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Bulletin Articles

Dealing with the Future

The Bible teaches us some guidelines when we deal with the future. Three important Biblical principles for facing our future are:

1. Include God in your goal setting. It is unwise to make plans without consulting God first. God is the only One who knows the future. The Bible says, *"The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord"* (Proverbs 16:1). In other words, planning without praying is presumption.

2. Live one day at a time. While you can plan for tomorrow, you can't live it until it arrives. Most people spend so much time regretting the past and worrying about the future, they have no time to enjoy today! Jesus said, *"Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof"* (Matthew 6:34). Live one day at a time.

3. Don't procrastinate -- do it now! *"Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest now what a day may bring forth"* (Proverbs 27:1). Procrastinating is a subtle trap. It wastes today by postponing things until tomorrow. You promise yourself that you'll do it "one of these days". But "one of these days" is usually "none of these days".

Let us include God as we face our days. *"For I know the thought that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart"* (Jeremiah 29:11-13).
(adapted from Rick Warren)

Justo Dorantes (edited/gr)

A New Year's Resolution

-- Dan Winkler

Never

Encourage

Wickedness

That's a tall order when you consider what the NT terms "wicked":

Causing someone to stumble spiritually (Matthew 12:41-42, 49-50).

Holding a grudge, refusing to forgive another (Matthew 18:32).

Sexual impurity (I Corinthians 5:1, 13; II Peter 2:7).

Twisting the Bible to say what we want (II Peter 3:16-17).

An egotistical "my way or the highway" attitude (III John 10).

"Abstain from every appearance of evil." - I Thessalonians 5:22

Eight Gifts That Don't Cost a Cent

The gift of really listening... But you must REALLY listen; no interrupting, no daydreaming, no planning your response. JUST LISTEN.

The gift of affection... Be generous with appropriate hugs, kisses, pats on the back and handholds. Let these small actions demonstrate the love you have for someone.

The gift of laughter... Clip cartoons. Share articles and funny stories. Your gift will say, "I love to laugh with you."

The gift of a written note... It can be a simple "Thanks for the help" note or a full sonnet. A brief, handwritten note may be re-remembered for a lifetime.

The gift of a compliment... A simple and sincere, "You look great today," "You did a super job" (or) "That was a wonderful meal" can make someone's day.

The gift of a favor... Every day, go out of your way to do something kind for someone you love.

The gift of solitude... There are times when we want nothing better than to be left alone. Be sensitive to those times and give the gift of solitude to others.

The gift of a cheerful disposition... The easiest way to feel good is to extend a kind word to someone. Really, it's not that hard to say "Hello" and "Thank you".

author unknown

Be A Barnabas!

Barnabas was a person anyone would love to be around. Why? He was a tremendous encourager of others; he made others feel good about themselves and their work, and his encouragement was not an artificial slap on the back, but a sincere and genuine response. The apostles were so impressed with this quality that they changed his name from Joseph to Barnabas which means, "Son of Exhortation" (Acts 4:36).

On several occasions Barnabas used his great ability to advance the cause of Christ. When many early converts were without physical sustenance, Barnabas sold a field he had owned and brought the profits to the apostles who distributed it to the needy (Acts 4:37). After Paul's conversion, many brethren questioned the genuineness of it. They had heard about the many things Paul had done against the church and were afraid of him. Barnabas took Paul to the apostles and convinced them that Paul was now a true disciple of Jesus and had risked his life for

Christ (Acts 9:26-29). The gospel of Christ has been greatly served because Barnabas was willing to support and encourage a man like Paul. A few years later, when he and Paul were about to embark on their second evangelistic tour, Barnabas once again manifested his magnanimous quality to encourage. Paul refused to take John Mark with them since he had withdrawn from them on the first tour. Barnabas did not feel they should give up on Mark yet. Their disagreement was so strong that they went their separate ways, Barnabas taking Mark with him (Acts 9:36). History has proven Barnabas to be right. This same Mark wrote the gospel account which bears his name. In later life, even Paul admitted that Mark was useful to him in ministering (II Timothy 4:11). Barnabas was contagiously encouraging wherever he went. He had the genius that serves.

Oh, that more people would emulate his great attitude! Brethren, "*Give heed to exhortation...*" (I Timothy 4:13)! "*Exhort one another day by day...*" (Hebrews 3:13). There is nothing that will brighten the atmosphere like an enthusiastic person who offers a few positive words of encouragement to others.

Barnabas was not known for his great writing skills, persuasive speaking or flashy personality. That for which he was known was his ability to encourage. If you are looking for a talent or gift to develop, or a ministry in which to serve -- try being a "son of encouragement". We've never needed them more. *James Draper*

The World's View of Christianity

The world's view of followers of Jesus has been tarnished by the hypocrisy of most religions today. Suppose all you had ever seen of "Christianity" was that which is portrayed

on TV, what would you think? The revelation of the true lives of leaders like Jim Bakker and Jimmy Swaggart has given rise to a mocking of everyone who claims to believe in Jesus. The fact that some on the "religious right" have become more political than spiritual has not helped.

Remember Jesus spoke of how to impact the world by letting our lights shine by doing good. Lives lived in keeping with His teachings have a profound impact on the world. Early in the second century the world was ruled by the Roman emperor Hadrian (117-137 A.D.). Look at how he described the church in his day:

"They walk in all humility and kindness, and falsehood is not found among them. They love one another. They do not refuse to help widows. They rescue the orphans from violence. He who has, gives ungrudgingly to him who lacks. If they see a stranger, they take him home and entertain him as a brother. When one of their poor passes from this world, any one of them who sees it provides for his burial according to his ability. And if they hear that any one of their number is in prison or oppressed for the name of their Messiah, all of them provide for his needs. . . . They thus labor to become righteous, as those who expect to see their Messiah and to receive from Him the glorious fulfillment of the promises made to them. Truly this is a new people, and there is something divine in them."

So what can we do about the fact that we are sometimes mocked by those in the world? Perhaps Peter's words will help us to see the course we should take: *"For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men"* (I Peter 2:15). Godly living by godly people is the only way to silence those who mock Jesus. May God help each of us to do our part.

Dan Jenkins

A Prayer

God, when I have food, help me to remember the hungry. When I have work, help me to remember the jobless; when I have a warm home, help me to remember those who have no home at all; when I am without pain, help me to remember those who are suffering. . . and remembering, help me to destroy my complacency and be stirred by compassion. . . and be concerned enough to help, by word and deed, those who cry out for what we take for granted.

S.T. Pugh

"Let us draw near to God..." (Hebrews 10:22)

Preparation for Worship

When are we prepared to worship? Hebrews 10:22 gives us an insight. *"Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water."* Let's look at the essentials for "drawing

near", i.e., worship to God.

First is sincerity -- *"with a true heart"*. Our worship must be with all our hearts. God will not receive a divided heart. Years ago Stephen Charnock wrote, "Without the heart it is not worship; it is a stage play; an acting part without being that person really -- a hypocrite. We may truly be said to worship God -- though we lack perfection; but we cannot be said to worship Him if we lack sincerity."

Second is fidelity -- *"in full assurance of faith"*. We are justified by faith. To the Hebrews it meant letting go of the law and fully receiving the New Covenant established upon better promises. We, therefore, come in worship not

only with sincerity of heart, but also in full assurance of faith in Jesus and the truth revealed in the New Testament.

Third is humility -- *"having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience."* We come, not in our own sufficiency, but totally on the merits of the blood of Jesus. This gives us a sense of unworthiness in the presence of God.

Fourth is purity -- *"and our bodies washed with pure water"*. The daily cleansing of the blood of Jesus comes through daily confession of our sin. Not all of life is worship, but all of life relates to our worship. You cannot live every day for the Devil and worship God acceptably on the Lord's Day or any other day.

Sincerity, fidelity, humility and purity -- these are prerequisites to worship. God is a living, eternal, glorious and holy Being worthy of our worship.

Clarence DeLoach

Brother DeLoach will be here April 28-May 1, 2002, for a meeting with us. Mark your calendars now to hear every lesson from this man of godly principles who is committed to preaching the truth.
-the Elders

"I saw a cartoon showing three smiling, happy-faced boys talking to a boy with a casual look and both hands in his pockets and the caption read: "We're out visiting 'one on one' for Bible class, but we figured it would take 'three on one' to get you to come."

After reading the cartoon and chuckling to myself I thought, "That's what it takes to get people in Bible class!" It was all in that one cartoon.

First: They knew who needed them. They knew who was absent.

Second: They cared enough to do something about it.

Third: They had a plan. Their plan was "three on one".

Fourth: They used their plan. They went to work.

The final ingredient I did not mention because we already have it here at West Side. What is it? Great Bible teachers! I'll see you in Bible class this Sunday. . . Bring your Bible!

written by Larry Roberts and adapted from

Warner Robbins c/C "Reflector"

The Greatest Challenge

The greatest challenge does not always come from without! Yes, it is true that this world and its agents can serve up persecutions and hurts in double portions. This is one reason we are warned to *"love not the world, neither the things that are in the world"* (I John 2:15). Satan is always busy using worldly things in an attempt to "devour us" (I Peter 5:8). "Ungodliness and worldly lusts" certainly have to be denied by the child of God on a daily basis. The impression must not be left that this world and Satan are not formidable foes. They will, as long as this world stands, present a continuous challenge to every living soul.

The greatest challenge, however, facing the child of God may very well come from within. It is not easy to crucify the old man (Romans 6:6), die to self (Galatians 2:20) and be content for the "old things to pass away" (II Corinthians 5:17). Unless a transformation takes place, the "old man" will never become a "new creature".

Our Lord admonishes, *"If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me"* (Matthew 16:24). Luke adds the word "daily" (9:23). It is a daily and not a weekly or monthly task of taking up one's cross as a Christian. The cost of discipleship is self-denial! The comforts, pleasures and conveniences that are so prevalent in this life must take a back seat when it comes to serving God. Many choose not to bear a burden, make a sacrifice or give up a comfort for the cause of Christ. It is easy to see that one who possesses such an attitude has not mastered the art of "denying self".

One question is of paramount importance. Are you a willing child of God? Think about it seriously, because it is indeed serious! What are you willing to do for the Lord and His church? What sacrifice would you gladly make so you can go to heaven? Before you begin your list, let's ask two penetrating questions. What are you doing now for the Lord and His church? What sacrifices are you now making for the cause of Christ? Do you see that the greatest challenge may come from within?

Let us ask other questions that perhaps will cause even the blind to see! Can the local congregation where you are a member count on you to be present each Lord's Day? Can they count on your contribution so the Lord's work might continue? Can they count on your help and service in needed areas? If you never attend services again, would the local congregation need to make immediate adjustments to fill the void -- or would there be no void to fill?

If you and I miss heaven, it will be because we have chosen to do so. Yes, the greatest challenge often comes from within!

Marvin L. Weir

The Race Is On

"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death: If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which I also am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing." Philippians 3:10-16

Anyone who desires to spend eternity with God must be conformed to the death of Christ (Philippians 3:10). This conformation only takes place in baptism (Romans 6:4-7). When one has been baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38), he then must begin his race toward eternity with God. Finishing the race and obtaining the prize requires at least four things.

First, if one truly wants to finish the race he/she must become dissatisfied with his/her present condition (Philippians 3:12). None of us are perfect. We have not even become as good as we can be.

However, many of us become satisfied with where we are and quit the race. One thing is certain, no one who quits the race will obtain the prize.

Second, if one wants to finish the race he/she must have determination (Philippians 3:13). The race we run as Christians is not on a flat track. It is a cross-country course with mountains and valleys, rivers and streams, thorns and thistles. God never promised an easy race. He did promise victory, however, to all those who endure to the end. Endurance requires determination.

Third, if one wants to finish the race he/she must have proper direction (Philippians 3:14). No runner has ever won a race looking behind him. We must keep our eyes focused on the finish line and our hearts focused on the prize. Too many Christians allow the obstacles of life to blind their upward vision. Too many Christians allow materialism to confuse their hearts and lead them toward the wrong prize. If one is going to obtain the prize he/she must be guided in the proper direction.

Fourth, if one is to finish the race and gain the prize he/she must have discipline (Philippians 3:16). It is not enough to be satisfied with your place and have determination to win. It is not even enough to have the proper direction. One must follow the rules if he/she is to be awarded the prize at the end of life. God has provided us with the rules in our copy of His book. Read the book, learn the rules and follow them completely, and God has promised

complete victory.

Mike Rogers

It Is Necessary to Continue

It has been said that "a good beginning ensures a good ending." This is not necessarily so. The Bible is replete with examples of those who began their walk with God, in full assurance of faith, but then fell from grace. Paul said of some in Galatia, "You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?" (Galatians 5:7). In the same letter he tells of those who "have fallen from grace" (5:4). But this does not have to be the tragic end. After beginning the Christian life, **we must continue**, and that is the key word. It is the continuation that is important.

We must continue in the grace of God. Paul and Barnabas found Jews and proselytes in Antioch who had been faithful to God under the law of Moses "who, speaking to them persuaded them to continue in the grace of God" (Acts 13:43).

We must continue in the faith. The faith that will save one today is not sufficient to save in the future. Faith must grow and strengthen. Paul returned to scenes of previous labor, "strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith" (Acts 14:22).

We must continue in the goodness of God. We can, however, reject that goodness and are thus warned: "Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you will be cut off" (Romans 11:22). We can know the goodness of God and yet fail to **continue** in that goodness. It is our choice.

We must continue in things learned. Paul, in writing to Timothy, said, "But you must continue in the things which you have learned" (2 Timothy 3:14). The life of a disciple is one of learning. He then must apply that which he has learned. In this we must **continue** if we will please our Lord.

We must continue in doctrine. This was demonstrated in the early church. "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine" (Acts 2:42). Paul encouraged Timothy to "Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you" (1 Timothy 4:16).

We must continue in the love of Christ. Jesus said, "As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love" (John 15:9). This shows that we can leave that love. Jesus also said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15). We must keep His commandments to continue in His love.

We must continue in prayer. Prayer is the life-line to divine communication. God has spoken to us through His Word, so we speak to Him in prayer. Paul exhorted the Colossians to "Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving" (Colossians 4:2). Paul summed it up like this: "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

It is not enough to begin. The life of Christ in us must continue, and we can then be able to say, "I can do all things through Christ Who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13).
--Gene Stilwell

via "The Reflector", Warner Robbins, GA

Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father. And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.

(1 John 2:24, 25)

Who Is a Christian?

"... and the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch" (Acts 11:26b).

There is considerable confusion in the minds of many as to what constitutes a Christian. Most people seem to think that anyone who professes any degree of belief in Christ, or who makes any claim of being so, is in fact a Christian. But is that true? Is there not more involved than that?

The Bible teaches that the gospel of Christ is God's power to save (Romans 1:16). In order for a person to become a Christian, he must not only hear and believe the gospel, he must also obey it! Notice what Christ Himself said: *"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved..."* (Mark 16:16). Notice the sixth chapter of the book of Romans: believers were freed from sin WHEN they obeyed from the heart the teaching they had received (Verses 16-18).

That teaching was the gospel, and they obeyed it by being baptized into the death of Christ and raised from the watery grave even as He was raised by God's power (Verses 6-11). While a lot of people go to Romans 5:1 to prove that salvation is by faith only, they ignore Chapter 1, Verse 5 and Chapter 16, Verse 26, both of which speak of "obedience of faith".

When one's personal faith leads him to obey the commands of Christ, i.e., the commands inherent in *"the faith once for all delivered to the saints"* (Jude 3), he THEN becomes a Christian. Thus, baptism of a sincere believer is "into Christ" (Galatians 3:26-27). The "pattern" is clearly revealed in Acts 2. Please note the gospel was preached (Verses 22-36), and those who believed it asked what they should do (Verse 37). They were told to "repent and be baptized" by the authority of Christ in order to receive the remission of their sins (Verse 38). Those who did so (Verse 41) were added to the Lord's church (Verse 47), which is the body of the saved (Ephesians 5:23) and the reconciled (Ephesians 2:16).

Some object to the concept of obedience by focusing all their attention on the grace of God. Certainly a great deal of attention needs to be focused on His grace because the Bible teaches that it is by His grace that salvation is made possible (Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:7, etc.). We would NOT minimize that for a moment and, indeed, we rejoice in His grace!

But it is misleading to make the "umbrella" of God's grace so inclusive as NOT to exclude anyone! The Bible excludes those who refuse to hear and see the truth (Matthew 13:15), who refuse to believe the truth (John 3:18, 36; Mark 16:16) and who do NOT obey the gospel (II Thessalonians 1:8-9). And, Jesus Himself taught that those who worship according to the doctrines of men do so in vain (Matthew 15:7-9).

One of the biggest problems I have with some of our brethren who have been embracing a liberal posture in recent years is their tendency to ignore such plain Bible teaching as given above in fraternizing with denominational error. These have emphasized God's grace so much that they seem to have convinced themselves God accepts everyone, regardless of false teaching. Best they re-read such passages as Romans 2:5-11; 16:17; Galatians 1:8-9; I Timothy 4:1ff; II Timothy 4:3-4; I John 4:1; II John 9-11; Revelation 2:2, 14-16, 20-25, etc.

Brethren, truth is of paramount importance! Through careful study we can know the truth (consider II Timothy 2:15; John 8:32, etc.). Let us believe the truth with all our hearts, live it daily in our lives and preach it in love (Ephesians 4:15), working while it is yet day (John 9:4) in reaching out to the lost with it.

Maxie Boren

Why Not Try Beginning Again?

Perhaps some reader has tried to be a Christian but failed. If so, why not try again? Great success does not always come from a single effort.

Worthwhile things are always worth fighting and striving for, even if we must try again and again. In the year 1917 a tornado destroyed our home, blew it away and ruined our crops on a farm before it tore up Carbon Hill, Alabama, and left the dead and homeless in its wake. But we did not give up or quit. The next Spring we found ourselves planting again, and soon we were growing a crop.

Life is much like that. Wars are not usually won by a single battle. But battle after battle must be fought before the victory is won. In a way some of these battles are lost, but *victory* belongs to those who win the last battle.

One young man started in to fight the cigarette habit but soon felt that the weed had conquered him. However, he decided that no man is licked who keeps on trying, again and again. So he summoned all his forces and marshaled them against this dangerous habit. A day at a time he vowed to his friends and to God that he would not smoke that day, regardless of what happened. Soon he had conquered a habit which is the master of millions in our land.

Very few spend a long life in the service of Christ without ever getting discouraged and, for the moment, giving up in despair. But those who overcome the world are they who (if need be) try again and again -- who refuse to surrender to the evil one. If they fail, they go

down fighting -- soon to rise again. It is easy to give up and quit when the going gets rough as it most certainly will -- sooner or later. Long roads usually have some detours and rough places over which one must travel in order to reach the desired destiny. The Christian life is like running a race (Hebrews 12:1; I Corinthians 9:25). If one fails, he should get up and try again. The new birth is sort of a "land of beginning again" (John 3:5). So is the restoration of an erring child of God (Galatians 6:1; James 5:19-20).

Gus Nichols

"God was at His best when He made humans.
He made four holes in the head for information to
go in and only one for it to go out."

"Lord, fill my mouth with worthwhile stuff,
and stop me when I've said enough."

ABC's of a Good Gospel Meeting

Advertise the meeting (There are post cards and door hangers in the foyer.)

Attend all the services.

Absorb all the lessons.

Always pray for the meeting.

Abound in good work.

Bring others to services.

Be reverent during worship.

Believe and apply each lesson.

Be courteous to all visitors.

Be enthusiastic.

Center your thoughts on spiritual things.

Create a friendly atmosphere.

Cancel interferences.

Call and invite others.

Continue to seek and save the lost.

Our meeting with Brother Burt Jones begins next week.

Do your part to make it a good one.

Responsibility Gladly Acknowledged and Accepted

In a book entitled Stories to Make You Feel Better Bennet Cerf cites a "personal

ad" that appeared in the Classified Section of a large metropolitan newspaper. It read:

"TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN: I am fully responsible for all debts and obligations of my wife Selma, both present and future, and I am delighted to be the provider for the woman who has borne me two fine children, listened patiently to all my gripes and helped me to keep on without giving up, even when things looked bad. On this, the 15th anniversary of our wedding, I am pleased and proud to express my love and gratitude to her publicly."

What a contrast that is to the "ads" which state that a certain person will no longer be responsible for debts and obligations incurred by certain (named) persons -- usually an ex-wife, sometimes a wife or other family member. This contrast focuses upon an attitude that applies in our personal, social and spiritual lives.

Marriage Responsibilities. The secret of a happy marriage is to accept not only the love and support of the other person, but also to accept responsibility and express loyalty and love for the other person. Marriage partners must work at building each other up in all important ways.

Marriage is a relationship of mutual support and cooperation, as well as mutual blessings and benefits. Each partner is equally obligated to the other and for the other.

Many are married only in name or under the law. They occupy space together, but often remain two isolated, selfish individuals. It may not become apparent until one does something the other does not like or approve, something the other doesn't want to support. Then it becomes clear for every one: "I accept no blame and I assume no responsibility for this (other) person."

The man who placed the ad quoted by Bennet Cerf reflects the true joy of a happy marriage where a sense of humor, love and commitment complement each other. It is a wise man who expresses his love and loyalty publicly.

Spiritual Responsibilities. The appropriate response of a person who is "married to Jesus Christ" is something like that of a husband and wife in marriage (Ephesians 5:21-33). Love moves us to accept responsibility for our Lord's cause - the work of the church, evangelizing the world, etc.

Obviously, we do not earn our salvation, but we must work at keeping it, or we will certainly lose it (Ephesians 2:8-10; Philippians 2:12-13; 2 Peter 1:10).

How can any Christian - one who is spiritually joined to Christ and identified with Christ - feel no responsibility for supporting and giving to the cause of Christ?

How can any Christian feel no obligation for carrying out the work which Christ has undertaken in behalf of the world?

What we do for each other in the name of Christ is actually a loving response to

those whom He also loves and desires to save (Galatians 5:6, 13; 6:2).

How can any Christian not want to work, worship and serve his Lord in whom every spiritual blessing is to be found (Ephesians 1:3)?

How can any Christian bear to be separated from (out of the presence and fellowship of) Christ and His people (Hebrews 10:21-25)?

Many apparently want to "share space" with Christ, but when there is a command or an obligation they do not like and do not want to honor and support, it quickly becomes apparent that there is no real *marriage* - no true discipleship.

When we joyfully accept our responsibilities to Christ, like the man in the article or advertisement, we are acting properly as the bride of Christ (Ephesians 5). Let us be willing to confess our love for Christ and our obligations to Him as well as our willingness to share responsibility for His ongoing work/cause/kingdom/church (His debts and obligations, both present and future). Let us do it publicly, in word and in action. Make sure that others know we belong to Him and that we are loyal to Him.

Gerald Cowan

via "Shield of Faith", Marion, IL

Don't Ruin the Invitation

Most preachers and Christians would agree that one of the most important parts of the sermon is the invitation. But do we ruin the invitation? Have we developed habits that distract souls who may need to respond to the Lord's invitation? We need to take a close look at self!

Don't ruin the invitation by failing to sing the invitation song. The song is for the purpose of causing self-examination. Each Christian should sing the invitation song with enthusiasm and sincerity. After all, the Bible says that we "*teach and admonish one another*" when we sing (Colossians 3:16).

Don't ruin the invitation by talking. This surely demonstrates a lack of respect for God and all present. The invitation song is not a time to visit with your neighbor.

Don't ruin the invitation by taking a rest-room break. Surely there are emergencies that arise, but this should be the only time, an emergency, when someone walks off to go to the restroom.

Don't ruin the invitation by getting out the songbook before it is time to sing. Why not leave the book beside you or hold it in your lap? We should not be "Quick-Draw McGraws" when it comes to getting the songbook too early.

Don't ruin the invitation by leaving or walking the halls or moving around in the foyer. It demonstrates a lack of concern for those who might be thinking about walking down one of the aisles in response to the message.

Let's be sure that we do not ruin the invitation. Souls are at stake. Our conduct will encourage or discourage individuals who may need to make things right with God!

- Bubba Phillips

Challenges of a Gospel Meeting

To make a gospel meeting work, we must be willing to accept the following challenges:

1) A gospel meeting is a challenge to our faith in the power of the gospel. Do we believe the gospel will save men? Did it save you? Do we believe it has the power to change the lives of men? Did it change your life? If we believe God's Word, we know He uses the Word to change sinful men. Every sinner has the right to be invited and be exposed to this great power the same as you had opportunity (Romans 1:16).

2) A gospel meeting is a challenge to every member of the church to work. Nothing will succeed without work. Every farmer knows that no hay will be harvested and no cattle will be taken to market without the sweat of his brow. There is joy in working for the Lord. Who wants to be guilty of shirking responsibility? (I Corinthians 15:58).

3) A gospel meeting is a challenge to our influence in the community. Have we been letting our light shine? Each member is duty-bound to brightly shine. It is impossible to conceive of living as the Bible teaches a Christian to live and failing to invite at least one person to attend a gospel meeting (Matthew 5:14-16).

4) A gospel meeting is a challenge to defeat the devil. Having a gospel meeting says to the devil, "You are in for a fight, and we are not giving one inch." Satan is bent on bringing sorrow and heartache into the world -- we can bring glad tidings, joyful singing and a happy face to the meeting (James 4:7).
via "The Key Word"

Our gospel meeting with Brother Burt Jones is scheduled for November
4-7.

Begin now to meet these challenges.

Stand Tall Even If, at Times, You Have to Stand Alone

"All that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12). Have you ever felt like you were carrying the world on your shoulders because of the response given to your Bible-based convictions? Ever, like Elijah, thought *"I, even I only am left"* (1 Kings 19:9, 10)?

Have you ever had ugly things said about you because you stood against ecumenism; Promise Keepers; mechanical instruments of music, praise teams and drama presentations and such being introduced into worship? Ever been ridiculed for defending what the Bible says about marriage, the role of submission for women in the home or God's purpose and pattern for baptism? Ever, like the Psalmist *"Mine enemies reproach me"* (Psalm 102:7-9)?

Have you ever struggled to remain spiritually balanced? When those to the extreme left question your intelligence and think of you as a radical... or... when those to the extreme right question your allegiance and you as a liberal, is it increasingly difficult *"to keep right on, and... turn not to the right hand or to the left"* (Proverbs 4:25-27)?

If so, read the "Epistle of Encouragement" Jesus dictated to the church in Smyrna. Especially note *"Be thou faithful unto death..."* (Revelation 2:8-11). Remember:

"If ye should suffer for righteousness' sake, blessed are ye: and fear not... neither be troubled; but sanctify in your hearts Christ Jesus as Lord... that, wherein ye are spoken against, they may be put to shame who revile your good manner of life in Christ" (1 Peter 3:14-16).

May we always have the courage to stand tall even if, at times, we have to stand alone.

Dan Winkler

What Repentance Is (And Is Not)

Repentance is the universal responsibility of mankind. God has commanded everyone to repent (Acts 17:30). He is patiently waiting for men to do so. Jesus taught that whoever will not repent will perish (Luke 13:30). Without repentance, God will not forgive sins (Acts 8:22). Since it is essential to obtaining and maintaining our salvation, it is vital to know exactly what repentance is and what it is not.

Repentance is not just being sorry for sins. Godly sorrow brings about repentance. *"For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death"* (2 Corinthians 7:10). The cause of repentance cannot be the same thing as the effect.

Do not confuse repentance with reporting sins. Merely admitting one has committed sin is not the same as repenting of it. Though Pharaoh said, *"I have sinned,"* the sacred record does not indicate he ever repented. In fact, he continued to harden his heart until he was finally destroyed in the Red Sea with the rest of his army (Exodus 14).

Psalm 136:13-15). Likewise, King Saul admitted, "I have sinned," but he, too, died in his sin.

The passage of time is not equal to repentance. Sins must be taken care of, not ~~if you God~~ *for God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil*" (Ecclesiastes 12:14). Given enough time men usually forget their sins, but God does not.

Repentance occurs when a person experiences godly sorrow and then has a change of mind. Godly sorrow occurs in a person's heart when he recognizes his actions are contrary to the will of God. Worldly sorrow is not regret for being caught. Jesus illustrated repentance by referring to a father and his two sons (Matthew 21:28, 30). The first son defied his father's will, but later obeyed. This change in attitude is called "repentance".

John the Baptist taught repentance bears fruit (Luke 3:8, 9). The Old Testament taught the necessity of returning stolen things (Leviticus 6:2-7). Zacchaeus offered to restore fourfold (Luke 19:8). If a man was guilty of stealing cars, his repentance would be questioned if he refused to return the stolen cars, or if he continued to steal cars.

Considering the preceding information, repentance can be defined as a change of will caused by godly sorrow which leads to reformation of life. Repentance can and should occur quickly. Jesus taught that a man should repent seven times in one day (Luke 17:3, 4). Repentance can occur as soon as a person is willing to turn away from sin and live according to God's law. It is never wise to remain in sin because it hardens the heart (Hebrews 3:12).

Repentance is perhaps one of the most difficult commands God has ever given mankind. It requires admission of guilt and the determination to do better. Since sin entered the world it has been man's responsibility to fight temptation and sin (Genesis 4:7). Unfortunately, not enough people take this charge seriously. As a result, sin has gained the mastery over them. Do not let this happen to you.

Douglas Hoff, Effingham, IL

Important Rules for Worrying

- 1. Never worry** unless you can worry about one problem at a time.
- 2. Never worry** until you have set a definite time to worry.
- 3. Never worry** over rumors, "they say". Always wait for the facts.
- 4. Never worry** with a frowning face; wait until you have a smile and a song on your lips.
- 5. Never worry** in a room unless it has an air conditioner and an easy chair.
- 6. Never worry** about a problem until you know what it is; write it down and face it.

7. **Never worry** while you are tired or sick.

8. **Never worry** unless you have set a time limit for your worrying.

9. **Never worry** while at work, play, shopping or talking.

10. **Never worry** about not having someone who cares "*Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you*" (1 Peter 5:7). "*Be careful (anxious) for nothing; but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace that passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus*" (Philippians 4:6, 7).

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