

Elder's Corner 2001

The End Is Before the Beginning

Bulletin 12/23/01

"I have found God is not an end in itself, but a beginning." -- Franz Rosensweig.

When we think about "end," what do we envision? Do we visualize it as final, finished, completed or accomplished? Let us examine this concept of "end" so that we can truly understand what the word "beginning" means. Before a beginning, there must be something that has ended. Even when God created the world and everything in it, as recorded for us in Genesis, there was an end before "the beginning".

"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:" (Ephesians 1:4). You see, God had finished choosing those who would enjoy heaven even before He created Adam and Eve. They were not to be a special nationality, race or denomination. Those who are to enjoy heaven are the obedient. *"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven"* (Matthew 7:21).

When Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden, it was the end of innocence and the beginning of sin in the world. When Noah ended the building of the ark, it was the beginning of the rain. When the tenth plague was upon the Egyptians, it was the end of bondage but the beginning of the exodus toward the promised land. When Jesus spoke while upon the cross and said, "It is finished," He had accomplished his purpose.

John the Baptist said, *"Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world"* (John 1:29). It was the end of His earthly ministry, but the beginning of the church. It was the end of animal sacrifices and the beginning of worship as we know it today. It was the end of the Law of Moses and the beginning of grace and truth. *"For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ"* (John 1:17).

When Peter preached on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, it was the end of the old law and the beginning of salvation by belief, confession, repentance and being baptized for the remission of sins. *"How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"* (Hebrews 9:14). When one obeys this gospel, it is the end of a worldly life and a beginning of a spiritual life. *"Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication. uncleanness. inordinate affection. evil concupiscence. and*

covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:" (Colossians 3:5-10).

Perhaps this is what Franz Rosensweig had in mind when he wrote the above quote. Regardless, the concept is correct. We Christians at West Side have at one point ended our old life and begun a new life. This beginning is one we should take very seriously like the athlete running for the touchdown who never takes his eyes off the goal. Unlike previous beginnings, we can truly appreciate this one, for it will have no end, because it is eternal. "*In the beginning...*" (Genesis 1:1). . . to

"And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end: (Revelation 21:6). "*I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last*" (Revelation 22:13). the Elders

Getting More Out of Our Christian Day Bulletin 12/16/01

Recently I was given an article entitled "Get More Out of Your Work Day" and asked how we could apply this to our Christian life. It explained what we all have sometimes experienced: "There just aren't enough hours in the day," characterizing it as the feeling that you never have enough time to accomplish every- thing you need to do, let alone the things you really want to do. How can we squeeze more time into our days and feel better about what we've accomplished? In applying this to our Christian life, we would ask ourselves this question: How can we get more out of our Christian day?

Suggestion #1 taken from article: There may be things you do every day simply out of habit that don't need to be done. Evaluate your daily activities and ask yourself what would happen if you didn't perform each individual task.

Applied to our Christian day: Have you accumulated some habits that need to be stopped? Sometimes our sin has become so routine that we overlook it. Would my daily Christian life be better without this activity? Would my going to heaven be hampered by this habit? Would I be embarrassed being involved in this activity with my Lord present?

Suggestion #2 taken from article: Set realistic deadlines. Don't kill yourself with self-imposed deadlines.

Applied to our Christian day: Rearrange projects so you aren't unduly rushed. There is a lot of truth in that old saying, "Haste makes waste." Sometimes we hurry through life so fast that the beauty around us is wasted by not being appreciated properly. We need to "take time to smell the roses" and enjoy that which God has created for us. This will allow time to show your new-found appreciation to God for all He has done for us.

Suggestion #3 taken from article: Reorganize your routine. Does the same crisis occur month after month? Identify the root causes of time loss and deal with them tactfully.

Applied to our Christian day: Avoid situations which cause you to act in an un-Christian manner, whether it be better control of our tongue or avoiding places and circumstances which foster inappropriate Christian behavior. Don't be caught up in office gossip, electric conversation with members of the opposite sex, being in places and circumstances which cast a shadow over your character.

Suggestion #4 taken from article: Take charge. Don't let other people control your time. When you are truly busy, let them know (politely, of course).

Applied to our Christian day: Take charge of your life. Have you taken up with friends who influence you to do wrong? Maybe it started with a desire to convert them to Christ, but now it seems that they are converting you back to the world. Choose your time spent with them wisely. Use it to the best advantage possible.

West Side church application: Getting more out of your time may be as simple as getting more time out of you. It's a fact, more time

doing good leaves less time for doing evil. Get more involved, volunteer, counsel, encourage, comfort, be there for someone, be a good listener, support the needy and involve yourself in the host of other activities which will prove the truth of what Jesus said: "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

-- the Elders

"We Are All the Strings of His Joy!"

Bulletin 12/09/01

The above quote was made by Jakob Boehme. The Bible says:

*"For the body is not one member, but many. If the **foot** shall say, Because I am not the **hand**, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the **ear** shall sav. Because I am not the **eve**. I am not of the bodv: is it therefore not of*

*the body? If the whole body were an **eye**, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the **eye** cannot say unto the **hand**, I have no need of thee: nor again the **head** to the **feet**, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. No ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."*

-- I Corinthians 12:14-27

As we can see from this passage of Scripture, every member has a purpose in the church.

How important is a single member in other areas? How would a quartet sound with only three members? How would an orchestra sound if the violins were missing? Would a duet sound like a duet with only one person? The automobile manufacturer puts together many, many parts to make a vehicle; when one part is not working, the vehicle does not operate properly. There may be some parts that perform the same task, like wheels, but all are nonetheless a vital part of the whole. A six-stringed guitar would not make the same unique sound with one of its strings missing.

How do you fit in the church? Do you feel like you're fulfilling your purpose? Would the church be that which it could be without your participation? These are important self-examining questions. Everyone's full participation is a necessary element in the church being what it can be. The West Side congregation is fortunate to have members who can fulfill every purpose that God has set forth in the church. However, just like the vehicle designed with four wheels, each person is needed to complement the whole. Think of yourself as "a string in the concert of His joy". Let us all contribute to the harmony. *"For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ..."* (II Corinthians 2:15).

the Elders

Is the King in Residence?
Bulletin 12/02/01

"Jov is the flaa flvina over the citadel of the soul indicatina that the King

is in residence." (Author unknown) There are always outward signs of inward activity. We see on occasion at the grocery store cans bulging at the seams which indicates spoiled goods inside. We see movement, lights turned on/off, sounds, etc., to indicate someone is at home. We see smoke coming from a chimney which indicates a fire is burning. There are, as indicated from this quote, official outward signs which indicate certain things. For example, there is a distinctive sign to indicate that the Queen of England is in the palace, a distinctive sign which indicates our Congress and Senate are in session, that indicates the presence of our President. Many other outward and visible signs are given to indicate activity or presence inside.

What kind of outward sign do we have as a Christian that indicates the presence of Christ in our heart? The quote above tells us in a figurative way that the expression of joy is an outward sign. Some would try to mask or hide what is inside, but God has given us this joy and expects it to be a visible sign of His presence. This doesn't mean we laugh all the time and are never serious. It means we have the ability to enjoy life to its fullest, no matter what the circumstances. Oh, I know there are times of sadness, times of a very serious nature, but even in these times, there is an inner joy that comes from knowing that all things pass, that there is a better place, a better life in store for us as Christians when this life is over. Death is not the end for a Christian, but a beginning of a new life with God in heaven. This joy should be an outward sign that attracts others to God, a sign held high for all to see. After all, Christians have more to be joyful about than any other people on the face of the earth. Your daily life will be enriched by having knowledge of the blessings which God has in store for His people. An understanding of these blessings will naturally result in an expression of joy.

How do we "fly this flag of joy"? By living an obedient life; having a friendly attitude, a willingness to go the "extra mile" and a sincere desire to help others. We also have a realization of our responsibility toward God, toward our fellow man and toward ourselves. We must realize that the source of our joy comes from association with other Christians, worshipping God in spirit and truth, remembering the great sacrifice of Jesus that gives us the hope of eternal life.

The next time you, as the West Side Church of Christ, come together, look around you and see for yourself the "flag of joy" flying high to indicate that truly "the King is in residence." the Elders

Let's Roll!
Bulletin 11/25/01

By now any of us who have watched TV in the past few weeks are familiar with the phrase "Let's Roll". It was first uttered by the brave young man to his fellow heroes who kept the flight that crashed in a field in New Jersey from

reaching its projected target. The folks on that flight will always be remembered for their courage in standing up to the terrorist who had earlier commandeered the plane.

More recently our President, Mr. Bush, used the same expression with reference to the above mentioned event, whereupon he vowed a committal of "Let's Roll" in pursuit of our enemies. Our nation is at an all-time awareness of the fact that we have adversaries.

God's people, on the other hand, have been aware of our adversary, the devil, for centuries. James warned, *"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour"* (James 5:8).

Through the Word we are told how to do battle with him.

Don't give place to him (Ephesians 4:27).

Stand against him (Ephesians 6:11).

Resist him (James 4:7).

One of our enemies, the false prophet, does not wear a turban so as to be easily identified. Rather, he will be in sheep's clothing while inwardly he will be a ravening wolf (Matthew 7:15).

We will continually need to be at war with sin and all that is associated with it. The battle has never been easy. Each new generation will have to put on the armor and go into conflict. *"Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil"* (Ephesians 6:11).

Our spiritual strength here at West Side is at an all-time pinnacle. Let's continue to strive to be like the church Paul wrote to in Ephesians 4:1-3: *"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."*

The timing is right. . . Let's Roll!

the Elders

A Revival?

Bulletin 11/19/01

Last week we were participants in one of the most energetic gospel meetings in three decades here at West Side. Brother Burt Jones fulfilled his part in the pulpit preaching in a most professional manner. Each sermon was well-designed and punctual in content and delivery. The congregational singing was outstanding, making for an uplifting spirit and complimented the lessons nightly.

There was a host of visitors at every service, several who returned night after night. Nine precious souls have been baptized into Christ, and 24 were restored with renewed commitment to their lives in Christ.

Daniel Webster (1782-1852) describes in his book the term "revival": "An evangelistic service for the purpose of affecting a religious awakening." Brethren, we just concluded a REVIVAL here in Salem at West Side!

"Revive us again: Fill each heart with Thy love; May each soul be rekindled, with fire from above." We commend every effort on the part of each of you who made this past week such a tremendous success. A special thanks to our own Eddy and Miss Glenna for the important coordinating done prior to the meeting's start.

Our minds reflect on the powerful text found in Isaiah 55:11: *"So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."* Let's not let up now, but keep the good memories of the events of this past week in our hearts and be more resolved to work harder in the months ahead.

As your elders we are grateful for the privilege to work and serve with such a devoted, persevering flock of God's people. To Him be the glory in all things.

-- Collin, Charlie, Rob, Bobby

The Joy of Worship Bulletin 11/12/01

"Mom, LOOK at what we did in Bible class," says the little boy when he comes running out to meet her. It is no wonder that Jesus said, *"Let the little children come to Me" (Mark 10:14). My heart is always filled with joy when I see little children so eager to tell someone about their study of Jesus.*

Sometimes when "aoina to church" becomes a dutv or drudaerv instead of

joy, I have to ask myself why. All too often the answer comes back to me that I have either not prepared my mind for worship or that I am not taking an active part in worship. Oh sure, I sing the words to the songs and hear what the teacher imparts, but do I really listen?

When Jesus returned to His home- town of Nazareth and went to the synagogue, instead of listening to what He had to say, they began talking about Him as just one of the local boys. Do I treat Jesus in this manner today by just "going to church"?

"But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth there-0 in, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed." James 1:25

via Gloster Street "Messenger"

*"I was **glad** when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD."* Psalm 100:1
the Elders

Six Reasons Why I Want to Attend Every Service of our Meeting Bulletin 11/04/01

1. Because I'm hungry for the Book. *"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6).*

2. Because I'm all that some people know about the church of Jesus. *"Ye are the light of the world... let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:14, 16).*

3. Because the members of the church are going to come together for worship, and it would be a sin for me to miss that assembly. *"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is... (Hebrews 10:25).*

4. Because I am always looking for good ways to boost the Christians at West Side. *"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; BUT EXHORTING ONE ANOTHER..." (Hebrews 10:25).*

5. Because I passionately hate and abhor the devil, and I want him to know it. *"Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good" (Romans 12:9).*

6. Because I love God... more than anything or anyone else... and how better can I show Him during these evenings? *"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind" (Luke 10:27).*

We'll look forward to seeing you! -- the Elders

Taking Personal Responsibility
Bulletin 10/28/01

Throughout the Bible we find cases of people who would not assume personal responsibility for their actions. When we have done that which is wrong, we should be mature enough to stand accountable for what we have done. This world would be a better place if people in general would do this instead of trying to blame others for what they do.

From the beginning we find in the book of Genesis Adam and Eve who disobeyed God by eating the forbidden fruit. Yet, when God asked them to account for their actions, they tried to blame others instead of admitting that the wrongdoing was ultimately their fault. Adam blamed Eve, and in a sense, blamed God as well, for having given Adam his wife. Eve, not having anyone else to blame, blamed the serpent for what she had done. So, even from the very beginning of creation we find people who, time after time, did that which was wrong but were not mature enough to take responsibility for their actions.

As we come further in the Scriptures, we find in the book of I Samuel that King Saul did the exact same thing that Adam and Eve had done in the beginning. When God gave specific orders for Saul and his army to go and destroy the Amalekites and all of their animals, what did Saul do that caused him to lose his kingdom? Saul spared the life of Agag, who was the king of the Amalekites. Also, Saul spared the best of the animals, when his instructions were to utterly destroy all of the Amalekites and all of their animals. Saul just did not do as he had been told.

But what happened when he was told to give account of his actions? King Saul blamed the people for not having killed all of the animals, but at the same time tried to justify the people's actions just in case his excuse was not acceptable. Saul told Samuel that the best of the animals had been spared so that they could offer them unto Jehovah. As we carefully study all of I Samuel 15, it becomes apparent that one of the lessons that the Lord wanted all of us to learn was that the day will come when all of us will have to give account to God, and no excuse we may offer will be acceptable before Him. Another lesson that we all are to learn from the incident of Adam and Eve eating of the forbidden tree and Saul's refusing to do what he had been told is that we should take personal responsibility for our actions and be willing to suffer the consequences. Do we blame others sometimes for the things we do? AI

Macias

via "The Southwestern", Austin, TX

Gospel Meeting
Bulletin 10/21/01

We have a gospel meeting scheduled **November 4-7** with **Brother Burt Jones**. We need to be prepared to do our part to make this meeting one of our best. Brother Jones is an outstanding gospel preacher and song leader, and we know he will do his job of preaching the truth of God's Word in a wonderful and capable manner.

To do our job to make this meeting a success, let us start NOW praying for the meeting, that many will hear the gospel as we do our part in inviting our friends and neighbors to attend. Pray that they will be receptive to the gospel. We also need to be present at each service ourselves, because it is hard to convince others of the importance of the gospel when we do not show up ourselves to hear it taught. In fact, not showing up demonstrates that our religion doesn't mean very much to us.

Let's greet every visitor with a warm welcome and make them feel they are special and we want them to come back. Be ready to provide transportation for someone who needs it.

During the meeting, join in the song service with all your hearts. God has promised that His Word will not return unto Him void, but will do what pleases Him (Isaiah 55:11). Let's really work hard and give the glory to God.

The Elders

John 3:16
Bulletin 10/14/01

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

What a soul-stirring, heart-warming sentence! someone has called it "the golden text of all the golden texts of the Bible". That may be true, but our human judgment of what particular sentence in the Bible is the most important may be right or wrong. It proves nothing. Certainly, I have no desire to take from this passage one ray of its bright glory. Neither do I wish to use this or any other "text" to cancel out other plain passages of God's Word. We should try to get out of every sentence what is in it. What is in this verse?

1. God
2. The degree of God's love - "so loved"
3. The world - mankind. Some have limited this love to a limited number. That denies this verse!

4. The gift of God's love - His only begotten Son
5. Belief
6. Perishing
7. Eternal life

Does anyone think when he reads or memorizes this verse that he has understood it?

If you had read everything in the New Testament except the book of John, you would know every- thing taught in John 3:16. Great truths are many times repeated. If you read carefully Romans 5:1-11; Hebrews 2:9; 2 Peter 3:9 and 1 Timothy 1:15; 2:3, 4 and Acts 11:18 and 22:16, you will know

If you do not know these and many other pass- ages, you can have a very limited and a very erroneous idea of what John 3:16 teaches. Suppose you clip this verse out (or quote it) and tell a man who has not seen a Bible, "Read this. This tells you all you need to know to be saved." Here are some of the questions he might ask that are not answered in John 3:16.

1. Which God?

2. Who is God? You start telling him and he says, "But those things are not mentioned in this verse!"

3. Is believing the only thing I must do? You say, "Oh, you must love God. You must repent." He replies, "But I don't find either my love of God or repentance in this verse." You could not tell him he must love God and repent unless you had read about these conditions in other passages. You did not learn of them in John 3:16.

4. Who is this only begotten Son of God? I didn't know God had a Son.

5. Was He on earth? Is He here?

6. How can I believe on Him? You can't tell him, because you would have to quote something besides John 3:16. If you mention His birth, His signs which are recorded "*that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God*" (John 20:30, 31), he would say, "I didn't know He was born. I didn't know He did signs. Am I supposed to learn these things by reading this verse?"

7. What is meant by God's giving His Son? You can't tell him if you stick strictly to your text. You can't tell the facts of the Gospel - the death, burial and

resurrection of Christ. They are not mentioned in John 3:16. You can't give him the evidence of prophecy. That is not in John 3:16.

You can quote every verse in the New Testament on the design of baptism to many people, and they will dispose of them all by saying baptism is not mentioned in John 3:16. I was told in West Texas once that a certain town people were singing "John 3:16", not even quoting it. But they had not set Mark 16:16 or Acts 22:16 to music. Why not? There is a popular slogan by some which says, "Faith plus nothing saves." Paul says all faith minus love equals nothing (I Corinthians 13:2). He also says faith plus love plus works (obedience) avails. You might read John on that, too (I John 2:3, 4).

J. Early Arceneaux (deceased)

Security

Bulletin 10/07/01

Much emphasis has been placed on security in the world since the tragedy of September 11, and rightly so. It seems the country is in an awakened period. This is good, although there were many innocent people who lost their lives for which we are very concerned and sorry. It is hoped the ones responsible for this tragedy will be brought to justice.

The most important security should be placed on our souls. This can only come through full obedience to the will of God. We may prosper with worldly goods and think this is security. This is true, so far as our lives are in this world, but the Bible teaches this is not real security at all.

The soul of each person is his most important possession. *"For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"* (Matthew 16:26; Mark 8:36).

We need to make sure of the security of our souls by living true Christian lives after obeying the gospel and being added to the church (Acts 2:47).

Blessed Assurance

Bulletin 9/30/01

Doubt is the antithesis of faith. Faith and doubt can't occupy the same heart. Knowing this, Satan is committed to planting doubt in our hearts. We need assurance!

* *Assurance of salvation.* Too many of us are living and dying with our fingers crossed. There's no need for this. Jesus said, *"You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"* (John 8:32). We can know we are saved, heaven-bound people. John writes, *"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life..."* (I John 5:13).

* *Assurance of forgiveness.* In Christ we have forgiveness, total forgiveness. Those in Acts 2 were promised remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit if they would repent and submit to baptism. But what about after baptism? What if I fail again? God made provisions for our failures. *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his son cleanseth us from all sin"* (I John 1:9, 7).

* *Assurance of His continual power and presence.* Scripture tells us that *"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble"* (Psalm 46:1) and *"I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee"* (Hebrews 13:5). The best way to overcome doubt is to replace it with faith. *"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"* (Romans 10:17).

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!

O what a foretaste of glory divine!

Heir of salvation, purchase of God

Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.

Randall Caselman

A Hopeless End or An Endless Hope?

Bulletin 9/23/01

Are you heading for a hopeless end, or do you have an endless hope? Paul, noting the plight of the Ephesians before they became Christians, wrote: *"Therefore, remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh... that at that time you were without Christ... having no hope and without God in the world"* (Ephesians 2:11-12, NKJV). Without Christ, one has no hope. Without Christ, one is destined for a hopeless end.

Paul went on to remind the Christians in Ephesus of the hope they enjoyed in Christ: *"But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been*

brought near by the blood of Christ" (Ephesians 2:13). Because Jesus shed His blood on the cross as a payment for sin, and because these Ephesians had come in contact with the cleansing blood of Christ through faith, repentance and baptism, they **now** had hope.

With Christ, one has an endless hope. Peter also reminded some suffering Christians of their hope in Christ: *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a **living hope** through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time"* (I Peter 1:3-5). Peter's audience had been "begotten" (or born) again when they were born of the water and the Spirit (John 3:5) in baptism. Theirs was a **living** hope because it was based on the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Christians have a living hope because the Savior lives!

With Christ, one may proclaim along with the writer of the book of Hebrews: *"This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast"* (Hebrews 6:19). An anchor is used to provide stability, even in the times of storm. In the same way, one's hope in Christ gives stability in the storms that life brings.

Lives are often tragically ended in this world today. There is, however, a greater tragedy -- to die without Christ, having no hope. As Gilbert Beenken has well stated: "Other men see only a hopeless end, but the Christian rejoices in an endless hope." Do you see a hopeless end, or are you rejoicing in an endless hope?

God bless you. -- David A. Sargent minister/Church of Christ at
Creekwood Mobile, AL
www.creekwoodcc.org

"It Is Not Worth the Effort?"

Bulletin 9/16/01

So often the old Devil seeks to discourage us by hindering the Lord's work. He is a master at discouraging the brethren. He knows every trick and ploy. So often godly saints want to quit and say, "It's not worth the effort."

Often ELDERS grow discouraged because sheep stray and reject all efforts to save them. Many members could not care less that brethren grow weak and die spiritually, so they become grounds of discouragement by hindering the reclamation and discipline of the lost members. Elders often feel, "It is not worth the effort."

Often DEACONS grow discouraged because so few will cooperate with them in getting the job done. Other deacons do not bear their fair share of the load, and this discourages, too. They say, too, "It is not worth the effort."

Often BIBLE SCHOOL TEACHERS grow discouraged. Students do not study their lessons and, if comments are made, half are wrong or off the point! Many act as if Bible study is an "optional expedient" instead of "growth unto salvation". Then the old expression arises: "It is not worth the effort."

Often PREACHERS despair. People often fail to react as they should to the Word. Preacher's words and actions are often misunderstood, misrepresented or actually opposed, so he becomes discouraged. After years of study, application and faithful service, a handful of brethren can destroy the preacher's work by getting the ear of the eldership, so the preacher says, "It is not worth it."

All of us have felt this on occasion about something we are doing for the Lord's cause. But through it all we must remember what we do, we do for God! Many times it takes tremendous effort to persevere in our work in the Kingdom. Only those who have been there really understand the unremitting toil, sacrifice, time and effort, and even money it takes to continually achieve for the Master (in any of the above roles). No one else may even notice, much less sympathize or help.

But GOD notices.

GOD cares.

GOD is concerned,

and GOD will ultimately make it all right.

It may not be worth the effort if it is for money we serve, or for favor or for popularity, or for any of a hundred other reasons. But for God, IT IS WORTH IT!
Hang in there! Andrew Connally (deceased)

What Obedience Is All About

Bulletin 9/09/01

We sing with passion, "Oh, how I love Jesus!" And then we step out and light a cigarette on the way to the car. We join in the chorus of "Send the light!" Yet we shrug as the collection plate is passed our way. We close our eyes and lift our voices to God, "Swiftly we're turning life's daily pages... Into our hands the gospel is given." When was the last time we spoke to someone about Christ? "Oh, how I love Jesus!" Yet, wasn't it Jesus who said, *"If you love me, you will keep my commandments"* (John 14:15).

Obedience is about truly loving the Lord. That means dying to our sinful pasts and living each day for Him. Should there be a word uttered from our lips that doesn't in some way praise God and promote the cause of Christ? No! Is there any activity in which we should be engaged for which we cannot give thanks to the Father? Not a chance! Obeying Christ is loving Christ, living FOR Him, IN Him and THROUGH Him.

But oftentimes we have a slanted view of obedience. We've been baptized, we show up for worship at least once a week and maybe even more! My ticket is punched! I'm a Christian, and the Lord is sure lucky to have me on His side! No, I don't have time Saturday to help knock doors--I've got a golf tournament that day. What's that? No, I can't make it to Bible class Wednesday night. The job keeps me away late and, if by chance I do get home in time, well, I'll be too tired. Sunday morning? Yes, I'll be there. But not for class. It's too early, and Sunday is the only day I have to sleep in. I'll wander in just before they pass the bread... gotta have my ticket punched, you know. Sunday night?!?! I was already there for almost an hour Sunday morning! What else do you expect!? I've got a life--bills to pay, a family to take care of. What song are we singing? "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus! Sweetest name I know!"

Is this YOUR view of the obedient, faithful Christian life? Is this what you feel is pleasing to Christ? It doesn't please Him; on the contrary, it breaks His heart.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, left heaven above and took on the form of man, the form of a servant. He lived the perfect, sinless life that is to be the pattern for ours. He became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross (Philippians 2:8), so that you and I could live... for HIM! "If you love Me, you'll keep my commandments." Not your desires, your appointments, your will or your life... but HIS!

"Who will follow Jesus? Who will make reply? I am on the Lord's side! Master, Here am I!"

Henry J. Machado, Jr.

Christianity
Bulletin 9/2/01

Christianity is not the religion of sorrow and gloom: it is the religion of the morning, and it carries in its heart the happiness of heaven.

Christianity is not a restraint, but an inspiration--not a weight, but wings; not subtraction, but addition.

Christianity brings bloom for faded hearts, rejuvenation for the prematurely old, imagination for the dry, literal mind.

Christianity is not a kill-joy at the feat of life, nor a kind of incarnate "don't". It bristles with affirmatives, fires the soul with permanent enthusiasms and durable loyalties.

Christianity leaves a trail of light wherever it goes; it can keep you cool under any confusion, bring you up smiling from any depth and utterly banish your fret and worry.

Christianity brings zest and sparkle to life; it is sunshine on the flowers rather than moonlight on the snow; it is life more abundant; it is leaving the little narrow life behind and leaving it forever. --H.E. Brown

Jesus said, "... I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." John 10:10

The Big Picture

Bulletin 8/26/01

How would you like to have the big picture of the Old Testament encapsulated into one chapter of the Bible containing sixty verses? This would no doubt help us in our interpretation of the sacred scriptures. It would help us in relaying information to others that could cause them to obey the truth. It could serve as a beginning point for any Bible study. If it were memorized, it would make good conversation with other Christians. If we were able to possess such an encapsulated version of the Old Testament from Abraham to Jesus, wouldn't it be a great asset to your Christian life.

Well, such is available to you right now. No, I'm not talking about the Reader's Digest version of the Bible, which may or may not have been accurate. This encapsulated version is guaranteed to be one hundred percent accurate, because it is inspired of God. I am referring to Stephen's discourse recorded for our benefit in Acts 7. He begins with Abraham and continues expounding upon circumstances which involve Joseph, Jacob, Moses, the forty years in the wilderness, the delivering of the ten commandments to Moses, Aaron's introduction of the golden calf, David and Solomon. Stephen ended his brief oratory by seeing the Son of man standing on

the right hand of God. This relatively short discourse cost him his life, for Stephen was stoned to death (V. 59). The Bible ends one phase and enters another with the first verse of Chapter 8 and the introduction of Paul the great apostle. But no greater amount of information on the overall big picture of the Old Testament can be found than that of Stephen. Let us, as Bible students at West Side, not

overlook the importance of a little-known Christian of the first century named Stephen. -- the Elders

Sight to the Blind

Bulletin 8/19/01

"Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me" (Acts 26:17, 18). This verse is the greatest example of the true message of a disciple of Jesus Christ in all of the New Testament. God's ultimate desire is summed up in these words, "... *that they may receive forgiveness of sins...*"

"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). Our job as workers for God is to open people's eyes spiritually so that they may be turned from darkness to light. It is painfully obvious that there is an abundance of the ungodly and those who profess to be Christians, those who are caught up in denominationalism and false doctrines. Their physical eyes are open, but they are spiritually blind.

"Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are for they are white already to harvest" (John 4:35). Remember how we ourselves had our spiritual eyes opened by being taught and obeying God's Word. *"But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you"* (Romans 6:17). *"Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart"* (Ephesians 6:6). This is the plan that God has for us as his people: To (1) realize the lost condition of those around us, (2) remembering the joy of the forgiveness of our own sins and (3) accepting the responsibility of teaching the Word of God to open the eyes of the spiritually blind.

Some may make vows and promises and may be determined to follow through, but these are "wells without water" when the Gospel is not shared with others. Are you willing to accept God's plan? Is West Side as a congregation willing to accept God's plan? Let each of us pick a point from a sermon or Bible class and share it with someone. It just might be your opportunity to play a part in *"giving sight to the blind"*.

- the Elders

Are You a Friend of the Bridegroom?

Bulletin 8/12/01

"He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:29-30). Being a friend of the bridegroom is an honorable relationship. However, sometimes the most difficult job for the friend is doing nothing that would draw attention away from the Bridegroom himself. This might mean avoiding a boisterous or loud disposition. It might mean the use of less eloquent language or clothing. It might mean considering our own possessions to be his also. A true friend of the Bridegroom would want all attention to be given to the Bridegroom. He would want to decrease and allow the Bridegroom to increase.

To maintain this friendship and faithfulness to the Bridegroom, we have to be constantly aware of how we appear to others. A Christian can actually be a means of diverting a person's focus away from Jesus Christ. Suppose we are such an eloquent speaker that the tickling of ears becomes more important than truth. Suppose we are arrayed in such fine apparel that more attention is given to the physical

than to what is said. Suppose we are so boisterous and loud that we turn away the meek and soft-spoken. Instead of being friends "of the bridegroom" we may find ourselves working against Him.

As members of Christ's church here at West Side, we are His bride; however as in most marriages, it begins with friendship. Let us remember our place and responsibility to be a friend and to honor the Bridegroom.

the Elders

All Efforts of Worth and Excellence Are Difficult

Bulletin 8/05/01

"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matthew 7:13-14). If we are going to live as disciples of Jesus, we have to remember that all efforts of worth and excellence will be difficult. The Christian life is gloriously difficult, but its difficulty should not cause us to faint and cave in -- it should stir us up to overcome. Do we really appreciate the salvation in Jesus Christ enough to do our best in difficult situations?

"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). Although God plays a part in our everyday practical living, we have to "work out" our own salvation (Philippians 2:12). If we will only start with His Word as our basis, then we will find that we can overcome. The true nature of a Christian is how he reacts in difficult times. If we obey the Word of God, practicing it in our daily life, then when a crisis does come, we will find that our own nature, as well as God, will stand by us.

The difficult things in our lives require bravery, courage and holiness. These difficult times will test us for all we are worth. It takes a tremendous amount of discipline to live the worthy and excellent life of a disciple of Jesus in dealing with the realities of this life.

If you're a member at West Side and are going through a difficult time in your life... if it is a matter dealing with a health issue, finances, a family problem, school or work... remember that these problems are come upon everyone, but it is how a "Christian" handles these difficulties which set us apart from the world. Don't forget to gather strength from fellow "Christians" also. - the Elders

When Does Faith Save?

Bulletin 7/29/01

An example of God-pleasing faith is found in Hebrews 11:30: *"By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days."* By faith the walls fell! But, when? The Bible states, *"By faith the walls of Jericho fell down **after**" -- after -- after* they did what God told them to do, thereby manifesting their faith.

God gave the marching orders. God told them to march around the walls of Jericho once daily for six days and on the seventh day to march seven times (Joshua 6:3-20). They marched the first day, the second day, the third day, the fourth day, the fifth day and the sixth day. Every step they made was a step of faith because Hebrews 11:30 declares it was "by faith". Finally, on the seventh day they began marching. They marched around the wall the first time, the second, the third, the fourth, the fifth, the sixth and yet the walls were standing, because God had said for them to march seven times on the seventh day. They marched the seventh time on the seventh day, completing their obedience to God, thereby manifesting their faith, and then God did what He said He would do. The walls of Jericho fell; "by faith", but by faith "after" -- after they proved their faith by obeying God's commands -- not by faith only!

God gave the orders. God did not heal Naaman of his leprosy until his faith led him to obey. He had to *"dip seven times in the Jordan"* (II Kings 5:14). Naaman's faith had to work before he was healed. His faith had to work or obey before God acted.

God gave the commands. The fact that baptism is not mentioned in "so many words" in John 3:16 or Acts 16:31 does not mean that it is not essential to salvation. Repentance is not stated "in so many words" in these passages either! But, if we can go elsewhere in the New Testament to find that repentance is essential to salvation, why can we not go elsewhere to find that baptism is also essential to salvation? Remember that Jesus said, *"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God"* (Matthew 4:4).

To become a Christian, a person's faith, or belief (Mark 16:16), must lead him to repent (Acts 2:38), confess the name of Christ (Romans 10:9-10) and be baptized to wash away his sins (Acts 22:16). We are saved by faith, but remember, it is "by faith after" -- after we have obeyed the commands of God.

Charles Box

Horizons/CTS 2001

Bulletin 7/22/01

Last week a chartered bus driven by one of our elders delivered 26 youngsters and 16 adults from Southwest Virginia to the 2001 Horizons/Christian Training Series at Freed-Hardeman University. Among those privileged to attend were two of your elders, three deacons, several teachers and the preacher and his wife.

Any attempts to explain in writing the benefits of this week would only be shallow. To understand the impact of the fellowship, classroom teaching, morning and evening devos, nightly singings and so much more, you must be present. We know of no other excursion that could bring the personal and collective pleasure to a group of God's people.

Our young people conducted themselves in a most distinguished manner. We're proud of their demeanor. The Virginia aggregation continued to make its mark for distinction as they have in past trips. We are so very proud of each of you.

To those of you who have been thinking about going, delay it no longer. Plan on attending next year. You'll never be the same!

Mission Work Report

Bulletin 7/15/01

Recently our deacon in charge of missions, Jerry Anderson, and his son Nathan were among a group who traveled to Pensacola, Florida and participated in an inner-city mission effort. We are very proud of these two men and encourage you to read a first-hand report written by Nathan.

"Upon arrival in Pensacola, Florida, on Wednesday, July 27, my dad and I

met up with a group from the Leoma Church of Christ in Lawrenceburg, TN. There were 16 members of their group and, surprisingly, nine of the 16 were teenagers between the ages of 14 and 18.

"Wednesday night Bible study at the Inner City Church of Christ was held in the basement of a school in the area. Even during the evening I could see that most of the people at the study were from the Inner City area. Most of the inner city folks were black and dressed less casual, but when it came to singing, they were some of the loudest and proudest in the group.

"The following day the Leoma group, along with my dad and me, were instructed by Kenny Pervis, the preacher at the Inner City Church of Christ to go into the Inner City projects in pairs (male and female) to visit with people, request prayer and a Bible study. Having been my first time conducting a Bible study with a total stranger, I was fairly nervous. I wasn't sure what the people in the projects would think of me and how they would react to what I had to say. Once Allison and I were given a list of people who were interested in Bible studies we headed through the neighborhood to sow the seed. After only a few minutes my tension was eased when I noticed almost every individual in the inner city said, "Hey," and asked us how we were doing. Young children ran up to us asking about Bible class, which was conducted by another group in the Inner City Ministry. Kids curiously followed us around the neighborhood. It felt nice to have such a good reputation in the area.

"We visited many houses in the area. Many of the people weren't home when we came by, so we left notes to each one about how we had stopped by and would come back later. Kenny told us to write notes to each person if they weren't home to show that we really did care about them. We had prayers with many people about different problems they had or conflicts in their life.

"Allison and I had the opportunity to have a Bible study with a woman who had been interested in one earlier. She was very interested in what the Bible had to say and what we had to tell her. She was unsure about some things, but we always turned to Scriptures to show her the answer clearly. She was thankful for us coming and wanted to have another Bible study on a later day. It felt wonderful to have shown the way of salvation to a woman in poverty and need.

"Though we were treated like friends by most of the people, some people were upset and irritated by our presence at their door. We gave everyone a flier about Sunday services regardless of their attitude, and encouraged them to come.

"Matthew 28:19-20 says, *'Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I*

am with you always, even to the end of the world.' I feel our trip was a success in the fact that we did "go" and sow the seed of the gospel. Kenny was grateful to have us help them that week, and we were glad we had the opportunity to help him and the Inner City Ministry."

Freedom

Bulletin 7/08/01

On Wednesday of this week America celebrated the 4th of July, the holiday commemorating the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776. Businesses shut down, the airways were full, highway traffic was at its peak for the travel season. Families assembled together. Cities had special events. Parks were crowded with people. Fireworks were displayed in the evening. Many of us gathered here at the picnic shelter for a great afternoon. As a nation, we pause and are thankful for our freedom. This has been on-going for 225 years. It is indeed a glorious celebration throughout the land.

On the other hand, as God's elect, we have a more compelling reason to celebrate our freedom -- the independence from sin which He supplied to us when He sent his Son to die on the cross (John 3:16). As New Testament Christians we are indeed free from all that would keep us in spiritual bondage. *"If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed"* (John 8:36).

We are one in Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:28). We need to stand fast in the LIBERTY wherewith Christ has made us FREE (Galatians 5:1). As those who are free, we need not use our liberty for a cover of the wrong purpose, but as servants of the One who gave us this freedom (1 Peter 2:16).

As this subject of freedom is on our minds this week, let us ever be reminded that we can fall back into that bondage of sin. Remembering that the liberty we have can be taken away, stand fast: *"Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage"* (Galatians 5:1). Enjoy your freedom in Christ. Serve Him through faithfulness every day, every week, all year long. - the Elders

From the Mouth of Babes

Bulletin 7/01/01

My wife and I usually stand at the back of the building greeting visitors and members of the congregation as they leave each service. A six-year old boy stopped in front of me. I bent down with outstretched hand, and the little boy thrust out a puzzle and with a terse tone said, "It's wrong!" My wife took the puzzle from the child, and I shook the child's hand assuring him that we would see what the trouble was with the puzzle.

Upon examination of the puzzle, we found that the puzzle was a verse

from the Bible that had been jumbled up and was to then be found in the puzzle. The person doing the puzzle had to look up the verse, write it down and then un-jumble the words. A simple, straight-forward method of learning for a young or old mind. But, the puzzle maker or the printer had only put part of the words in the puzzle and, when compared with the Bible verse, words were lacking.

This is an example of how easy it is to understand the Bible and what it says. A six-year old could see the following things:

The puzzle and the Bible verse did not match, and it prompted him to correctly conclude, "It's wrong!" He was then able to understand that someone had made a mistake, because it did not match what the Bible said... and he concluded, "It's wrong!"

That got me thinking. How wonderful it would be if all would have the ease of understanding that this six-year old boy possessed. He was able to compare the work of a man with God's Word and tell if it was right or wrong. He was not encumbered by other information that would bring him to a pre-determined assumption about the verse. He was not burdened by the force of family that would sway him to reject the Bible truth because a member of his family was not a Christian. He was able to see the truth as it was written. Plus, he had established in his mind that the Bible was right and, if something did not match with the Bible, he would reject whatever did not match with the Bible. In fact, he was already understanding such scriptures as II Timothy 2:15; 3:16, 17; Matthew 15:9 and Galatians 1:7ff, just to cite a few.

This six-year old boy is on the right track in life. We who are teaching him ought to think of the great impact we have already made by teaching him Bible truths. This ought to spur us on to *"not be weary in well doing"* (Galatians 6:9ff). Yes, our efforts with children do make a difference and will pay off now and in the future. -- Dave Duncan

Behind the Scenes

Bulletin 6/24/01

"Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due;. . . honour to whom honor"
(Romans 13:7).

There are so many folks who go the extra mile to make things here at West Side work smoothly, grow spiritually and take care of things in general. We want to give "honour to whom honour" is due and highlight some of these folks. We hope this will be an encouragement to them to continue and will encourage others to become more involved in the every-day activities and efforts here.

In our last installment of this list, we want to recognize a couple of women who go out of their way to be a part of things -- openly and in quiet. Named a Roanoke Times "Neighbor of the Year" several years ago by the folks who are her neighbors, **Mary Alice Wood** stays busy fixing food for her neighbors when they need a meal, delivering food to West Siders who are in need, making quilts for Good Samaritan Hospice, and all the new babies at West Side are privileged to wear "Mary Alice Wood" sweater sets. She is a faithful example of Dorcas, and we love and appreciate her example.

Though she's only been at West Side a short time, **NuRocha Williams** has jumped in with both feet. She helped host a Ladies' Night Out and volunteered to serve as our new church librarian, filling a long-empty position. She's been busily cataloguing new arrivals putting things back in order in the Adult Library, often giving up her Sunday afternoons to do so. If you need a smile and a warm greeting, she's got one to give.

There are so many folks here at West Side who help to make it the great family it is. We've highlighted only a few, and we hope you all will be encouraged to "imitate them as they imitate Christ" (I Corinthians 11:1). To God be the glory in all we do.

the Elders

Behind the Scenes

Bulletin 6/17/01

"Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due;. . . honour to whom honor"
(Romans 13:7).

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He's a husband and the father of three young children and works two jobs (one as an educator of "special" children, the other as a construction worker), yet this does not stop **Squeaky Valentine** from giving his all when it comes to the Lord's work. He takes an active role in everything he can here at West Side, from teaching classes to acting in VBS skits and building props. Since the end of the Fishers of Men class conducted by Brother Tim Wilkes, Squeaky has encouraged, prodded

and taught a modified FoM class to keep us "in the groove". As a deacon, he holds monthly meetings which serve to encourage and offer suggestions to those of us who are having studies and those who are trying to set up studies. In the meantime, he sets the example -- he has several studies of his own going at this

time. Squeaky is always ready to "give an answer" (II Peter 3:15), and he does so with love and patience. Thank you, Squeaky, for your example. We love and appreciate you.

the Elders

Behind the Scenes

Bulletin 6/10/01

"Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due;. . . honour to whom honour"
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Have you heard **Natalie Valentine** singing "B-I-B-I" during the worship service? This lovely little girl is learning early the importance of the Word of God in her life. We honor and express appreciation to her teachers in the Cradle Roll class: **Sandra Altizer, Debbie Christian, Jackie Dixon, Shirley Freeland** (whom we will miss), **Bonnie Mellon** and **Wanda Smith**. These ladies love the Lord, they love our babies, and it shows.

"God made dogs." "God made chickens." "God made Mama and Daddy." These are some of the lessons which our Toddlers learn at the capable hands of **Becky** and **Marsha Cooke, Laura Kozar** and **Debbie Rogers. Jenny White** also worked with these little ones before she moved to northern Virginia. It thrills our hearts to watch these eager children run to their classroom to be lifted into a chair for Bible class to learn what God has done for them.

Beginning with our 2's and 3's, our children begin a walk through the Bible, doing a complete "survey" with emphasis on God, Jesus and the church, at least three times before they leave the fifth grade. Patiently teaching memory verses to two- and three-year olds are **Jean Argabright, Rebecca Durham, Barbara Saunders** and **Gloria White**. Jean has been teaching this class for at least 25 years, and we sincerely appreciate her dedication.

The 4-K class gets especially excited to learn of Noah and the big fish, Moses and the basket in the river and other great Bible stories taught with much love by **Kim Brown, Judy Durham, Annette Shrader** and **Diane Tucker**. Annette, too, has been teaching this class for more than 25 years.

First graders are challenged with new memory work and good deeds in their studies, guided by **Kay Anderson, Melissa Doss, Esther Green** and **Lisa Valentine**. A lot of time and effort goes into ideas for hands-on projects for this age group, and they love it.

Our second-third grade teachers, **Rosemary Bush, Charlene Guard, Shree Lowe** and **Wanda Martin** work hard to encourage this active group in learning the books of the Bible and the 12 Apostles, among other things. **Marsha Cooke, Jeanny Gilpin, Jeff Goodwin** and **Charlotte Harrington** guide the hearts and minds of our fourth and fifth graders as they prepare to enter the world of the junior high student. Grounding them in knowledge of Bible facts and application, these teachers encourage them in the direction of becoming Christians and living faithfully to God.

We salute all our primary teachers who give so much of themselves, their time and their energy and love to these little ones to help them love God and His Word. Drop by and check out the classrooms, and say "Thank You" to the teacher you find there.

They are supported by **Sandy Garby, Velda Gearhart, Pat Gwaltney** and **Gloria Kinney** who keep the treasure boxes full and visual aids ready, and by **Danny Guard** (Deacon, Primary Education) who continually urges them to "get fired up". West Side's primary education program would not be the great program it is without the dedication and hard work of all these folks. We salute you and thank you for your efforts. To God be the glory.

Addition: Audrey Hooker serves as a substitute teacher for Wanda Martin in the primary classes.

the Elders

Behind the Scenes

Bulletin 6/03/01

"Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due;. . . honour to whom honor"
(Romans 13:7).

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"...To do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God

is well pleased" (Hebrews 13:16). Communication in this verse is defined as "benefaction, social inter- course". Many West Siders please God in this manner, but three ladies stand out in our thoughts.

She doesn't just write "notes", but "epistles" when she thanks someone for some kindness or writes to encourage, which she does often. **Luetta Gregory** is thankful for every "small" kindness and lets everyone know. Not only thankful for kindnesses done to her, she lives the Golden Rule by passing on kindnesses to others... in the form of a bowl of green beans for your dinner if you're sick or a call to check on you because you were missed. She's a wonder- fully faithful example of the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31, and we appreciate her.

Need an idea for a gift? How about a table decoration or a gift-wrapping idea? Need a lift to the doctor or someone to go to lunch with because you need cheering? **Annette Shrader** comes up with more thoughtful ways to be of service than any two people can. She has the unique perspective of being helped when she's had surgeries, and she has a special insight into what helps others to feel better. Her love for people and her Lord is demonstrated in the extra mile she goes to teach her 4-year olds in Bible class and the fact she will spend the day on the spur of the moment with you in the emergency room. And, she does all this with a smile on her face. Thank you, Annette, for your example of "pure religion" (James 1:27).

Diane Tucker is West Side's "good will ambassador". She encourages us all with her smiling greetings when we come to services, her concern for what's going on in our lives and the encouraging notes she sends to everyone. Though she's only been a Christian just over three years, she demonstrates a maturity and love for the Lord which comes from much study and hard work. Thank you, Diane, for encouraging us all by your zeal and enthusiasm.

the Elders

Behind the Scenes

Bulletin 5/27/01

"Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due;. . . honour to whom honor"
(Romans 13:7).

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There are three fellowship teams here at West Side, each headed by one of our fine deacons who work so well with the aid of their lovely wives: Team 1: Ron & Melissa Doss; Team 2: Mike & Judy Durham and Team 3: David & Kim Brown. Keeping track of 200 folks' needs with regard to helping out in times of sickness or grief and planning fellowship activities is no small task. These three couples do an outstanding job!

Ron only recently took over Team 1 and has already been responsible for helping to coordinate a going-away party. Melissa was chief decorator with Annette Shrader, and the party went well. **Melissa** is also responsible for the great-looking bulletin boards in the Primary hall and the foyer. Her imagination knows few boundaries. In addition to being Team 1's leader, Ron is instrumental in keeping up with the finances for West Side's oversight of the Ferguson Five while they are in Tanzania.

Mike & Judy Durham are kept busy with three little ones, but this does not keep them from being active servants here. They both teach in our education programs, Judy in the 4-year old class and Mike in the High School classes. They keep the members of Team 2 busy with activities and are key players in the planning of the annual 4th of July picnic.

David & Kim Brown work tirelessly to keep Team 3 busy and working. Kim is an excellent organizer and a good helper to David. David also serves as an outstanding song leader. They help the Garbys plan the annual Memorial Day picnic and both of them, too teach Bible classes.

West Side is truly blessed with such capable and willing workers. We appreciate you, guys, for all you do to help the work here grow and prosper. May God receive the glory and add stars to your crowns.
the Elders

Behind the Scenes

Bulletin 5/20/01

"Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due;. . . honour to whom honor"
(Romans 13:7).

There are so many folks who go the extra mile to make things here at West Side work smoothly, grow spiritually and take care of things in general. Over the next few weeks, we want to give "honour to whom honour" is due and high- light some of these folks. We hope this will be an encouragement to them to continue and will encourage others to become more involved in the everyday activities and efforts here.

"The light in my classroom is buzzing." "There's a puddle in the men's room floor, don't know where it's coming from." "Can I get a shelf put on the wall in my office?" These are some of the questions Brother **James Cooke** hears every week, in addition to questions from his Bible class students about Bible basics. If Jim can't fix it, he most likely will know someone who can, and that's the reason things stay in such good shape around here. He spends many hours doing electrical work, painting, cleaning and general fix-up to keep our building looking as nice as he can.

An innovative teacher, Jim has incorporated the use of the computer into his Bible basics class which he teaches alternately with Rob Kinney and Barry White. Jim is a fount of Bible knowledge and as friendly a guy as you'd ever want to know. Whether participating in church activities, answering questions, greeting newcomers or chatting with old friends, Jim is an asset to the work here. Thanks, Jim, for your example and your diligence. We appreciate you!

the Elders

Behind the Scenes

Bulletin 5/13/01

"Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to honour to whom honour"

(Romans 13:7).

There are so many folks who go the extra mile to make things here at West Side work smoothly, grow spiritually and take care of things in general. Over the next few weeks, we want to give "honour to whom honour" is due and high-light some of these folks. We hope this will be an encouragement to them to continue and will encourage others to become more involved in the everyday activities and efforts here.

Paul Faw is one of those "men behind the scenes". Since October, especially, he has worked innumerable hours to produce tapes, not only for those who requested copies of Eddy's lessons, but literally hundreds of tapes of the Bert Thompson seminar, the "Polishing the Pulpit" preachers' workshop, the Grief Recovery workshop and our gospel meeting. He has been here early to see that everything is in readiness to make the best tapes possible. He also is here to record and take care of the sound equipment for weddings, Bible Bowl, youth rally, etc.

Need help loading "House to House/ Heart to Heart" for the Post Office? Paul can always be counted on to help. And, what happens to all those boxes the HtH² come in? Paul breaks them down and makes sure they get to the recycle bin.

Faithfulness to services (and most all the other activities which happen here), friendliness to all who pass his door and a sincere desire to serve God are part of what makes Paul such an asset to the work here. Thanks, Paul, we appreciate you! the Elders

The Heavenly Way

Bulletin 5/06/01

"We commend to you this article by our Brother Jeff Clark." *the Elders*

Isaiah 35:8-10 says, "And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fouls, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there: And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." Think about it this "way".

It is a pure way. V. 8, "*the unclean shall not pass over it*". They travel a different path, by choice. "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that

find it" (Matthew 7:13-14). This pure way is for those with a different mindset, like that described in Matthew 5:8, "*Blessed are the pure in heart. . . .*" Yet, one declares, "I have allowed my mind to be *impure*." Then purify it as described in I Peter 1:22 "*by obeying the truth*".

It is a protected way. V. 9, "*No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon. . . .*" Ours is a dangerous world—physically, emotionally, spiritually; and Scripture warns us about the source of these dangers. "Be sober, be vigilant, for your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour" (I Peter 5:8). But in the midst of danger as serious as that we are protected! "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us" (Romans 8:37)!

It is a pleasurable way. V. 10, "And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs of everlasting joy upon their heads." Have you noticed how often "joy" is associated with Christianity? with living right? "Rejoice in the Lord...", (Philippians 4:4), et.al. Yes, there are "pleasures" in sin, but they are empty and unfulfilling. The only way to find real joy is in God's way, the Heavenly Way. Think about it.

The Lion's Lunch

Bulletin 4/29/01

If you've watched any nature films on television, you've probably seen a lion hunt down and kill one animal out of a herd. It occurred to me that the devil kills the spirit of the same sort of "Christians". "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (I Peter 5:8).

He attacks and kills the spirit of the small. . . newborn and the young who aren't yet strong enough to avoid the lion. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit is indeed willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:41). "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep" (I Corinthians 11:30).

He attacks and kills the spirit of the slow. . . those not alert enough or quick enough to avoid the lion. "Be watchful and strengthen the things which remain" (Revelation 3:2). "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation" (Mark 14:38).

He attacks and kills the spirit of the sickly. . . those who are sick and weak, just not able to run away from the lion. He attacks and kills the spirit of the stragglers. Those who have wandered away from the fellowship and protection of the group are easy prey for the lion.

He attacks and kills the spirit of the solitary. Those who never run in herds unless they are big, fast or strong won't last long where the lion lives. "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Hebrews 10:25).

Something else occurred to me also. I've never seen one sheep or even a herd of sheep kill a lion. However, it's not the responsibility of sheep to kill the lion, they just need to avoid him. Let us not assume we are stronger, and we can tread where we shouldn't without danger. Our pride might provide the lion's lunch. Let each of us at West Side benefit from the shelter of the flock and be encouraged by each other to keep up the good fight and always be watchful for the lion.

The Elders

Are You a Fountain Or a Drain? Have you ever seen one of those fancy
fountains?

Bulletin 4/15,22/01

Sometimes there are colored lights under the water and, as the plumes of water shoot up into the air on a Summer's evening, the red, blue or green lights turn them into a concert of colors. I've even seen a fountain that was programmed to shoot its sprays in

time to music, with short spurts of staccato rhythm and tall, majestic geysers for the dramatic passages of music. It's fascinating to watch, and people are drawn to these fountains.

Fountains use the same water over and over. A spray of water goes into the air and returns to the fountain to be used again. No one stands around and watches the drain in the fountain. When a cleaning is necessary, the plug is pulled, and the water goes down the drain. The drain only takes water—it doesn't give it back.

God showers us daily with bountiful blessings. Do we use them to glorify Him? Do we enjoy them over and over and share them with others? Or are we like the drain, drinking them in and selfishly keeping them only to ourselves? "... *remembering the words Jesus himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'*" (Acts 20:35b).

Let us at West Side remember from whom all blessings flow. Our Christianity does not end with receiving the blessings—it begins.

The Elders

How Do I Get Closer to God?

Bulletin 4/08/01

Sincere people struggle with their faith. They want to feel God's presence and power. They pray and seek. Yet, like David, they cry out: "*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;*" (Psalm 63:1).

Do you want to be closer to God? Learn to be thankful! That's right! Expressing appreciation to God builds a relationship with God. How does humanity lose touch with God? When they have a relationship with Him, they begin to take Him for granted. They cease to worship Him. They neglect to give Him thanks. "*Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful*" (Romans 1:21).

How does thanksgiving build a relationship? The heart that thanks God thinks about God. The closer you are to someone, the more you think about him. The more you think about God, the more thankful you will be. The more you study the Bible to learn more about God, the more you become thankful. The more thankful you are, the more you will have Him in your thoughts.

Thankfulness generates appreciation. We are not just thankful—we are thankful to Someone! We are recognizing God as the source of all that is good and pleasant. We are grateful to Him for reassurance and Acceptance even when bad things happen. We thank Him in spite of doubts, fears, anger and hurt. We appreciate Him in good times and bad. Thanksgiving is Selflessness. The

more thankful we are, the less self-centered we will be. The less we think of self, the more we think of others and of God. This truly will bring us closer to God.

It is obvious that West Siders are living close to God. IT shows in attitude, actions, reactions and our ever-present thankfulness and appreciation for His bountiful flow of blessings. The Elders

“Night, with Ebon Pinion, Brooded O’er The Vale”

Bulletin 4/01/01

What is and “ebon pinion”? Many times we lift up our voices in praise unto God singing words that are unfamiliar or confusing to us. In I Corinthians 14 Paul emphasizes the importance of being able to understand what is being said... or sung, for that matter. *“I will sing with my spirit, I will sing with the understanding also”* (V. 15). The word “ebon” is a shortened and poetic form of the word “ebony” which means “dark, black”. The word “pinion” means “feather” and is also used at times to refer to the entire wing of a bird. Thus, “ebon pinion” is simply a way of saying “dark feather” or “the dark wings of a bird”.

“Night, with ebon pinion, brooded o’er the vale.” In poetic form, the author conveys his impressions of the nature of the night in which the Lord Jesus suffered in the Garden of Geth- semane just prior to His arrest. He visualizes it as a dark night; also, one which was silent “save the night wind’s wail”—the moaning of the wind in the trees. The night is pictured as being like a bird with dark feathers “brooding over the vale.” A “vale” is a valley. This would have been the valley between Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives. At the base of this range of hills, and at the edge of the valley was the garden known as Gethsemane.

“Brooding” is what a bird does when it hovers over its nest, spreading its wing over its young. The image being conveyed in this hymn is a giant bird with dark feathers spreading its wings over the valley. The light from the moon and stars is thus blotted out, the birds and animals are quieted by the sight, and the effect is one of deep dark-ness and silence—even gloom. Such was the nature of that betrayal night in the mind of the author of this hymn. Deep darkness has always been a symbol of despair, sadness and distress. Certainly, as our Lord suffered alone in the garden, pouring out His heart to God, he felt many of those emotions. It was a dark night indeed!

Although the words to this hymn may sound somewhat strange to the unaccustomed ear, nevertheless they convey a moving message. By singing with the mind as well as with the heart, we are drawn even closer to that garden where our lord “humbly bowed in prayer”. Let us remember that each song we sing has a special meaning or conveyance to God. . . and we should be aware of that meaning.
The Elders

Another Outreach

Bulletin 3/24/01

The church of our Lord has as one of its reasons for existing to reach out to those who are hurting. Last weekend we were privileged to have with us Brother Don Williams and his good wife Leisa. The entire two days were devoted to the subject of grief recovery. There were a goodly number of non-members from the community in attendance. Several of these assured us that they would return to be with us at a regular worship service.

To those of our number who could not or chose not to avail themselves of this learning opportunity, you once again are the losers. Brother Williams, through his study and practical application in this very specialized field of endeavor, is indeed making a noteworthy contribution to our brotherhood.

We as a congregation and as individuals feel better equipped now in handling the needs of our brethren who are, and who will become, grief-stricken in the days and years ahead. Furthermore, this can be a great tool in ministering to the community.

We thank all of you who were so untiring in your efforts, which helped to make this seminar another successful event in shaping the course of West Side. To those who should desire a tape of any of the speeches, see **Jeff Durham**. (Contact the Church Office at 387-9139)

As always, let us put into practice what we have learned. May we be there for those who need us in this very special way. The Elders

When Times Are Sad

Bulletin 3/18/01

One of the greatest victories any man experienced was Elijah's triumph over the false prophets in I Kings 18. There on Mount Carmel God demonstrated His power through Elijah by winning the contest set before him. He experienced a true mountaintop experience.

However, in just a few short days Elijah sat under a broom tree in despair. From his point of view, his whole world came tumbling in. The queen desired his death. Elijah believed he was the last man on earth who loved God. Elijah typifies the discouragement people often endure.

The story that follows gives a three-step solution to overcoming depression. First, **regain your spiritual strength**. An angel brought food to Elijah. After he had finished eating, the angel commanded Elijah to sleep. Often when you are depressed, you neglect your body's needs. When you are physically weak, depression increases.

Second, **renew your perspective**. Raise the window shades, and turn on the radio. God showed Elijah that He still loved him. It is time to dwell on the good, the positive and the successes of your life. It is time to look to the future with hope and expectation. Your life will reach its full potential when you strive for the best.

Third, **redirect your life**. God showed Elijah that he still had a task to do. Everyone has talents they can use to serve others. Becoming involved in life with others will raise you out of the pits. Do not just sit there under your broom tree grasping at the last straw. Rise up and use that broom to sweep away depression and face tomorrow with hope. – Tim Sensing

Left Behind? Bulletin 3/11/01

Recently there has been a lot of across-the-fence conversation about the book, and now the movie, bearing the above title. While I have neither read the book nor seen the movie, I've discussed its contents with several that have. It seems but another falsity of the term "rapture" which cannot be found in the Bible.

There is not one verse in the Scriptures that suggests a scenario of plane crashes, missing children and such like. First Thessalonians tells us that believers *"shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord."* If by "rapture" one simply means that Christians will be carried up to be with Christ, then there is little objection to the word. However, "rapture" as usually used by religious teachers (and movie makers) means for more than the simple definition herein given. Indeed, there is a doctrine that is false to the Bible, wrapped up into day's modern word "rapture". Furthermore, in Verses 13-18 of the same text, there is total silence about the Conditions on earth when the saints are lifted up.

The truth about this subject as it was recorded by inspired men will be around long after Hal Lindsay and his fellow schemers are forgotten. As is quite so often, what is really being "left behind" is a desire for truth on this subject and others which men have distorted beyond recognition. We need to be aware when we are reading or viewing subject matter that deals with Biblical settings what part is truth and what part is a glaring error. *"Study to shew thyself approved unto*

God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Timothy 2:15).

The Elders

A Timely Lesson

Bulletin 3/04/01

This past Sunday our Preacher, Brother Eddy, Brought us an excellent lesson on the dangers of several modern translations (versions) of the Bible. A lesson of this magnitude is needed from the pulpits of faithful congregations of God's people throughout the brotherhood.

No doubt many modernists, theologians, teachers and even preachers are well pleased with the modern versions because of their sympathies with the false teachings advocated in them. Not a few today in the pulpits of the country even deny that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Some declare that there is no heaven, and there is no hell. There will come a day when there will be no doubt about it. We realize that thousands upon thousands of honest, sincere people use one or more of the modern versions because they really aren't aware of their per- versions and the infidelity of the authors.

It has been the desire and the request of this eldership that our teachers, when teaching a class, reading or speaking from the pulpit or any other public proclamation effort, use the King James, New King James or American Standard Versions. We believe this is a reasonable request and are grateful for the adherent attitude that our teaching staff exhibits here at West Side.

In a time when the church of our Lord is facing challenging dangers on every hand and on every subject, we need to stick with the Word. This is but another way which we can insure the future of our youth and reinforce the faith of the stalwarts.

We again thank you, Eddy. Thank you as a congregation for your support of the elders and the preacher who is fulfilling his job in a most professional manner. May our days ahead, whether they be few or many, all be to the glory of God Who left us His Word through inspired men of long ago to follow.

The Elders

The Last Lap

Bulletin 2/25/01

This week NASCAR and the racing industry lost one of the most magnetic, extraordinary race drivers of the last three decades. Dale Earnhardt, "The Intimidator", crashed head first into a concrete wall at 180 mph on the last turn of the last lap of one of

the country's most prestigious races, the Daytona 500. He died instantly.

Masses of people, both on and off the race track, mourn his untimely passing. We too, are sorrowful for the Earnhardt family and his closely-related racing peers.

How ironic that such a shocking incident should come on the last lap of a race that had been going on for three hours and five minutes. Little did any of those seasoned drivers expect such would take place when they "fired their engines" at the starter's command earlier that afternoon.

This sobering episode should give each of us, both Christian and non-Christian, reason to reflect upon how we will approach our last lap. None of us knows in advance when our last lap will be, but it is for certain we shall all experience it (Hebrews 9:27). We will go into eternity in one of two ways: prepared to face God, or unprepared to face Him. The last turn we shall all make is turning into dust from whence we came (Ecclesiastes 3:20; Genesis 3:19; Ecclesiastes 12:7).

One cannot help but wonder, of the 195,000 spectators present there on a beautiful, balmy Sunday afternoon, how many who considered themselves New Testament Christians had "forsaken the assembly" (Hebrews 10:25) to attend the event that ended so tragically. However we may rationalize, compromise or fantasize, the final realistic conclusion must be drawn. It matters not how famous we are; what status financially, socially or educationally we have attained. It matters only that, when we have run the last mile of the way, it will not have been in vain. *"Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man"* (Ecclesiastes 12:13). May God help every West Side member to prepare faithfully for his "last lap".

The Elders