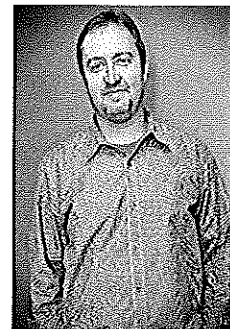


12 STEPS TOGETHER

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



Brother Kenny

John 4:34, 35

I remember as a small child going to a friend's house to pick potatoes. When I got to the field, I didn't see anything but dirt. The farmer tilled the ground, and away we went digging up potatoes. It was fun, but hard work!

In doing God's work, we spread seeds every day. We may not get to see the seed grow, but when the time comes, the seed will be harvested. Don't look at the field like I did as a child and see only barren land. Keep working the land, digging for lost souls, no matter how hard the work gets. You never know, today may be the day for you to harvest a soul for Christ.

Personal Notes:

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Romans 12:6-21

Brother Craig

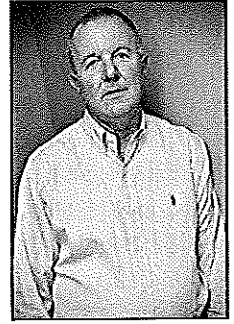
By now you have probably been to church a few times this week. There is something each one of us needs to understand about church and that one thing is this: what we teach in church is to be lived outside of church. It's cool to come and hang out while you enjoy worshiping, but there is more involved in living for the Lord than the few hours you spend at church. What about the many hours you are not at church? What do you do with that time? You should use what you have learned and are learning through bible study, and Godly people to impact the world around you. How do we do it? Paul gives us some pointers in Romans when talking about abilities God has given each of us and how to use them.

When we talk about helping and loving other people we must understand that it will take a tremendous amount of energy and effort on your part. There will be sacrifices and losses when you try to help people. There will be days when you get dirty and days when you smell different, but when you do it for the right reason none of that stuff will matter. Just remember whatever is done do it well, and do it for the glory of God.

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Brother Rick

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Psalm 20:7

The year 2011 will be remembered for governments collapsing which once boasted of having a strong military force. These once powerful nations now lie in ruins militarily and economically. We live in the greatest nation on earth. The United States has been able to stand tall exporting freedom around the world for over 235 years, yet we must be careful as a nation not to trust in anything other than the Lord Himself. After the first Gulf War, people boasted of "smart bombs" being the key to victory forgetting that it was really God who was responsible instead.

We must ask ourselves: Do we really trust in the name of the Lord our God?

To trust means to possess total dependence upon the Lord just like a child who is dependent upon his parents for his needs to be taken care of. Sometimes when we have a measure of success in life, we may relax our relationship with the Lord only to reconnect when our circumstances change. The goal for today is for us to display a sold-out heart that belongs to the Lord Jesus, trusting in Him alone no matter who we are, where we live, or what we might possess.

Prayer for today: Lord, I trust in You alone for this day.

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Brother Tim

Romans 8:14-15

Too many times we allow the fear of the unknown to dictate how we live our lives. Often we are faced with difficult decisions that seem impossible to reconcile. I once saw an Any Griffith episode where Opie kept talking about a man named Mr. McBeevy. Now Mr. McBeevy was a power company lineman that wore a shiny hat, had tools on his belt, could do tricks with smoke and stayed up in the top of poles and trees most of the time. When Opie told his father about it, it was hard to believe. Andy asked him to tell him there was no such thing as Mr. McBeevy but Opie would rather be punished. Opie trusted in his father.

When faced with the prospect of having to give Opie his punishment, Barney asked Andy "do you believe in Mr. McBeevy"? Andy replied no but I believe in my son.

There are times in our lives when circumstances do not allow for reason and logic. Fear and anxiety will often be present during those times. You may not be able to see through a circumstance and believe God is going to carry you. It is during those times where you must be led by His Spirit to walk by faith and not by sight. Andy believed his son. In the end Andy discovered that Mr. McBeevy really was real after all.

It is understandable to not believe in Mr. McBeevy, but we must always believe on the Son who saves!

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Tracy Wills

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Romans 8:4-8

As Christians, we are to have our minds set on the things that the Spirit desires. Often times we find ourselves struggling with what our flesh desires. This chapter tells us that a mind that is governed by the flesh leads to death and the mind that is governed by the Spirit leads to life and peace. The way of the flesh is hostile, and it doesn't submit to God's law or please God. No matter who you are and how great of a Christian you are...you struggle with your flesh. For instance, when Jesus and his Disciples are praying in the garden before Jesus was to be crucified. Jesus being close to these men asked them to pray in the garden. I feel for sure that the Spirit within these men wanted them to do what Jesus was asking of them but their flesh was so weak. When Jesus returns to the garden he finds the men asleep and not praying.

We cannot stand against our flesh alone. If we chose to do so alone, it will defeat us every time! I explain it to the children at church like this...Look at the word ...FLESH. As Christians, we have our flesh but thankfully we also have **Him**. When you try and take on your FLESH without the **H** (HIM) all you are left with is...**FLES** a backwards self that you cannot control on your own. I am so thankful that I have **Him** and that the Spirit leads me against my flesh. Without Him I would just be a backwards self!

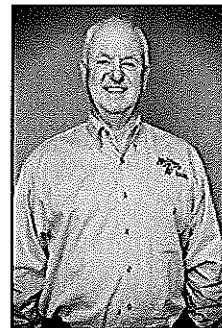
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Brother Garry

I Kings 19: 9

I think you know the story of Elijah in the cave. He had great victory on Mount Carmel over the prophets of Baal. Then he bailed on God, "pun intended," under a death threat of Queen Jezebel, now he is a pouting cave dweller and God is asking a very serious question, Elijah, what are you doing here?

Let me answer that! He is not acting like a prophet; he is what I like to call a spiritual spelunker! I have witnessed too many cave dwelling christians in my life. Fear, discouragement, defeat and the list is endless as to the cause. The list is endless as to the caves; people make caves out of jobs, hobbies, yard work and even their dens. Any place will do as long as I can hide from my responsibilities as a christian. Be careful, if it can happen to a great prophet it can also happen to good people. Stay on your toes and out of the caves!

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Amanda Cobb

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Matthew 5:6

Do you hunger and thirst for righteousness? Do you have a desire to spend time with your creator every day? What happens when you have a glass full of water and you tilt it over and slowly pour it out? It becomes empty!

So many times people who teach bible study classes or work in a ministry every week pour themselves into to others and eventually become empty inside because they don't take time to fill themselves up with God's word. It is so easy to get caught up in doing "God's work" that you slack on your relationship with Him. You MUST pour God into your life each day if you are going to be pouring into others each week. God tells us if we hunger and thirst for righteousness we WILL be filled.

What about you? Do you need a refill? Make time each day to fill up your cup.

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Julie Russell

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Ephesians 3:20-21

When Brianna was an infant, each night when I laid her down to sleep, I played a precious lullaby by Michael Card, titled "Sweet Sound in Jesus." As she grew into a toddler she continued to listen to this song as she fell asleep. If I walked out of the room and did not play the song or if finished playing before she drifted to sleep, she would always call me back and ask me to play it. Still to this day, this song is special to her and to me. The words to the first verse are:

Sleep sound in Jesus my baby, my dear—
Angels are watching, they keep you so near.
Know for His sake you'll be safe for the night;
Sleep sound in Jesus—I'll turn out the light

To be "in Jesus" means to be His child. It means you are in the love and care of our Savior. The the greatest desire we can have for our children is that they will be found "in Jesus" and to know their Father's love. We should teach them the ways of the Lord and pray that they will come to be His children and live their life "In Him."

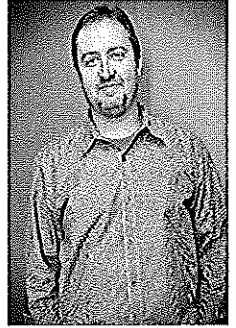
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Brother Kenny

Daniel 9:4-19

When I read this prayer it spoke to me. Daniel was an old man who had a lot of passion for his people. Every day Daniel would go home and go to the room that that was facing Jerusalem. Daniel showed great respect to the Father by calling out "O Lord, the great and awesome God". Then he would thank Him for all his glory. Daniel would cry out, asking for forgiveness for himself and his people. This man had a purpose. He gave God respect and was looking for an answer. He yearned to be close to God. That's how we need to be. In Matthew 6:5-13 Jesus told us how to pray. He said go into a room and close the door and pray in private. When we bow in **PRAYER**, we should:

Set a clear **Purpose**

Give **Respect**

Look for an **Answer**

Have a strong desire or **Yearning**

Look for the **Effect**

Rejoice

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Joshua 24:14-24

Brother Craig

Each day of your life you will be facing new challenges. How will you handle those challenges? In order for us to really handle these times in our life well we must use our will power to refrain from doing the wrong thing. "Will power" is the mental strength to do what is right, or the strength to keep from doing what is wrong. It can also be described as self-discipline and controlling yourself. Whatever you may be faced with you generally have a choice unless you are forced against your will to do something. Most of the time that is not the case at all and you are standing at a point of decision with all types of pressure on you. What will you do? Which way will you go? You will be presented with a right way, there will be a wrong way, and you will have to choose what you will do. In Joshua we can read about a time when Joshua stood before the people to ask them which way they were going to go.

This is the idea for today. You will be faced with the right and wrong, but you must have the strength to make the right choice. You can do it! Joshua did.

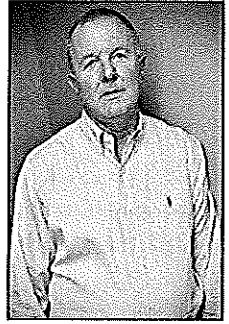
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Brother Rick

2 Peter 1:7

There is a TV commercial I like that shows someone who displays an act of kindness to a complete stranger. Sometimes this act may be as simple as holding a door for someone, helping an elderly person across the street, or maybe letting someone merge into traffic. The premise of this commercial is that a bystander notices the act of kindness, passes it on, only for the act of kindness to be repeated throughout the day. It only took one kind act to start an entire day of kindness.

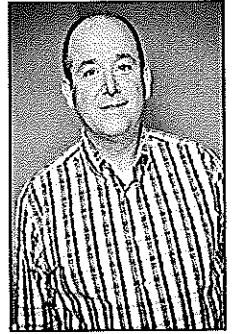
Let us approach this day with kindness towards others in mind. We can be people of influence today by buying a stranger lunch, letting someone go ahead of us at the checkout line, or checking on a neighbor who would love to have someone to talk to. There are endless opportunities awaiting us today if we will prayerfully look for them. With each act of kindness we can show the love of Christ, and perhaps even share the real reason behind the kind act.

Prayer for today: Lord reveal someone to me today who I might show kindness towards, so that I might point them to You.

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Brother Tim

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Proverbs 29:18

Myopia or nearsightedness is a vision problem experienced by up to about one third of the population. In fact, a recent survey found that myopia is more common among Americans than it was 30 years ago. Near-sighted people have difficulty reading highway signs and seeing other objects at a distance. Often a person who is nearsighted will be able to focus on the immediate but not with a clear vision for the bigger picture.

Nearsighted people come into the church and see their contribution as a task to complete and work hard for a while but their enthusiasm runs out quickly like a shooting star until they simply disappear.

Do you know someone who: Fails to see the big picture because small obstacles block the view or they know the cost of everything but the value of nothing? What about the person who is perpetually cynical but sees themselves as perfectly practical? Then there are those that never see beyond the cost and never value the investment.

Get the picture? What do you see today? The picture is bigger than we are but we must be willing to focus on the future because with each new day the future is now.

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Tracy Wills

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Exodus 20:4

I have really enjoyed studying the Ten Commandments for a DT class that I am teaching the children. Several of these devotions came from the studying that I did during that time. This was one of the first things that really caught my attention while reading Exodus 20. The Israelites journeyed through lands of many idols on their journey. So God was issuing this 2nd commandment as a safety path through their journey. Today our idols are far less obvious than those of the Israelites. They are things that sneak into our lives and grab our time and attention away from God.

People often think of idols in life as being negative things...tobacco use, pornography, addiction to alcohol. The majority of us would say that we do not struggle with those things. BUT God has given us so many wonderfully good things to enjoy in this life! We are often guilty of allowing those good things to become little gods in our lives. God has given my family SO many wonderfully good things. Many times we get so caught up in all the good things that we fail to realize how quickly they can become a god in our lives. (An O no makes something good a god) As our creator, God wants and deserves first place in our lives. Idols are any of those little things that steal God's place in our hearts and in our time schedules. Safe guard all of your paths from allowing little gods to rob you of your time and friendship with the one true God.

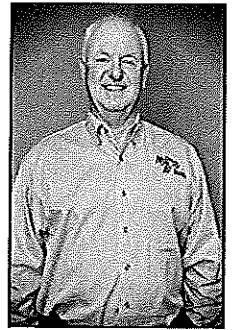
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Brother Garry

Hebrews 13: 17

Do you believe in pastoral authority? I hope you do and hope you know the bible teaches it very plainly. It is a part of God's divine game plan for the church. I was a quarter back in high school. It was my job to call the play and the offensive team players job to help me run the play.

Being a pastor is a lot like that. I am the shepherd of the sheep. As shepherd my job is to feed, lead, and protect. By the way I was called, you do not sign up for the job! However, I love being a pastor and I love people who understand and submit to my role in their spiritual walk. Someone recently described me as their pastor in this way. "You are like a state trooper in my rear view mirror; you influence me to act right." I love it and I hope you do too!

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Amanda Cobb

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Proverbs 1:33

If you have ever been to Six Flags and rode the Monster Plantation ride, you probably remember coming to a point where the ride splits into two directions. There is a character there waving frantically, telling you to go to the right where the path is safe, but as your boat veers to the left, you hear the character screaming, "Don't go into the swamp!"

Throughout life, we have choices to go in different directions. Just as the character in the ride warns us to take the path of safety, God's word is full of warning signs for us, if we will only heed them. If you are a believer, God always gives you warning signs before you sin. After the sign is given, the choice is up to you.

We could be saved from a lot of harm and heartache in life if we would slow down enough to see God's warning signs and choose to obey them.

What about you? Has God given you warning signs this week that you have chosen to ignore? Seek His word and choose His path of safety.

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Julie Russell

Proverbs 20:7

I think it is very important, as parents, to realize that just as God has a plan for our children, so does Satan. Proverbs 22:6 tells us, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." If we fail to teach our children the ways of the Lord, their ability to resist the temptations of the evil one become more difficult. If our children fall into the temptations of Satan, it can change the whole course of their lives. God's plan is perfect and we must do all we can to help our children follow that plan.

There are three very important things that a parent must do to help their children follow the ways of the Lord. First, we must be diligent in teaching them God's Word. We must, also, walk as an example to our children. Seeking God and walking in His ways as our children follow us. God knew, however, as our children follow us, we would not be perfect parents, because we are not a perfect people. Therefore, He gave us a way to make up for our imperfections by giving us the power to pray for our children. God commands us to "Pour out your heart like water before the face of the Lord. Lift your hands toward Him for the life of your young child." (Lamentations 2:19). Seek today, as you teach your children God's Word, to walk in integrity and righteousness before the Lord and your children. Pray for them with fervency and passion and praise God for his blessings that will be poured out on them.

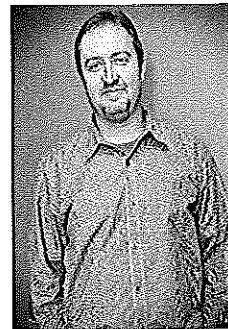
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Brother Kenny

Philippians 4:4

Rejoice in the Lord always. What a blessing it has been writing devotions for this book. At first, I didn't know how I was going to complete such a task because I am not a writer! Putting my thoughts on paper is much more difficult for me than sharing them out loud. But, God has been faithful and has opened my eyes to many experiences. He has revealed His love through childhood memories and modern day blunders, all the while drawing me closer to Him! I thank God for my church family and pray that you too are blessed by the stories shared in this book. Rejoice in His love today!

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Brother Craig

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Hebrews 11:1-16

After reading about each person who did extraordinary things in their life what was the one thing they all shared in common? If you said faith you are correct. These people walked in faith believing everything God had promised them and they believed it until they died. When we read about their faith it causes us to trust God more doesn't it? How can taking steps of faith give others an opportunity to see God? I wonder how it would have been if Noah had not put his faith in God. I'm guessing everyone would have been destroyed, but because Noah was faithful we live and since we are alive we have been able to accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and savior. I just wonder if your faith can give other people the chance to meet an awesome God.

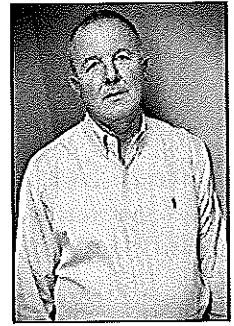
Hebrews 11:2 (NLT) ²Through their Faith, the people in days of old earned a good reputation.

When we put our faith in Jesus Christ there should never come a time when we decide not to live for Him. The faith of those who lived for God gave them a reputation of being people who trusted God. How can your example lead others to Christ? What is your reputation right now?

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Brother Rick

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Exodus 7:8-13

Counterfeiting is big business today. These counterfeit goods look just like the real thing from a distance. I recently read where a man bought what he thought to be one of the most sought after digital devices on the market today at an incredible price. This device was in an original box, yet upon opening it after arriving at home he found out that he had bought a piece of wood made to look like the real thing. When the buyer found out he had been tricked, he returned to the place of purchase only find the seller had taken the money and ran. It was too late.

We know Satan is the master counterfeiter. His goal in counterfeiting is to deceive by making something look real from a distance. There are many religions today that from a distance look just like Biblical Christianity. Satan often will slightly twist God's word just as he did in the Garden of Eden when tempting Eve. Sometimes he brings another word offering it to man pretending to be a messenger from God. Sadly, there are millions today who have believed the lie.

The best way to know the real thing is spend quality time studying the Word of God. The Bible has not, nor will it ever, change. We can trust it to be true. We must keep our guard up making sure that what we read, believe, share, or receive is from the Lord and not a counterfeit.

Prayer for today: Lord, guard my heart today, so I will not follow that which is counterfeit.

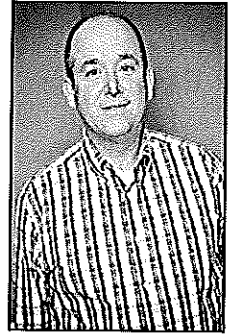
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Give it All... Now that you're focusing on Christ, try to make every part of your day today, a moment that will glorify Him.



Brother Tim

Revelation 3:15-17

Hot and cold foods must be kept at a temperature below 40 degrees or above 140 degrees. Any temperature between 40 and 140 allows for bacteria to grow rapidly and will sicken the person who eats that food quickly. Many times you may see poor health scores on an eating establishment as a result of the health department coming in and checking temperatures.

The Lord said to the church at Laodicea, *"I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm neither hot nor cold I am about to spit you out of my mouth"*.

Lukewarm Christianity makes the Lord sick. Whenever you drink a lot of lukewarm water, it will make you nauseous. The church at Laodicea was simply going through the motions. It is a sign of independence from the Lord.

If the Lord were to stick you with a thermometer today, what would it read? Cold, hot or in between. Luke warmness will leave you blind, naked and open to decay. Do not allow the things of this world to snuff out your passion for serving Christ. Get fired up today!

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Tracy Wills

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Exodus 20:7

The third commandment in Exodus tells us that we are to speak God's name with respect. It is a strong command as we are told that the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name. It really gets under my skin when a person curses using the name of God. As Christians we should be offended at the movies, tv shows, radio stations, and people that do so. The core of our being should be nauseated at the sound of it. It should sound like fingernails on a chalkboard to our ears.

How are we to use the name of the Lord our God? I think that Matthew 6:9 says it best. Jesus was teaching us how to pray in this passage. He gave priority to the fact that we are to speak God's name with respect. The Lord's Prayer says that we should pray: "Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be your name." If you look up the word hallowed in a thesaurus you will find that it means sacred, holy, sanctified, blessed, consecrated, and deified. You can't hallow the name of the Lord and misuse it at the same time. Our words tell what is in our hearts. I know a lot of people that do not curse the name of the Lord but are using His name as a word out of habit. Using the name of the Lord as a bad habit when you are angry, caught off guard, or just emotional also brings dishonor to his name. His name is to be hallowed and not a habit. Is His name just a habit? Or are we speaking it with the honor that Exodus 20:7 commands of us. Will you be found guilty or guiltless?

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Brother Kenny

Romans 10:9

Do you remember the day that you confessed Jesus as your Lord and Savior? I do! It was after my first Upward season, ten years ago. Bailey Smith was preaching a sermon on the wheat and the tare. I had been having doubts about my salvation for about six months. I had been raised in church my entire life. I knew about God, but I did not know Him. I had played the part of a Christian for a long time, but that day I finally got it right. It felt as if the weight of the world had been lifted off of me. I had never felt so great! I challenge you to share your testimony with someone today. It may just change their life forever!

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Amanda Cobb

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James 1:2

Is your life a MESS? Do you feel like you are being TESTED? Are you going through a TRIAL? Do you consider yourself a VICTIM?

If you answered yes to any of the questions above, listen to this; Only GOD can turn:

- A MESS into a message
- A TEST into a testimony
- A TRIAL into a triumph
- A VICTIM into a victory!

I read this on a sign the other day and could NOT stop thinking about the times He did all of the above in my life!

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Julie Russell

Philippians 1:6

Have you ever started a project that was never completed or you get to a point where you stop because you are unsure about how to accomplish the next step of the project? Personally, Barry and I have started a home remodel project that I'm not sure will ever be complete! Thankfully, however, God completes all his projects. His most important job began when He sent Jesus to die on the cross for each of us. He began His work *in* us when we first believed and accepted Him as our Savior. His work will continue until we see Jesus face to face. God will help us grow in grace until His work is complete. So when there are times when we feel discouraged, incomplete, or distressed over our imperfections, we must remember that God is still working on us. We can be confident that His work in us will be completed.

Philippians 1:6 is very well expressed in one of my favorite preschool songs:

He's still working on me, to make me what I ought to be.

It took Him just a week to make the moon and the stars,

The sun and the earth and Jupiter and Mars,

How loving and patient He must be,

He's still working on me.

He's Still Working on Me, Joe Hemphill

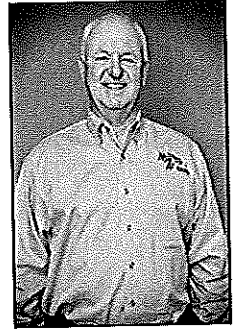
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Brother Garry

Proverbs 5:18

I have a special motive for today's passage! I am writing it on August 25th which happens to be my 39th Wedding Anniversary. Thirty-nine years ago, on this day, I married Debra Sue Ezell at the Lakeview Baptist Church in Oxford, Alabama. The officiating pastor was Reverend Wayne Grubbs. It was one of the greatest days in my life.

I have and still do to this day follow the counsel of Proverbs 5:18, "I rejoice with the wife of my youth." We both have changed a lot in appearance from those youthful days, but our hearts are still as young and in love as ever! We are a bit worn, but a whole lot wiser. Those vows of August 25, 1972 are still real and relevant in our lives, "For better, for worse, in sickness and in health, in poverty and in wealth, till death do us part," and it will at some point, but until then I choose to rejoice with the wife of my youth!

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Job 1:6-22

Brother Craig

Can you relate anything in your life to what happened to Job? When reading about the terrible loss of his family I think, Job lost it all. Something else we may experience in life is the consistency of struggles, pain, and difficult things. Job was listening to one person and another would arrive with more bad news, and then another. I can't relate to how this must have hurt Job, but I do know what hurt is. Maybe you do too. Maybe there have been times in your life when you faced tough times, hurt. The question for you and I is did we and will we remain faithful like Job did? Job gives us a great example as we see his pain and see him remain faithful.

Job 1:21 (NLT) ²¹ He said, "I came naked from my mother's womb, and I will be naked when I leave.

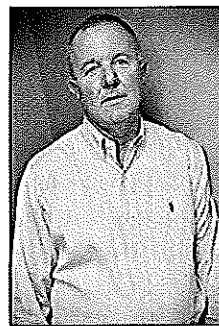
The LORD gave me what I had, and the LORD has taken it away. Praise the name of the LORD!"

What if we could take our difficult situations and say Praise the name of the Lord! Through your tough times try to see what He is telling you, and see if you can say Praise the name of the Lord.

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Brother Rick

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Daniel 4:2

Before being called into the ministry, I worked construction for over 20 years. The last 16 years of that time was spent at Jacksonville State working in the Maintenance Department. Throughout the years spent at JSU, I had the privilege of being a part of many projects that contributed to the overall mission statement of the University. The process of construction never ceased during my time spent at JSU. Each day was a day to learn the campus better, and find how to do the task more efficiently. By the end of my time at JSU, I knew my way around not only the campus, but more importantly the people who made up the university such as the students, faculty, and staff. There was a big difference between my first day on the job and my last. On my first day, I had to be told what to do, and on my last day I knew what needed to be done without having to be told.

For Christians, we are to grow in our walk with Christ. This walk is a process where we learn, experience, and sometimes fail only to simply start over each day.

At the end of my career at JSU, I wanted to make sure I did not leave any unfinished business so I spent the final days focused on finishing well. The Bible says "He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ." (Philippians 1:6)

While we are on times side of eternity, we are a work in progress. Let's choose to use this day to declare "the Most High God" by being people of unashamed devotion. If you were able to read this today God is not finished with you yet!

"End of construction. Thank you for your patience."
Inscription on Ruth Bell Graham's gravestone

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Brother Tim

Ephesians 6:15

People wear all types of shoes depending on where they are going. Some shoes are only to be worn in the house and some shoes are to work while others are for special occasions. For the believer we have shoes that we are given when we come to know Jesus. They are gospel shoes that every believer should always be ready to wear. Shoes are made for walking in and we are to go and tell the good news to everyone we know and even those we do not know.

Some people have to take their shoes off before they can enter into a home because they have been places that left their shoes dirty. Don't muddy up your shoes with the filth of the world. Keep your shoes shined.

When we are shod with the gospel of peace, our feet are covered. No one sees our feet, they just see Jesus. Make sure your life matches up with your testimony. After all you would not want to leave the house with a pair of shoes that do not match. No one would take you very serious. Do not leave the house today barefooted but be prepared with a firm understanding of the gospel message. Be prepared to share the message with all those you come in contact with.

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Exodus 20:8-11

When teaching the Ten Commandments to the children at our church, this one spoke to me the most. We are told to remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, work six days and then take a day to rest. This is one of those passages that I read and then say, "BUT HOW?" We live in a society that races around at break-neck speeds from one task to the next. We are bombarded with responsibilities in our competitive, achievement based society. OH how we need a day to just reenergize our bodies and rekindle our spirits! We have become flashlight people....we started out fully charged and ready to shine our lights! And we have shined ourselves in every crack & crevice we can find. We have let our lights grow slowly dim by not stopping to re-charge or change our batteries. We slowly begin losing light and need to jump off our dizzy merry-go-rounds into the arms of our Savior. He wants to renew our strength and He recognizes our needs even when we refuse to.

Many in our society struggle with the dark & dim light path of anxiety & depression. Our bodies and minds were not designed to go non-stop seven days a week. We have left our lights burning until many of us are in the darkness of a schedule that is never ending, an obligation list that is never fulfilled, a life that has worked the Sabbath completely out of its schedule. You are doing one of these three things....Shining, Losing Light, Or Sitting in the Dark? Which are you today? Remember the Sabbath

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Brother Garry

Judges 6: 11

This little verse is one of those that could slip right by a bible student. We could rush on to the bigger story of Gideon's great conquest by the power of God and a handful of people. Yet here is a nice little nugget that all of us can relate too. Gideon was threshing wheat down by the wine press. Why? Because the Midianites would see him and come and steal the wheat.

Now the nugget: Wheat could not be threshed by the winepress because they were always at the bottom of the hills. To thresh wheat you need wind to blow away the chaff which works best on top of hills. So what this angel observed was Gideon trying to do the impossible . Wheat and chaff were going up together and down together right on top of Gideon. The reason was Israel was sinning and that's the reason the enemy was in Israel. The point: we can't accomplish things with sin in our lives. We will be like Gideon, only looking foolish and feeling frustrated.

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Romans 5:8-9

Have you ever wondered if you are good enough for God to love? Unfortunately, a lot of people believe that God loves them as long as they don't make mistakes. Most of the time when we mess up we get upset with ourselves and that can leave us feeling that God is not impressed with us either. Did you know that Jesus didn't die for you because you were great and wonderful? He died for you because He loves you. Romans 5:8-9 confirms this truth. I have talked with numerous women who would not come to church because they felt like they were not "good enough". They felt so much guilt and condemnation from their past mistakes and they felt that God could never forgive them much less the church would accept them. This breaks my heart! Isaiah 53:5 tells us that when Jesus died for our sins, He also bore the guilt. He loves us so much that He paid the price for our sins so we would not have to suffer the guilt after we have ask Him for forgiveness. So to answer the question- Are you good enough? YES- on good days and bad days. God loves you more than you will ever know. I am thankful for His unconditional love.

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