

12 STEPS TOGETHER



Amanda Cobb

A Fresh Start... Today is another new day, a day that you want to begin in the right way. Go ahead and start your 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.

Romans 8:28

Let's take a trip down memory lane. Can you think of a time in your life when you had no idea what God was doing but as time passed you could look back and see exactly what He was up to?

Priscilla Shirer says it so well in her bible study *Discerning the Voice of God*. Even seemingly meaningless activities are used by God as a tool to guide us toward His plans. Never think your circumstances are disconnected from God's leading and His will.

Don't spend your time wishing you could get out of the season of life you are in; rather spend your time looking fervently for God's hand in your situation.

God has you just where He wants you.

Personal Notes:

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Julie Russell

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James 4:8

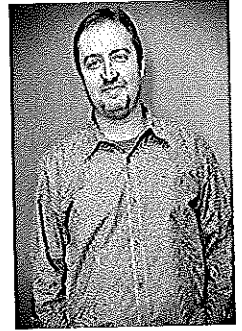
Do you remember a time in your life where you had one of those "hilltop" experiences with God and you were so excited about God and things that he was doing in your life. You began studying his word more consistently and the more you studied it the more you wanted to study it. Over time, usually before you realized it, that zeal for God and His Word faded. We once again became "lukewarm" about the things of God. Revelation 3:16 tells us, "So, because you are lukewarm-neither cold nor hot- I am about to spit you out of my mouth." Clearly the state of lukewarm is detested by God! Thankfully, however, we have a forgiving God that promises us that if we seek to be near to Him, he will be near to us. (James 4:8).

In order to maintain the zeal for the Lord, we must first make studying his word a priority in our lives. We must drop the things that consistently steal our time with Him. We must delight ourselves in Him and His Word. I believe, if we give our attention once again to the things of God, our desire for the things of God increases. This is only a natural principal with us, the more we have of something, the more we want and desire it. We see this in the hobbies that we have, the food that we eat, the homes that we have. The more we have, the more we want is a great principle when it comes to our love and desire for the Lord. Commit to spending more time with God each day and watch how your desire to be near God increases.

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Matthew 6: 16-18

About five years ago I read an incredible book titled, A Call to Die. It encourages you to fast for forty days, from things that may separate you from God. I chose to fast from TV, newspaper, and radio. The only thing I could listen to was praise and worship music. My fast began in January. I was excited and ready to start my challenge, but not once did I think about the time of year. Well...God got me good. Some of the best sporting events in the world take place within the first 40 days of each year: the National Championship game, the Super bowl, and the Daytona 500 to name a few! But I was faithful and God was good! He blessed my life so much during that time. It opened my eyes to the things I use to watch. He also gave me a focus and revealed His plan for my life. It's amazing what God can do in our lives when we release control!

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Ecclesiastes 10:10

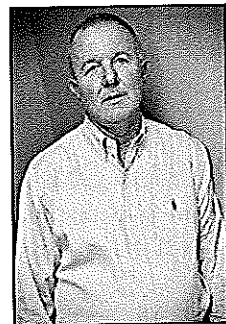
Josh was a young college kid who thought he knew all the answers in life. He was very arrogant, very proud, and looked down on everyone as if they were a lower species. He was the strongest, the quickest, and he did not mind telling anyone that. One day he walked into a discussion where some other students were talking to a lumberjack about the harvesting of trees. Josh soon chimed in and said he could chop down a tree faster than anyone, and more of them than anyone. Soon there was a competition between the two men. The person with the most trees cut down in five hours wins. So they went to an area in the woods and began. Josh began chopping wood like a mad man while the lumberjack walked to his truck, pulled out a file, and began to sharpen his axe. Two hours later Josh had three trees down and the lumberjack was just beginning. Soon Josh began to tire and the lumberjack began to catch up. At the end of the time Josh had 5, and the lumberjack had 7 trees on the ground.

How sharp are you? I mean how much time have you spent trying to become a sharper Christian? Are you swinging away with a dull axe? The scripture plainly says a dull axe requires more strength. How long can you hold up on your own strength? Well, the wise person sharpens the axe before cutting wood for several reasons, but the main one is so they will finish well. Sharpen your axe today by reading God's word a little more, talking to Him a little more, and sharing His message a little more.

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Colossians 1:13-20

The world that we live in is driven by trends. These trends often determine what cell phone we use, the clothes we wear, or even where we eat. An emerging trend in religious circles today is a "cross-less" church. For years cults have built false doctrines that deny the deity of Jesus Christ and His vicarious death on the cross for all mankind. Sadly, the latest trend today is mainstream groups allowing a watered-down theology to guide their doctrine. We must never accept a doctrine or teaching that removes who Jesus is or what Jesus did on the cross for us.

The writer of Colossians teaches us that we have been "rescued from the domain of darkness" (Col. 1:13-14) by the One who created the "heavens and the earth" (Col. 1:15-16). He is the "head of the body", which is the "church", and should have "first place in everything" (Col. 1:18). Lastly, the Apostle Paul teaches there can be no conversion without "the blood of His cross" (Col. 1:20). Hymn writer, Isaac Watts, must have had this passage in mind when he penned these words:

Alas and did my Savior bleed,
And did my sov'reign die?
Would He devote that sacred head,
For such a worm as I?

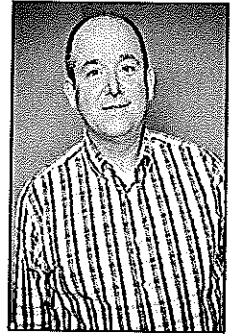
At the cross, at the cross,
Where I first saw the light
And the burden of my heart rolled away;
It was there by faith, I received my sight
And now I am happy all the day!

Prayer for today: Lord, thank You for the cross!

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Ezekiel 33:11

God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked for beyond the grip of death there is no reprieve. We must be careful not to gloat in the death of evil men even when their death means justice for others. It is not God's will for any to perish (2nd Peter 3:9). But because we all deserve death for our sin, we must reach out with the gospel. God gave Ezekiel a directive to share and that directive is for us as well.

There are people in some circles who say some people are born to go to eternal punishment and some born to go to heaven (hyper-Calvinism). Such discussions do not edify, therefore are useless and non-profitable. Beware of anyone who discounts God's grace or man's responsibility.

William Carey said "Expect great things from God, attempt great things for God". From the day when Carey preached his sermon that contained those words, the first missionary union was established and Carey went on to Calcutta. We have a mandate to carry the gospel to the ends of the earth and if we care at all about the eternal destiny of people, we will do something.

The first step to carrying the gospel around the world begins by sharing with those around you. Who do you know that does not know? What will you tell them today? You may be the only agent for salvation that person has. Don't let that opportunity pass you by.

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I John 4:3-5

This world is full of enticing things and the majority of them are addicting in nature. These addictions no matter how small are sinful in nature when they control us. I often question how people addicted to drugs, alcohol, gambling and so on let it ruin their whole lives. They slowly lose everything that was once important to them as the addiction takes over their lives. It never occurred to me that I also have addictive behaviors in my life until our church called us to a 40 day fast. We were asked to fast from something that would cause a void in our lives for 40 days. Which one of my addictions would I chose? Coffee, Dr Pepper, Eating Habits, Facebook.... Well, it was my debit card! I had become addicted to swiping that thing for cokes, snacks, whatever little items this world had to offer that we thought we needed at the moment. My debit card was something that I knew would create a void because it had become way too easy to use it when we didn't have cash on hand. It also was the source of the majority of my other addictions. Groceries, gas, everything had to be paid for with cash. That wouldn't be hard for some of you but for me the convenience of swiping my debit card had become addicting in nature.

This passage of scripture is an encouraging reminder that we are children of God and NOTHING this world offers us (no matter how addicting) can overcome HIM. **Greater is HE that lives within me than he (or anything) that is in the world!** So don't give up... look at that cookie, coke, cigarette, credit card and remember that **the power of the whole universe is living inside of you.** Everything else is small in comparison to HIM! Use this passage of scripture as an encouraging reminder when you are overcoming strongholds in your life.

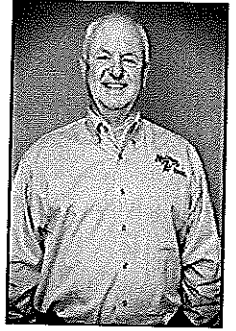
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Brother Garry

Joshua 14:10-13

This is one of my favorite stories in the Word of God. Caleb along with Joshua was the only two of twelve spies who wanted to conquer Canaan on the first trip. They were allowed to survive the forty years of wandering and go in on the second trip, Joshua as the leader and Caleb as an 85 year old warrior. When given the choice of the land to conquer this senior saint said give me the mountains where the giants live!

They did not scare this guy, forty years and they still don't, and 85. There is a real role model for us all, especially senior adults. Don't be a complainer be a conqueror. Vision and vitality for Caleb equaled victory. It did for this 85 year old saint and it will for us today as well!

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Galatians 5:22-23

In Galatians 5:23 we are instructed to have a gentle spirit. A gentle spirit will temper the words that come out of your mouth. Unfortunately, in the world we live in if one is thought of as being meek and gentle we assume that they are a weak person. Please realize that meekness is not weakness. It is actually power that is under control. The saying "sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me" has to be the most incorrect statement I have ever heard. Our words can wound hearts deeper than most of us realize. In *The Power of a Woman's Words* by Sharon Jaynes, she states "when Jesus said He was meek and lowly in heart he was saying He was submitted to God-Almighty powerful but under God's control." It is only when we submit our tongues to God will we have the ability to use our words for good. A meek person submits to God. A weak person wounds with their words.

Which one are you? Meek or Weak?

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Philippians 4:4

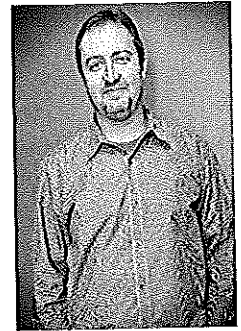
Sadly, many Christians are walking around in a state of depression, anger, sadness or some other negative emotions. Their lives are overcome by the unhappy circumstances that surround them. What we often fail to realize, however, is that even in the midst of unhappy circumstances we can still have joy. "Joy is deeper than despair." (Corrie Ten Boon) Joy is not dependent on happy circumstances. Joy depends on Christ. Paul obviously understood this quite well as he wrote from his jail cell to his friends in Philippi. I can't imagine that Paul considered living in a cold concrete jail cell as a happy time in his life. Paul, however, learned to be content whatever the circumstance (Philippians 4:11-12). He understood the secret of true joy was grounded in his relationship to Christ.

We must realize that in those times where our lives are filled with "unhappy" circumstances, those are times that we must turn and focus on Christ and who He is in our lives. We must be like Paul and learn that our joy is complete only in Christ Jesus. Rejoice today and know that He is our Salvation and in Him our lives can be filled with great joy!

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Matthew 4:19

What a powerful verse! I remember being challenged as a kid to learn scriptures from the Bible and this verse was the one that just seemed to stick with me through the years. Maybe it's because I loved going fishing with my dad and could relate to the term "fishing". It wasn't until later in my life that I truly understood the meaning. Eventually, God blessed me with a son that I got to carry fishing. I remember how excited he was the first time he reeled a fish into the boat. Much like the excitement I felt the first time I lead someone to the Lord. I had so much joy in my heart. The Lord had put me to work being a fisherman and I was having a blast. Last year Craig and I had a bon fire with the youth by the creek side. We had invited the high school to be a part of it and we were ready to go fishing. God showed up and we reeled five souls into the kingdom! Today think about your life. Are you a fisherman, or are you just sitting on the creek bank? Go find the joy of fishing with the Lord.

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Ephesians 4:11-16

Brother Craig

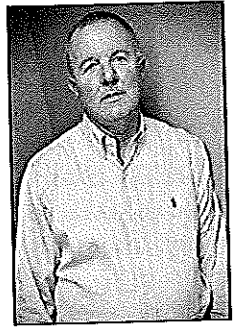
I recently read a story about a statue in Bangkok which stood in front of a temple. It was old and very ugly covered in dirt and often was overlooked. Many times it would hold a person's package while they tied their shoe, or collect trash of those passing by. One day a priest decided to take the statue to his home where at least it would receive some appreciation. As they began to move the statue they noticed the outer crust was cracking. Once the statue had arrived the priest began to peel away a old muddy layer of dirt and underneath was a shiny golden Buddha. It was the largest Buddha ever discovered standing over eight feet tall, and made of Gold.

When we stand back and look at who we are and what we are doing for the kingdom of God I wonder if there are hidden treasures. While I don't care to find a Buddha I am quite concerned about the gifts and abilities the Lord has blessed me with. My desire is to be the best for Him and that would mean using what He has given me for His honor and glory. Are there things I have never told anyone about that I could do as I serve at church? Are there things I could do to honor the Lord better at work? Don't hide who God made you to be but be who God made you to be and do what God has made you to do. What is within me that I can use to bring honor to the name of Jesus today?

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Acts 2:42-47

I was recently in Atlanta and happened to notice that "gated communities" are on almost every block. These communities offer more than a secure environment; they offer a social environment as well. Many communities have their own stores, schools and some have their own medical care. Their amenities are described as being all that a person would need for life "from womb to tomb". Another aspect to these communities is their designed barriers to keep nonresidents out in order to maintain the desired environment. In other words, not all people get invited in.

It has been said that Americans are among the loneliest people in the world. People we pass each day are looking for community. Not a place to live, but a place to belong. We as the Church of the living God are a community of believers that should be ready to help someone connect to the Lord by removing barriers or gates from our lives that might hinder those who are on the outside looking in. The book of Acts provides a pattern for us in that the early church saw people saved daily as a result of teaching, fellowship, and prayer by small groups of believers. While this is a perfect picture of our Bible study classes, it should also be a picture of our homes, where we work, or where we attend school. Let's use this day to connect with someone and in turn connect them to the Lord Jesus Christ!

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Ephesians 4:30

Whenever we grieve the spirit by our action or inaction, we literally embarrass Him because the day we received Christ as our savior, we were sealed or marked as His. Paul also says in 1st Thessalonians 5:19 to not quench the spirit. Some translations say do not put out the spirit's fire. The imagery is still the same. I remember as a young child getting ready to go to some place with my mom and dad. Momma would always tell me before we left what I could and could not do once we got there. If I were to embarrass her or my father with my behavior, there was not sweet fellowship between us.

Whenever we grieve, quench, stifle or put out the Spirit's fire, we will often experience a time of loneliness, broken fellowship and uncertainty in our life. Sometimes it is not because of something we did but what we did not do. Has He spoken to your heart today about a direction for your life or an area of your life that He is not quite through with? Don't leave unfinished business with the Lord. Keep a short account. The loneliness that accompanies a strained relationship often will create doubt to the extent that some people will even question whether or not they are saved. When He speaks to you concerning an action or an attitude, don't delay.

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Ecclesiastes 3:1-3

I love this passage of scripture and it always comes to my mind as the seasons of the year are changing. How amazing is it that God the creator has the trees adjust to the seasons of the year? I love watching them change from green to shades of gold to barren and then back to blooming. God does the exact same within us as our seasons of life change. I can recall a women looking at me in the grocery store once with my 3 little boys and buggy full of groceries in tow. In awe she said, "I do not know how you do it, I guess God gives us kids when we are young for a reason. I am tired just watching you." It instantly reminded me of the look on my mother's face the last time they all had spent the entire day at her house. She looked totally exhausted! God does give us just what we need in each season of our lives. Think about the seasons that you have been through, are in, and are approaching.

There is the innocence that He gives us in the season of childhood safeguarding us from the world around us. The safety that He provides in our ten foot tall and bullet proof years when we do not listen to anyone but ourselves. What about the over abundance of love that He gives us as we get acquainted and learn to overlook the faults of a new mate? He provides the extra strength mentally and physically we need to train up our children. And then there is the wisdom we need as we teach the younger generations from our own life experiences. Those are just a few! Whatever season we are in He gives us just want we need! What season are you in today? Just like the trees how is He adjusting you to adapt to this seasons of life? Think of someone that is approaching a new stage of life and say a prayer for them today.

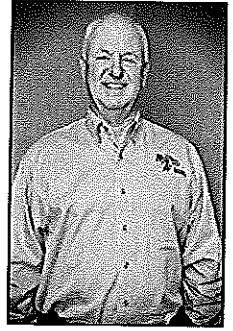
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Brother Garry

II Kings 2:13-14

Today's text shows us a sad prophet because his mentor had just been taken up to heaven in a chariot of fire. Yet look closer because the key in today's text is not the countenance of the prophet's face but what he has clad in his hand. Wow, it's just a big hairy mantle weathered. I would imagine probably a little smelly as well.

However, it is the mantle of his mentor, the one cast over him when he was called by Elijah - I Kings 19:19. To Elisha that mantle meant I will follow in my master's footsteps. As a true prophet of the most high God, I remember my mentor's mantle as well, Dr. Jim Knight. When God called me to pastor I carried his mantle which was Expository Preaching, Personal Evangelism, and Celebrative Worship. I am now passing that mantle on to other preacher boys. Two questions: What's your mantle? Are you mentoring others to keep the kingdom work going when you are taken out or should we say taken up?

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Galatians 6:2

Amanda Cobb

We all need help at some point in our life, but a lot of times pride gets in the way of asking. In Galatians 6:2 God tells us that we are to carry one another's burdens. Whether that is lifting their need up in prayer or meeting a physical need, we as Christians are instructed to do it! In Phillipians 4:13 Paul wrote "I am able to do all things through Him who strengthens me" but Paul also goes on to say that the church in Philippi had lightened his burdens by coming along beside him in difficult times.

Whose burden have you helped carry this week? Something as simple as a card or a meal can mean the world to people who are going through difficult circumstances. Maybe you are the one who needs help. People can't help if they are not aware of a need. Pray today that God will show you how you can contribute to those in need and also that He will help you be more willing to receive help when needed.

Look for someone this week that you can help carry their burden.

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Julie Russell

Matthew 5:16

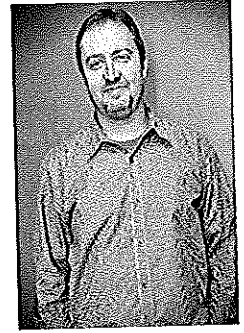
Do you allow the light of Jesus to shine in your life? While studying the science of light last week with my youngest son, there were two words that he defined that made me think of the light of Jesus. One of those words was "transparent" which is defined, "as an object allowing light to pass through with little or no distortion so that objects on the other side can be clearly seen." This is how the light of Jesus should shine through our life. It should be obvious that Jesus is in our lives. Our family, co-workers, & friends should see a clear message of Christ in everything we do. Our words and actions should line up together. On the other hand, the word "translucent" is used to define an object that "allows light to pass through, yet the light is diffused, so that objects on the other side cannot be clearly distinguished." I believe for many Christians, the light of Jesus is being diffused, making our witness less intense and effective. These people say one thing and take actions that clearly state another. Leaving those in the shadow of the light confused as to what a Christian should look like.

As Christians according to Matthew 5:14, we are the light of the world. I believe Christ wants us to shine his light in a transparent way. No diffusion or confusion that we are a child of God. Commit today, to be the "light" you have been called to be. Live as transparent "children of the light" (Ephesians 5:8).

Personal Notes:

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12 STEPS TOGETHER



Brother Kenny

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Luke 6:46-49

Building things is a passion of mine. I love to create and restore different kinds of projects, but my favorite is restoring old cars. When restoring an old car you can run into a lot of problems with rust. Rust will corrode a car's body making it tough to work on, but luckily, I have been trained to handle just about any automotive problem that comes my way. Occasionally, I'll come across a problem that I just can't find the solution to. Which is a problem for most of us guys because we'll jump right into a project (knowing we don't have a clue what we are doing)! We may need a repair manual or instruction book, but there is no way we're going to use them. I have battled with problems before knowing the answer was in the instruction book, but I thought I could figure it out for myself. All I really did was waste my time and money.

In our walk with Christ we do the same things. We know where to turn for help, but we want to fix things on our own. God's word will save us a lot of time and pain, if we'll take the time to read it!

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Brother Craig

Ephesians 4:21-32

According to verse 24 we are to replace our old nature with a new one. What would you say a new person look's like to God "in true holiness and righteousness"?

When the scripture says we are to be like God it means, a representative of God, a person God would be proud to have representing His name. A representative is a person sent in place of someone and in this case we represent for God. As God's representative in life we are showing the world what they cannot see, God's holiness. How are you doing? Are you representing the holiness of God well?

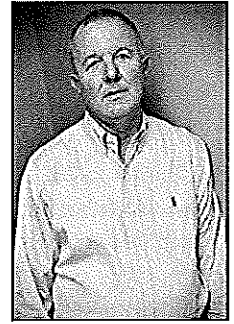
List the things in verses 25-31 we should not represent and do a thorough examination of your spiritual walk to see if there are any you need to remove so you can be child of God in holiness and righteousness.

Verse 32 gives us some things that should be present in our lives as Christians. Write those down and do another systems check to know where you stand. We are all works in progress so do not feel like you can't do it.

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2 Samuel 24:24

We live in a digital age. Today it's common for someone to have a least one or more digital devices such as a smart phone, Mp3 player, or notebook. This technology has had a positive effect on productivity and convenience while at the same time may be responsible for changing the landscape of the music industry. Recently a worship music company closed that had been in business for decades. This company provided music that we sing almost every week in our services here at Mount Zion. The root cause for this was explained this way: "people today demand access to music, but deny ownership". People file swap or download from the internet without paying. It cost them nothing.

King David knew about cost. It would have been easy for him to offer a sacrifice that cost him nothing yet he refused to take the threshing floor without paying for it. We as believers should examine our daily sacrifice of time, talent, or whatever we might offer to the Lord to ensure that it is the very best that we have to offer. We know that this is not for salvation, but instead, because of salvation. Jesus Christ gave His all for us! What will we give Him today? Will we give our best or that which is borrowed?

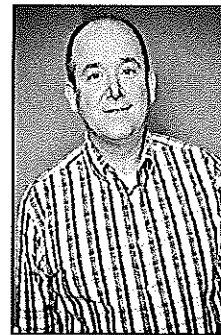
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Brother Tim

Romans 8:18-23

A farmer prepares the soil and sews the corn seed. Soon the little tiny corn stalk emerges from the ground reaching for the sun, growing daily. After a while the stalk grows stronger, the roots grow deeper, the leaves fill out to become broad and green. The first hint that there is going to be a crop is when the tassel emerges. Not long after the stalk begins to bear ears of corn. First they are puny and the silk is blond. Then the ears fill out to maturity to be harvested. The stalk now begins to turn brown, begins to bow under its weight and eventually dies.

There is a parallel to our life when you think about it. We start out small and grow to maturity and then the ones who nurture us go on. The farmer looks at his crop with great expectation and when he begins to see the signs of the upcoming harvest, he watches the crop ever so closely. I wonder if that is what it looks like in heaven as our bodies begin to wear down, our tassels turn gray and our mission is finished. Do the angels see us with the same expectation the farmer has of the soon coming harvest? Are they saying to one another "make room for another, he is just about ready"?

Our lives are only for a season. We have one chance to produce fruit. What will your harvest look like?

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Tracy Wills

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Genesis 3:13-15

If you have ever been to the reptile house at the zoo or to the snake section of the museum you have been able to watch the snakes through the glass. We have all seen a snake on the ground moving, slithering, dragging it's body across the dust of the earth. In our mind's eye, that is what a snake should look like. If you were to see a snake walking around on legs and up off the ground, (the way God intended for it to be) then you would think that you were witnessing a mutation of some kind! I think it is interesting that God did not intend for the snake to be the creature that we know it as today. It is the way that seems normal to us but indeed it was not in the beginning.

In the same way, we change who we were designed to be as we adapt to the things of this earth. We think we can out smart God. Like Eve we may stop when tempted and say, "did He really say that we should not do this" or "just this one time will not hurt". We often drag our bellies along pulling others into our own downfall. We change who God intended for us to be each time we fall into the dirt. He created us to bring honor, glory, and praise to Him. He did not create us to crawl around in the filth and dirt of this world.

The story of Adam, Eve and the serpent is about sin. Just for a moment think about the way that God intended the serpent to live and dwell forever. The snake would've had a whole different appearance, an easier journey through life and a better reputation with people. What does He desire for you to look like? Maybe your spiritual appearance has changed. Are you listening to Him and following His will for your life? If not, then think about that serpent...Grow your legs back, pick yourself up off the ground and be what He created you to be.

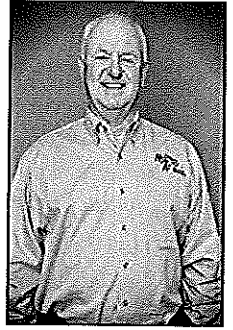
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Brother Garry

Matthew 16:13

Jesus asked a question to His disciples. *Who do men say that I am?* Men were throwing out some pretty flattering names, John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, and other prophets. As a preacher, I would be glad to be compared to any of those guys. Why even some of today's: Adrian Rogers, Billy Graham, or Johnny Hunt.

However, what is flattering to a preacher doesn't even scratch the surface when you are "The Christ, the Son of the Living God," (Revelation 16). Non can compare with who Jesus was and none must ever compete with who He is. Jesus must be both Savior and Lord of our hearts and lives.

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Amanda Cobb

Proverbs 22:6

I have read that osteoporosis, a bone thinning disease, has been called a “Pediatric disease” with a “Geriatric outcome” because bone mass gained or lost during your childhood and adolescence greatly determines life-long bone health. Youth is the best time to invest in your child’s bones. Just as the way we live and take care of our physical bodies in our younger years affects us as we grow older, so does the way we take care of our spiritual life in our younger years affect us as we become adults. As we mature as Christians and our walk becomes closer to God, we still have to live with consequences of our past decisions. This is why it is so important to teach our children spiritual truths while they are young. This does not guarantee that your children will not stray but the more of God that you pour into their life while they are young (pediatric) the better the chances are that they will desire more and more of God in their “geriatric” years. Just like milk helps to build strong bones, a parent who teaches their children the truths of God helps to build strong Christian adults.

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Julie Russell

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Mark 1:41

The word "compassion" as defined by Webster is the "sympathetic consciousness of others' distress together with a desire to alleviate it." Jesus perfectly exemplifies the act of compassion. The Scriptures demonstrate to us that Christ not only spoke of compassion for individuals, but put his compassion in to action. His compassion was never passive. An example of this is found in Mark 1:40-45, in the healing of a poor leper in the streets of Galilee. As this leper falls to his knees begging for healing, the scriptures tell us that, "Jesus, moved with compassion, stretched out His hand and touched him." To touch a leper was an unthinkable act in those days. Lepers were banned from society. No one would even get close to a leper, much less touch them. Can you imagine the lepers need and desire for a touch from someone who cared? After the touch, Jesus then healed the diseased man. Our Savior could have chosen to heal him first before he touched him, but I believe this was Jesus' way of saying to the leper, "you are loved and accepted."

As Christians, it is easy for us to feel compassion for those in need, but are we willing to "touch" the untouchable? Will we reach out our hand and help those who have any type of unattractiveness, those who no one else will help? I do not believe Jesus considered social status or attractiveness when his hand of compassion was in action. We too should show love and compassion to those in need. "Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another, be sympathetic love as brothers, be compassionate and humble."

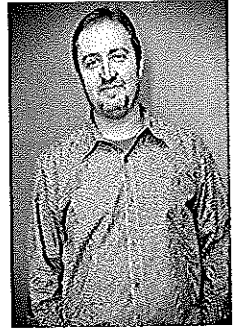
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Brother Kenny

Proverb 22: 9

Lately I've been thinking about my trip to Uganda and the experience of passing out manna to those in need. Once a family starts receiving manna, the mission team will conduct follow-up visits to check on the families. During those follow-up visits we found families that could stretch the food out all month long while others could only get by for a couple of weeks. As the physical needs of those families were being filled with manna, the mission team was able to fill the spiritual needs with the Bread of Life. Matthew 6:11 says- *Give us today our daily bread.* Are you taking what He is offering to you daily? If so share your food with someone else. Start today by sharing God's words with a co-worker or friend at school. It just may be what the Great Physician has ordered.

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Ephesians 5:15-17

Brother Craig

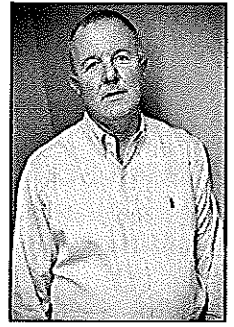
Most people have a Thermostat in their home and inside that Thermostat there is a Thermometer which reads the temperature of the room. The Thermostat and the Thermometer are two different mechanisms. One is controlled by the temperature in the room and one controls the temperature in the room. The Thermometer will move only when the temperature rises and falls. The Thermostat however, causes the temperature to change and controls the environment, it sets the temperature.

I wonder if we are sometimes like a thermometer and we are influenced by the things around us. According to whom we are around or what may be going on around us we are driven and directed. Many times the things we do each day are carried out because we know other people will be looking at us or we will be in a position where we must act a certain way. Could we be more like the Thermostat which sets the pace instead of being influenced by anyone or anything else? As we live our lives for the Lord we are always working on trying our best to live for Him and honor Him with our lives. In order to better please Him we must learn to be in control of our lives and watch out for any influence that might cause us to step away from Him.

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Acts 19:11

Brother Rick

I read a story, almost ten years ago, that told about how after World War II a group of German students volunteered to rebuild a severely damaged cathedral. A large statue of Jesus with the words "Come unto Me" inscribed on it was missing both hands. After much effort the students found it impossible to reattach the hands so they changed the inscription to read as follows: "Christ has no hands but ours".

We, the "Body of Christ", are the "Hands of Christ" as well. To use our hands might mean teaching, working in the Baptist Service Center, or serving in the mission field. Maybe a great prayer for today might be: "Lord, please use my hands today that I might display Your greatness to a lost world". In Jesus name!

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Brother Tim

John 6:44

What does it mean to be drawn by God? Some folks view such passages to mean that man has no choice in salvation. Practically speaking, our job is to share the gospel with a lost and dying generation. The extent of our responsibility is simply to model Christ like behaviors and attitudes which include a knowledge of scripture and the sharing of the plan of salvation. We are to be salt that creates a thirst in men.

God is omniscient (all knowing) and omnipotent (all powerful) therefore He determines how to draw men to Him. He draws all men (John 12:32) but not all respond to Him. Wayne Grudem says man has a general or external calling which comes through the gospel invitation offered to all people through human proclamation. Man is given the will to choose or to reject. The effective call is an act of the Father speaking through human proclamation of the gospel in which He summons people to Himself in such a way they respond in saving faith.

Salvation is all of God but it is man's response that completes the circuit. Pray for those whom you would like to see saved. Unless God works in the heart of people to make the proclamation of the gospel effective, there will be no genuine saving response.

When Lydia heard the gospel message, *the Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message* (Acts 16:14). There is a tri-part responsibility in the salvation of men. We share the message from the Word of God, the Father opens the heart of the hearer to the Word of God and the hearer responds in faith. *How can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard* (Romans 10:14b)?

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