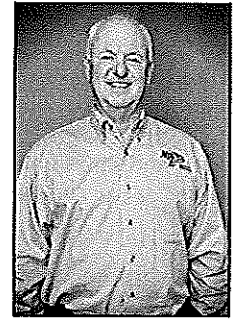


12 STEPS TOGETHER



A Fresh Start... Today is another new day, a day that you want to begin in the right way. Go ahead and start you day off right now by thanking God for your new life, and turning your attention toward Jesus Christ.

Give it All... Now that you're focusing on Christ, try to make every part of your day today, a moment that will glorify Him.

II Corinthians 11:3

Brother Garry

Say what you want about the devil, but the rascal is consistent. The tactics he used in the garden on Eve he still uses today. Paul said the defenses we have against his schemes are to not let our minds be led astray from the simplicity and the purity of devotion to Christ.

Recently returning home from a trip to Panama City my GPS tried to put me on highway 280 just outside of Sylacauga which would have sent me to Birmingham and about 80 miles out of the way. I knew better. I knew the direct and simplest way home. That old GPS was screaming recalculate, recalculate, recalculate. I simply ignored it, I knew better. Do not ever let Satan make you recalculate the simplicity and the purity of devotion to Christ.

Personal Notes:

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Mark 12:30

Amanda Cobb

Headstone markers usually bear inscriptions with information about the deceased. One thing that is always included is the year the person was born and the year that they died. There is a dash in between those two dates. To me, that dash represents the most important thing about the deceased person. I usually wonder...what kind of legacy did they leave behind for the ones who knew them?

How are you living out your "dash"? When others stand over your headstone one day, will your dash be a Godly example to those left behind? I once read this saying on a tombstone. "Remember me as you pass by, as you are now so once was I, as I am now, so you will be, prepare for death and follow me."

What does your dash say about you? Do you love Jesus with all of your heart, soul and mind? If others followed you, would they see Jesus?

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12 STEPS TOGETHER



Julie Russell

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Psalm 62:8

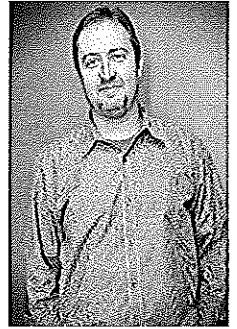
If you look around you or maybe within you, you can quickly see that there is so much pain, sorrow and heartache. It doesn't take long to find a child fighting to conquer cancer, a family destroyed by the sin of unfaithfulness, a teenager rebelling against the teachings of Godly parents, a husband or wife who has allowed alcohol or drugs to destroy his or her life, a loss of a job. Pain is all around. These are the times when we must turn to our Savior.

In Lamentations 2:19, God's word tells us to "...pour out your heart like water in the presence of the Lord." Water when poured out on the ground quickly evaporates. If we truly empty our hearts of pain and sorrow at the feet of Jesus, the pain and sorrow that consumes us will also begin to evaporate. This is the point where healing and restoration can begin. Jesus says in Matthew 11:28, "Come to me all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." Pour out your worries, sorrow and pain at the feet of Jesus so that you may find peace.

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12 STEPS TOGETHER



Brother Kenny

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Daniel 1:8-16

When we eat, we are filling a void in our stomach. Daniel knew that the food given to him from the King's table would fill his stomach, but he also knew that it could not fill his soul. He understood the Mosaic Law of his people, and he knew that the food from the King's table was unclean and unhealthy for him. It would have destroyed his walk with the Lord.

Today we are so busy that all we have time for is fast food. We realize that it's not good for us, but it fills our void. We may yearn for a quality meal and the time to sit down and enjoy it, but we're just too busy for that. We get in the same rut in our spiritual life. We quickly speed through our daily quiet time, taking no time to comprehend what God has given us. We are simply checking off our daily "to do list". Today when you sit down to enjoy the great feast from God's Word, take time to digest it and enjoy God's spiritual feast.

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1 Peter 1:1-12

Brother Craig

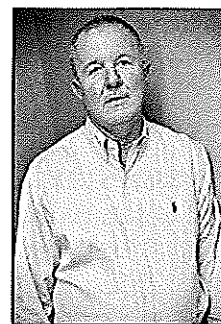
Salvation brings joy that the world cannot bring. Mankind rejoices in a lot of things but nothing compares to salvation (Luke 10:20). The blessings of salvation are indeed extremely great and a great reason to rejoice. When a believer thinks of the future of the lost and realizes what blessings salvation has brought him, it should cause him to greatly rejoice in his salvation. Have you thought about what Jesus has done for you lately? When we think about how doomed we are without Him it causes us to be more thankful. Peter reminds us just how much we have been loved through salvation. Read verses 8-9 again and consider your actions of worship and praise today as you express gratitude for the life you now have in Him.

It would be really easy to move from here to the busy day without turning your attention toward the Lord and asking Him which way to go, how to go, and when to go. Before you begin each day make it a point to ask for His direction and thank Him for loving you. Have a joyful day!

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Brother Rick

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Hebrews 11:6

Life often brings us to what "Experiencing God" author Henry Blackaby calls "A Crisis of Belief".¹ This is where we must trust in the Unseen Hand of God for not only salvation but also the daily events in our lives such as family issues, finances or job decisions.

I was reminded of this Faith Factor at Kids' Camp 2011 when I got in line to ride the zip line that extended from the mountain top to the bottom of the lake via a steel cable. Whether you are 8 or 51 years old, the facts are the same in that you must overcome the fear of the first step. Once you take that step, faith now abounds in the cable and the one who hooks you up each time you ride.

In the Christian faith this remains true because we serve a God who has proven Himself to be faithful and true to his word to provide for us as we travel this "zip line" called "life". Whatever Crisis of Belief you find yourself in today, remember to stay connected to the line, don't be anxious, instead take everything to the Lord in prayer and enjoy the ride.

"The beginning of true faith is the end of anxiety".

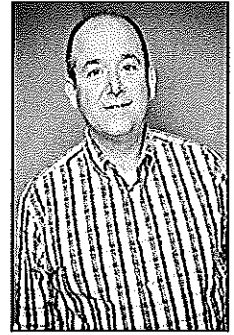
George Muller

1. Experiencing God, Henry T. Blackaby, Claude V. King, 1990 Lifeway Press, 108

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Brother Tim

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1 Timothy 2:4

For a person to have a better understanding of the love that God has for us, one need to look no further than their own children. A father will always want what is best for his children but in the process of raising a child any good father has to know there are times when he has to permit the child to make mistakes. This comes with pain to both parties but is sometimes necessary to break the will and shape the life of the child. It is not the father's will for any to perish but for all to come to everlasting life.

Knowing God's will is limited to the revelation we have of His will. When we begin to exert our will, the result is usually painful and I am sure it grieves the Father as well. Our heavenly Father wants us to come to a knowledge of the truth.

Do your children have a knowledge of the truth? Have they experienced your love for them in a way that assures them of your unconditional love for them? When they look to you do they see Jesus?

Pray that today God will grant you wisdom and discernment to know where the boundaries are and how you can teach them to your children. Ask God to show you how to allow them to mature and grow in wisdom and understanding but sovereignly prevent them from making deadly mistakes.

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Tracy Wills

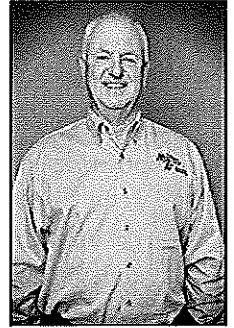
I John 4: 7-12

How much do you love me... Watching my youngest with his arms stretched as far apart as he could. "This Much" he would say. I began to think of how much I love him... with all that is within me. And to think that God loved us so much that He allowed His ONLY Son to die to save us. How much greater is that love than the love that we have for our own children and family. It is unexplainable, unfathomable, a love that our human minds will never understand. The great thing is that we do not have to understand it... just accept it. Think of it this way. God created us and gave us our breath. He calculated every ounce of us down to our fingerprint DNA. The love that we have for our children (that we **think** we created) is great but fails in comparison to the amount of His love. He is the one that **really** created them. They are His masterpieces. I can't comprehend a love greater than the one I feel in my heart. But it abounds. As His child...when we ask Him "How Much Do You Love Me?" I imagine that his nail scarred hands would reach as far as the ocean is from the east to the west...a vast span that keeps going on and on without end. A view that our human eyes can't take in and our hearts will never completely understand...but we don't have to. Just accept it!

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Brother Garry

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John 4:4

This passage teaches us that Jesus had a divinely directed life. There were places and people that God directed Him to go each and every day. Many places were unpopular like Samaria! However, God was in control and Jesus was insistent with His disciples about His father being in control. The results were miraculous as you well know!

Can I ask you a question? Does God still mess with our must? You know the answer and it is absolutely yes. We too have divinely directed lives that put us in places and sometimes around people that are difficult. Yet miracles still happen. Souls are still saved and spiritual growth always occurs when we are willing to let God mess with our must!

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Ephesians 6:12

Amanda Cobb

Have you ever experienced spiritual warfare? I don't know many people who openly and willingly worship the devil, but worship is what warfare is all about. God desires our worship, but the devil wants to be worshipped as well. This is why the devil is constantly attacking Christians.

When we conform to this world it is one of the highest forms of worship to Satan, it allows demonic doors to be opened. Most believers are trying their best to serve God so the devil has had to become very sneaky and use deceiving methods to get to them. This is why we must keep our spiritual guard up at ALL times. I honestly believe if we could physically see the spiritual warfare that goes on in our homes each day, that we would stay on our knees in constant prayer.

Ephesians 6:10-20 gives us instructions for everyday living. Are you ready to fight? Satan wants your marriage, your children, your testimony and anything else he can get. So put up your dukes because the fight is on!

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12 STEPS TOGETHER



Julie Russell

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Deuteronomy 6:13

As a parent, I have constantly prayed for my children in all areas of their life: to walk in God's will, obedience, safety, to have Godly friends, health, to find the mate God has chosen for them, just to name a few. Over the last few months, God has revealed to me that the greatest prayer and desire for my children should be that they have a reverent "fear of the Lord."

To fear the Lord is to respect, love and to desire Him above all else. It is to be so totally committed to Him, that we fear making a decision without Him or to fear living a life without Him. Fearing the Lord also leads us to "hate evil" (Proverbs 8:13). According to Proverbs 9:10, God's word tells us that "*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.*"

If our children, and all Christians, would desire, above all, to be deeply committed to the Lord in reverent fear, I truly believe all the other areas in their life would line up with that of a righteous man. I believe that our children would desire with all their heart to walk in the will of God, to respect the authority of God and their parents, they would seek Godly friends and not be influenced by the ungodly, and they would desire a mate that would strengthen them spiritually. The fear of God in our children's life (and ours) would protect them, bless them and give them the wisdom that will direct them all the days of their lives (Proverbs 10:27, Proverbs 14:26-27, Proverbs 10:27). What greater thing can we desire of our children but to live a life in the fear of the Lord?

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12 STEPS TOGETHER



Brother Kenny

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Luke 15: 11-31

How many times have you read this story? The Prodigal son thought he had everything going his way, but money and power are dangerous things to play with. I think the son was hesitant at first, he probably just wanted to test the waters, but little by little he fell into more trouble than he could handle. It's the same way with us, God has given us so much and blessed us more than we deserve. Life is great when everything is going our way. Then the world comes knocking and we miss a Wednesday night service. Then Sunday rolls around and we have better things to do. Before you know it your walk is in danger, and you find yourself in all kinds of trouble. It hurts when you hit rock bottom and it's not a great place to be in our life. The Prodigal son finally came to his senses, and he returned to his father to ask for forgiveness. Your Father is waiting for you. All you have to do is realize that you have wandered away from Him. His arms are ready to welcome you back.

Welcome Home, God Bless

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Brother Craig

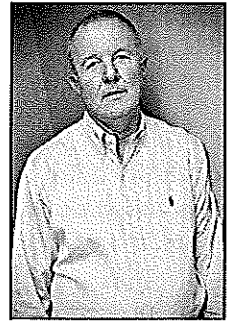
I Timothy 4:1-11

As Paul wrote young Timothy he wanted him to really focus on what matters most, growing spiritually. He says don't waste your time talking about old wives tails but concentrate on the things that will benefit your walk with the Lord. The fitness craze is everywhere. Just about any time I turn the TV on I flip to a channel that is advertising some new type of machine or product to help you lose weight, tone up, and become stronger than ever. Millions of dollars are spent each year by those in desperate search of physical fitness. What if we gave that same effort in our spiritual fitness? The bible tells us to make spiritual fitness our goal. Spiritual fitness requires discipline and hard work. If you're spiritually fit, keep growing and don't allow your faith to get flabby. Studies show that 60% of Americans are overweight. Don't allow your walk with the Lord to get out of shape.

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Brother Rick

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1 Peter 2:21

In May 1980 I arrived at Parris Island, South Carolina to begin Marine Corp basic training. When the recruits, including myself, stepped off the bus we were met by drill instructors who directed us to stand on the yellow footprints that were painted on the pavement. These footprints represent the first lesson learned in becoming a Marine-- how to stand. Before we learned to march we learned to "cover" the footprints each day until it became second nature.

In the Christian life we have Jesus Christ who lived a perfect life and stood in our place that we might have eternal life through Him. Each day we should strive to walk in His perfect will by "covering" His steps. To claim Christ means we should display a life of denial of self, devotion to our Savior, and diligence to follow Him wherever He leads us to go in His name.

The old hymn "Footsteps of Jesus" says it best - "Sweetly, Lord, have we heard Thee calling, come follow me! And we see where Thy footprints falling lead us to Thee. Footsteps of Jesus, that make the pathway glow; we will follow the steps of Jesus wherever they go."

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12 STEPS TOGETHER



Brother Tim

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Hebrews 11:24-27

Bruce Lee was a martial arts fighter who became famous through the many movies he made. For many years Bruce Lee was the standard for others to reach in the field of martial arts. Lee was asked what the key to his ability and success was and he responded with a simple answer. He said that he always aimed six inches past whatever his target was.

For the Christian, we are faced with challenges every day in this life. Just like Moses we should always endure hardship and persecution and we should always aim past the target. We know what is ahead for us ultimately and with that in mind, whatever we face today shouldn't look near as big as it may seem.

Look past your immediate circumstances. Do not see that obnoxious boss for what he is but what he can be. See him as God would like to see him. That problem you have which appears to have no viable solution is an opportunity for you allow God to do something wonderful. That person that gets under your skin like fingernails down the chalkboard is a great opportunity for you. Problems are just opportunities still in the package. Look past whatever your shortfalls and shortcomings are and ask God to open the eyes of your heart to minister to others using your experiences and hardships in life. Remember that He never wastes a painful moment.

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Tracy Wills

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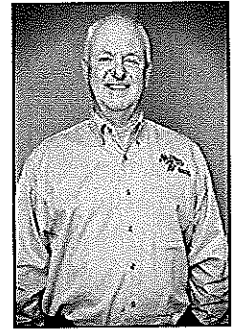
I Samuel 16: 1-13

Riding our bikes recently at a campground one of the kids made the comment that our camper was not as nice as the others. He continued to talk about all the camper lots that we looked at before we bought our little used beauty. He said, "a lot of those campers were big and looked really nice on the outside but they were kind of stinky and gross on the inside. Ours is just ok on the outside but it is clean and we have lots of fun on the inside." I could not help but think of the story of Samuel anointing David king. So it was time for me to turn our moment into a lesson. In the "Camper Lot" of Jesse's Sons... Eliab would have been "The Wilderness" and Abinadab would have been "The Big Horn"...strong with all the extra bells and whistles. David would have been the little one far out in the camper lot "The Shephard". He was the one with nice features that needed some "anointed" help. He would have been the one that most would have bypassed. The lot keeper wouldn't have even suggested him to you. I am so glad that when it comes to WHO God chooses to use that he doesn't look on the outward but the inward. "Rise and anoint him, he is the one" is what the scripture tells the Lord said upon David being brought before Him. That is all it took and from that day forward the Spirit of the Lord came upon David in power. I love verse 7b "The Lord does not look at the things that man looks at. Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart". It is not your outward appearance he chooses but the quite still places of the heart.

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Brother Garry

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Hebrews 10:25

I love Hebrews 10:25! You know I do I am a pastor! However, before I was a pastor I loved church and Sundays. It's God's day but it's my day too because I am a believer and I can come to worship Him with my believer family. It's been said a true New Testament Church is like a Dairy Queen we have great Sundays!

So I'm telling you I'm human enough to say I like TGIF – "Thank God It's Friday" but I'm also saved enough to like TGIS – "Thank God It's Sunday", as a matter of fact I'm writing this devotion at 8:00am on a beautiful Sunday morning and I can't wait to see what's going to happen on God's day with God's people – TGIS!

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Amanda Cobb

Philippians 2:13

One of the biggest questions I hear women ask is "What is God's will for my life?" I personally think your attitude has a lot to do with finding God's will. Think about this for a moment...If you are anxiously searching for God's will for your life it is all about you.

Instead try anxiously seeking God. Search for Him and not His will for you and you will be amazed at what He will show you.

As you seek Him, stay in His word and continue to keep a close relationship with Him by confessing your sins, He will transform your mind to align with His plans.

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Julie Russell

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Colossians 1:9

So many times when trying to make a decision and to know God's will for my life, I have said, "I wish God would just write the answer in the sky." That request has never happened and I honestly don't foresee it ever being that simple. In Colossians 1:9 as Paul writes to the followers of Christ in Colosse, he tells us that the knowledge of God's will for our life will be found through spiritual wisdom and understanding. This verse explains why we often end up out of the will of God, struggling to find the path that God had laid before us. We fail to spend the necessary time with God that we need to gain the wisdom we need. Spiritual wisdom that guides us to God's will and understanding come from studying His Word and through time in prayer with our Lord.

My prayer is no longer "Lord, just write it out for me", but is now "Lord give me the wisdom and the knowledge in your Word, so I may know your direction for my life." If we seek God's wisdom and understanding through His Word, we will "live a life worthy of the Lord and may please Him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God" (Colossians 1:10). May we commit to spend time with Lord daily, so we will know the will of the Lord concerning our lives.

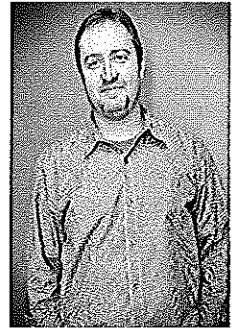
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Brother Kenny

II Corinthians 13:5

I think we all can agree that the worst part of high school was having to take tests! I would get so nervous and worry about whether or not I would pass. Instead of cramming the night before a test, I should have taken time daily to reflect on what I had learned. It would have made test taking less stressful. Today (and everyday) we need to take a spiritual examination and reflect on God's presence in our lives. Can you see Christ in everything you do? Do you have a spirit of love, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control? I know that's a lot at one time, but take one topic at a time and examine yourself to see where you stand spiritually. I pray that you have passed the test. If not, pray to the Father and He will give you a study guide.

Personal Notes:

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12 STEPS TOGETHER



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II Kings 22:1-3,8; II Kings 23:3,25

Brother Craig

When you read these passages we discover that King Josiah was a son of David and King Josiah did what was right in the sight of the Lord. As I read through these chapters I thought this guy really had a lot of pressure on him. He was the leader, the one with the final say so, the one who decided what would happen in the kingdom. While all this rested on his shoulders he was constantly faced with new challenges every day. The Word of God had been hidden and when it was found King Josiah had a choice, there were alters built to false gods everywhere and King Josiah had a decision to make. Those people who wanted to continue to follow other Gods were still trying to live for their own God and Josiah had to decide. The scripture says that King Josiah found the Word and made a covenant to follow the Word and all its commandments. He chose to live right, follow God's way, and remove the things in his kingdom that were dishonorable to God.

With the pressures of life on each one of us I want to be known as a person who was faithful to God in all things. When I'm tempted to go the wrong way I want to follow the Lord. What about the life God has given you to be responsible with? Are you handling the everyday choices by seeking His way?

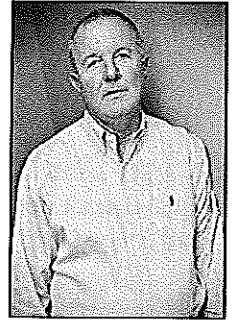
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Brother Rick

Psalm 130:5-6

In ancient times the watchmen had to stay alert looking out for the enemy while the city slept. For anyone who has ever served in the military you know what it's like to be on guard duty for the last watch of the night. The darkness soon turns to loneliness as the night reaches its peak.

We know these are dark days in which we live, yet we must stay alert, watching out over our land. Many watchmen have left their post, some have fallen asleep, and others have grown indifferent refusing to admit that there is danger.

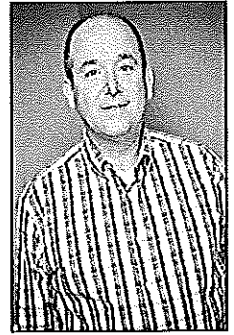
There is another side to this Psalm in that the watchman also looked for the Lord as Psalm 130:5 says "I wait for the Lord." There is a day coming soon when our Lord will come for those who have stayed on post, fulfilling the duty of a watchman.

When the Lord comes will you be found watching and waiting?

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Brother Tim

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Matthew 5:13

People do not realize that wars have been fought over the control of salt. More wars have been fought over salt than over gold because salt is so precious. The early road *via Solaria* from Rosettia to Rome was constantly guarded by Roman soldiers who fought off marauders and invading armies seeking salt. The Germans waged war for saline streams. Many Indian wars in our country were fought over salt licks or salt springs. Indians protected them at all costs. One of the principal purposes of the Union campaign in Virginia was to capture a source of salt of the Confederacy at Saltville. The objective of the Union Army in Louisiana was to cut off sources of salt from New Orleans. Their success helped to shorten the war. Salt in 1865, sold for an expensive \$1 per pound. In Roman times workers would often be paid with salt.

Jesus said you are the salt of the earth. Therefore you too are valuable in the advancement of kingdom work. Christians, by their word and deed are to make others thirsty for the gospel. Who do you know today that may be thirsty? Jesus also said when the salt loses its saltiness it is to be thrown out and trampled by men. So guard your testimony carefully lest you lose your saltiness and your influence over others.

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Tracy Wills

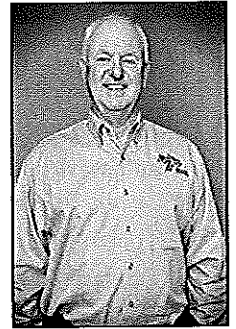
Psalm 119:105

Ancient...when I think of that word I picture things that are old and rare, like a set of encyclopedias. I can still see the numbered volumes lined up on my grandmother's bookcase. You might possibly find a set with one or two missing in a thrift store now days. With today's technology, I am thrilled that we can go to the internet to research the most updated information at any moment. But the art of digging through the pages of a book is a thing of the past. I hope that we do not find this to be true when it comes to our Bibles. There is something about touching the pages of a Bible & holding God's word in your hands. Today books can be ordered on line and stored in electronic form. These electronic devices even flip the pages to mimic the feeling of holding the manuscript in your hand. It is an amazing thing to have your bible at your fingertips in such a way. But I hope we never get away from the art of owning and keeping a personal bible that we can hold in our hands and close to our hearts. Ancient words in a modern world... it should be placed on the endangered list of rare things. The world will move forward with technology advances and we will be driven towards less clutter and more convenience. Let us not forget to hide God's word in our hearts in case the day comes that we no longer can find one to hold in our hands. Let this one verse be a reminder to you that your bible is a light unto your path...like a flashlight that you hold in your hands. Teach the younger generations to cherish and memorize scripture...for the future is futuristic in deed and is just around the corner.

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Brother Garry

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Proverbs 14:4

This is one of my favorite passages. Now you might be saying, are you sure Pastor because it does not make a lot of sense to me. Ok let me paraphrase you can't have milk without manure! Clean stalls are nice but it's also empty.

Empty nest are neat but I miss the life, the noise, the fun of family. Empty churches run smoother, less problems and are much easier to control. But I like the crowds, the comments, and yes even a few kooks along the way. So don't get so frustrated with the clean up, it's a small burden compared to the big blessings!

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Amanda Cobb

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Psalm 27:14

Do you recall a time in your life that you acted before waiting on an answer from God? Do you always go to Him with major and minor decisions in your life?

Anne Graham Lotz once said, "I never make a major decision, especially one that will affect another person before I receive direction from God." She goes on to say that for every major ministry decision she has made; she can pinpoint a specific scripture as the one God used to personally direct that decision.

I know that in my personal life it is often during the waiting process as I am on my knees and seeking His direction that He does His greatest work in me. Angela Thomas says that waiting is an opportunity for us to grow. Did you know that the value we place on an object or person dictates the amount of time we are willing to wait?

So what about you? How important is hearing from God before going on with something in your life? He has the perfect life plan for you...if you can wait on Him!

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Julie Russell

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Proverbs 14:34

I recently had the opportunity to hear and see one of the 2012 candidates for President at a local event. As I was impressed with this elegance of speech, hopeful of his planned approach and uplifted by his faith, my heart was burdened for our country and the changes that need to be made. From the time, I am writing this, our national elections for President are more than a year off. However, as Christians, it is imperative that we begin now praying for our elections. Proverbs 11:14 tell us, "For lack of guidance a nation falls, but many advisors make a victory sure." The outcome of our elections determines not only the leader of our country, but the many advisors that determine the actions of our President.

As concerned citizens, we must commit now to pray for wisdom (James 1:5) and discernment between truth and falsehood. We must educate ourselves on the issues and the candidates and we must make a stand by voting in our elections. We must seek and pray for a leader who takes an unapologetic stand for righteousness, even when it may not be well received by many. Pray that godly advisors will surround our leaders and that God will protect those leaders who take a bold stand. Commit today to pray for our nation and upcoming elections. May we be a nation exalted by righteousness, not disgraced by sin. (Proverbs 14:34)

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Brother Kenny

Matthew 7: 13-14

When I think about a gate, it brings to mind the soccer field. You can enter the field through a large or small gate. The large gate is the main entrance that is used the most. It is easier to find, and more people can pass through it. The smaller gate however, is not as easy to locate because it's a little out of the way. To protect the sod and the people on the fields, we keep the large gate locked so that cars can't enter and cause destruction. We don't worry about the other gate because it is too small for a vehicle to pass through. The bible warns us of the same type of gate that leads to destruction. As Christians, we need to do everything we can to prevent people from passing through that wide gate. Let's join together to show the world that life begins when you enter the narrow gate.

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Brother Craig

II Peter 1:1-11

As Christians we should be constantly becoming more like our savior. It is no secret that as we grow physically we go through all types of changes. Some are pretty cool while others are just scary. Considering our spiritual life could help you deal with some of the changes taking place in your body. Here's how it works. The bible has the answers we need for life and godliness. If we are trying to understand who we are becoming we should look in the bible to see who we are supposed to be. The more you grow the more you should be what Christ wants you to be. Remember we are living for His glory and not our own. As we learn to live for Him more we will find less value in living for ourselves. In our text today there are seven characteristics we should add to our faith in Christ.

List all seven below:

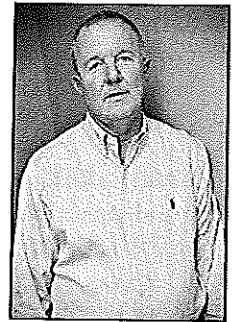
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Brother Rick

Ephesians 6:8

We have been renovating our house over the last five years one room at a time. As I was painting the trim around a door recently, I thought about skipping the very top of the trim since it could not be seen from the ground. However, in the end I made certain that all was painted, visible or not.

To be honest, in the Christian life it's often easy to take shortcuts. We may rationalize that if no one sees then what does it matter? We must be careful in every aspect of our lives to take care of the little things--- visible or not. While man might not notice, God sees all and will remind us one day of the unpainted things in our past.

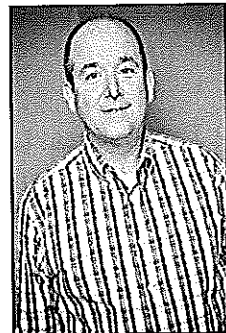
When all is said and done, let's make certain that all is done to the glory of God!

"People will do what's expected, when it's inspected."
Dr. Garry Ragsdale

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Brother Tim

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Mark 1:9-10

Many people ask why Jesus was baptized. It wasn't until I was asked that question particularly that I began to study the question. After all, Jesus was sinless and therefore had no need to repent, convert or confess sin. Jesus baptism was to identify with sinful man's need to be baptized, to be a model for us to follow, and a picture of the death, burial and resurrection He would fulfill. Mark records that Jesus came up out of the water therefore He must have been immersed. The baptism of a New Testament believer illustrates the death, burial and resurrection that has taken place in their life.

Historians record that a Jewish convert's rite of initiation of ministry began with baptism. Jesus' first act of His earthly ministry was baptism, not to qualify Him but to deny anyone's claim that He was not authentic. The recording in scripture of John's reluctance to baptize Jesus also points to and illustrates further His sinless perfection. The story of John's baptisms serves as another validation of who Christ is.

For you and I the issue is obedience. We follow the Lord in baptism not to gain any particular standing or to be absolved of any sin. Obedience to His teachings in our lives depends on how we view His teaching. If we truly believe what He says, we will have no problem with obedience. We stray when we doubt what He says is true or necessary.

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