometimes soil determines what happens to seed. Jesus said some seed fell on good ground and produced various amounts of fruit. Other seed became bird food because it fell on trampled trails or developed no roots (or fruit) because it landed on stony ground. Some seed even started out good but “choking thorns” stymied growth. Same seed but different reception produced different results.

Sometimes people’s attitude determines growth (“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures

daily, whether those things were so” Acts 17:11). People who do not want to do better seldom do better. A church with no desire to grow, a husband with no desire to work, and a rebellious child with no desire to obey can turn the best instructions and intentions into headaches and heartaches.

Sometimes “chance” changes things. A community industry closes and a church seeks to survive rather than thrive. Someone decides they want to use your spouse to advance their career. Your good child is in a bad place at a bad time.

Sometimes beating yourself up is punishing the wrong person. Sometimes failure is not your fault. So lift up those downcast eyes and remember I am praying that your day will be filled with victory, your life will be filled with success, and you will always fail to have failure.

August 21, 2019 GUIDELINES TO GOD BY

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Leviticus chapter nineteen is a tremendous discourse on living the way God desires you to live. It begins by saying you are to strive to live right because this is the character of God (Be holy because I am holy). Then it gives numerous guidelines to show how to make this happen.

(1) Respect your Parents and honor God’s Day. (2) Let nothing physical take the place of the spiritual God. (3) If you mess up come back to God on His terms; not yours. (4) Find ways to share with others. (5) Treat others the way you want to be treated- do not steal from them or mislead them. (6) Honor God in your daily talk; do not use God as an excuse or slur His name in your conversation. (7) Be honest: do not borrow and not return; nor hire and not pay. (8) Respect those who have infirmities: Do not curse the deaf or trip the blind. (9) Do not judge people simply by the clothes they wear or the money they possess. (10) Do not run people down with gossip or destroy people with hate. (11) Do not avenge, nor bear any grudge against people, but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. (12) Let your outside life (what you wear and how you make a living) show how much you value God on the inside.

Your beliefs determine your behavior. Is your life shaped by God’s guidelines?

August 28, 2019 AND YET BE LOST

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“There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always” (Acts 10:1-2). AND YET HE WAS LOST

Cornelius lived a good moral life (a devout man). He and his home respected God (One that feared God with all his house). He cared about others and put this care and compassion into action (Which gave much alms to the people). And he continually sought to communicate with God (Prayed to God always). And yet he was lost.

Some people believe what they are doing or how they are living will work out all right with God because they are “guided by love” or their “heart is in the right place”. And yet they are lost (“There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” Proverbs 14:12).

Other people trust that the good they do will outweigh the bad they do and the “wages of THEIR sins” will not be death. After all, they live a better life than many people around them. And yet they are lost (“But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags” Isaiah 64:6).

You can “do the best you can” and Yet Be Lost. Or, like Cornelius, you can let someone tell you about Jesus and move from your good works into God’s amazing Grace.

September 4, 2019 SEEKING GOD

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Nothing is more important than seeking and finding God!! Nothing- not wealth, or fame, or anything this world can possibly offer. Seeking God must be the primary goal of every life. Without Him you have nothing; with Him you have everything!

1) Seek God with a Passion- "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). God must not be a casual desire; you must crave Him more than food or water or even life. Never rest until you rest in His loving arms.

2) Seek God by Faith- "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb 11:6). You must believe that God will be found if you look for Him. Trying to find God so you can see if He is real will not work. You must believe your seeking will lead to finding.

3) Seek God until He shows Himself- "Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to SEEK THE LORD, TILL HE COME" (Hosea 10:12). The heart is a restless hunter, seeking only God. Knock on Heaven's door until God Himself comes to greet you!

Your life will change if you believe that if "you seek the LORD thy God, you shall find him, if you seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul" (Deuteronomy 4:29).

September 11, 2019 GOD'S VIEW POINT

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God does not judge you based on your physical characteristics or skin color. God sees the real you {The inner You} instead of the "you" you're trying to make real ("Look not on his countenance or on the height of his stature; for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart" 1 Samuel 16:7).

Before you breathe a sigh of relief because God sees your "good heart" let me share God's viewpoint of human "hearts"- "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9). God views your heart as "desperately wicked" filled with selfishness, self-effort, self-indulgence, self-pity, and self-righteousness. Bummer.

This is "Old Testament God" you say, Jesus sees people's "good heart" differently. Here is Jesus' viewpoint of human hearts, "From within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness" (Mark 7:21-22). Ouch!

Good news, when God sees a problem He provides a solution! "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh" (Ezekiel 36:26). God wants to do "heart surgery" on you today and change you from the inside out. This changes God's viewpoint about your heart and your viewpoint about life; and about death, as you now long for the day you can see Him face to face whom so long you have known heart to heart.

September 18, 2019 MAKING RIGHT DECISIONS

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In a world where media and the masses constantly scream contradictory and confusing guidelines to us; how can we make right decisions so we will do right thing? Here are some principles which can be applied in any situation or circumstance.

A) Would God approve of it? “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (I Cor 10:31). If God approves it you will not be sorry you did it.

B) Would Christ want to put His name on it? “Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Col 3:17). What reputation will result from your conversation and occupation?

C) Would you be sorry if it were broadcast on national TV? In a time where everyone is recording everything just remember “Nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither any thing hid, that shall not be known and come abroad” (Luke 8:17).

D) Will it lead other people down a wrong path? “Take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to them that are weak” (I Cor 8:9). Many have thousands of “followers”. Where are you leading them?

E) Is your decision guided by Love? “Love worketh no ill to his neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law” (Rom 13:10). If you are guided by love you will do no harm with hate.

F) What are the consequences of your actions? “Be no deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Gal 6:7).

September 25, 2019 **THE SIN OF NO GOOD**

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“Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (James 4:17).

The sin of “no good” is one of the unique sins in the Bible. It is about the right we do not do instead of the wrong we actually do. It is about failing to remember that the “least of these” could be Jesus in disguise (“Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me” Matthew 25:45).

The sin of “no good” lets others suffer when you have the ability to do them good. We are commanded to “DO GOOD and be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate” (1Tim 6:18). This means God intends for us to “do good” in our deeds, our charity, and our talk and it is “no good” when we keep our “cup of cold water” instead of sharing with thirsty souls.

The sin of “no good” can also be manifested in returning “no good” instead of good to those who do you “no good”- “I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, DO GOOD to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you” (Mt 5:44). When you sink to their level you end up on the wrong level.

Make it your goal today to “depart from evil and do good” (Psalm 34:14). That way you will avoid the sin of “no good” as well as the sin of “do bad”.

October 2, 2019 **SCORNING THE SCORNERS**

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“The curse of the LORD is in the house of the wicked: but he blesseth the habitation of the just. Surely he scorneth the scorners: but he giveth grace unto the lowly” (Proverbs 3:33-34).

Sometimes the “good news” has some “bad verses”. Pastors seldom speak about the “curse of the Lord on the house of the wicked” (Such as, the sins of the fathers visited on the children- Alcoholic

parents often have alcoholic children. Abusive parents painfully develop abusive children. Drugs destroy families and empty pocketbooks). Sinful living pollutes and penalizes everything around it.

Not only is the “curse of the Lord” on the house of the wicked but God also “scorns the scorers” (In the Hebrew it says He “scoffs at scoffers” or “ridicules those who ridicule”). Comedians and TV Personalities seem to think the “in” thing today is to make fun of God’s people, God’s Word, or God’s name. What they fail to realize is that when “the wicked plot against the just and scorn the saints” there is coming a day when “the Lord shall laugh at them” (Psalms 37:12-13). Disregarding and disrespecting God is not fun in the future!

God scorns the scorers; BUT He gives Grace unto the lowly. The reason people have the “curse of the Lord” on their home or the “scorn of the Lord on their scorning” is because they are running from God’s mercy instead of into His loving arms. If your home or your life is in chaos then you might want to think about that.

October 9, 2019 UNCOMFORTABLE TRUTHS

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God could have made the world black and white. Instead He used a multiplicity of colors. God could have made life simple...

Ecclesiastes teaches us that God is not offended if we “think outside the box” about religion. Ecclesiastes shows us God realizes we are humans dealing with human problems in a wicked world where uncomfortable truths sometimes do not fit our “religious formulas”. Here are two examples.

Life is not always fair- “This I have seen in the days of my vanity: there is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man that longeth his life in his wickedness” (Ecclesiastes 7:15). Sometimes the bad guys live long and rich in their wickedness and the good guys die in poverty and persecution. Just remember, the earthly story is just a small part of the whole story.

Too much “righteousness” rots: “Be not righteous over much; neither make thyself over wise: why shouldest thou destroy thyself?” (Ecclesiastes 7:16). Sprinkled salt flavors; poured salt makes food inedible. Limited light illuminates; light too bright blinds. Pharisees and Sadducees were so “righteous” until God walking among them as a man agitated them enough to become a mob crying, “Crucify him”.

Jesus touched the untouchable, had His feet washed by a prostitute, and He was a friend of publicans and sinners. He even called a tax collector to become His disciple (Gasp!). Jesus did not allow the fact that He was God to keep Him from interacting with people.

Life is not always fair and “being so heavenly minded until you are no earthly good” harms instead of helps. Two uncomfortable truths humans face in a real world.

October 16, 2019 FOUR QUESTIONS

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Sometimes questions can be life changing- “Will you marry me?” “How long have you had that lump?” “Would you like to go to work at my business?” “Did your child drive your car tonight?”

Chapter nineteen of the Gospel of Luke contains 4 incidents that can generate such life changing questions.

1) **How Satisfied are You?** Zacchaeus was a rich man, who had all the comforts of a rich man’s life, but he found his life was missing a key ingredient; peace. He became so dissatisfied with the way things were going until he abandoned his pride and climbed a tree in order to meet Christ and find real

peace. How about you? You have the two cars, the nice house, and the big screen TV but, in the lonely darkness, do you still long for something to satisfy the itch in your soul?

2) **How Productive is your Life?** Jesus then told a parable which revealed that a productivity life is tied to either fear or faith. Fear causes people to bury their talents and live in misery. Faith encourages them to accomplish great deeds. Everyone has at least one talent. What are you doing with yours?

3) **Who Believes in You?** Then, as Jesus entered Jerusalem, he was honored by the people who really matter, the people who believed in Him. You can spend your life trying to be part of the Pharisaical “in crowd” and get, at the most, fleeting fame; or you can get your boast from people who believe in you and are willing to “give you the shirt off their back”.

4) **What happened to your relationship with God?** Finally, Jesus cleaned the temple of money grabbing merchants whose greedy conduct had replaced Godly worship. Your final question is this, “If Jesus came to your house today would He eat at your table or turn it over?”

October 23, 2019 TALKING ABOVE THE CATS

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Never have so many been communicated to so little while they are communicated to so much. Phone / iPad zombies stare perpetually at constantly changing screens covered with continually updated information which stirs no one unless it is a dancing dog or a piano playing cat! Many people hear only the “sounds of silence” in a world where so many opportunities are available to inspire and motivate them to grow closer to God and bring goodness to others.

Effective communication includes your Truths (The message of your message), your Tone (Do not let the “music in the background” drown out your song), your Timing (A right thing said at a wrong time can range from awkward to awful), and your Touch (Touch me or you do not touch me. Sometimes this is a physical touch but most often it is something emotionally stirring or mentally challenging). Effective communication means people hear what is coming out of your mouth.

Christians should not be Trash Talkers (Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth Ephesians 4:29). Instead, they should be Trustful communicators (Let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay Matthew 5:37) so their witness about God’s work in their life will draw others to Christ (That the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus Philemon 1:6).

If your communication does not speak TO me then it does not speak to me. In a world where people have ears to hear but hear not Christians must learn to effectively communicate eternal truths over the din of piano playing cats or people will continue to stare blankly at screens while the world crashes and burns around them.

October 30, 2019 OVERCOME EVIL WITH GOOD

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Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good (Romans 12:21).

It began as a day to honor "All Saints"; it involved into a night to honor witches and ghosts. The first day of November was "All Saints Day" to honor all Saints who did not have their own special day. The Evening before this special day was called "Hallowed Evening"; eventually corrupted in old English to Halloween.

Many customs associated with Halloween came from the Celts. The old Celtic calendar began the New Year on November 1st (The year ended with the harvest of their crops). New Year's Eve became known as a time when witches and goblins roamed around trying to hold back the new year. At the New Year's Eve parties people would dress up as witches or goblins to placate the demons while the serfs were invited to the main house to "demand" an offering (treat) in exchange for protection from the demons during the coming year (or I'll trick you).

Most Churches have changed Halloween to Family Fun Night. We do not believe it is right to promote witches and demons. We also do not think it is right to teach children to demand a treat under the threat of a "trick" (Plus, in our present world, it is just plain dangerous to allow Children to accept candy from strangers).

We make it a Family Time where people dress up as "good" people, eat all the candy they want, and enjoy an exciting time of games and fellowship. We think that's the Christian way- overcoming evil with good; changing negative circumstances with positive conduct.

November 6, 2019 BUILD A BLESSING

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Your life largely contains the things you bring into it or the things you build with it. The Apostle Paul said if you are going to "build a blessing" then you need to know where to build, how to build, what to build, and when to build (1Cor 3). Today I want you to experience the exaltation of building such a blessing; and help you grasp the purpose of such a blessing.

A Blessing Builder realizes **they are their best when they help others be their best**: *He called the twelve, and said unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all* (Mark 9:35). Helping others enriches your life while it builds a network of friends who support and encourage each other.

A Blessing Builder **must respect themselves before they can show genuine respect to others**: *And the second great commandment is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself* (Matthew 22:39). "As thyself" is not self-centered conceit; it is desiring the best for others in the same way you desire the best for yourself. It is treating others with the same respect and affection you expect for yourself.

Blessing Builders do not seek blessings in order to "build bigger barns" or promote their pride. They realize you build a blessing by being a blessing; and that helps build you into the amazing person God intended you to be! It is great when you help make others great!

November 13, 2019 I WONDER

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I wonder who takes out the trash in Heaven and where the garbage dump is located? The word for "Hell" is the word used for the garbage dump outside of Jerusalem. Will someone dump our garbage onto the heads of those who occupy hell?

I wonder if TV in Heaven will show reruns of history? I would be very interested in seeing what really happened during many incidents described in the Bible. Can you imagine the talk around the table when Lazarus was raised from the dead or the widow of Nain's son got up from the coffin?

I wonder what doctors, lawyers, and funeral directors will do in Heaven after spending their life learning an occupation that is not practiced in Heaven? I wonder who will do repair work on our

heavenly mansion? I wonder if the fruit from the tree of life will give juice or if water from the river of life be the only way to quench our thirst?

I wonder how far and how fast “heavenly saints” can travel? I wonder if we will walk everywhere or have a car that never breaks down nor needs gas! I wonder if we will ever sleep in a place where there is no night there?

I wonder if many people who expect to end up in Heaven will be sadly disappointed at the judgment bar of God when “many will say in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matthew 7:22-23)?

November 20, 2019 MAKE THINGS GO GOOD

Are you struggling to be thankful at Thanksgiving because you can't find the correct “formula” for the good life you envisioned? Are you tired of having more troubles than triumphs? Here are some Bible guidelines that will help make things go good.

Make family time a priority: “Honour thy father and thy mother, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee; that thy days may be prolonged, THAT IT MAY GO WELL WITH THEE” (Deuteronomy 5:16). Family time forms many principles and practices of life. Establish good principles, abandon bad practices, and celebrate your home as a “happy haven”.

Expect God to honor those who honor Him: “Thou shalt do that which is right and good in the sight of the LORD: THAT IT MAY BE WELL WITH THEE, and that thou mayest go in and possess the good land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers” (Deuteronomy 6:18). Live Right and claim God's Promises.

Seek God's leadership in life, Work Hard, and take time to enjoy the blessings God puts in your life: “Blessed is every one that feareth the LORD; that walketh in his ways. For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: HAPPY SHALT THOU BE, AND IT SHALL BE WELL WITH THEE. Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table. Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the LORD” (Psalms 128:1-4).

Too simple you say. Try these principles for a month and marvel at thanksgiving as a way of life instead of just a turkey day.

November 27, 2019 PRAISE PERSPECTIVE

I grew up when you had to hand pump water into a number two wash tub and heat water on a wood burning stove in order to take a Saturday night bath. I am thankful for a hot running water shower.

I have visited many countries in the world. I am thankful my wife can vacuum our carpet instead of sweep a dirt floor. I am thankful she can “throw a dinner into the microwave” if we get in a hurry instead of slave over an open fire, in 95 degree heat, trying to make much out of little.

I am thankful imperfect Christians loved one of those “Jones Boys” enough to invite him to their imperfect Church where I heard about a perfect plan of salvation which brought God and I together and set me on a path where life has meaning and ends in a mansion.

So put your praise in perspective. God is more pleased when you praise Him with what you DO have than when you whine about what you do not have: *I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving. This also shall please the LORD better than an ox or bullock* (Psalms 69:30-31).

Everyone does not have an “ox or a bullock” but if you sing a joyful song or give a praiseful testimony about what you do have you will be amazed at the change it will make in you; and in those around you.

December 4, 2019 COST OF CHRISTMAS

Christmas is expensive. Yes, it cost most people more money than they have but I’m not talking about that kind of expense. The bill for that first Christmas came at a cost that was far above anything put under a tree.

It cost Joseph his reputation when he obeyed the angel’s voice and remained engaged to a lady with child by the Holy Spirit. He lost his job and his home because taxes and prophecy demanded he move to Bethlehem. Joseph paid a high cost for Christmas.

Mary paid her bill for Christmas in pain and suffering. What anguish she must have suffered as she lay in a stable looking at the manger that was soon to hold her child and wondering how she and Joseph could deliver this child on their own. And when the final agony of birth was over and she thought she could get some rest a bunch of rough neck shepherds came barging in, waking the baby, and tracking mud all over the stable. Mary also paid a high cost for Christmas.

And think of the child born that first Christmas day. As a newborn baby clothed in flesh that could feel pain, hunger, and temptation the Son of God went from having all power to having no power. Wow! What a cost Christ paid that first Christmas.

At Christmas the pressure of buying gifts for people who don’t need anything makes us forget about the one who gave everything. Maybe we would have a different attitude if we considered the real cost of Christmas.

December 11, 2019 CHRISTMAS NOT

Christmas should be about Christ; not about Christmas (The word “Christmas” is not in the Bible [“Easter” is found one time- Acts 12:4]). People put up their Christmas decorations in October and go “crazy” if their Christmas shopping is not done by Cyber Monday. They are so busy until they have no room in their inn and push Christ off into a “stable” manger scene brightly shining on their front lawn.

Christmas has become about the stress of shopping, the frustration of holiday traffic, and the budgeting of time to attend work and family get-togethers. God becoming flesh as a baby and dwelling among men is seldom mentioned or considered. What a surprise it would be if the guest of honor (Christ) showed up at His birthday party celebration and people ask who He is and what He is doing there!

Christmas is about His Presence; not about presents [The originally presents were given to Christ (not to other people) almost 2 years after His birth by the Wise Men (gold, frankincense, and myrrh). And each present had a distinct purpose in the life of the Child].

Christmas is about receiving God’s amazing Christmas gift; not about giving a gift to try to earn love or “because Cousin Clem is giving a gift to you”. Christmas is about God loving the world so much until He gave His only begotten Son in order for mankind to have eternal life. Christmas is about Christ; not about Christmas. Receive Him as your gift; and rejoice in your best Christmas ever!

December 18, 2019 RELATE CHRISTMAS

Here are some ways you can put Christ into Christmas. When God shared the story of Jesus coming into the world He began by sharing Christ's human ancestry (Matt 1). Why don't you do the same? Talk about family history so those who gather at Christmas can grasp your family's journey. Where did your family's ancestors live before they came to America? Are there any famous (or infamous!) people in your background? [FYI Matthew's ancestry line of Christ listed several women of "questionable" background].

Joseph and Mary had an "angel encouraged" marriage. Do not be offensive or insensitive but let some of the married couples at your get-together share how they met and how they knew the one they are with was the one they wanted to be "one" with. Mary and Joseph had some very difficult times early in their marriage but God always guided and cared for them. Are there any stories of God's care and provision you can share with the rest of the family to encourage them in their relationship or circumstances?

Jesus was probably born in a cave used to house animals (based on the availability of a manger). I was born in a house. Are there any unusual birth places for people in your family? Joseph and the family had to move to Egypt before deciding Nazareth was a safer location than Jerusalem. How many places have you lived at in your life journey? Share some interesting info.

Christmas is not a "fairy tale story". God became flesh and lived like we live. That should impact your life and relate to everything you do.

December 25, 2019 A BABY CRIED

For four hundred years God remained silent. Disease, war, and desolation devastated the earth. Empires rose and fell. Israel's sins again led them into bondage and oppression. The hard times and heartaches caused God's chosen people to cry for God to show His Power and bring relief. But 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 the "Word" arrived from God when a baby cried in Bethlehem. The shepherds heard this cry by angelic announcement and it changed them from sheep herders into savior seekers. Wise men heard his cry via a star message which they thought came from an earthly king before the cry called them to bow and worship the King of kings.

This baby's cry echoed through the halls of time where it brought hope to my heart, meaning to my life, and peace to my future. It drew me to serve a king whose kingdom is not of this world and to worship a God who cried from a cross before He rose from the dead. And one day this cry will come from the clouds as a shout, "Come home to the mansion I have prepared for you"!

Kingdoms still wreak havoc and men still work wickedness but a baby cried and God opened His arms to invite mankind into His family. It is indeed a time to celebrate!