

Elder's Corner

What a Blessing--Christ Stayed on The Cross

When Christ was nailed to the cross, the chief priest, scribes and elders mocked saying, "He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the king of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God, let him deliver him now if he will have him, for he said, I am the Son of God" (Matthew 27:41-43). No doubt Christ could have come down from the cross at that time, and no doubt He had the power to do so; but, being obedient to His Father in heaven, it was necessary for Him to die on the cross in order for His will to go into effect.

Just think how dreadful the consequences would be if Christ had come down off the cross. Christ's will and testament would not be in force, the church would not be in existence. There would be no gospel plan of salvation, no law for us to follow, no chance for salvation, no forgiveness (Ephesians 1:7), no redemption (I Peter 1:18-19), no hope (Ephesians 2:12) and no eternal abode with God when we die.

We are so blessed that Christ stayed on the cross and fulfilled His Father's will. Everyone who will obey His commands and live faithfully will be blessed to live eternally with God and Christ after this life is over. In order to enjoy a home in heaven, one must render full obedience and service as God has instructed in His Word. We pray that we will all work to this end.

the Elders

Is Our Nation a Christian Nation?

We live in a nation in which a large percentage believe in God and attend weekly religious services. Of these, a very low percentage serve God in the way He commands, in truth and in spirit (John 4:23-24).

America is one of the most violent, crime-ridden, drug-infested nations. Three out of every ten births are illegitimate. Virginity is a joke, half of the marriages end in divorce. Homosexuality is a "lifestyle," and now we are seeing marriage of the same sex which is totally against God's commandment of one man for each woman (Matthew 6:4-6; Genesis 2:24). Abortions have claimed more lives than most wars put together. Murder is an on-going newspaper report. Burglaries are much more frequent in our nation than in nations we call "pagan". Alcohol consumption is called "sickness"; gambling is legalized in most states. Prayer is not allowed in school and most public places. False religion is taught on every hand. God's name is being removed from most documents. Evolution is taught in schools and colleges as fact. We could go on and on about how Satan

has influenced our nation and its people.

Members of the Lord's church have a great job ahead of them if we are to change our nation from the sinful condition listed in this writing. When we read the Genesis account of the world in Noah's day before the flood, we should shudder to think what God thinks of our nation today. As Christians, let us stand up and be counted to do our part to make a change for the better. We pray God will help us so to do.

the Elders

I Love to Tell the Story

When it becomes distasteful for the church to tell the old, old story, revival is in order. I love the sentiment and truth expressed in Catherine Hankey's song, "I Love to Tell the Story". In it we sing: "I love to tell the story, for those who know it best, seem hungering and thirsting to hear it like the rest...."

We need NEW energy to perform the same OLD tasks that Moses and the prophets, John and Jesus, and Paul and the apostles had to perform--the task of turning men to God. To do that the church requires:

More faithful sowers, not new seed. The seed is the Word of God. The message must remain the same (Luke 8:11).

More faithful reapers, not new fields. Anywhere there are people, there is work to be done. The existing fields are white unto harvest. We need to pray the Lord of harvest to send forth reapers into His harvest (Matthew 9:38).

More faithful diggers, not new wells (Genesis 26:18). As Isaac *"dug again the wells of water which had been dug in the days of Abraham his father..."* Christians today need to dig deep into the well of Divine Truth and knowledge. Dig faithfully there into God's medicine and psychiatry.

More faithful stewards, not new treasures (Matthew 25:21). It is required of a steward that he be faithful (I Corinthians 4:2).

More faithful leaders, not new paths (Jeremiah 6:16). Ask for the old paths wherein is the good way. Pray for faithful soldiers unafraid to follow in His steps.

The method and the message that God has already given us is the very thing that works the best, and those who know it best seem hungering and thirsting to hear it like the rest!

author unknown; via Westconnett c/C, Jacksonville, FL

Make No Little Plans

Recently I read an article containing a quote attributed to Chicago architect Daniel Burnham. The quotation hit a note that stirred my soul. Mr. Burnham said, "Make no little plans; they have no magic to stir men's blood and probably themselves will not be realized. Make big plans; aim high in hope and work. Remember that our sons and grandsons are going to do things that would stagger us."

What are your dreams... hopes... aspirations? What were they when you were younger? I received quite a compliment from an 86-year old friend (Jim) the other day. We were talking about looking to hire a new man for a job. He said, "They need to get a younger man right out of school who still has dreams."

My reply was, "Perhaps what they need is someone older who has experience in the field."

He replied, "Someone who has been doing the job for 30 years is afraid to take changes; they don't dream any more."

I paused for a moment and said, "But I've been doing this same job for 30 years..." to which he replied, "Yes, but you're different, you still dream...." I hope that is true.

I jokingly tell Melody, my wife of 35 years, that if nothing else, our life hasn't been dull; its' always been an adventure. How do you see your life? Are you stuck in a rut, afraid to be more than you already are? I read a quote many years ago that has stuck with me: "The only difference between a rut and a grave is the depth." I remember that quote and have to ask myself sometimes just which one I am in.

Do you make little plans or big ones; do you have great dreams or small ones? I like what the Apostle Paul writes in Philippians 4:13 where he says, "*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*" He give us hope, but keeps things in the proper perspective also. I personally believe that we can do just about anything we put our mind to doing. We far too often tend to start out on some great journey, towards some great objective and then just get worn out, tired or discouraged. The key, though, to being able to continue on life's great adventure is that we draw our strength from the right place! The source of strength, encouragement and vigor must be our God.

My prayer is that God will empower each of us to plan great plans and dream great dreams--not just for our glory, but also for the benefit of God and the people.

Russ Lawson
W. Columbia c/C, SC

We have stepped out in faith, made big plans, if you will, in planning for "Light the Fire" and our gospel meeting which will occur June 11-16. We hope you are planning, dreaming, praying and planning to work with us in this effort. We can "do all things through Christ"!

the Elders

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The Us of We

The following article is edited from the Karns Church of Christ "Kourier", April 2003. As the time for our "Light the Fire" campaign nears, we offer it as food for thought regarding your involvement in this effort. -the Elders

The individual side of involvement is about the *me of we*; congregational involvement is the *us of we*. Some things in Christianity must be approached most fundamentally on the level of *me*, such as my personal responsibility to mature in Christ (Ephesians 4:13-15). There are, however, group or family commitments that I cannot keep by myself, such as the building up of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:16; I Corinthians 12:12-27). Here the *us of we* is required.

Sometimes, I fear, the practical side of the *us of we* is the first thing to be missed. To work together we must be willing both to spend time together and to serve family needs. Worship services are a start, but they are not sufficient for the success of the project. We do gain an important solidarity in worship, especially on the Lord's Day at the Lord's Table (I Corinthians 10:16-17). Working together, however, demands more.

To what extent are we willing to develop a more involved group culture? To what extent are we willing to address a way of life characterized by *less of me and more of us*? What can I do to connect more with the *us of we*?

I can: meet someone every week that I don't know, send cards, call and/or write to give encouragement, visit, participate in a fellowship team, attend Bible classes, attend special classes, help with the youth group, be active as a senior, become a teacher, help someone in need, sign up and take food, have people over, answer various calls for volunteers, organize a work day or other needed service, personally greet every newly baptized person, greet all who place their membership with the congregation, go to the front to encourage everyone who responds to the invitation, go to weddings, go to funerals, go to showers, do spontaneous good deeds for others, be friendly, talk to others about evangelism, discuss things I have learned in Bible study, talk about the congregation like it is a family and I am a member of it, don't speak of myself in a me vs. them fashion when referring to the congregation, ask what I can do to be of help, fill out a volunteer form, do yard work, keep "my" pew clean, hug someone, shake a hand, smile, sing enthusiastically, give liberally, pick up loose trash, be on time, e-mail a large number of my brethren, help with campaigns and gospel meetings and Bible bowls, etc., keep the nursery, help clean up after a meal, etc.

"From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love" (Ephesians 4:16).

Participation

The word "participate" means to take part in something, to be involved! Bill Brown from the Roebuck Parkway congregation spoke to us about our upcoming "Light the Fire" campaign which takes place in June. Are you willing to participate and do your part? Will you decide now to involve yourself in this effort? Here are ten things you can do in order to prepare for the campaign:

Pray daily for the campaign and its success. Start now!

Submit your vacation schedule asking to be off as much as you can during that time.

Mark your calendar indicating the start of the campaign so you can be an active participant and not schedule something else during this time.

Tell all your friends you won't be home Monday through Wednesday of that week so you can be in attendance at the meeting.

Invite your friends and family to attend the meeting.

Start praying for them, by name, now.

Let the Campaign Coordinators (Jerry Anderson, Barry White) know that you are willing to assist in any way you can. Put your name on the sign-up sheets that will be posted. Volunteer your time!

Determine now that you are going to participate. We will need those who can knock on doors, prepare food, write cards and invitations, keep track of daily activities, etc. We want you to participate in any way you can.

Repeat Number 1. Pray daily for the campaign and its success.

the Elders

Food for Thought?

By age 18, the average American teenager will have spent more time watching television - 25,000 hours - than learning in the classroom. (*American Academy of Pediatrics*) The average person watches four hours of television per day (1,460 hours per year). The average person consumes 1,100 pounds of food per year. The average person spends 329 hours per year consuming food. The average person will spend 2,920 hours sleeping. There are 8,760 hours in a year.

If you are average, you will spend 6,709 hours watching T.V., eating, sleeping and working. This leaves 2,051 hours for everything else. If you're above average, you'll spend 655 hours consuming spiritual food! You will attend all services, when combined, will equal 156 hours between Bible Study, Morning and Evening Worship. You will spend 52 hours attending Wednesday night Bible Study. You'll also spend an additional 6 hours attending our two gospel meetings and 80 hours attending summer camp and CTS/Horizons. Of these 290 hours you'll also add an additional 365 hours for daily reading and Bible study.

Are you an above average Christian? Or, are you like many today who will skip Sunday evening and Wednesday night. Have you already decided that you can't attend both gospel meetings? Are you like many who have decided not to attend either meeting? Most will not attend summer camp or CTS/Horizons. Very few will find one hour per day to study and read their Bible. The average Christian will spend less than 200 hours per year on spiritual food. It's no wonder the Lord's church has stopped growing. We are starving to death! Luke 12:34 says "For where

your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Use your time this year wisely! As you ponder what you can do this year to be a better Christian, consider this scripture in Joshua 24:15 *"And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."*

-The Elders-

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Working With God

"We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain" (2 Cor. 6:1). "For we are laborers together with God" (1 Cor. 3:9).

Some men work with God, while others fight against him. If all men worked with God there would be no strife and confusion. There would be unity and peace.

Men do not work with God when they do not consult the Scriptures to see what God wants them to do. Men fail of this purpose, when they work by the wrong method. Sometimes when a man suspects that he has cancer he is afraid to go to a doctor to learn the facts. He is afraid the doctor will confirm his own opinion.

And many people are afraid to measure their lives by the word of God to see if they are working with God.

Men do not always see as God sees, because they see one thing while God sees something else. Men look at the outside, but God looks at the inside. "For the Lord seeth not as man seeth, for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." God sees both sides of the things that men do, and judges of their actions by the motives that inspire them.

Men should work with God because his way is perfect. People can do perfect work only if they have perfect wisdom and perfect power. And that leaves man out. God is perfect because there is nothing that he does not know and nothing that he cannot do.

"As for God, his way is perfect." By virtue of his wonderful grace he asks us to become workers with him. The children of Israel succeeded in building the tabernacle, because they were workers together with God. The man who brought goats hair to make the roof performed just as important a service as others who brought jewels for the priest's garments. Each one's gift was needed, and each in its place was equally necessary. The smallest service that contributes to a great end is a great service.

Anyone who works with God does a great work. What one man can do is mighty little, but when a group of men blend their efforts with the will of God, it becomes a great work.

Fighting Against God

When the Jewish Sanhedrin decided on a radical course of action against the apostles, Gamaliel warned against it saying, *"If this counsel, or this work be of men, it will come to naught. But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it, lest haply ye be found to fight against God"* (Acts 5:39).

Gamaliel was a doctor of the law. and was a wise counselor. He did not let exciting

circumstances or prejudice overbalance his judgment.

Gamaliel had seen the works of men come to naught, when such affairs were directed against the Lord. He regarded all human efforts that were in opposition to divine purposes as a failure. His conclusions in these matters were correct. It is vain for man to expect success in an enterprise, when God is against it. King Saul tried to hold the throne of Israel, when he had lost the crown by disobedience to God. He found himself fighting against God, and finally surrendered in shame and disgrace.

The pride of Pharaoh caused him to fight against God. His rebellion against the Lord caused his destruction. The hand of God was against him in refusing to let God let Israel go.

God is able to make the wrath of man to praise him. The construction of the tower of Babel failed because it was against God. The people were building a tower which they said would reach up to heaven. Down in their hearts it may be they thought they could climb to heaven.

Well, it had as good chance of success as some of the ways of men now, but it failed completely. And God's interposing frustration was the cause of their failure.

W. M. Davis, Firm Foundation

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Will You Pass On Your Faith?

Most people have probably heard of the name of Howard Hughes. Hughes' life started with great potential, but his life ended in a pitiful condition. This one-time wealthiest man in the world died as a spiritually-bankrupt individual. He was born in 1906 in Houston, Texas. His mother, Allene, died in 1921. His father was a Harvard-educated attorney and a great inventor. He invented the rotary drill bit and 166 cutting edges. He formed the Hughes Aircraft Corporation. Howard, Jr. inherited 75% of the family business, making him an instant billionaire.

In the 1960's Hughes sold much of the company and purchased a number of gambling casinos. Writings showed that he engaged in immorality in almost all categories. He died in 1976 in obscurity and isolation, coupled with extreme phobias and drug addiction.

There is another part of the story. Hughes came from a deeply religious family of gospel preachers. Howard's great-greatgrandfather was John Allen Gano. The dining hall at Freed-Hardeman University is named after this pioneer preacher. He was one of the restoration followers and friend of Barton Stone and Raccoon John Smith. Hughes' greatgrandfather was also a gospel preacher. His daughter, Allene, married Howard Hughes, Sr., the father of Howard Hughes!

It only took one generation to separate Hughes from the religious identity of the family. The separation cost him his mental, physical and spiritual well being. I am reminded of II Timothy 1:5, *"When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother, Lois, and thy mother, Eunice; and I am persuaded in thee also."* Will you pass your faith to your children and grandchildren?

John Pigg
via *The Chickamauga Chronicle*
Chickamauga, GA

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But What Can I Do?

"Then said I, Ah, LORD God, behold! I cannot speak, for I am a child. But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak" (Jeremiah 1:6, 7).

Jeremiah was a very young man when God called him to be a prophet. The young man was hesitant and afraid. What kind of opposition would he face as such a young man? Would people believe him and accept him as His message? How would he be able to speak boldly when there were older men around? But God wasn't interested in Jeremiah's excuse, only in his willingness to be used for the glory of God.

Sometimes today young people come up with the same excuse. They are unwilling to step forward and do the tasks for which they are called into service, indicating that maybe someone older should do the job. Young people should never be afraid to move forward for God. The vigor and enthusiasm of youth serves to inspire many others who are settled into a groove or set in their ways. Paul told young Timothy, *"Let no man despise thy youth, but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Timothy 4:2).*

Sadly, there are times when older people use their age as an excuse. They say that they have done their part. It's time for the younger ones to take their turn. Or they say that they are too old to work for God. (Remember Moses who led the people out of Egypt when he was 80 years old. Remember Daniel who was more than 80 when he was thrown into the lions' den. And there is Abraham... need I continue?).

For the work of the Lord to move forward, every Christian must do his part. We need the energy of youth and the experience of the older. Every member of the body of Christ is vital to the work, so don't use being old or young, male or female, married or single, rich or poor, or any other factor to deter you from the Lord's work.

Jeremiah heeded the call of the Lord and spent a long lifetime of service to the great God of heaven. He called the people to repentance in one of the most difficult times in the history of the nation of Israel. He preached the Word of God, defied stubborn kings, loved and led God's people and stayed faithful to the very end. God is calling you to serve Him. How will you answer His call today?

Roger Wright
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Teen & Parents Repent

Every so often something happens in the church that catches attention and makes an indelible mark on hearts. Several months ago that happened here. I have purposely withheld the names involved although the Spring congregation will recognize the letter.

Here is what happened. A father and mother allowed their teenage Christian daughter to leave home on a school-related trip for the weekend. The trip required that the teen absent herself from the worship assembly on Sunday morning. In retrospect, not one of these three family members felt altogether comfortable with the decision. Sunday morning came and went. The church assembled--the daughter did not. When she returned home Sunday afternoon, the three discussed the decision in light of Bible teachings. After careful thought, a letter was presented to the elders and later read to the church. Here is that letter:

To the elders and the Spring congregation: The book of Hebrews teaches us that the sum of all is that in Christ there is a better covenant and far better sacrifice. Our joyful confidence in Christ is that we can now enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. Hence, the brethren are encouraged strongly to hold to the blessings available in Christ to the saving of the soul. And this includes, "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).

Concerning these matters, (father's name), (mother's name) and (daughter's name) would like to confess a fault. (Father) and (Mother) allowed (daughter) to attend a school function in San Antonio over the weekend that caused (daughter) to miss Sunday morning services. We realize that our decision to do so was not in keeping with God's will concerning the assembling of ourselves together. For this we ask forgiveness and your prayers on our behalf. We also wish to express our gratitude for the exhortation received from those who love our souls.

I asked the family involved if they would let me use this letter as a teaching tool. Their attitude was, "Use it in any way that will help others." They were humble and gracious enough to tell me to use their names if I chose to do so.

During more than a few years of preaching now I have seen a number of parents who allowed or even encouraged their children to put anything and everything before the Lord and His church. Some get very defensive about their misplaced priorities. These same parents are convinced that their children can do no wrong--even when, in fact, they do.

What was so remarkable about this particular family? Several things. This family is known for being faithful. They will not again let school trips take priority over the Lord. These people are lovers of truth. They are tender-hearted, not rebellious and willful. When they did the wrong thing, they were penitent and humble. There was no effort to point fingers or shift blame. They did not try to evade the problem or justify sin. When they realized their wrong, they did everything in their power to make things right. They did not jump up in a huff, take their marbles (move their membership) and run down the road to the Church of the Disgruntled Malcontents. Their response was of a nobler and higher kind. It spoke of spiritual maturity. It swallowed pride and preached a powerful lesson for all to hear and see. God bless this fine family! Every congregation needs families like this one. I will not forget their fine example. Lynn Parker

Giving Thanks: A Simple Remedy for Depression

The late William Stidger, a famous minister and teacher, once had a nervous breakdown. He was enclosed in gloom and depression, caring for nothing. In the midst of his despair, a friend suggested, "Think of those who have benefited you in life and ask yourself if you have ever thanked them." Stidger responded that many people had helped him, but he could not recall ever having thanked one of them. Stidger's friend encouraged

him to write some helpful person a letter of thanks.

After giving it some thought, Stidger remembered a teacher named Miss Smith, who had given him a love for literature. He wrote Miss Smith and expressed his appreciation for her influence in his life.

Soon he received a letter in shaky hand- writing: "Dear Willy," Miss Smith wrote, "When I read your letter I was blinded by tears, for I remembered you as a little fellow in my class. You have warmed my old heart. I have taught school for 50 years. Yours is the first letter of thanks I ever received from a student, and I shall cherish it until I die."

This response so encouraged Stidger that he wrote another letter and another. After 500 letters he stopped. He was no longer downcast.

At this time of year we think of giving thanks. All of us have benefited from a host of people--parents, teachers, schoolmates, friends, preachers, fellow Christians. Are you in the dumps, feeling sorry for yourself? Pick up a pen and write a letter. Go dial the number of a friend. Express thanks! Chris Smith via Coldwater c/C "the Messenger"