

Elder's Corner

"Tomorrow"

In Yellowstone National Park a sign advises, "Photograph as you go, you may never pass this way again." Aren't there so many things we wish we had on picture, tape or recorded! We constantly put off things until tomorrow that we should be enjoying today.

A psychologist concluded that 94% of us were simply enduring the present in expectation of something better tomorrow--waiting for this "miraculous something" which is to turn up tomorrow.

Here are three rules concerning each day:

Commit something good to memory each day. Be alive! Learn something! Wisdom comes a drop at a time. Read, observe, watch! Look at scenery, watch people, evaluate yourself. In life there is not only a place to fill, but a place to fulfill.

Look for something beautiful (good) each day. Make the best of a situation before it gets the best of you. Really, it is not what the future holds, but Who holds the future! There is beauty surrounding us.

Pass along kindness each day. It isn't what lies behind us; it is not what lies before us--it is what lies within us that really counts. The heart of all training should be the training of the heart. Take good care of the present, and the future will take good care of you.

"Photograph as you go. . . ." Charles Hodge

"I am resolved to go to the Savior, Faithful and true each day; Heed what He sayeth, do what He willeth, He is the living Way."

Hymn #255, Verse 3

That Little Extra Effort

The difference between success and failure is often determined by the willingness to put forth that "little extra effort" that spells success. We need to be gently reminded that there are many areas where our putting forth that "little extra" will make the difference between a good church and a really great church.

That "little extra effort" that gets us to Bible class as well as to worship on the Lord's

day morning.

That "little extra effort" that brings us back to the evening worship and mid-week Bible study.

That "little extra effort" that causes us to spend more time in private study of God's Word.

That "little extra effort" that reminds us to frequently claim the privilege of prayer.

That "little extra effort" that helps us to be more sacrificial in our giving as measured by our prosperity instead of our carnal nature that says, "Give as little as possible."

That "little extra effort" that keeps us at the home congregation except in cases of necessity.

That "little extra effort" that leads us into a compassionate concern for the lost and wayward and reminds us to speak to them about their spiritual condition. That "little extra effort" that helps us engage wholeheartedly and attentively in all phases of our worship.

That "little extra effort" that involves us in every activity of the work of the local church.

Of course, there is that "little extra effort" that we must avoid--we must avoid "extra" things, even very small things, which add to, take away from or in any way violate God's Word. His Word alone will do its effective work when it is followed as God's only revelation to man. Then it is the sole guide to our soul's salvation. Beloved, let us diligently apply ourselves to give that "little extra" and make the Lord's church the really great church it deserves to be for our Lord.

James Draper

Knowing When to Flee, Follow, Fight and Firmly Grasp

"But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life..." (I Timothy 6:11, 12). From these verse come four admonitions to the child of God: Flee, follow, fight and firmly grasp eternal life.

There are times when the child of God must flee. Delay would have been deadly for Lot in Sodom. He was directed to leave Sodom *"lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city"* (Genesis 19:15). *"Escape for thy life"* (V. 17). There are times when delay can be just as deadly spiritually for the child of God; therefore, Paul admonishes us to *"flee fornication"* (I Corinthians 6:18). Joseph knew that he must not linger with Potiphar's wife, or else he might be enticed to lie with her and commit adultery. Joseph *"left his garment in her and, and fled, and got him out"* (Genesis 39:12). There are situations too dangerous for delay. Paul also urged, "Flee youthful lusts" (II Timothy 2:22). And he said, *"Flee idolatry"* (I Corinthians 10:14). Paul had been discussing the dangers of covetousness: *"But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted*

after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things..." (I Timothy 6:9-11).

The child of God must be a follower of Christ. The worldly man is a follower of unrighteousness and ungodliness, but the Christian must follow after righteousness and godliness. Righteousness is living as God wants, not as man wants. Godliness is showing ourselves like God, Who is holy. We are to strive to possess faith, love, patience and meekness. Paul declares such traits are *"the fruit of the Spirit"* (Galatians 5:22). And a similar list given by Peter is called the Christian graces or virtues (II Peter 1:5-7). A disciple is a follower, and a disciple of Christ is His follower. *"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me"* (Luke 9:23). We are to follow in our Lord's footsteps of humility, service, obedience and suffering. *"For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps"* (I Peter 2:21).

The child of God must be a warrior and "fight the good fight of faith". There is a time to flee, and there is a time to fight. Sometimes we fight when we should flee and flee when we should fight. It is vitally important to know when each should be done. The world is locked in deadly warfare with Christ, His church and every child of God. The greatness of the warfare is described by Paul in Ephesians 6:12: *"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."* The soldier of Christ must be bold and committed. Christianity demands great strength, and the marvelous part is that the strength is supplied by God. *"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might"* (Ephesians 6:10).

The child of God must firmly grasp salvation. Or, *"lay hold on eternal life."* Becoming a child of God is important, but Solomon declared, *"better is the ending of a thing than the beginning thereof"* (Ecclesiastes 7:8). So many souls begin the Christian life, but leave off living for Christ. *"Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip"* (Hebrews 2:1). It is either firmly grasp eternal life, or it will slip through our fingers, and we will be eternally lost.
Charles L. Brown

Baptism & The Thief on the Cross

In Mark 16:16 Jesus said, *"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."* Jesus said that with one's faith he must be baptized to be saved. Those who disagree with our Lord on this matter, preaching that baptism is not necessary, talk about the thief on the cross. They ask, "If baptism is essential, how could Jesus have given this man the gift of salvation when he was nailed to a cross?"

First of all, no one can prove that he had not been baptized. In Mark 1:5 we are told, *"... there went out unto him (John the Baptist) all the country of Judea, and all they of Jerusalem, and they were baptized of him in the river Jordan."* It may well have been that he was one of them.

Secondly, when one creates a situation that puts the Scriptures in conflict, causing one to question the

integrity of the Bible, we can immediately conclude that he has an incorrect understanding of the issue.

Thirdly, often those who cite the thief to deny that baptism is essential to salvation also teach that it is essential to church membership. They teach in essence, "You don't have to be baptized to receive the gift of salvation, but you do have to be baptized to 'join our church'." Now, isn't that consistent.

Fourthly, to cite this thief in such a way reflects a gross misunderstanding. Today, our relationship with our Lord (salvation) is a covenant relationship. We were not there when Jesus was here on the earth. In Hebrews 9:17 the Holy Spirit says, *"For a testament is of force when there hath been death: for it doth not avail while he that made it liveth."* Jesus was yet alive when he gave this thief the gift of salvation. It was His to give on whatever terms He chose at the time. Later that day Jesus died, and it was 50 days later that He gave His disciples the great commission to *"go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature"* and promised, *"he who believes and is baptized shall be saved."*

So, friend, if you are thinking of receiving the gift of salvation as did the thief on the cross, we have news for you. You're 2000 years too late. For you to receive the gift of salvation, you must obey the gospel: believe in the Lord, repent of your sins, confess your faith and then be baptized *"for the remission of sins"* (Acts 2:38).
L. Roger Powell

"Brother Gilpin is currently bringing us an excellent series of lessons on the subject of baptism. We found the above article to be very timely and in keeping with the study under consideration. We commend to you its contents and the author."

"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:"

I Peter 3:15

The Elders

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The Bible Class: Springboard for Success

As with most congregations, we have two periods of time set aside each week for studying God's Word in graded Bible classes. Although there is always room for improvement in teachers, curriculum and other elements of a "school", our Bible classes have much potential for good.

An old saying has it, "As goes the Bible school, so goes the church." There is much truth in this. The Bible school arrangement is an expedient planned by the elders to help the church reach at least the ten following goals:

(1) Evangelism. Here is a method of bringing lost souls into an environment where they will be exposed to the teaching of the saving gospel of Christ (Romans 1:16).

(2) Instruction. The Bible class is an effective way for saint and sinner to learn more of God's Word (I Peter 2:2).

(3) Meditation. Things learned in connection with a Bible class provide matters for one

to think and meditate upon as he goes about his daily life (Psalm 39:3).

(4) Training. Knowledge and insight gained in Bible class can be used in teaching and encouraging others (Proverbs 22:6).

(5) Edification. The Bible class is a means of Christians encouraging and strengthening one another (Romans 14:21).

(6) Application. Study can help class members see some practical ways in which the principles of God's Word can be put into daily life (Galatians 2:20).

(7) Fellowship. Class members are drawn closer together as they enter into serious and reverent study and discussion of God's Word (Acts 2:42).

(8) Service. The Bible school should be able to suggest various ways in which people can be of greater service to God and man (John 13:1-13).

(9) Spiritual Growth. The Bible class contains both of the prime elements of spiritual growth: feeding upon nourishing spiritual food and exercising in godly functions (Hebrews 5:12-14).

(10) Joy. The Bible class is an environment where those who love God can find pleasure, satisfaction and happiness in the things of God (Philippians 4:4).

With such noble and important goals, surely the Bible school program demands and deserves the enthusiastic support of those who profess an interest in the things of God. Are you attending Bible classes on Sunday and Wednesday? If not, you should be.

-Darrell E. Beard

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Give Thanks to the Lord

"Oh give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever. Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, Whom He has redeemed from the hand of the enemy."
Psalm 107:1, 2

One of the most fundamental attitudes that people of God seem to have forgotten is the need for thankfulness. In the 107th Psalm David writes to remind a redeemed people to be grateful for their redemption. Two revealing phrases are repeated four times in this Psalm.

The first phrase is: "Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, And He delivered them out of their distresses." David uses this phrase to remind them of the circumstances from which God had rescued them in times past. Probably one historic event which David has in mind here is the exodus from Egyptian slavery. God's abiding presence and power was

manifested continually in this hour of their need.

From what dark hour of trouble has the Lord rescued you? Maybe you were lost in worldliness and sin. Perhaps you were drowning in self-indulgence and pleasure. It could be that you simply were wandering aimlessly through life with no direction and no hope.

The second repetitive phrase employed by David is: "Oh, that men would give thanks to the LORD for His goodness, And for His wonderful works to the children of men!" This expression acknowledged man's shortcoming in verbalizing thanks to God for what He had done for them. Whenever the children of Israel were rescued from difficulties, they seemed to forget God Who saved them.

How were you saved from the gripping power of sin? Was it by your own power or ability? Was it because you willed it so? Of course it was not! When was the last time you gave thanks for God's deliverance and salvation in your life? We often give thanks for our abundant physical blessings, but I wonder if we express gratitude with our words and our lives for the greatest blessing of all--salvation!

"Let the redeemed of the LORD say so!" Sadly, we often live our lives as if to say, "So what?" May we never be found guilty of being ungrateful for God's blessing of salvation. Where would we be without it? "...Having no hope and without God in the world" (Ephesians 2:12). What a frightening thought!

Steve Lusk

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Clock Watchers

Brief sermons are in a great demand. If one could package and sell twenty-minute sermons with "preheat and serve" instructions, he would become an instant Forbes celebrity. The "hurry up and get this over with" philosophy has found a home in the church.

"If a man cannot strike oil in twenty minutes, he is drilling with a dull bit" may provide a chuckle, but not from the spiritual mind intent on drinking deep from the well of living water. Sunday's high noon sounds the gun for the Indianapolis 500 to the local restaurants, beating the Baptists to the drumstick has become a sporting event.

One brother said, "When the sermon goes overtime, I turn it off." Rest assured he never said that about his favorite television program. One can easily discern Sunday's time of day by taking note of activity in the pew. Proceeding past the "allotted time" is like scraping the top of an ant bed. Overtime is no man's land where preachers void of stout heart fear to tread.

Some attempt to justify this disturbing lack of interest in God, worship and the gospel by pointing to man's diminutive attention span. This is insane. The application of this point is

always limited to small children or adults in a worship assembly. The truth is, the capacity of one's concentration is dependent upon his sense of priority and interest. One lacking in spirituality can devote rapt attention for several hours to some entertainment medium while experiencing a severe shortage of mental vigilance under the sound of gospel preaching.

Missionaries tell of people who walk for miles to sit four hours on back-less boards in thatched huts and scorching heat to feast on the treasures of the gospel. It is indeed tragic when one's interest in spiritual things can be exhausted during the course of a thirty-minute sermon.

Frank Chesser

Our Gospel Meeting

We are blessed to have Brother Burt Jones back with us in our gospel meeting which starts today and continues through Wednesday evening. Brother Jones is an outstanding gospel preacher and always presents messages true to God's Word in love for lost souls. He will do his part to make this meeting a success.

As members at West Side, we need also to do our part to make the meeting successful, a glory to God and pleasing to Him. We need to invite our neighbors and friends, make arrangements to pick them up if they need transportation and make them feel welcome so they will want to come back. We need to pray for the meeting and Brother Jones as he speaks from God's Word. We need to show reverence to God in our singing (Ephesians 5:19) and in our prayers (James 5:16). We need to listen attentively to the messages and let our visitors know that we are sincere in what we do. We also need to pray for those who need to obey the gospel, that they will do so.

If we make our priority pleasing God, we will have a great meeting. Let us all work to this end.

the Elders

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A Strange Country

While proud to be Americans, I think you will agree that we live in a strange country. We freely pass out Bibles in prisons but ban them from our schools. Why is it that our government is all for passing out Bibles for prisoners to read and study but opposes our children reading and studying the Bible in school? Don't worry about the kids! If they can't read it in school, they'll be able to read it when they get to prison... if the violence

and drugs don't get them first!

Before we jump on politicians, everyone's favorite whipping boy/girl, let's ask ourselves some hard questions: (1) Who allowed the eroding of moral landmarks and religious freedoms in America? We did! (2) Who elected a lot of knothed humanists and professional politicians to office? We did! (3) Who has been more focused on economic issues than moral issues in election years? We have! (4) Who basks in religious freedom to worship, study, pray, teach and live the Christian life but neglect to worship, study, pray, teach and live a Christian life? Guilty! Guilty! Guilty!

Talk is cheap, especially in an election year! "Preacher, are you a Republican or a Democrat?" Neither! I am a Christian! My counsel? Vote, but don't vote as a Republican or a Democrat! Vote as a Christian! Don't vote for the man or woman! Vote for God! Look at the moral issues! Raise your voice... and practice what you preach! "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21).
Dwight Fuqua

Effort--Are You Doing Your Part?

Dr. Bert Thompson concluded a great weekend last Lord's Day by bringing us the thought provoking message, "Why Are We Losing Our Children?" Did you know that Brother Thompson also spoke on "Creation or Evolution... Which?" at the Salem Civic Center on both Friday night and Saturday afternoon? Attendance for these great lessons was, at best, disappointing. A great deal of time and effort was exerted in preparing for this event. Were you one of those in the audience? Did you do everything you could to support Brother Thompson? Men and women at West Side spent hours and hours planning for this activity. Effort--Let's take a closer look at this word. How much effort do you put into supporting activities at West Side?

As defined by Mr. Webster, "effort" is (1) the use of physical or mental energy to do something; exertion; (2) a difficult exertion of the strength or will: *It was an effort to get up*; (3) a usually earnest attempt: *Make an effort to arrive promptly*; (4) something done or produced through exertion; an achievement: *a play that was his finest effort*.

How much physical or mental energy did you exert by attending any of Dr. Thompson's lessons? Did you make an effort to contact your friends and neighbors and invite them to attend? Did you make an earnest attempt to make calls or send cards inviting your co-workers, family or friends to attend this event? They needed to hear what Brother Thompson had to say. Great efforts were made to advertise this activity by renting billboards and advertising space on the bus transit service and in "House to House...." Many of you handed out or mailed flyers that were provided announcing this event. Did you put forth all of the effort you could to do your part? Only you know the answer to this question.

You'll have another chance in just a few weeks to make an effort to support our gospel meeting with Brother Burt Jones. Brother Jones will begin our Fall meeting on Sunday, November 9. He will make every effort to preach the best sermons he can preach. Will you make the effort necessary to support him? Will you exert the energy necessary to attend faithfully each night? Will you earnestly make an effort to pray for the meeting? Will you make the necessary telephone calls to invite your family and friends? Will you use the physical or

mental energy to write and mail invitations? Much effort is needed to fully support this gospel meeting. Will you do your part?

Both of these men are dedicated soldiers of the cross. One can easily see that each of these men put forth much effort in what they do. Will you do your part? Will you put forth the effort needed to reach the lost? Those lost souls need to hear Brother Jones and the message he will proclaim. Will you do your part to invite them? Will you do your part and be in attendance? After all, you can't expect your family and friends to be interested in something you don't support yourself!

Effort! Please do your part in the next few weeks to make our gospel meeting successful in reaching the lost and proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.
the Elders

Telephone Calls!

Your child left home several hours ago heading off to college, and you anxiously await their telephone call letting you know where they are. You just want to know that he/she is all right. You pace the floor and wonder why they haven't called. It's now been much longer than you thought it should have been, and you are frustrated or even angry by now. "Why hasn't she called?" "Doesn't he care about me enough to pick up the phone and call me?" "I just want to know that he is all right!"

Your child doesn't have to be out of state attending college. He might be across town living with his family. How often do they call just to say, "Hi, Mom, I'm just calling to check on you" or "Hello, Dad, how was your day?" You can't understand why they don't have time to pick up the telephone and call you, even if it's just for a few minutes. All of us have probably experienced something like this.

Have you considered how God feels when you don't call Him on time or don't call Him at all? How long has it been since you called Him and told Him you are all right? How long has it been since you just called to say "hello"?

We are told in I Thessalonians 5:17 to "*pray without ceasing.*" "*But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly*" (Matthew 6:6). "*Watch ye therefore, and pray always*" (Luke 21:36). "*Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation*" (Matthew 26:41). "*Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much*" (James 5:16).

God wants us to talk to Him. Take time each day and call God. Just as the parent waiting for the child to call, God waits for His children to call. the Elders

"See You Tonight!"

"I love you. . . see you tonight!" Have you ever said those or similar words to your mate or your children as you walked out the door on your way to work? Did you stop to think what you were saying? Did you consider that this might possibly be the last time you would see your wife, husband or child?

We take so many things for granted. Most Christians do, however, realize that there's no guarantee of tomorrow. We are reminded in James 4:14 how short life can be: *"Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."*

How should we live our life? We read in Matthew 6:31-34: *"Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day*

is the evil thereof." We should live our life today as though it will be the last day of our life! By doing so, we would put important things first. Our priorities would change drastically. Are you "seeking the kingdom of God"? Have you lived your life "seeking God"? If your life ended today, where would you spend eternity? Would you hear these or similar words: *"Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord"* (Matthew 25:21).

Have you been like the wise man in Matthew 7:24: *"Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:"* or are you living like the foolish man in Matthew 7:26: *"And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:"*? "See you tonight!" Words spoken often. Words we take for granted. Next time you utter these words, consider the fact that this might be your last word spoken! This might be the last time they hear your voice. Are you prepared should this happen? Have you prepared them?
the Elders

How Important Is Church Attendance?

"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). From this verse we can see that attending church is very important. This verse isn't complicated or hard to understand. Can we miss church and still be pleasing to God? How many times can we forsake the "assembling of ourselves together"?

Brother Burton Coffman writes, "When people do not attend worship, they do not give, pray, nor sing God's praise, nor observe the Lord's Supper, or study the sacred scriptures, all of which are things related to the public worship and have practically no existence apart from it." You might be thinking, "I attend Sunday morning worship so this doesn't apply to me." If you are missing the other designated times that have been set by the elders, then you are missing prayer, singing, studying of the sacred scriptures and fellowship with your brothers and sisters. You are starving spiritually!

The definition of "not" means "in no manner; to no degree, absolutely no or not." "Forsaking the assembling" is something we are not to do. The word "forsake" means "to desert. leave. abandon."

We are not to forsake any "assembling" of the church.

The Greek word for "assembling" means "a complete collection; specially a church meeting (for worship): assembling (gathering) together." The only other place this word is used is in II Thessalonians 2:1. There it means "gathering together". If one willingly absents himself from a church service, he has forsaken "the assembling" and has broken a commandment of God. Breaking a commandment of God is sin. Sin separates us from God (Isaiah 59:1-2).

There is a difference between "missing" and "forsaking". To "miss" is to be absent unwillingly. You would "miss" if you were sick or in the hospital. To forsake is to be absent willingly.

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:19-21). Verse 24 says, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." If you forsake, willingly miss, services, you have made the choice to serve Satan rather than God. You serve God when you willingly attend services. You must do as Joshua did in Joshua 24:15... "choose you this day whom ye will serve..." the Elders

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"Everyone Is Entitled to His Own View"

The above statement has been frequently expressed by countless people. Some might even think it is contained in Holy Scripture. Though it is not in Scripture, we prize the freedom represented in the fact that all are entitled to their own view as Americans. In fact, let's note a few of the many ideas expressed in regard to religion today.

"I think Christians should be more tolerant. I don't think everyone has to believe in Christ to be all right with God."

"I think homosexuals and women should be ordained to the ministry like anyone else."

"I think it's ridiculous that some churches make such a big deal about baptism. What's that got to do with what kind of person I am?"

"I think all truth is relative. What's true for you does not necessarily mean it is true for me. You have your truth, and I'll have mine."

"I think churches of Christ should catch up with the times and use instrumental music in worship."

To these thoughts many may be thinking, "I agree!" But there is a small problem. Listen to Proverbs 3:5-6: *"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."*

There is a world of difference between "I THINK" religion and the revealed will of God.

We desperately need to hear once again, "*lean not unto thine own understanding... lean not unto thine own understanding... lean not....*" Those words should be a mandatory warning label printed on every bottle of home-brew religion. The "white lightning" religions many are concocting will kill them.

God has spoken (Hebrews 1:1-2). Truth is absolute, not relative (John 17:17; 8:32). We can (and must) know the truth (John 8:32). God has never allowed man to determine what is acceptable and right. God has allowed man the freedom to make choices, but only if man follows the explicit commands of God will man then be blessed.

I indeed am so thankful we live in America, in the land of the free and many freedoms. I am thankful "everyone is entitled to his own view." Still, the absolute truth of the matter is, His view, His way is the only way (Matthew 7:13-14; John 14:6).

author unknown; via The South Florida Avenue "Messenger", 5/26/99

Responsibility

You have seen it. In our pluralistic society it is almost a forgotten quality. What is it? It is a failure or unwillingness to take responsibility. You see it in government, in major corporations, in schools, on the street, in families and in the church. Pluralism has taught us that there is no ultimate truth, there is no absolute standard of behavior and what one thinks is right is right.

Of course, no one lives by this code--everyone draws the line somewhere. Those who say there is no absolute truth believe that there is no absolute truth.

Pluralism is a cop-out allowing one to believe whatever he wants to believe and insisting that everyone agree with him. Holding to this point of view allows one to excuse himself from responsibility. A politician can be hypocritical, the CEO of a corporation can practice "funny bookkeeping," a school administrator can be convinced that his school problems have come about because of a lack of funds from the state, a father can overlook his being in absentia, a young person can rob a grocery store and a Christian can be only an observer. In all of these areas it is easy to say, "Don't blame me. It's not my fault."

Freud helped develop this thinking by suggesting that our genes make us do what we do, and Marx fortified this position by saying that our societies are to blame. However, God holds us personally responsible for what we do and say and what we do not do and do not say (Romans 14:12). In the church, we must not be on the sidelines watching things happen.

We must not think of the work of the church as "what they are doing". The church is the body of Christ, and the body functions properly when every part does its share (Ephesians 4:16). We are all responsible. We all have a place to fill. Can the body count on me? Can God count on me? Responsibility accepted says, "Here am I, send me!" What are you saying?

Jay Lockhart

A Spiritual Inventory

"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" - II Corinthians 13:5

"But let a man examine himself,..." I Corinthians 11:28

If everyone attended as many services as I do, how often would the building remain closed?

If each member arrived at the services at the same time as I do, how many would be late for worship?

If everyone attended Bible study as I do, how many would be present?

If each one studied the Bible as I do, how much study would there be?

If each member tried to sing as hard as I do, what kind of singing would there be?

If everyone gave as I do, how much would the contribution be?

If each one sacrificed just like I do, how much sacrificing would be done?

If every member visited the sick as I do, how many of the sick would be visited?

If everyone invited others to services and other church activities like I do, how many guests would attend?

What if each member always complained as much as I do?

via The River Road bulletin

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Voluntary Inertia

One father told his little son that he couldn't go to worship because he was suffering from a severe case of voluntary inertia. "I bet you ain't," the little boy answered. "I bet you're just lazy."

Jesus, the Lord of the Harvest, always has positions available for workers. No one has an excuse to stand "idle in the marketplace" (Matthew 20:3), for there is "work to do, work on every hand." As long as there is a lost soul on earth (Luke 19:10; Mark 16:15, 16), as long as there is one needy person (James 1:27), as long as there is breath in our lungs to praise the Father (Isaiah 38:18; I Peter 2:5, 9), our work is not done.

To cut away the nice verbiage and get to the truth, some Christians are going to be lost on Judgment Day because they are lazy. Some are standing on the promises, others only sitting on the premises. No Christian should be satisfied to just be a name on a roll. Each should be a hand in the work. Fill a place--not just a space.

The Book says, *"Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord"* (Romans 12:11; Hebrews 6:12). Martin Luther said, "If I rest, I rust." Leonardo DaVinci observed, "Iron rusts from disuse, stagnant water loses its purity and in cold weather becomes frozen; even so inaction saps the vigor of the mind." George Whitefield quipped, "It is better to wear out than to rust out."
Allen Webster

"Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall" (II Peter 2:10).

Consider the Poor

Several years ago a television station in Nashville, Tennessee, did a special feature on Ira North, minister of the Madison Church of Christ. The interview was done during the last year of Brother North's fight with terminal cancer. It was presented as a tribute to Brother North and the phenomenal success of the Madison church. When asked by the interviewer what was the key to Madison's growth, he responded by quoting James 1:27, *"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."*

In Brother North's book Balance: A Tried and Tested Formula for Church Growth, he wrote that he had never realized the true importance of benevolent work until the late A.M. Burton, founder and President Emeritus of the Life and Casualty Insurance Company of Tennessee made him aware of passages like Romans 12:16: *"be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate...."* Brother Burton was more than worthy to teach a lesson on this principle, for he had devoted his life to serving others. It is said that he gave over 90% of his income away. On one occasion after reading Luke 14:12-15 Brother Burton resolutely determined that he would put it into practice. The next evening he and his wife invited twelve girls from a wayward home in Nashville for dinner. As a result of that dinner a Bible study was started, and ten of the twelve were baptized.

One of the very first characteristics of the church in its beginning in Jerusalem was its benevolent spirit. People *"sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all, according as any man had need"* (Acts 2:45). The work of caring for those in need, particularly the Grecian widows, was so important that *"seven men of good report, full of the Holy Spirit and of wisdom"* (Acts 6:3) were appointed to oversee the task. Is there any doubt that we should likewise place a similar importance on caring for those in need?

It has been said that "people don't care how much you know, until they know how much you care." As a child at our Bible camp, one of my favorite songs was a song based on our Lord's command to love one another in John 13:34-35. The chorus says, "Yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love." What better way to manifest our discipleship and the heart of Christ than to show love toward the less fortunate? Yes, if we are going to be a growing church, we must show ourselves a caring church.

Tim Shoulders via Round Knob c/C, Austinville, VA

"West Side has always been a caring congregation. This week we will demonstrate

such care by designating the entire contribution for the construction of the Andrew Connally School of Preaching in Tanzania, East Africa. To God be the glory for all we are able to do." the Elders

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Who Have You Encouraged Lately?

Two great men, both seriously ill, occupied the same hospital room. One man was allowed to sit up in his bed for an hour each afternoon to help drain the fluid from his lungs. The other man had to spend all his time flat on his back.

The men talked for hours on end. They spoke of their wives and families, their homes, their jobs, their involvement in the military service, where they had been on vacation.

Every afternoon when the man in the bed by the window could sit up, he would pass the time by describing to his roommate all the things he could see outside his window. The man in the other bed began to live for those one-hour periods when his world would be broadened and enlivened by all the activity and color of the world outside.

The window overlooked a park with a lovely lake. Ducks and swans played on the water while children sailed their model boats. Young lovers walked arm in arm amidst flowers of every color and a fine view of the city skyline could be seen in the distance. As the man by the window described all this in exquisite detail, the man on the other side of the room would close his eyes and imagine the picturesque scene.

One warm afternoon the man by the window described a parade passing by. Although the other man could not hear the band--he could see it in his mind's eye as the gentleman by the window portrayed it descriptively with words.

Days and weeks passed. One morning, the day nurse arrived to bring water for their baths only to find the lifeless body of the man by the window who had died peacefully in his sleep.

As soon as it seemed appropriate, the other man asked if he could be moved next to the window. The nurse was happy to make the switch, and after making sure he was comfortable she left him alone. Slowly, painfully, he propped himself up on one elbow to take his first look at the real world outside. He strained to slowly turn to look out the window beside his bed. It faced a blank wall.

The man asked the nurse what could have compelled the deceased roommate who had described such wonderful things outside this window. The nurse responded that the man was blind and could not even see the wall. She said, "Perhaps he just wanted to encourage you."

Epilogue: There is tremendous happiness in making others happy, despite our own situations. Shared grief is half the sorrow, but happiness when shared, is doubled. If you want to feel rich, just count all the things you have that money can't buy. "Today is a gift. That's

why it's called 'the present'."

source unknown

*"Wherefore comfort yourselves together,
and edify one another, even as also do ye"*

(I Thessalonians 5:11).

the Elders

What Is a Family?

Warmth when the world is cold. . . safety when the world is hostile. . . a place of love in a world of hate . . . a place of light in the midst of darkness. . . This is a family. of

A family is many things. . . it is devotion sitting on a pew together. . . a mother singing as she goes about preparing supper. . . a father happily playing with laughing children. A family is a yell squad when victory is won. . . a place of understanding and starting again when a defeat must be endured.

It is a very private organization--only bona fide members are allowed in. As a poet said, "All of us are we. . . and everyone else is they." It is held together with the glue of love and the cement of mutual respect.

The family is a shelter from the storm. . . a safe and friendly port when the waves of life become too wild. No person is ever alone if he is a member of a family. The smile of a mother. . . the robust laughter of a father. . . the giggle of daughters. . . the shouts of sons. That's a family.

They may taunt one another. . . they must fight, fuss and bicker among each other. . . but, when trouble threatens from outside forces, instantly the ranks close and the troops unite against the common foe.

A family is all of these things. . . but, most of all, a family is a group of human beings working together to build something beautiful and lasting. A family is a colony of heavenly bliss--right here on earth. Relate all of this to Paul's statement in I Timothy 3:15 which says the church is the *"family of God"*. author unknown

This eldership is indeed proud to be a part of the family at West Side. We feel

privileged to have the trust and support of the congregation as we try to lead this family to heaven together. We urge each of you this week to look in our hymnal at #855 and slowly read the words, then re-read them. Isn't it great to be a part of the family of God! -- the Elders

A Full Plate

Have you ever heard the expression, "My plate is already full, I can't handle anything else"? Certainly each of us has heard this at one time or another and, as most of us know, it was not talking about a picnic, a church fellowship meal or in line at one of the local buffets. The phrase is one which is related to a work load.

Now for a thought provoker, let's put this phrase into some practical application. Here we are at West Side. First of all, isn't it great to be associated with and involved in so many works that make our "plate full"? Indeed, there are so many workers, willing to take on another job without any hesitation. You each know who you are, and we thank you and thank God for you every day.

Oh, now back to the plate. Eddy and Wayne have just returned from a fabulous trip to Tanzania. They will be having more to say (and show) about this experience of a lifetime. While they were away, Brother Burt Jones filled the pulpit and presented us with two great lessons. Several restorations were a result of these sermons. Thank you, Burt, wherever you are now engaged in a gospel meeting.

We recently completed a one-day Vacation Bible School. Our sincere thanks to the director, Brother Mike Christian, and all those who volunteered to be used in any way they could be of service.

Here's looking ahead on this full-plate agenda:

September 13, 9am-2pm, Southwest Virginia Youth Rally w/Jerry Elder of Columbia, TN. This will be a growing event for our young people and those from around the state.

October 17-19, "Science & Nature, Two Votes for God" with Brother Bert Thompson. Be inviting your friends now.

November 9-12, our gospel meeting with Burt Jones.

By now you see that West Side is rapidly developing a "full plate" of activities for each of us to participate in and promote, starting now and continuing until every event is completed. Surely, our plate is full, but we should never and will never acknowledge that we cannot handle anything else. Let our attitude be, "bring it on, put a little more on my plate". May God help us to have the proper love and concern for His Word being spread to everyone within hearing distance of this fair city. the Elders

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The "Local Preacher"

"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (II Timothy 4:2).

Preaching the gospel of Christ is the primary purpose of a preacher's life, but this soul-saving effort is not confined only to the pulpit. He has the ever-present responsibility of study along with helping others with mental, emotional, financial, parental and marital difficulties. These are ever present among the members as well as the citizens of the community. Our preacher handles all these responsibilities well.

This August 8th marks the beginning of the seventh year since the Gilpin family came to West Side to become a part of this work. To them we say, "Happy Anniversary! May we have many more together."

Jeanny has shown herself to be a capable helpmeet as a preacher's wife and supporter. Their two fine sons have been an asset to the youth of our congregation. They make us very proud of them by their conduct and influence in the community.

Eddy commands respect wherever he goes. In lectureships, gospel meetings, mission trips or just at the local coffee shop, he is a commendable representative of our Lord and the West Side family. His pulpit preaching is sound in the Word and spoken in love. He is indeed a defender of the *"old paths"* (Jeremiah 6:16). We feel that we have a lot to offer this community here at West Side, and a favorable amount of credit for that goes to "the local preacher".

To serve this congregation as your elders is an honor for us. To have Eddy at our side contending for the faith makes the unity of the Spirit even stronger. May we serve together for many more years. To God be the glory for all that we accomplish. the Elders

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Ten Marks of a Growing Church

Growing churches have elders who are spiritual men of wisdom and vision and who are deeply interested in the souls they are shepherding (I Thessalonians 5:12, 13; I Timothy 3:1-7).

Growing churches have deacons who believe they must be servants in order to be deacons, and as deacons they rejoice for the privilege that is theirs to serve (I Timothy 3:8-13).

Growing churches have preaching that exalts Christ and His Word, that proclaims the *"whole counsel of God"* and challenges members and non-members in a bold but loving way to draw nearer to God (II Timothy 4:2-4; Acts 20:27; Ephesians 4:15).

Growing churches have an educational program that stimulates members to know more of God's Word and to better apply its truth (II Peter 3:18; Ephesians 4:12).

Growing churches regard worship as a privilege rather than a chore. The singing is enthusiastic, the Lord's Supper is thoughtfully observed, prayers are humbly and lovingly offered and brethren give generously as they have been prospered. People bring their Bibles and even take notes during lessons because they want to better know God (John 4:24; Psalm 116:12; Ephesians 5:19; James 5:16; I Corinthians 16:1, 2).

Growing churches make visitors feel at home. Others can see the unity, warmth and love that exists among the

people of God (John 13:34, 35).

Growing churches make a diligent effort to teach the lost and restore the fallen. Visitation and Bible studies are constantly going on (Acts 5:42; Galatians 6:1, 2).

Growing churches keep up with their missionaries by writing them letters, sending them good literature and encouraging them in their work (Philippians 4:14-20; I Corinthians 3:9).

Growing churches respond to goals and challenges because every member is focused on glorifying Christ (Philippians 2:5-11).

Growing churches exhibit the mind of Christ—they are humble, serving and obedient to the Father (Philippians 2:5-11).

Does this sound like us? If not, then let's get growing!

Mike Vestal via Red Bank c/C Chattanooga, TN

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"In Christ"

Have you ever thought seriously about the blessings and responsibilities of being "in Christ"? Everyone in the world is either "in Christ" or not. There can be no middle ground. Many make some claim of faith in Christ. Is faith in Christ the same as being in Christ? What are the benefits of being in Christ? What are the obligations of being in Christ? What is the way to be in Christ?

We have access to every spiritual blessing "in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3). We have hope "in Christ" (I Corinthians 15:19; Ephesians 1:12). We have confidence "in Christ" (Philippians 1:26; Philemon 8). We have redemption "in Christ" (Romans 3:24). We have sanctification "in Christ" (I Corinthians 1:2). We have salvation "in Christ" (II Timothy 2:10). There is no condemnation to those who are "in Christ" (Romans 8:1). The love of God is "in Christ" (Romans 8:39). We are fellow partakers of the promise "in Christ" (Ephesians 3:6). We can be complete "in Christ" (Colossians 1:28). There is a promise of life that is "in Christ" (II Timothy 1:1).

The only way to be "in Christ" is to be "*baptized into Christ*" (Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:27). We are "*created in Christ Jesus for good works*" (Ephesians 2:10). We are to be "prudent in Christ" (I Corinthians 4:10). Any boasting that we have should be "in Christ" (I Corinthians 15:31).

There is much more that could be said, but of all the places to be, "in Christ" is the place that we should be! Are you "in Christ"?

Steve Lusk

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Get Involved!

Not long ago I came across the following congregational analysis:

140 total membership

8 *too old to work*

132 left to do the work

-12 *too young to assume responsibility*

120 left to do the work

-8 *away at school*

112 left to do the work

-16 *work long hours, six or seven days a week*

96 left to do the work

-8 *tied down with small children*

88 left to do the work

-15 *handicapped by aches and pains*

73 left to do the work

-14 *hindered by unbelieving companions*

59 left to do the work

-15 *Indifferent and do not attend*

44 left to do the work

-16 *attend but refuse to work*

28 left to do the work

26 *tired and asked to be relieved*

2 left to do the work -YOU AND ME, but I am too busy with other things, so YOU do the work!

Does this congregational analysis fit us? You be the judge.

The success of any church depends upon the willing cooperation of the membership. The

church is a body, and the various members of the body must each perform their tasks or the entire body suffers. God will bless the corporate efforts of this congregation--but there must be effort expended. God will not do our work for us. Let's all get involved!

Johnny R. Melton via Red Bank c/C

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Wrong Is Wrong!

In a time of sagging morals, Satan provides many rationalizations for improper behavior. Those who would live faithful Christian lives must not be *"ignorant of his devices"* (II Corinthians 2:11). Wrong is wrong, despite our efforts to excuse our actions.

Wrong is wrong even if you don't get caught. From "little things" like littering the highways and breaking the speed limits to "more serious offenses" such as adultery and stealing, our society seems to think the only wrong is getting caught. It just isn't so. *"The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good"* (Proverbs 15:3).

Wrong is wrong even if you do it for a good cause. The honorable purpose does not justify a dishonorable deed. Many who would not think of gambling have no resistance to buying a raffle ticket or playing bingo if the proceeds go to "a good cause". Stealing is stealing even if it is done by a mother who does it to feed children neglected and abandoned by their father.

Wrong is wrong even if others do worse things. It will be little comfort to you in the judgment, if you should be lost, that others you know did things which you considered to be worse than your sins.

Wrong is wrong even if it doesn't bother your conscience. Conscience can be trained to accept wrong-doing, but sin is a transgression of God's law (I John 3:4), and whoever transgresses God's law has sinned, even if his conscience does approve.

Wrong is wrong even if it is commonly considered all right. *"Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil"* (Exodus 23:2). The Christian should *"enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of the evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away"* (Proverbs 4:3-15). *"Prove all things, hold fast to that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil"* (I Thessalonians 5:21-22).

Mack Lyon

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Is Faithful Attendance Important?

It is quite strange to hear some members of the Lord's church express their thoughts about attending all services of the congregation. They have been purchased with the blood of Christ, separated from the world to live according to Christ's doctrine, enlisted in the army of the Lord, commanded to be lights in the world and instructed to put the Lord and His work before all other interests. But in some way we have convinced ourselves (deceived is a better word) that faithfulness in attendance is only optional, except for the Lord's supper on Sunday

morning, which we do not see as too pressing even then.

Please think seriously and look again, before Judgment day comes, to the real truth of the matter.

1. Faithfulness is the seventh fruit of the Spirit. This fruit is produced in our lives only when we follow the Holy Spirit's teaching (Galatians 5:22).

2. Faithfulness means dependable, constant, reliable, honorable and loyal. Could this be said of our attendance when we only attend once a week?

3. Faithful attendance is directly commanded along with holding fast our confession and considering one another as we should (Hebrews 10:23-25). Are we practicing the Golden Rule concerning others' interest (Matthew 7:12)?

4. Faithful attendance causes the church to be seen as "*a city that is set on a hill,*" while unfaithful attendance puts our influence "*under a bushel*" (Matthew 5:14-16).

5. Though we are commanded to seek the lost, do we realize that no one can influence any of the lost to be saved while not being faithful (I Peter 3:1-7).

6. Those who substitute faithful attendance for people and/or things of the world will soon have corrupt morals (I Corinthians 15:33).

7. Unfaithfulness to all services keeps one from growing "*in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*" (II Peter 3:18).

8. Children, whom we are charged with training, will grow up undisciplined in honorable loyalty to the Lord (Ephesians 6:4).

9. Unfaithfulness in attendance expresses a lack of concern for our souls and ignores those charged with watching and giving an account for our souls in the Judgment (Hebrews 13:17).

10. Unfaithfulness causes us to miss the fellowship, strength, comfort and peace intended by God in the church (I John 1:7; Philippians 4:6-8).

11. And, worst of all, unfaithfulness will cause us to miss heaven with all its joy, peace and eternal bliss, because sin will not enter there. "*Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin*" (James 4:17).

One hour with the people of God in worship unto God is more profitable to a citizen of heaven than all the fleeting pleasures or cankering gold of this world. The bottom line is really found in whether we love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul and with all our mind (Matthew 23:37). Gary Colley

It is our fervent prayer that each member at West Side will seriously consider whether they shine their lights by their attendance or hide them under a bushel. Let's all strive to be

"dependable, constant, reliable and loyal" in service to our God by our faithful attendance to all services. the Elders

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Sunday Night -What's Different?

Have you noticed how different we are on Sunday night? We dress up in our Sunday best on Sunday morning and dress like we're going to a picnic or baseball game on Sunday night! We come to worship on Sunday morning, but Sunday night is different. We seem to have a different attitude on Sunday night. We say there's no difference between Sunday morning worship and worship on Sunday night, but outwardly we are so different. Ever wonder why? What's different between Sunday morning and Sunday night?

Sunday morning is very formal. Sunday night is more relaxed.

We wear coat and tie or very nice dresses/ suits on Sunday morning. We wear blue jeans and tee shirts on Sunday night, or at best we remove the ties and dresses and exchange them for casual shirts and slacks. On Sunday morning we look like we're going to a wedding, and on Sunday night we look like we're going to work in our yards.

We don't need our Bibles on Sunday night.

We come in later on Sunday evening.

We even sing differently on Sunday night. For some reason we don't sing as many songs on Sunday night, or we try those new songs that no one seems to know or if they do, you wouldn't know it!

We don't invite our friends to attend worship on Sunday night.

We expect preaching to be different on Sunday night. Many won't attend on Sunday night if the regular preacher is out of town. For some reason, if he's gone, they don't have to come either. After all, we're just having singing tonight, or our young men are conducting services tonight. They don't need me to encourage them.

We expect the service to be shorter on Sunday night.

We allow the world to dictate our attendance. After all, the Super Bowl is more important than worship; I just couldn't miss my family reunion; or that sporting event only happens on Sunday. I have to go to work tomorrow, so I need my rest.

We don't give respect to those who are attending on Sunday night. While they are partaking of the Lord's Supper we are gathering up our belongings so we can leave as soon as they are done.

Many don't need to be in attendance at all on Sunday night. Our attendance drops drastically

by evening services. Why? Could it be that Sunday evening is not important?

The truth of the matter is that we treat Sunday night as if it is different! Don't we come to serve and to worship the same God? Are we in fellowship with the same people? Should we be any different on Sunday night?

Do I really have to attend on Sunday night? What should my attitude be? Jesus said in Luke 17:10, *"So likewise you, when you have done all those things which are commanded, say, we are unprofitable servants, we have done what was our duty to do."*

the Elders

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Making the Tomb Secure

A joke heard around the Pentagon goes like this:

One reason the Armed Services have trouble operating jointly is that they don't speak the same language. For example, if you told Navy personnel to "secure the building" they would turn off the lights and lock the doors. Army personnel would occupy the building so that no one could enter. Marines would assault the building, capture it and defend it with suppressive fire and close combat. The Air Force, on the other hand, would take out a three-year lease with an option to buy.

It seems to me that there was some misunderstanding regarding the "securing" of a location in Palestine in the first century as well. *"On the next day, which followed the Day of Preparation, the chief priests gathered together to Pilate, saying, Sir, we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, 'After three days i will rise.' Therefore command that the tomb be made secure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night and steal Him away, and say to the people, 'He has risen from the dead.' So the last*

deception will be worse than the first. Pilate said to them, you have a guard; go your way, make it as secure as you know how. So they went and made the tomb secure, sealing the stone and setting the guard" (Matthew 27:62-66).

The Jewish and Roman leaders' idea of "securing the tomb" meant putting a big rock in front of it. Unfortunately for them (but fortunately for us) Jesus' idea was to secure the tomb's place in history by rising from the dead. Mere rocks are unable to hold back the One Who created the universe! What hope is ours because of what happened that glorious morning nearly 2,000 years ago! Praise God for the resurrection of His precious Son!

author unknown

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who

are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (I Peter 1:3-5).

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A Wooden Bowl

A frail old man went to live with his son, daughter-in-law and four-year old grandson. The old man's hands trembled, his eyesight was blurred and his step faltered.

The family ate together at the table, but the elderly grandfather's shaky hands and failing sight made eating difficult. Peas rolled off his spoon onto the floor. When he grasped the glass, milk spilled on the tablecloth. The son and daughter-in-law became irritated with the mess. "We must do something about Grandfather," said the son. "I've had enough of his spilled milk, noisy eating and food on the floor."

So the husband and wife set a small table in the corner. There Grandfather ate alone while the rest of the family enjoyed dinner. Since Grandfather had broken a dish or two, his food was served in a wooden bowl. When the family glanced in Grandfather's direction, sometimes he had a tear in his eye as he sat alone. Still, the only words the couple had for him were sharp admonitions when he dropped a fork or spilled food. The four-year old watched it all in silence.

One evening before supper the father noticed the son playing with wood scraps on the floor. He asked the child sweetly, "What are you making?"

Just as sweetly the boy responded, "Oh, I am making a little bowl for you and Mama to eat your food in when I grow up." The four-year old smiled and went back to work. The words so struck the parents that they were speechless. Then tears started to stream down their cheeks. Though no word was spoken, both knew what must be done. That evening the husband took Grandfather's hand and gently led him back to the family table. For the remainder of his days he ate every meal with the family. And for some reason, neither the husband or the wife seemed to care any longer when a fork was dropped, milk spilled or the tablecloth soiled.

Children are remarkably perceptive. Their eyes ever observe, their ears ever listen and their minds ever process the messages they absorb. If they see us patiently provide a happy home atmosphere for family members, they will imitate that attitude for the rest of their lives.

The wise parent realizes that every day the building blocks are being laid for the child's future. Let's be wise builders and role models. Life is about people connecting with people and making a positive difference.

On a positive note, I've learned that, no matter what happens or how bad it seems today, life goes on and will be better tomorrow. I've learned that you can tell a lot about a person by the way he/she handles three things: a rainy day, lost luggage and tangled coat hangers. I've learned that regardless of your relationship with your parents, you'll miss them when they're gone from your life.

submitted by the elders

"The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness" (Proverbs 16:31).

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and other; which is the first commandment with promise; That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth."
Ephesians 6:13

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Is Dancing a Work of the Flesh?

We are quickly approaching the time of year when schools will be having their proms and graduation dances. This article written by Brother Gary Colley should be read and pondered upon by every parent and student at West Side. -- the Elders

Each year there seems to arise the need to give scriptural teaching concerning dancing and its evils. Parents must meet the questions of their young people; young people must have answers for themselves and their friends on the question.

It is very important that we know what the works of the flesh are, as well as "*such like*" things that are mentioned in God's Word, because "*they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God*" (Galatians 5:21). The words "world" and "flesh" are often used in the Bible to mean evil or worldliness, and thus it does in Galatians 5:19-21.

Is dancing a work of the flesh? The list of words that show us the works of the flesh in Galatians 5:19-21 are: uncleanness, lasciviousness and revellings. There are other words given, but these apply directly to the subject of dancing.

1. Uncleanness is from the Greek word *akatharsia* which is defined: "lewdness, impurity of motive, the impurity of lustful, luxurious profligate living." This word is also found in Romans 1:24; 6:19; II Corinthians 12:21; Ephesians 4:19; I Thessalonians 4:7 (Thayer's Lexicon).

2. Lasciviousness is from the Greek word *aselgeia* which is defined: "intemperance, lasciviousness, licentiousness wantonness; indecent bodily movements, unchaste handling of males and females" (Thayer's Lexicon).

3. Revellings is from the Greek word *komoi* which is defined: "a jovial feast with music and dancing; a carousal, a festive lascivious feasting" (Liddell and Scott Greek Lexicon).

We should not need scholars to explain to us that the modern dance is included in the three words defined above. We can see that the "*such like*" of Galatians 5:21 does include the dance. No Christian, striving to live so as to please his heavenly Father, should participate nor allow those under his care and guidance to be a participant in the modern dance. The Bible condemns it as wrong.

Yet, if there were no such book as the Bible, it seems one should be convinced of the destructive and dangerous nature of the dance simply by studying reports of sociologists on the evil results of dancing. The fondling and embracing in dancing is proven to do great damage. Certainly no good thought or noble thing has ever come from dancing.

Christians cannot dance and abstain from evil (I Thessalonians 5:22), for dancing is evil! Neither can we keep ourselves unspotted from the world and dance, for dancing is worldliness (James 1:27; I Peter 2:11). Christians cannot dance and deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, for ungodliness and worldly lusts are found in the dance (Titus 2:11-12).

Dancing belongs to the world. The Christian belongs to Christ. Let us not then jeopardize our own soul's salvation and the salvation of those we might influence by participating in the modern dance! May God help each of us to so live that heaven may be

our home.

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Encouraging Elders

If a church is thriving or dying, it is doing so primarily because of its leadership. Elders have a tremendous responsibility to see that the church is being fed spiritually. *"Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly: not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind"* (1 Peter 5:2).

To the average person the idea of becoming a servant is repugnant. Who wants to be a slave? The world's measure of servitude labels it as debasing. But in the Lord's church it is beautifully different. *"...but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your servant"* (Matthew 20:26).

The ultimate worth of any congregation, either to its members or to the community, lies in the serving quality of its leadership. Congregations that have leaders who view themselves as servants can be a moving force for good in the community. In a day when selfishness and self-centeredness is the common fair, a congregational leadership that really cares about people has a valuable place. Moreover, every member should do everything they can to make their work a joy. *"Obeying them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you"* (Hebrews 13:17).

Furthermore, elders are to be examples and not only administrators, they are to be leaders rather than commanders. Elders who really lead must bring to the office certain qualities which will induce the church to support their decisions with willing and happy obedience. They should strive to encourage others to follow, not because of who they are, but rather because of what they are. Congregations thus led seem to grow, prosper and thrive. The church that has leaders which serve has members that serve. The demands for excellence in leadership are exceedingly great. One who serves in the capacity must possess qualities of character that is not common among mankind. Leading with the attitude of service rather than being a ruler is perhaps one of the most valuable qualities.

Perhaps, when an elder looks back over his years of service, maybe the greatest joys will be those times when he gave himself freely in the spirit of love for the welfare of the sheep he shepherded. The selfless servant is truly a great servant. He becomes great not by trying to become great. He becomes great in the hearts and lives of his peers by becoming servant of all. All of the success formulas have it backwards. Elders become great by serving. They leave their monuments engraved not on stone, but on our hearts.

May God continue to bless those faithful men who love and watch for our souls, as they so do, realizing they must one day give account. -- Johnny Burkhart

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Power of the Ordinary

Christ emphasized the individual. He surrounded Himself with ordinary people. Worldly honor and true humility are opposites. Today, Christ continues to seek individuals of service rather than those who aspire to honor and power.

John 1:40 states that a man named Andrew was one of the first to answer the Lord's call. Christ had not given him special instructions in soul-winning. This Andrew was introduced as "*Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.*" It was Andrew who told his brother Peter, "*We have found the Messiah, which is being interpreted, the Christ*" (V. 41). This ordinary fisherman put things first in expressing the enthusiasm and the real joy of a soul-winner. The following verse (V.42) says, "*And he brought him to Jesus.*" The point is that Andrew appeared to many people to be insignificant. He belonged to a class shared by the majority--the middle ranks--the ordinary.

The power of the individual and the efforts of the ordinary (average, undistinguished) may be the greatest source of the church's strength from a human standpoint. Andrew was willing to be himself and do the work commensurate with his own ability. There's one thing we know, that Andrew, a man of few talents, became a man of great service in leading others to Jesus. In reality a part of Peter's greatness was first found in Andrew, the ordinary.

God loves us one by one. Christ saves us one by one. The Bible is one book read by one person at a time. The key word in the Bible may well be "one," and the emphasis is the individual. There's one messenger--the Christian!

You may be another Andrew. That's commendable, because you maintain a willingness to be yourself and share the gospel with others. May God continue to bless your efforts in His service.

the Elders

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"It's Not Over, Until It's Over"

"Well, it's all over." These are the words we hear at the conclusion of our gospel meeting. Pause for a few moments and consider the events of the past week.

Many of you are disappointed because the friend, neighbor or work acquaintance you invited never attended. Yes, they need to hear the gospel. However, as a congregation of the Lord's people, we will continue to meet on a regularly scheduled basis. This always provides additional opportunities for those individuals to be with God's people and learn of God's will for their lives. You are encouraged to continue your prayers and extend an invitation to others.

Our meeting was a success for several reasons:

1. Any time the Word of God is taught, something positive occurs--our faith is strengthened.

2. We enjoy fellowship with those of like precious faith here at West Side.

3. As a congregation we work together to produce something beneficial--that's a good feeling.

4. We are able to enjoy the fellowship of brothers and sisters in Christ from other congregations.

5. We rejoice with those who obeyed the gospel by putting on their Lord in baptism or who were restored to faithful service.

Remember Paul's words in I Corinthians 15:58: *"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."*

the Elders

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Whose Words Shall Stand?

In the Old Testament, when God's people did not believe His warnings of judgment against them, they were saying in effect, "God's Word will not stand; His judgments against us will not occur." But God said that they *"shall know whose words shall stand, mine or theirs"* (Jeremiah 44:28). Now, you guess whose words stood and whose failed!

It is the same today. Jesus spoke of one who *"rejects me and receives not my sayings."* Still, He said, *"The word I spoke will judge him at the last day"* (John 12:48). In other words, we shall see *"whose words shall stand, mine or theirs."* Let us note some words of God and some words of men, and let us ask, "Which shall stand?"

God's: *"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved"* (Mark 16:16).

Man's: "He that believeth is saved whether or not he is baptized."

God's: *"Ye are fallen from grace"* (Galatians 5:4).

Man's: "It is impossible to fall from grace and be lost."

God's: *"Buried with him in baptism"* (Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12).

Man's: "Sprinkling is baptism."

God's: *"Elders in every church"* (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5).

Man's: "One-man, pastor, oversees church under board of deacons."

God's: *"There is one body, church"* (Ephesians 1:22, 23; 2:16; 4:4).

Man's: "Many denominations make up the one church."

God's: "*Christ is the head over all things to the church*" (Ephesians 1:22).

Man's: "Christ and the Pope are the heads of the church."

God's: "*Upon the first day of the week... disciples... break bread*" (Acts 20:7).

Man's: "We can take the Lord's supper on any day."

God's: "*They were baptized, both men and women*" (Acts 8:12).

Man's: "Infants, babies, should be baptized."

God's: "*No man cometh unto the Father, but by me (Jesus)*" (John 14:6).

Man's: "All sincere religious people will be saved."

Many more examples could be given. God said, "*My words shall surely stand.*" In the day of judgment, "*all... shall know whose words shall stand, mine or theirs*" (Jeremiah 44:28, 29). In view of that, whose words do you believe and accept from the list above?

via Forest Hills "News" Memphis, TN

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What Can Happen **Because Of You?**

In God's kingdom (the church) good things can happen because of you or bad things can happen because of you. An example of the good is that of a husband being won to the Lord by his godly wife (I Peter 3: 1-6.) Diotrefes is an example of what can happen because of an evil person (III John 9-11.) What can happen because of you?

Because of you others may choose God:

Naomi's influence was so strong that Ruth chose her God (Ruth 1:16-18.) Your influence can cause others to choose God. Your influence can cause someone who believes in Jesus to be stronger in the Lord. **Because of you the faith of some might be overthrown:** "*But shun profane and idle babbling, for they will increase to more ungodliness. And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some.*" (II Timothy 2: 16-18.) It will be sad indeed for some to stand in judgment having possessed saving faith themselves and yet be guilty of over-throwing the faith of others.

Because of you others might be discouraged: The spies, except Joshua and Caleb, discouraged the people from going into Canaan and conquering it. "*But the men who had gone up with him said, We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we. And they gave the children of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, The land through which we have gone as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great stature. There we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight.*" (Numbers 13:31-33.) Our words or our actions may be a discouragement to others. **Because of you others can be refreshed:**

"For we have great joy and consolation in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed by you, brother." (Philemon 7.) In a world which beats people down what a blessing it is to be refreshed by brethren who truly love and care.

The live of a Christian is a blessed life. The Christian life is also a blessing to others. What will happen because of you? Will it be good or evil?

Charles Box- Walnut Street c/Christ

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A Successful Meeting Depends On You And Me

It Depends on Our ATTITUDE

Are we looking forward to it? Do we realize its potential for good? Are we excited about the cause of Christ?

It Depends on Our ATTENDANCE

Some meetings fail because 50% of the members do not attend any service except Sunday and Wednesday. Will we clear our schedules so we can be present every service?

It Depends on Our INVITATIONS

Regardless of all the advertising done through printed announcements, the newspaper, radio, etc. visitors will usually attend only if personally invited by a Christian friend. How many do you plan to invite?

It Depends on Our FRIENDLINESS

Do our visitors feel welcome and wanted in our services? How many of us make a special effort to greet visitors and invite them back?

It Depends on Our PARTICIPATION

Nothing "kills" a service so effectively as a combination of back-seat sitting, inattention during services, and poor singing. How simple these problems are to avoid. Will we?

It Depends on Our PRAYERS

Are we praying for the preacher, the song leader, the lost, the delinquent and the spiritual growth of all who attend?

It Depends Our ENCOURAGEMENT

A word of love and encouragement to one who needs to respond to heaven's invitation means so much. Words of appreciation to those who work on behalf of the meeting help to

insure success.

Yes, Christian friends, a successful gospel meeting depends on us. Let's do our part.
(Unknown)

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I'm A Visitor

I'm a visitor, and sometimes I see things you church members don't notice. I can appreciate things you take for granted--and be repulsed by things you have learned to accept. Your building may be beautiful, your sermon inspiring, and your church perfectly aligned with the Bible--but most of the time it's not these things, but the little things I notice.

When I walk in the door, I feel like a stranger--for that's what I am. So it means a lot when someone welcomes me with a friendly greeting. I don't mean the preacher or an elder, but one of the "regular" members. It's nice when they want to know my name, and even better when they want to know me. They try to help me feel at ease. They show me where my Sunday School class meets. They introduce me to someone in my class. I make two new friends.

I like Bible classes where there is love, excitement, and participation where people seem glad to be there. I like it when they introduce me as a visitor, when someone asks me to sit next to them, and when a person I've never met helps me find I Corinthians 13 in my Bible. The class members are anxious to discuss the lesson and to see how it applies to their everyday lives and they talk about God in language I can understand. I'm not used to that in my old church. I leave class with some new understandings and some things I need to think about.

Someone from the class invites me to sit with her in the worship service. When the singing starts, I notice there is no organ, but it sounds beautiful anyway. My friend next to me is not a fantastic singer, but she sings out enthusiastically like she means what the song is saying. Everyone is participating and the people seem to be enjoying church. I am not used to that, but it makes me feel good too.

When the preacher starts talking, it impresses me that the people all start reaching for Bibles and note pads. They follow along in the Bible and seem to be really interested in what is being said, so I listen too.

After worship, I usually figure it's time to head home to my paper and television. But all the people around me make an effort to meet and welcome me. They invite me to come back and visit again they invite me home for Sunday dinner. They want to know me better. All of them seem to know and love each other, and I have a tough time getting through the crowd, so I stay and talk and meet more people.

When I get back home again, I often forget what the building looked like, or even what the sermon was about. But I remember when I met people who love God and each other. People who loved me. I want to come back so I can find out what makes them that way!

"Cross Ways" Cottdale, AL.

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Opportunities

"As we therefore have opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Galatians 6:10).

Perhaps this passage of inspired Scripture is one of the most overlooked in the New Testament. We commend the flock here for practicing its true meaning. This past year has been one filled with opportunities for us. Without hesitation you have responded when called upon to "do good".

There has been an extreme amount of illness among many of our own congregation, and even the passing away of several. Your good will continued to excel during the trying times.

On the brighter side, those special events where your good works prevailed shall reap benefits for years to come. "Gimme Five for Tanzania" and the Parker Scholarship Fund are only a couple.

Now, what's ahead for us during the up-coming months? We're literally loaded with opportunities! Geoff Rowe is coming April 12th and 13th for an exciting weekend of lectures on "The Bible and Science vs. Evolution." This has been heavily advertised in the current issue of "House to House/Heart to Heart". Our annual "Introduce a Friend" Day and gospel meeting with Glenn Colley will be May 4-7. October 17, 18 Dr. Bert Thompson will be back in the Valley for another evolution seminar at the Salem Civic Center. In November, our dear Brother Burt Jones will be with us for a gospel meeting.

Brethren, we need to put forth our best efforts, individually and collectively to make sure each of these events is successful. The leadership knows we can count on the great West Side spirit to prevail during each of these opportunities. Work hard, pray often and God will give the increase. -- the Elders

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Do You Enjoy Worship?

Often it seems apparent that some are not enjoying worship. Worship must be enjoyed. It is unfortunate to come to worship and not enjoy it. If you do not enjoy it, think what you have missed--likely the very thing you needed to carry you through the week.

I offer the following to help you enjoy:

Attend with regularity. Think about this. When a doctor gives a prescription, it is to be taken regularly. It is not effective if taken only occasionally. My friend, it is the same with attending the church services. Once in a while is no cure.

Plan to enjoy the worship. Worship should not be approached with a negative attitude. Attend with the

idea that you will enjoy. It would be well to remember, also, that the worship is not primarily for one's entertainment. It is giving honor to God.

Think about God, not about yourself. This is to be a period of spiritual refreshment. One must do whatever is necessary to make it refreshing.

One must participate in the worship. There must always be participation. That makes it much more enjoyable. In participation there is never room for criticism. Here's hoping you always enjoy worship.
Hunter C. Miller

"I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD."

Psalm 122:1

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Don't Be Afraid of Little Things

An old Chinese proverb says, "A journey of a thousand miles begins with one step." Every man was once a baby. Rivers are made up of drops of water. The shore of the sea which we call the beach is made up of grains of sand. What would the world be without little things?

Many people have failed in life because of an inability to place the proper value on small things. One cent lost in a sale makes one dollar when there are one hundred sales. It is looking after such small matters that assures success for many people in business. The same is true in whatever we do. A person may be very talented, but one fault, though it may be small, may result in failure. Did you ever hear someone say, "I like that fellow, but for one thing, he is always talking about himself"? Some call it "tooting his own horn". One little fault marred the beauty of an entire life. Or you hear another say, "That fellow is a very good man, but for one thing, he is lazy. He will not work." This one fault casts a shadow on everything else. By this we can see the harm that one small fault can do. If we turn this thought over, we will find a valuable lesson on the other side. As sure as success is lost because of small things, it is gained by small things. Looking after details is a profitable habit.

Let's look at the work of the church and see how much it depends on little things. It is impossible to know how many small matters are looked after by those who are never really recognized as workers in the church. However, recognition from man is not what genuine Christians are interested in. What would the church be without some to look after the details? How much "decency and order" could be had without these people? The answer is on the surface. There is a great host of people who are constantly looking after what we call small matters, who are actually contributing the difference between success and failure.

Someone is ill and needs care. A member of the church silently fits into the picture and does a bit of modest service. A person is helped. The church is glorified. New life has come from somewhere. Perhaps none of us recognize just where this new life comes from, but I am sure it could be traced back to this modest service.

Someone has grown weak and ceased to worship. He is "forsaking the assembly". A devout Christian does a little exhorting. No announcement was made. In fact none knew of it but these two, but soon the fault is removed, and a soul is restored. New strength is added to the church. Where did this new strength originate? Who knows? Perhaps just two people and God.

A neighbor needs to hear the gospel. One who loves the souls of men invites him to attend services with him. He attends again and again. Soon he obeys the gospel. A new child is born into the kingdom of God. Someone gives the preacher credit for converting another soul, but God knows what happened. He saw the humble child as he approached the stranger with the invitation. God will not forget. His reward is sure. A small

service was performed, and a soul was born.

Yes, just as sure as you sometimes find a "little leaven in a large lump," if you will turn that lesson around and make another application, you will sometimes find "a lot of leaven in a little lump," and the world goes on. We depend so much on small things. The small things that you may be able to do. Remember their importance, and don't be afraid of small things. (author unknown)

We are thankful for the many here at West Side who are "stepping up to the plate" and doing little things that amount to so much in the lives of so many. Keep up the good work. the Elders

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West Side -- Showing Our Love

Author Stephen Levine asks the question, "If you had an hour to live and could only make one phone call, who would you call, what would you say, and why are you waiting?" Give this some thought.

Who knows what we are waiting for. Perhaps we believe we will live forever or that "someday" we will get around to telling the people we love how much we love them. Whatever the reasons, many people simply wait too long.

Here is where we believe West Siders shine. Just think of how many people have been on the receiving end of a phone call where the caller says, "I just called to tell you how much I love you." We each know that almost nothing in the world means so much to a person. Or, perhaps it is a heartfelt letter instead. Or even better, a covered dish or a full-blown dinner for that family who is suffering some real albatrosses in their life.

We here at West Side as a family have suffered with a score of our brethren in the past months. We commend you as a congregation for coming to the forefront with a show of your genuine love and concern. This is the way Christ would have us to be there for each other. When heaven our goal is reached, "Won't It Be Wonderful There?"

God bless each of you that we have the privilege of serving.

the Elders

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Prejudice

Prejudice is a condition of the heart or mind that one obtains before the facts are known. It is prejudging, judging before hand. Sometimes it is simply a misunderstanding, but it can hardly be justified when there is reason to believe there might be a lack of knowledge. It can be toward an individual, or it may be toward a group of individuals.

The basic causes or conditions which prevail that underlie prejudice are many. The unknowing may be children whose parents have an unjust feeling, hence, an environmental cause. An attitude toward races or politics or religion is a common example. The strength of peer pressure is likewise common. Because it is an unfortunate attitude of mind. whatever

affects the mind may build prejudice. It is easy to be prejudiced and hard not to be under circumstances tending in that direction. If one wants to feel a certain way, he will find it difficult to work at knowing the facts that would lead him away from what he actually desires.

Personal advantages may be the cause. Social prestige, business interests, financial advantage, family loyalty and personal pride may condition the soil of one's heart to think and feel in a certain direction. It is not easy to admit a thing may be right when it will likely hurt in one or more of these circumstances.

A very obvious example was the attitude toward Jesus Christ held by most of the Jews while He was upon the earth. That brought Him to cite an Old Testament passage which said, "*They hated me without a cause*" (John 12:25; Psalm 35:19; 69:4). It is significant that this did not cause Jesus to hate them in return. He prayed, "*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*" (Luke 23:34). It is very serious when hatred has to be associated with prejudice, but it is very often the case. It may be a vicious, damaging hate, or it may be latent and held because of a lack of candor. Whatever the nature or cause, it hurts the one who holds it far more than the one against whom it is held.

In religion, prejudice will hinder a correct interpretation and understanding of the Scriptures. Because figures of speech are widely used in the Bible, there is a tendency to want to make a passage figurative when it is plain and literal. It is often also the case that a truth taught in a figure of speech may be discounted by allowing it is "only" figurative. We believe the purpose of baptism taught in the New Testament is an example. IT is said to be in order to "be saved," "for the remission of sins," to "wash away thy sins," "baptized into Jesus Christ" and "baptized into his death," "doth also now save us," "baptized into one body" (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Romans 6:3; I Peter 3:21; I Corinthians 12:13). Are we to conclude that all of this is simply figurative and does not really mean what it says? The proper condition of the heart toward what God has said has much to do with one's understanding of that. Religious leaders have written many books and spent many hours in attempting a framework to direct the souls of men around the obvious meaning. It is easy to accept an answer that one does not really understand if the force of influence is strong enough.

Jesus was speaking of this very thing when He said, "*For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them*" (Matthew 13:15).

But for the love and happiness and peace among all, where do right and responsibility rest? It is certain that no one on earth has the privilege of dictating to others. That privilege changes, however, where the Lord is concerned. We may claim the responsibility toward one another for attempting to help. That seems altogether reasonable and right, but only God can tell us what we must do. We believe He has in His revealed Word. The only way we can know anything about that is in what He has said. In that we can know that we know. John said, "*And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments*" (I John 2:3).

The article above was written in 1986 by Brother Howard Parker, beloved gospel preacher, who preached here the first 5-1/2 years in the beginning of the West Side work. The subject matter is still just as fresh and meaningful as it was then. Let's each read and

absorb the truths contained therein. - the Elders

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How and Where Do You Walk?

We have all heard statements like, "He is walking in his father's footsteps" or "He is a chip off the old block" and "like father--like son." Children follow and imitate those they love, respect and admire. They copy their walk, speech and mannerisms. Let the father walk in the snow, and his young son is sure to follow his steps. It is simply a natural inclination. It is not uncommon for a son to continue a business that has been in the family. How carefully parents should choose the paths they walk, for these will guide children.

Some children have walked after parents to their destruction! Take the sons of Rehoboam and Jereboam, kings over Judah and Israel. It is written of Abijam, *"And he walked in all the sins of his father"* (I Kings 15:3). Then of Nadab, *"And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the ways of his father, and in his sin by which he made Israel sin"* (I Kings 15:26). No less than 20 times it is said that Jereboam make Israel to sin! What an example to leave a son! Tragic, but true, some sons must rise above the example that a father has left them.

Some have walked with God. *"And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him"* (Genesis 5:24). Think what a great accolade is given Enoch. He walked in the presence of God through life, and finally, at its close, he went home to live with God forever. He never had to face the rigors of death. *"By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, and was not found, because God had taken had taken him; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God"* (Hebrews 11:5). Just consider that perfection of life and its great reward.

There were others who also walked with God and were rewarded. *"Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God"* (Genesis 6:9). Recall, if you will, the benefits Noah had from walking with God. *"By faith, Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith"* (Hebrews 11:7). You cannot question the great rewards Enoch and Noah obtained by walking with God in this world.

Gene Stilwell
Warner Robbins, GA
(former West Side minister)

Make plans now to walk (or ride) to each and every service for the remainder of this year, and "walk the walk" for the other six days of each week.

the Elders

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What Is Loyalty Bulletin 2/23/03

It is a couple taking care of each other after 50 years of marriage.

It is feeding and bathing an aging parent with Alzheimer's.

It is a mother mailing her weekly letter to her son in prison.

It is a 96-year old widow with rheumatism showing up for Bible class on a cold, drizzly day.

It is praying every day for our elders, preacher and members.

It is keeping the support going strong for our missionaries.

It is talking the church up and not down.

It is refusing to gossip or complain.

It is being careful not to bring reproach on the cause of Christ.

It is attending every worship service appointed by the elders.

It is hanging in there when others have long since given up.

It is resisting temptation when it would be so easy to give in.

It is doing what needs to be done even though no one but God notices.

It is Jesus going to the cross because it was the Father's will.

It is Jesus loving His disciples until the end (John 13:1).

It is Jesus refusing to give up on Peter who had denied him by telling him, "*Feed my sheep*" (John 21:15-17).

It is obedience to the Master who laid down His life for us.

It is holding on to His body, the church, in spite of hurts caused by our fellow members.

It is holding firmly to the truth in spite of attacks by unbelievers and defections by the unfaithful.

This is loyalty!

written by David Gibson

We agree whole-heartedly with David.

the Elders

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Rules for a Happy Married Life

Bulletin 03/16/03

1. Never both be angry at once.
2. Never yell at each other unless the house is on fire.
3. Yield to the wishes of the other as an exercise in self-discipline if you can't think of a better reason.
4. If you have a choice between making yourself look good, or your mate, choose your mate.
5. If you have any criticism, make it lovingly.
6. Never bring up a mistake of the past.
7. Neglect the whole world, but not each other and God.
8. Never let the day end without saying at least one complimentary thing to your life's partner.
9. Never meet without an affectionate welcome.
10. Never go to bed angry.
11. When you make a mistake, talk it out and ask for forgiveness.
12. Remember, it takes two to make an argument -- the one who is wrong is the one who often does the most talking.
13. Always be true to God's Word, and always keep Him in your lives.

Author unknown but endorsed by West Side elders

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God's Law Regarding Marriage

Bulletin 03/09/03

This subject plagues our nation and, we are sorry to say, the church also. God's truth about marriage, divorce and remarriage causes great pain for some who make the mistake of entering into a sinful relationship. God's law does not provide a trial period where, if things don't work out, you get a divorce and try again.

God's law regarding marriage is quite specific. It applies the same to all people. God's law of marriage was revealed in the garden of Eden: *"And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam. and he slept: and he took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh*

instead thereof: And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh: She shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh" (Genesis 2:21-24).

Jesus taught the same thing in the New Testament, only He added, *"What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder"* (Matthew 19:4-6; Mark 10:4-9). The Lord has given one cause, and only one cause, wherein one may divorce his mate and marry again: if one of the marriage partners commits adultery. Then the innocent one has a right to remarry (Matthew 5:32). When one's spouse dies where divorce is not involved, the surviving spouse is free to remarry (I Corinthians 7:9).

In the world there are many reasons given to allow divorce which cannot be proven by God's Word. Let us take heed to what God's Word says about marriage and obey the same so we can be pleasing to Him. Next week we will list some rules for a happy marriage.

the Elders

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Discerning Good and Evil

Bulletin 02/02/03

The prophet of old wrote the following by inspiration: *"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death"* (Proverbs 14:12). But many might ask the question: "How can we know what is right?" For an answer all we have to do is turn to Hebrews 5:14: *"But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."* Here the apostle is saying that some were not able to tell the difference between what is good and what is evil because they have not studied God's Word.

Some today say they can see no wrong in certain things. However, this does not mean the harm is not there! It may be as the writer of Hebrews wrote, they cannot discern good and evil! Some want a specific statement from the Bible naming the sin in question before they think it sinful. But consider the fact that the world could not hold the book that listed every sin man has committed and can commit. On the other hand, the Bible does teach us how to *"discern both good and evil."*

The following are some rules which will help any Christian discern good from evil.

Whatever weakens my Christian influence is sinful. *"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven"* (Matthew 5:16).

Whatever hinders me from performing my Christian duty is sinful. *"No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier"* (II Timothy 2:4).

Whatever places upon me an unequal yoke is sinful. *"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? ... Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you"* (II Corinthians 6:14-17).

Whatever corrupts my body is sinful. *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service"*

(Romans 12:1).

Whatever corrupts my heart is sinful. "*Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God*" (Matthew 5:8).

Remember, the requirements of the gospel are not there for the purpose of making the Christian life hard and difficult, but to help us prepare for eternal life!

Danny Box (deceased)

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Few the Days

Bulletin 1/26/03

Do you know anyone who is 70 years old? How about 80 years old? Or do you know anyone who is 90 years old? Do you consider them to be very old?

When you are very young, it is hard to understand what age means. Those who are young tend to think that they will live to be very old, and they believe that all those years will seem like a very long time. But those who are older in years feel differently about the years. The older a person gets, the faster it seems that those years go by. For most older individuals, it seems like just yesterday they were a child. The older person wonders where all the years went.

In Genesis 47:9 Jacob is speaking to Pharaoh of Egypt. Jacob is 130 years old, yet Jacob says his days and years have been few compared to his ancestors. That is true. Before the flood people lived to be several hundred years old. But Jacob realized that his life was coming to an end, and it just did not seem that he had lived that many years.

Job said that a man's years are few (Job 14:1). James said that a man's life is like a vapor; it appears for a little while and then is gone (James 4:14).

We should always make sure that we use our few days on earth to serve God. Even though at a young age it may seem that we have a long time to obey God, we really only have a short time. Do not put off until tomorrow what you can do today. Read and study your Bible. Learn what you must do to obey God, and then obey Him. Use every day to be His servant... and, if any of this is hard to understand, ask an adult to help you.

"Wisdom's Corner"

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You Say, God Says

Bulletin 1/19/03

It is easy to get discouraged when things are going badly, but we shouldn't lose heart because God is at work in our lives, even in the midst of pain and suffering. Remember, the next time your little hut is burning to the ground, it must may be a smoke signal that summons the grace of God. For all the negative things we have to say to ourselves, God has a positive answer:

You say: "It's impossible!"

God says: "All things are possible" (Luke 18:27).

You say: "I'm too tired."

God says: "I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28-30).

You say: "Nobody really loves me."

God says: "I love you" (John 3:16, 34).

You say: "I can't go on!"

God says: "My grace is sufficient" (II

Corinthians 12:9; Psalm 91:15).

You say: "I can't figure things out."

God says: "I will direct your steps" (Proverbs 3:5-6).

You say: "I can't do it!"

God says: "You can do all things" (Philippians 4:13).

You say: "I am not able."

God says: "I am able" (II Corinthians 9:8).

You say: "It's not worth it."

God says: "It will be worth it" (Romans 8:28).

You say: "I can't forgive myself."

God says: "I forgive you" (I John 1:9; Romans 8:1).

You say: "I can't manage."

God says: "I will supply all your needs" (Philippians 4:19).

You say: "I'm afraid."

God says: "I have not given you a spirit of fear" (II Timothy 1:7).

You say: "I'm always worried and frustrated."

God says: "Cast all your cares on me" (I Peter 5:7).

You say: "I don't have enough faith."

God says: "I've given everyone a measure of faith" (Romans 12:3).

You say: "I'm not smart enough."

God says: "I give you wisdom" (I Corinthians 1:30).

You say: "I feel all alone."

God says: "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5).

via e-mail/David Looney

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A Lesson the World Needs to Learn Bulletin 1/12/03

In Genesis 2:24 we read, *"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."* In Matthew 19:5 Jesus put his stamp of approval on this concept. This is not Christian, Jewish, Muslim or Catholic. Nor is it attributable to any religious philosophy. It is a moral principle that was put into motion "in the beginning" of bringing man and woman together as husband and wife and was stated by Adam with the approval of God. Therefore, man and woman enter into a relationship that makes them even as one flesh, the closest relationship that exists among people. This applies to all people for all time.

This close relationship cannot exist between a man and a man nor a woman and a woman. They can become the very closest of friends, but never can they be as "one flesh". Also, this closeness cannot be accomplished until both the man and woman accept and apply the conditions set forth. Man and woman living together with no intention of being husband and wife are in an adulterous relationship. Man and woman belong together as husband and wife; they become an autonomous entity known as a family. Nothing shall come between these two who have determined to live as "one flesh". not even the love and respect that

children are to have for their parents.

The word "cleave" is a strange word just as many other English words are strange. It can be used as an exact opposite. Sometimes it means "to cut asunder" and conversely, it can mean to "adhere, stick tight or cling fast". The latter meaning is what man and woman are to do, but too often we find them practicing the former definition. Let's begin to teach our children at an early age, by word of mouth and by the example of our lives, that husband and wife, Mama and Daddy, "adhere, stick tight or cling fast" to one another.

the Elders

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A Sad Story Bulletin 01/05/03

"From that time many of his disciples went back and walked no more with him." (John 6:66)

These disciples had heard something from Him that they could not, or would not, accept. They considered it a "hard saying." Many today will not receive Him because they, too, consider something He has said to be "too hard."

For instance, some think His law concerning marriage, divorce and remarriage is too severe. Here's what He said, *"The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twa in shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the*

beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery" (Matthew 19:3-9). This goes back to the beginning of creation. He made one woman for one man, and no one but God or death could separate them, so many of today's people turn from Him and look for an easier way.

Notice: It is one MAN and one WOMAN, not two men or two women. They come together as husband and wife and in this relationship bring forth children, thus producing the happy situation we call the FAMILY, the HOME. What can be better than what God through Jesus ordained?

There are literally hundreds of other scriptural situations that man turns his back on.

It's always the same sad story when people turn their backs on Christ -- they forfeit eternal bliss in heaven. The bottom line: *"Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God"* (John 6:67-69).
the Elders

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