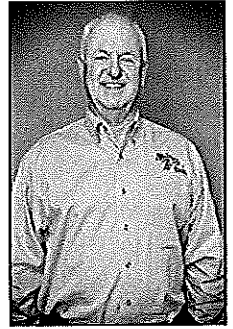


12 STEPS TOGETHER

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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 Garry

Luke 2: 52

Today's text describes the development of Jesus from a young man to an adult man. But it also gives us valuable insight to areas of growth in our own lives, these three areas of growth are: wisdom, stature, and favor with God and man.

Jesus' example is to never stop learning. I believe the moment anyone loses a teachable spirit it is a sad day in their lives. Someone has well said wisdom is the application of knowledge. Next in stature are our bodies, after all our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. We should never neglect or do anything to hurt it. Ex.: Alcohol, tobacco products, unhealthy eating habits, not to mention sun damage and even tanning beds. The last thing is favor with God and man. Every day we are to be drawn closer to God, closer to immediate family, and our church family.

Personal Notes:

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Amanda Cobb

Genesis 22:17-18 & Ephesians 5:6

On my bathroom mirror you will find this written in the corner, "Obedience brings blessings, Disobedience brings consequences." My prayer is that if my children read this day in and day out it will sink in with them! This also applies to us as adults. Just like we love our children and want what's best for them, God wants what is best for His children. Think about the times in your life that you have been disobedient – can you remember the consequences you suffered because of your choice to be disobedient? There are some consequences that haunt us the rest of our life.

When you choose obedience, no matter what area of your life, there are always rewards and blessings that follow. We see the blessings time and time again in God's word for those who were obedient and we also see the wrath of disobedience.

What will your choice be – blessings or consequences?

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Julie Russell

Psalm 91:9-16

God's desire is that we live in peace without fear. Satan, however, likes to disturb the peace that God gives us and replace it with fear. I am so very thankful that I have a God that cares for us so much that He always provides His hand of protection. Psalm 91:11-12 is a promise from God. "For He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone." God's promises are true! We must claim this promise and pray this promise over our lives and the lives of those that we love.

Unfortunately, because we do not live in a perfect world, pain can still enter our lives. Even in the difficult times, God is with us and he continues to protect us. "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not over flow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you" (Isaiah 43:2). Commit today to trust God and "abide under the shadow of the almighty" (Psalm 91:1). Remember that God is your fortress and you can dwell in safety. (Psalm 4:8)

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12 STEPS TOGETHER



Brother Kenny

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Daniel 3:24-25

As a small child I loved to watch shows about super hero's especially Superman. I can remember going to dinner with my family back in 1978. After dinner dad suggested that we go "window shopping!" I was not thrilled with the idea, but off to Nobel Street we went. Instead of shopping, Dad walked straight toward the movie theater and surprised us by taking us to see the new Superman movie. The movie was amazing! Superman's powers were like no others! He was a true hero in my young eyes!

I have a question for you to think about today. Who is your Superman? Is it just a fictional character from a comic book or do you know the real Super Hero that these three men knew? Today think about Christ, is He your hero? If He's not, start looking towards the clouds and He will save you.

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Philippians 2:1-11

Brother Craig

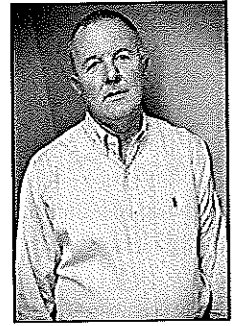
What was Christ thinking for Him to leave the splendor of heaven and come to this place? Well, there are several things on His mind according to Paul. First he said think like Christ who thought nothing about what He would lose but fully gave of Himself to reach a lost world. **He is unselfish.** Another thing we read about Christ is that He humbly became a man. His love for His Father was His motive for being obedient and He humbly gave His life so others might live. **He is humble.** His humility shows us His obedience to His heavenly Father. **He is obedient.** Finally there is one other thing that we find in the scripture regarding Jesus. He was given a name above all others. His name would be salvation for anyone who called on Him. He was given a name that would one day cause every knee to bend and all people would bow to Him. Having a name above all other would place Him at the top, right? **He is exalted.** Today we should have a clear picture of why Jesus came. He came because He was not selfish about leaving heaven but humbly came to earth where He would be exalted after giving His life for you and me. Christ came because He thought more about you than Himself as He gave His life willingly.

The Son of God, our Savior, left heaven in obedience to His Father to save your life. I don't know about you but I'm glad He was thinking about me. Big question: Are you thinking about Him?

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Brother Rick

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Psalm 27:14

We live in a high speed culture that does not like to wait for anything ranging from the internet to standing in line at the bank. This past year I was reminded of waiting on the Lord as our son and his wife were building their first house. The loan was approved and construction began, taking only 6 weeks to complete. The process of closing the loan was delayed because of the new mortgage rules that were implemented as a result of bank failures across our country. After weeks of waiting, they finally closed the loan only to learn that the interest rate had dropped substantially, which meant a much lower payment than expected. God had provided in His time.

Sometimes we may get caught at a traffic light only to miss an accident by minuets. We might find a much needed check in the mail today, or we may receive a call concerning a job that we thought might never come. God's timing is everything. We must be patient before the Lord trusting in His timing while displaying courage and allowing Him to work His perfect will in our lives. The last part of this verse tells us of the promise that God will "strengthen thine heart" while we wait. If there is a care or concern, we might have today take to the Lord in prayer and then allow Him to work in His time.

Prayer for today: Lord, grant me courage to wait on you.

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Brother Tim

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Titus 1:16

I was about to get out of the car at Wal-Mart when I caught a glimpse out of the corner of my eye of a GMC Denali going by. What was curious about this vehicle passing by was that the lettering of the name of the car had somehow been damaged, and at first glance it appeared that it now read Denial.

So the thought came to me that there are many people riding around in denial. There are many in this world who not only are riding around in denial but are living in denial. Someone has said Denial is not just a river in Egypt and for many; everything about their life is a contradiction and a denial of our sovereign Lord. The make of a person's automobile is not the issue here. What is at issue is the fact that who we are and what we are ought to be defined by who we serve, how we live our life and that which has eternal consequence.

When we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, He will convict us of sinful actions, He will confront our attitudes and what we believe about Him will work out in our actions.

Consider your actions, how you dress, what you say and do. Do they deny or affirm what lordship means in your life? When around others, are you approachable? There are many ways we either deny or bring glory to Him. How does that work out in your life?

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Tracy Wills

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Matthew 13:44

This scripture is a reminder of the treasure we have in the kingdom of God and in becoming a Christian. Imagine that you are walking in a field and you come upon a very expensive hidden treasure. The property is practically being given away so you hide the treasure again where only you can find it. You rush home and sell all of your things so that you can buy the field.

In the case of the kingdom, God has a place for each of us that is For Sale By Owner. He has already paid the closing cost and all. The treasure of our salvation is free and we should be so excited when we discover it. We too should go as fast as we can leaving our materialistic ways behind us to live for Him and to tell others about the treasure we have found.

There are some that have discovered the treasure but have not hid it in their hearts. It would be so sad for a person to wait until it was too late to take the treasure as their own. Jesus is coming back someday so purchase the listing before it is taken off the market.

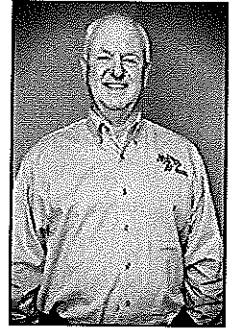
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Brother Garry

Isaiah 6: 1, 5, & 8

This is one of my favorite passages that I have preached and used many times in my years of ministry. Isaiah was in a difficult time because of the death of his King, but God gave him a glimpse of glory that changed his outlook on life. He looked up and saw God, he looked in and saw himself, and he looked out and saw others.

I believe the upward, inward, and outward look still works today. God is on the throne, we are sinners saved by grace and there is a great mission field before us that is white unto harvest. Go forth this day and be an encouraged, surrendered, missionary for Christ.

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Amanda Cobb

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Job 5:17

The files of heaven are filled with stories of redeemed rebels. One redeemed rebel that comes to mind is David. This story begins in 2 Samuel 11:1. At the very root of David's problem we find a King who wasn't where he belonged. Shouldn't he have been on the battlefield where the King was supposed to be? Instead, he was hanging around the palace and this is where his down-hill slide began.

Is it not the same for us? A lot of time trouble starts for us when we are somewhere we should not be. As the story of David and Bathsheba progresses, he did what most people do when caught in a bad situation—he tried to cover up his sin and shift his responsibility to someone else. David had sinned and “thought” he had managed to build an effective cover-up plan but there was small detail he had over looked. You can't hide your heart from God! In 2 Samuel 12:13 David made the most noble statement of his life. David confessed his sin and expected to die for it, but instead God showed His grace by forgiving David and allowing him to live.

Genuine repentance brings forgiveness, restoration and healing and the end result of that painful, but cleansing, cycle is action. David committed to serving God with his restored life. Just like David, your life can be healed, restored and rebuilt if you are willing to be honest with yourself and with God.

I am so thankful that God is still in the business of redeeming rebels!

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Julie Russell

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Ephesians 3:17-19

When my children were younger and I tucked them into bed each night, one of the prayers I prayed was that they would always know how much their mommy and daddy loved them, but even more so, that they would know that their heavenly Father loved them even more. I remember thinking each time I prayed this, "How could God love them more than me?" Although I knew He did and still does, my small mind struggled to perceive or comprehend the true depth of God's great love. It doesn't seem that there could be a greater love than the love I have for my children. However, I know that there is. Paul even tells us in verse 19 that God's love "surpasses knowledge."

What greater love can be shown than that of Christ dying for His children? He could have chosen to bring himself off the cross. Yet, his love for each of us, kept him there. His love endures forever. "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!" 1 John 3:1.

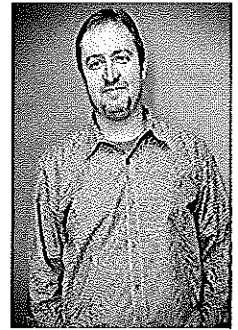
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Brother Kenny

Psalm 143:10

Teach me O God should be our on-going prayer. Unfortunately in high school this didn't ring so true. I wasn't a very good student, but I performed well enough to get by. God blessed me with plenty of common sense, but book sense- not so much. After completing high school, I attended trade school for a year to study auto body repair before venturing out on my own. It wasn't until answering the call into full time ministry that I got serious about obtaining a college degree. Going back to school at my age is not an easy task, but God is seeing me through and is blessing me beyond my wildest dreams. He teaches me something new every day! What about you? Do you recognize the lessons God is teaching you? I hope so. You don't have to go to college to learn more about God. Just open the Word of God and let the Great Professor teach you His ways. May we never get too old to listen and learn from God!

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John 8:12-20

Brother Craig

Would you happen to know what Luminous Energy is? If you said light you are correct. Can you imagine life without light? We really are fortunate to live where energy is available to power our homes and provide us with illumination. The scripture says Jesus was in the Temple when these things were said so He could have possibly gestured toward a lamp stand and said He is the light of the world. Jesus revealing Himself as being the light of the world meant He was the solution to the problem of spiritual darkness. As Christians we need to understand that we are significant to the cause of Christ because we too are a light in the world.

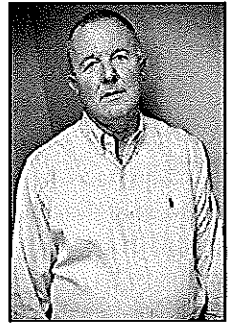
A light is used when it is hard to see and the way is uncertain. A family went on a cave tour one day. They descended deep into the cave and came to a point where the guide said I am going to turn off the light's to show you what complete darkness is like. When the lights went out a little girl began to cry and was very scared. Her brother leaned over to comfort her by saying don't worry; someone knows where the light switch is.

You are a light in the world for Christ because you know where the light switch is for those who live in darkness. Those around you should see Jesus Christ shining through your life.

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Brother Rick

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Romans 8:1

The Amanda Knox trial has been in the news for almost three years. She was convicted in an Italian court of murder, and sentenced to life. After appealing the sentence, the verdict was overturned. Even though she is an American, Italian law allows for the charges to be re-filed because the court does not recognize double jeopardy. In other words, she will always be subject to the court for the crime that was committed whether she is actually guilty or not.

The Bible teaches that we are guilty before God as we have been born sinners (Romans 3:23). This sin separates us from God, yet God sent His Son to pay the penalty for our Sin. When we repent of our sin, we are declared not guilty by God the Father through God the Son. The Bible teaches that those who have truly trusted Christ will not be put on trial for their original sin over and over again. Satan accuses us daily before the throne, yet we have a promise from our God that "there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ." Let's live this day in light of the freedom of having been declared not guilty!

"Blessed Assurance Jesus is mine."

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Brother Tim

Ephesians 2:14

One of the most common sights in cities of Africa is the walls that surround every home. These walls cannot be afforded by the very poor and in Africa for the most part there are only two classes of people, the rich and the poor with no middle class. Walls separate, walls divide; they make a statement that if you cross there will be a consequence. Christ came and destroyed the barrier wall between Jew and Gentiles. He is in the business of tearing down walls between nations, people groups and families.

One observation I made while in Africa was that the more dangerous the area was, the higher and more deadly scaling the wall would be. In dangerous areas there would be razor wire, broken shards of glass and sharp steel rods at the top of the wall. For a person who is mired very deep in their sin, that is the way the wall appears. There seems to be no way to get over it so they just accept it and go on.

We do not have to climb the wall. We just simply must trust in Christ to break down that wall. There is only one way to break the barrier of sin and that is to quit trying and start trusting. Have you?

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Tracy Wills

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Proverbs 16:24

We sang a song as a child about words that said "more to be desired are they than gold, yea than much fine gold, sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb." We should guard our words carefully. They can do great things for the soul or they can be equally as damaging. The Holy Word of God is a honeycomb to those of us that read the pages of the Bible. We find such sweet and soothing honey within the scriptures that has both a pleasing and healing effect.

Matthew Henry's commentary says this about Proverbs 16:24. "These words, to those that know how to relish them, 1. Are pleasant. They are like the *honey-comb*, *sweet to the soul*, which tastes in them that *the Lord is gracious*; nothing more grateful and agreeable to the new man than the word of God, and those words which are borrowed from it, Ps. 119:103. 2. They are wholesome. Many things are pleasant that are not profitable, but these *pleasant words are health to the bones*, to the inward man, as well as *sweet to the soul*. They make *the bones*, which sin has broken and put out of joint, *to rejoice*. The bones are the strength of the body; and the good word of God is a means of spiritual strength, curing the diseases that weaken us." I like the point that Henry makes that many things are "pleasant that are not profitable". Make your words profitable by learning and sharing scripture from the honeycomb that is the Holy Word of God with those that you speak with each day.

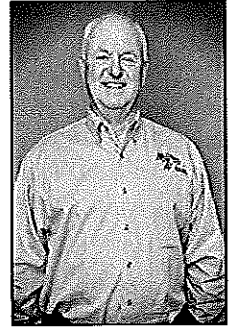
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Brother Garry

I Samuel 15: 23

Please pardon my "preachyness" if that is even a word. Sometimes I can't help it; I guess it comes with the calling. However, I have seen my share of stubbornness and rebellion in the church. Change, church growth, fund raising campaigns, and many other areas where stubbornness and rebellion show up and show out.

Yet it is almost accepted as normal responsible behavior in the church. Would we accept witchcraft or idolatry and the answer is NO. Then we must see these sins as God does and make sure stubbornness and rebellion has no place in our personal lives, spiritual lives, and especially our church family!

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Amanda Cobb

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Acts 16: 23-26

I think we often forget that there is power in our praise to God. It causes the foundation of Satan's kingdom to shake when Christians praise God. I was reading through some old notes from my dear friend Belinda Webb and ran across this – "Praise is like a two-edged sword, one side brings health to your spirit while the other side cuts down the enemy." Psalm 149:6 says *May the praise of God be in their mouths and a double-edged sword in their hands.* Paul and Silas knew the secret of how to lift their hearts above their troubles and enter into God's presence and power.

Through praise and worship their hearts were raised into the joyous presence and peace of God. Their sincere praise provided God a channel for his power to operate in their circumstances. The Bible says that God inhabits the praises of his people (Psalm 22:3). God dwells in the atmosphere of his praise. Think about your life, your home, and your family. Are you creating an atmosphere where God dwells?

When God's people begin to praise Him, it sends the enemy running.

I challenge you to become a person of praise today.

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Julie Russell

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Philippians 4:13-14

I remember teaching my youngest son, Payton, to ride a bicycle. He struggled with it for some time. We eventually put him on a small hill and let the hill move him forward. He mastered the skill of riding as he learned that the key to bicycling is to keep moving forward. He learned if you stop or look backwards, you fall and often hurt yourself. Our Christian life is much the same way.

Each day we should move forward in our relationship with the Lord. We should be closer to him today than we have ever been before. We must stand strong against satan as he tempts us to focus on our past. It is impossible to move forward when you are looking back at the past. Paul had good reason not to focus on the past. He had persecuted Christians for many years. He was able to move forward because he knew that the Lord had forgiven him. Because of our hope in Christ, we can let go of our past guilt and look forward to what path God has in our future. Praise God today for his forgiveness and move forward in a life of faith and obedience.

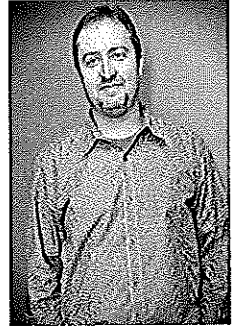
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Brother Kenny

Hebrew 12:28, 29

Let us be thankful. Are you thankful for what God has done for you? Sometimes I catch myself getting in a rut and taking Him for granted. This is not a situation we need to be in. God has given us so much; a great church and a loving church family. He has given us life and a future, so we need to give back to him. What if you woke up in the morning and all you had left were the things you had thanked God for today? Don't take God for granted, take time to thank Him for what he has blessed you with!

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John 6:26-36

Brother Craig

What kind of bread would you like? That's the first question they will ask you if you go to Subway. There are several different breads: French bread, wheat bread, oat, rye, cheese bread and on and on. That's usually confusing to me because I don't know a lot about the bread's so I just say give me white bread please. In the days when Jesus walked on the earth and talked with people bread was an important part of life. In this passage Jesus says He is the Bread of Life which would have carried a lot of meaning for those who were listening. How could regular bread compare to the Bread of Life?

The name of the bread was important because while we may find various breads Jesus called His bread "life bread". Bread in that day was available for anyone and Jesus would be available to all people. Bread was needed as a part of life as it provided all the nutritional needs and Jesus provides all our needs. Bread pieces were saved for the end of the meal to wipe the mouth and clean up, and Jesus will clean you up if you trust Him. Bread saved lives and kept people from saving and Jesus is all about saving lives.

Jesus said I Am the Bread of Life and whoever believes in me will never hunger or be thirsty again. I'll take some of that bread.

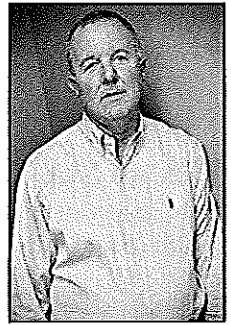
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Brother Rick

John 5:2

It has been said that when you visit the Holy Land you will never read your Bible the same again. I must say that's true! When you enter Jerusalem by way of the sheep gate you will find that the Pools of Bethesda are just inside the city wall. We know that Jesus performed a great miracle of healing in a man who had been lying sick by the waters edge for 38 years. Jesus told the man in verse 8 to "Get up, pick up your pallet and walk." After healing the man, Jesus slipped away only to later find the same man now in the Temple. At this meeting Jesus dealt with the man's spiritual condition in verse 14 telling him "Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you."

As we stood at the Pools of Bethesda listening to John 5:1-17 being read by our guide, there were tour groups from around the world singing in different languages. While we did not know the words, we did recognize the song. They were singing "How Great Thou Art." What an amazing time as hundreds of people were singing in their own language about the greatness of our redeeming Savior. We all have been healed just like the man who Jesus touched along the pool's edge. We must not forget that the work that Jesus performed in each of us, needs to be proclaimed loudly before a lost world.

Today is the day to "pick up our pallet and walk" singing "How Great Thou Art."

Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee,
How great Thou art! How great Thou art!
Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee,
How great Thou art! How great Thou art!
© 1941,1953,1955, Stuart K. Hine, Renewed 1981 Manna Music

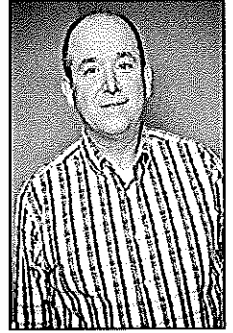
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Brother Tim

I Corinthians 5:11

One of the devil's greatest tools is a backslidden brother who refuses to repent. It is never pleasant to observe a brother in denial or to have to confront him. The Bible does not afford us the right to judge the world but does admonish us to discipline the immoral believer. We are told to distance ourselves from immoral believers but we are not to distance ourselves from the world but to be a witness to the world. Associating with those who bring disgrace to the church is likely to bring disgrace to ourselves through association and imitation. The purpose of church discipline is to restore the believer to fellowship. To accept grievous sin is to condone grievous sin.

Mama used to say this hurts me more than it does you but that did not dissuade her judgment and I am better for it today. When we lose our way, we have to come to the point where we see our sin the same way the Lord sees our sin in order to repent. Our will and our pride often stand in the way. Sin packaged by any other name is still sin and we should be careful to not allow the devil a foothold in our life. Admonish one another with compassion and kindness. Allow close friends to hold you accountable by giving them permission to bring to your attention that which should not be in your life. There are no lone rangers in Christianity.

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Tracy Wills

Isaiah 55:11

The bible speaks of words in this scripture and how they will not return void to us. Whatever we speak out of our mouths will come back to us in some form. We also can use our words silently. I have a friend that has scripture posted on her bathroom mirrors, kitchen windows, and car. They are not spoken words but they are God's Word and she is sharing and speaking silently to others that come into her life.

I remember reading about 2 moms that had become friends because their boys were involved in a lot of the same activities. One day Janice nicely told Amy that she was enjoying their friendship but really didn't want to hear anymore about her religion. Amy was still convicted about sharing Jesus with Janice and would think about this each time she sat down to work on her scrapbook. She had a lot of pictures of their kids together and she decided that she would use it as a silent witnessing tool. She looked at a picture of the boys soaking wet from what could have been a dangerous accident for the two young swimmers. She was reminded of how they flipped the canoe and the guide had to reach out to get them in from the currents. She SPOKE with her scrapbook pen "Matt 14:31 And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand, and caught him". She went through all of the pictures matching a scripture to each verse and silently she shared Jesus through her scrapbook. God promises that His Word will accomplish His purpose. What will your words return to you? Do you speak Jesus out loud and silently to others?

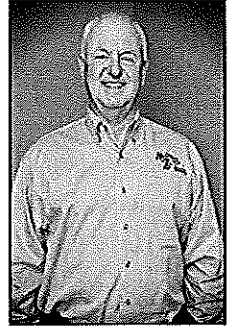
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Brother Garry

Genesis 8: 7-9

The flood was over but was it safe to leave the Ark. Noah sent out two birds; a raven and a dove. The raven never came back because he liked the environment that he found. Yuck, muck, and rotting carcasses. It doesn't get any better for a carnivore.

But the dove returned because her nature was not to feast on filth. I love the words, "no rest for the sole of her foot." Now the question for today is; do you have a raven heart or a dove heart when it comes to the world and worldly things? A dove heart is found resting in Christ and not in the world. Every week our church rolls give testimony of raven hearts. I certainly would not want to live or die with a raven heart.

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Amanda Cobb

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1 John 5:13

I went to the front of the church and was baptized as a child. Throughout my teenage and young adult years, I remember "rededicating" my life several times. It never failed after some time would pass I would start doubting my salvation. It wasn't until June of 1998 that I realized exactly what was happening. Over the years I had been trying to "rededicate" something that I never had. I never remember a life change as a child when I went to the front of the church, but I know on that Tuesday night in June when I knelt in my living room floor and asked Jesus to forgive me for my sins and to come into my heart to be my Lord and my Savior, I stood up a changed person.

Do you know 100% if you were to die today that you would spend eternity with Jesus? If not, don't delay!

Let today be your day of salvation.

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Julie Russell

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Matthew 7:24-27

The parable of the wise man and the foolish man is always a wonderful Bible story to teach children. The popular preschool song written based on the scripture in Matthew 7 begins like this:

*The wise man built his house upon the rock,
The wise man built his house upon the rock,
The wise man built his house upon the rock,
And the house on the rock stood firm.*

The song continues,

And the house on the sand went splat!

The preschool children always love to see the "house" falling down, by whatever means this is illustrated. In life however, it is not fun to see homes (families) fall down. Sadly, we see too many homes unable to withstand the storms of life. If your life and your home are going to stand, then it must be built on a strong foundation, which is the Word of God. In order to have a strong foundation, you must know God's Word and obey it. God and his commands must be your priority! How strong is your foundation? Does God take priority in your home? In what areas does your foundation need to be strengthened? Seek today to establish a firm foundation on God, our Rock!

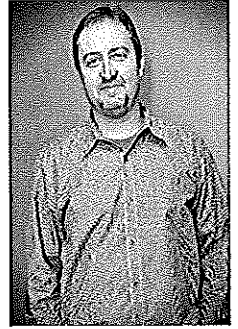
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Brother Kenny

Revelation 22:11-15

I just finished preaching a series of messages from the book of Daniel. Daniel was a Godly man and his story has blessed my life. Daniel was faithful to the Lord and suffered his fair share of persecution, but he was also blessed with abilities that no one else had, like the ability to interpret dreams. The King of Babylon turned to Daniel to interpret his dreams and God was faithful to reveal the meaning to Daniel. The dreams revealed the fall of the Babylonian empire as well as Grecian and Roman Empires. They also revealed truths about the rapture and tribulation. Are you ready for that day? So far 4 out of the 5 dreams that Daniel interpreted have come true so don't take any chances. Make sure your name is written in the Lambs Book of Life before it's too late.

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John 1:3; Colossians 1:16-17

Brother Craig

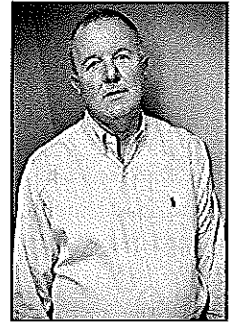
What was our Savior doing before He was born in a manger? The bible tells us He was busy doing several things. Look in John 1:3 and you will see that all things were made by Him. Understanding that **Jesus is our creator** gives us a better view of His love for us from the beginning. Another thing He was doing was controlling this creation of His. As we read about Jesus in Hebrews we see He was "upholding all things" and in Colossians 1:17 "all things consist". Wow, what we read here tells us that not only did Jesus create everything but He was controlling everything as well. "Just as He placed the earth some 93 million miles away from the sun in creation **Jesus is still controlling** that distance today." (Harold Wilmington)

He has always been in existence! Jesus did not just become the Son of God when He was born on earth, but He has been the Son of God before anything ever existed. The greatest of all His creation in my opinion is the one thing He has revealed to us all. It is far greater than any beautiful sunset, far grander than any tropical paradise, and no creature can relate to its capacity of love for mankind. What is it, it's "God's Grace", which He has revealed in His Son to you and me so we can know Him as our creator and Lord.

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Brother Rick

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Psalm 46:10

The Dead Sea in Israel is fed by the River Jordan, yet it has no outlet which makes for a heavy salt and mineral concentration. When I was in Israel this past year, I could not pass up the opportunity to swim in the waters that are famous for making people buoyant. As I reached depths that would be over my head I began to tread water because of my natural instinct to stay afloat, only to learn with time that the water would support me.

We as Christians often spend our day treading spiritual waters trying to keep ourselves afloat, when our passage for today tells us "To be still." To be still means to cease striving, or trying to make it on our own. I know this goes against our natural instinct, yet our God is saying we can trust Him. We all have problems that sometimes appear so large we fail to trust them to the Lord. We feel that we must try to fix them by ourselves. Today, no matter what we might face, let's "trust" instead of "tread."

Prayer for today: Lord Jesus, may I not strive on my own today.

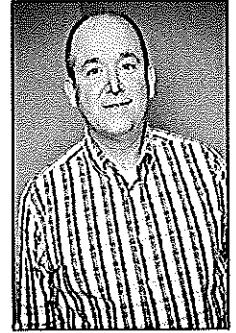
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Brother Tim

Nehemiah 7:2

What kind of person can God use? The number one characteristic is faithfulness. Nehemiah's brother was faithful and so was Hananiah. These men were faithful plus they feared God. These men were dependable before men because they were dependable before God. We cannot make a positive impact for the kingdom's sake if we are not a people of faith and integrity. We see examples of integrity each day. When you cross a bridge you expect it to not fail, when you press the brake pedal you expect to stop. Often however when it comes to our commitment to kingdom work which has eternal significance we are only faithful some of the time.

When the nominating team meets to select people to serve it is not usually ability that is the biggest hindrance to service but dependability. Nehemiah could not do it alone. He needed men of integrity whom he could delegate responsibility.

The NIV says Hananiah *feared God more than most men do*. He was above average. If we are to do above average things for God, we will have to be above average Christians. These men were a blessing to Nehemiah and to those they protected. Who do you see when you look in the mirror? You may be the Hananiah someone needs today.

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