

HEAVEN'S HEADLINES

**75 Unchanging Truths
in Changing Times**

TERRY RISSER

Foreword by Ron Mehl

HEAVEN'S HEADLINES

**75 Unchanging Truths
In Changing Times**

TERRY RISSER



Foursquare Missions Press
Norwalk, California

HEAVEN'S HEADLINES:
75 UNCHANGING TRUTHS IN CHANGING TIMES
Copyright © 2001 by Foursquare Missions Press
All rights reserved.

Printed in the United States of America
Published by Foursquare Missions Press
11661 Firestone Blvd.
Norwalk, CA 90650

THANK YOU

I never liked to write. For some it's pure pleasure...for me, it's 100% work. Or, as Edison said, "10% inspiration and 90% perspiration." Fortunately, God has placed a lot of great people in my life who have encouraged me to keep pressing ahead...even when the tank's low and all I see are mental blocks ahead.

First and foremost, I am thankful for my wife, Stephanie, who has not only enhanced my life in this area, but every other one as well. God knew exactly what He was doing when He gave her to me.

I'm also grateful for my parents, Paul and Marilee Risser. From birth, they were great guidance counselors in my life in everything from my relationship with Christ to academic pursuit to sports to a love for music to my eventual calling to ministry. They challenged me in a loving way to be well-rounded. Thanks to them, I find joy in so many areas.

Then, a special thanks to my brothers, Brad (Lori) and Mike (Rose). We learned early that anything you achieve in life is a direct result of being surrounded by the most positive people in your life...that is true in our family. I'd also add a special thanks to my mother-in-law, Marilyn, who has always been there for me since we first met. They just don't get any better than her.

Also, I would add a heartfelt thanks to our church staff who make my job so much easier through their support of me and love for the church. Then there are a few dear men in ministry who have impacted and encouraged me greatly—Ron McGregor, Jim Thomas, Ron Mehl, Wayne Cordeiro and Jack Hayford.

I want to extend a special thank you to Bob Hunt from the Foursquare Missions Press for his valuable input and insight in this book. You are a blessing.

Finally, as every pastor worth his salt would feel, I'm most fortunate to pastor the most wonderful congregation a person could ask to serve at the Florence Avenue Foursquare Church in Santa Fe

Springs, California. While pastors have a role in shaping the lives of people they shepherd, the people shape the pastor's life as well. You have blessed me and I look forward to the many years ahead. God has given us a great past and an even greater future. Happy 75th Anniversary, Florence Avenue.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Amy', written in a cursive style. The signature is positioned to the right of the main text block.

Heaven's Headlines

FOREWORD **8**

INTRODUCTION **9**

FRONT PAGE NEWS **11**

1. Heaven's Headlines 12
2. God's Brightest Hope In America's Darkest Hour 14
3. Taking The Stand 16
4. All I Ever Needed To Know About Elections
I Learned In Kindergarten 18
5. The Peace Of Jerusalem 20
6. The Best Is Yet To Come 22
7. Infinity And Beyond 24
8. Time For An Evaluation 26
9. Eureka 28
10. Ground Zero 30

ENTERTAINMENT TODAY **33**

11. Got God? 34
12. Heaven's Highest Priced Possessions 36
13. The One And Only King 38
14. Truth Is Better Than Fiction 40
15. Dare To Dream 42
16. A Predictable God In An Unpredictable
Time 44
17. God's Final Answer 46
18. When Out Is Out And In Is In 48
19. A Touch Of Glory 50

20.	The Ultimate Team Game	52
21.	A Force To Be Reckoned With	54
22.	The Great Escape	56
23.	The Real Grinch That Steals Christmas	58
24.	Know God, Know Love	60

BUSINESS AND POLITICS **63**

25.	Krispy Kreme Kristianity	64
26.	Sweat The Small Stuff	66
27.	Mixed Messages	68
28.	The Jabez Phenomenon	70
29.	History Lessons	72
30.	The Body Vs. The Body	74
31.	Crisis In Christianity	76
32.	Character Counts	78

THE SPORTS PAGE **81**

33.	March Madness	82
34.	The Name Of The Game	84
35.	Cross Training	86
36.	Our Crowning Glory	88
37.	A Zone Of Your Own	90
38.	A Worthy Goal	92
39.	Extreme Games	94
40.	Fierce And Fair Weather Fans	96
41.	Prime-Time Prayers	98
42.	The Consummate Closing Ceremonies	100

HOLIDAY HEADLINES **103**

43.	New Year's Dance	104
44.	Whose Hands?	106
45.	First Love	108
46.	Titanic Victory	110

47.	Mama's Boy	112
48.	War And Remembrance	114
49.	A Dad For All Seasons	116
50.	Pens And Swords	118
51.	Holy-Ween	120
52.	The Lights Of Christmas	122
53.	Christmas Time	124

INVESTMENT ADVICE

127

54.	Bible Reading Is Fundamental	128
55.	The Best Kept Secret	130
56.	Perfect Rest	132
57.	Simplicity Of Sympathy	134
58.	God's Heart For The World	136
59.	A Grounded Faith	138
60.	The Power Of Words	140
61.	Itchy Faith	142
62.	Loving Without Regret	144
63.	A Time To Laugh	146
64.	Vision Is More Than Meets The Eye	148

GOD'S WANT ADS

151

65.	Home Improvement	152
66.	God's Perfect Timing	154
67.	Polka-Dotted Grace	156
68.	Adoption	158
69.	No-Godders	160
70.	Old School	162
71.	Happy New Year?	164
72.	Christianese	166
73.	Non-Prophet Organizations	168
74.	The Power Of Eternity	170
75.	When Time Stands Still	172

FOREWORD

I was thrilled and felt very honored when I was asked to write a few words about this book that is being given to you as a congregation.

Through nearly eight decades, God has sovereignly given you mighty pastors who have led you with skillfulness of hand and humbleness of heart. I am thrilled that God has graced you with pastors Terry and Stephanie Risser, who are consecrated, wise and caring.

During this time of celebrating the 75th anniversary of ministry, your church feels proud to present you with this special book that is a collection of articles written by your pastor, Terry Risser. The words you will read in this book are characteristics of his ministry, firmly grounded in the Word, profound in truth, practical in application and filled with love. I know you will treasure these practical “unchanging truths for changing times.”

If there’s a newspaper in heaven, then I’m convinced Florence Avenue is in it. The “Heavenly Headlines” must tell of the souls saved and victories won through your sacrifice and service. Your church’s faithfulness and giving heart may not be written up in the New York Times or the Washington Post but, believe me, it will end up in God’s journal in heaven.

Please know that we pray God’s blessing upon each and every one of you.

Looking forward to heaven,
Pastor Ron Mehl
Beaverton, Oregon Foursquare Church

INTRODUCTION

As long as I can remember, newspapers have always been a part of my life. As a paper boy at the age of seven, I received my daily stack which I meticulously folded and lined tightly into my bike bag, and became rather mildly skillful at nailing my customers' porches from thirty paces (or at least hitting the driveway). Then, during my teen years as a sports fanatic, hardly a day would pass that I didn't plop down on our den floor early in the evening to check the sports page, with an occasional glance at the comics and current events. And now as a pastor, I find myself pressed and in constant need of today's "headlines" to stay current with our changing times. Charles Spurgeon once noted, "To be an effective preacher, you need two things...the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other." I could hardly disagree with that observation. If the Bible doesn't speak to our needs in our current year, we have little hope for the next. Thankfully, it does.

But long before my lifetime, newspaper headlines have been telling the stories of the most important events in history. From wars to moon launches, to Zeppelin explosions, to Depression events, to political highs and lows, we've been given everything from the snapshot to the panoramic view in words. From year to year, decade to decade and century to century, our society has seen mankind's tragedies and triumphs played out in black and white. Yet few of us would argue, the more things change, the more they stay the same. We live in a world that is hurting and in need of hope. Sadly, the largest papers in our society tend to bring large doses of the bad news all around us with few answers for the cure.

The good news is, God gives us a peek into His view of our world and His heart for our world through His Word. Heaven's Headlines is a glimpse into that news. Isaiah 55:9,10 says, "His ways are higher than our ways and His

thoughts are higher than our thoughts.” Though “the times, they are a-changing,” as Bob Dylan sang, God’s truths are never “a changin’.” He is the same each day and His truths speak to all of our needs.

Heaven’s Headlines are 75 perspectives of unchanging truths in a changing world. It is dedicated to the congregation that I am thankful to serve at the Florence Avenue Foursquare Church, which recently celebrated it’s 75th anniversary. (One perspective for each year.) While our society changes daily, God’s Word has continued to minister the good news of Jesus Christ for generations in the past and will continue to do so for those in the future.

HEAVEN'S HEADLINES

On The Internet: WWW.HEAVEN'S HEADLINES.COM

Vol. 52

506

FRONT PAGE

One of the essential ingredients of the Gospel is Hope. "Hope for Humanity" - now wouldn't that make a great headline for the L.A. or New York Times?

What deserves to be on the front pages of our major newspapers? Just bad news? The standard thinking among the news media has traditionally been; "If it bleeds it leads." In God's Word, and God's economy, the headlines take a vastly different tone. "Salvation for Souls" or "Compassion for the Lost," could easily headline any daily newspaper that God wanted to publish. Wouldn't it be wonderful if our secular news outlets



could get the message? One of the essential ingredients of the Gospel is Hope. "Hope for Humanity" - now wouldn't that make a great headline for the L.A. or New York Times?

What deserves to be on the front pages of our major newspapers? Just bad news? The standard thinking among the news media has traditionally been; "If it bleeds it leads." In God's Word, and God's economy, the headlines take a vastly different tone. "Salvation for Souls" or "Compassion for the Lost," could easily headline any daily newspaper that God wanted to publish.

The biggest news of the day is always reserved for the front page. Usually, it's the type of event that is making the most impact around the world and affects the most people. This generally includes conflicts of ruling powers and leaders, but occasionally, it's a heartfelt story of human interest like that of the passing of Princess Diana. Either way, it's where our collective eyes are focused and our collective hearts are touched, always bringing us to an understanding of our need for God's sovereign work in our hurting world.

1. [Heaven's Headlines](#)
2. [Taking The Stand](#)
3. [All I Ever Needed To Know About Elections I Learned In Kindergarten](#)
4. [The Peace Of Jerusalem](#)
5. [The Best Is Yet To Come](#)
6. [Infinity And Beyond](#)
7. [Eureka!](#)
8. [Time For An Evaluation](#)
9. [Eureka](#)
10. [Ground Zero](#)

HEAVEN'S HEADLINES

Late summer marks the anniversary of Princess Diana's tragic death in Paris, France, on August 31, 1997.

Countless in Britain will make the trek to the palace and family home to lay flowers as a memorial to "England's Rose." Most recall vividly the news of the infamous paparazzi chase that led to the fatal crash and months of investigation that followed. In the wake of her death, a nation mourned her significance and contribution to the world.

Frankly, as moved as I was over the international attention given to her, I was equally impacted by the quiet passing of another woman across the ocean who had faithfully served the Lord and others in relative obscurity. It's almost as if no one noticed. But you see, Mother Teresa of Calcutta wouldn't have had it any other way. Her life was so little about herself and so much about her Savior. Few lives typify like hers what John the Baptist spoke in John 3:30 when he said, "*He must become greater, and I must become lesser.*" Ironically, two of the greatest women in the world died within days of each other leaving the less glamorous a footnote in the obituaries.

Rewind several decades to the day November 22, 1963. Few have difficulties remembering what occurred that fateful afternoon in Dallas when President John F. Kennedy was gunned down by Lee Harvey Oswald from the sixth floor school depository window. The "shot heard round the world" drew the final curtain on Camelot and left an optimistic nation in numbed pain. Flowers were brought to remember the death of "America's King" and slain leader.

While the world's attention was riveted on Dallas, another quiet eternal exit occurred that same day across the Atlantic. Though justifiably the columnists and editors would rush their J.F.K. stories to print, only a few would

take note and mourn the death of Clive Staples Lewis better known as C.S. Lewis. Again, hardly a word was mentioned. But like Mother Teresa, he wouldn't have wanted it any other way. Arguably the greatest Christian author and mind of the 20th century entered heaven with far less earthly fanfare than was due his work and life.

When you survey the annals of modern Christianity, you are hard pressed to find two greater servants of God's kingdom than Mother Teresa and C.S. Lewis. Hardly a believer of any length has not been profoundly touched by their lives and furthered in their walk with God, which causes me to question the untimely and ironic nature of their passing. If anyone ever deserved the front-page headlines of a metropolitan newspaper or national magazine, it was these two. But instead, their powerful and eternal investments came and went with barely a send-off of any significance. Either God's timing is strange or our priorities

need to adjust to His way of seeing things.

In Isaiah 57:1, the prophet wrote, *"The righteous perish, and no one ponders it in his heart."* He was stating that we should place far less emphasis on grand exits and far more emphasis on grand entrances. Our heavenly hope reminds us that God has a reception of special honor waiting for those whom He calls His own. Who knows, some day you might even make heaven's headlines.



Either God's timing is strange or our priorities need to adjust to His way of seeing things.

GOD'S BRIGHTEST HOPE IN AMERICA'S DARKEST HOUR

The smoke and debris from Tuesday's terrorist attack on America served as fitting analogies to the unclear and shattered emotions that most have been forced to deal with following a tragedy some consider the worst in our nation's history.

By now, everyone is aware that four planes were hijacked on the East Coast with the perpetrators on a "kamikaze" mission like none other witnessed in our time or any other. Two hit the World Trade Towers, bringing them to their knees, one hit the Pentagon and the last was driven into the ground somewhere in Pennsylvania. The damage has yet to be counted, but 266 died on the planes and untold numbers on earth below. Frankly, as the word has been used a hundred times the week, it all seemed "surreal." Like something out of a Hollywood movie, the sight of the two planes crashing into the Twin Towers, the distance of the events from our homes, the ensuing collapse of the buildings, and unknown people involved, we stood almost questioning its reality.

That is, until more information started emerging from the buildings and airplane manifest. Every kind of person and profession was represented. You name it...from Hollywood directors to homemakers to television reporters to secretaries.

And if those things didn't help it sink in, then reading the list of victims and their ages did. While we may never know all that transpired on those flights, we do know that on United Flight 175, 76-year old Rev. Francis Grogan stood at the back while not far away little 3-year old Christine Hanson held closely to her parents Peter and Susan, 32 and 35. As well, practically every age in between the little girl and the minister stood by on board. We don't know what they knew, but their destiny would be the second Twin Tower building and, sadly, their final minutes on earth.

Unprecedented tragedies such as these become pregnant pauses in life to cause us to evaluate our beliefs and, in many cases, see how faulty our view can be and how mortal and vulnerable we

really are. The Bible, always our guide, reminds us of a couple examples of important truths to hold onto in times such as these:

**1) Remember that you *can't* add time to your life
(Matthew 6:27)**

Like the victims, each of us has a certain number of days allotted on earth that we must learn to hold more dearly and use more rightly. Though the type of loss is hard to bear, it is nonetheless true. Matthew 6:27 says, "*Who of you by worrying (or doing anything else for that matter) can add a single hour to your life?*" Whether long or short, we are challenged to live lives that are pleasing and in right relationship with God.

**2) Remember that you *can* add life to your time
(John 10:10)**

While Reebok's tells us that, "Life is short, play hard," the author of Psalm 90

"Prays hard that we realize that life is short." Jesus adds in John 10:10, "*I have come that you might have life and have it more abundantly.*" When we find

that true life comes from Jesus Christ alone, we start making choices that add life to our years.



While countless lessons will continue to surface from America's day of infamy, the greatest remains that, though tragedy occurs, God still cares...and while sin still exists, an answer has been given in our loving Savior, Jesus Christ.

While countless lessons will continue to surface from America's day of infamy, the greatest remains that, though tragedy occurs, God still cares...and while sin still exists, an answer has been given in our loving Savior, Jesus Christ. Thankfully, good news is always present for whoever is willing to hear it.

TAKING *THE* STAND

President Bush was sworn into office shortly after the election results were confirmed. But the ones doing most of the swearing over the weeks following his inauguration were his opposition. It seems that, in the process of selecting his cabinet, the new President nominated a man that some view as “a nightmare come true.” Most of us would wonder, “What kind of scandals has his life unfolded to draw such venomous attacks?” Adultery...extortion...racketeering...fraud...drug trafficking? No...for some Senators, these might be forgivable sins. It’s worse than that. The issue at hand is that he’s a “Christian.” Heaven forbid!

16
Yep, John Ashcroft is being personified as Lucifer himself for his candidacy as the “A.G. for A.G.” (a.k.a. the Assembly of God man for Attorney General). Never mind that he has served two terms as Attorney General of Missouri, two terms as Governor, and one term as a Senator with impeccable character and performance. That doesn’t seem to matter. Somehow, some think, if those conservative Missourians want him, that’s one thing, but just try to bring his godly heart to Capitol Hill and pay you will. And some of the activist groups are joining in. Ralph Neas of People for the American Way said, “*He is the very worst executive nominee ever,*” while Patricia Ireland, president of N.O.W. called him, “*the extremist’s extremist.*” They’ve slapped him with everything from close-minded to intolerant to insensitive to being a “sharp stick in the eye.”

The greatest problem with Ashcroft, at least for some anyway, is that he has convictions. Recently at a Bob Jones University commencement address, he was vilified for saying, “*We have no king but Jesus*” and another group was disturbed that he was “*anointed with oil*” before taking office as a Missouri Senator. Somehow, Eminem, the vulgar rap star, says what he wants and none of them blinks an eye. Senator Ashcroft shares his beliefs and a federal case develops. Amazing!

A graduate of Yale, Ashcroft holds high company with the likes of the Bush Presidents, President Clinton, Vice-President Cheney and others. But in Michael Isikoff's estimate in Newsweek, similar paths to diverse methods were found. He writes, *"For the Clintons, the law is an engine of social uplift, and a guarantor of individual and group rights on everything from affirmative action to abortion. To Ashcroft...the role of law is to protect the life of the "unborn," punish criminals with utmost severity and, for the most part, otherwise stay away from trying to perfect American society."* Now there's a piece of unbiased journalism if I've ever read one. With apologies to Newsweek (not!), I have to disagree with Isikoff's assessment of Ashcroft. He's all about morality, values, Christ-centeredness and righteousness, the things that made our nation great. And which, by the way, actually takes us toward a more perfect America.

Years ago, one of our noted national politicians had a meeting with a group of young students and urged them in their



The greatest problem with Ashcroft, at least for some anyway, is that he has convictions.

endeavors by saying, *"You will do well to learn the religion of Jesus Christ. It will make you a greater and happier people than you are. Congress will do everything they can to assist you in this wise intention."* His name...President George Washington (The Original Dubya). Good thing Ol' President George didn't have the same opposition as Ashcroft or who knows, he might not have been...er, qualified.

ALL I EVER NEEDED TO KNOW ABOUT POLITICS I LEARNED IN KINDERGARTEN

"It's burning, bursting into flames and is falling on the mooring mast and all the folks...this is one of the worst catastrophes in the world! It's a terrific sight. Oh, the humanity and all the passengers!" O.K., so Herb Morrison's account of the Hindenburg explosion in 1937 might be a little dramatic for our recent presidential electoral college and popular vote process...but you can't help but wonder how we got here and what direction we're going to take.

Not since the Civil War has our country faced the possibility of two presidents refusing to relinquish office. Back then, it was over slave trade, but right now, it's over a system that is too close for comfort. Like Tony Curtis and Sidney Poitier in the classic film, The Defiant Ones, the two prisoners escape a train transport crash only to discover they were irreversibly handcuffed to someone wanting to go in a completely different direction. Don't tell me God doesn't have a sense of humor. Consider some of the facts:

1) Out of 50 states in the union, the tiebreaker has come down to Florida.

2) Florida is basically 50/50 and too close to call until all ballots are in.

3) One party is calling the ballots in certain counties "confusing and complicated" while the other has said "when all else fails 'read directions.'"

4) It is believed that unintended ballot problems occurred in several other states that could have tilted the balance of the election either way.

It gives gridlock a whole new meaning. Makes you wonder if God was trying to get our collective attention. And what, pray tell, might He be trying to say? I think He might be saying that when, and only when, we begin to rely on Him and only Him, we will begin to see our nation changed and our land healed. (2 Chronicles 7:14)

Don't get me wrong. I'm a strong believer in our nation, govern-

ment, and system. It's the best that man has ever produced because it's based on God's Word. The problem is we can easily replace God as our source of trust with a trust in mankind.

If you follow biblical history, many times, when God's people got the leaders that they desired, they grew soft in their faith. Depending on the leaders to do the work, they decided they didn't need to do anything. King Saul is an excellent case in point. But when oppositional leaders were appointed, the believers dropped to their knees and relied on God. The early church reveals that truth in that God worked more powerfully than ever.

That doesn't mean that you should vote for the opposition or not have political leanings. It simply means that whatever God chooses to do, he is calling Christians to a new understanding of dependence whether we "abound or are abased."

Apart from God, political leaders can do nothing of eternal significance. Never have and never will. But some of the greatest history has been made by believers who came to a place of dependence

regardless of which group held office.

In Isaiah 33:22, the prophet wrote a concise reminder for times like these: *"For the LORD is our judge (Supreme Court), the LORD is our lawgiver (Congress and Senate), the LORD is our king (President); it is he who will save us."* In the meantime, my guess is, when the smoke clears, they'll either toss a coin or engage in a classic "paper-rock-scissors" contest. Let it ride and let the winner take all. And whoever wins, remember Who's really in charge.



**The problem is we
can easily replace
God as our source
of trust with a trust
in mankind.**

THE PEACE OF JERUSALEM

While watching the news reports of the Middle East Crisis between the Israelis and Palestinians, I remembered standing in the old city of Jerusalem some time ago. It was there, God challenged me to follow the words of Psalm 122:6 which say, *“Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: May those who love you be secure.”* As my eyes scanned the surroundings of the Dome of the Rock, I was reminded of all the preceding events that have set the stage for the final, tension-filled chapter of Christ’s return to that spot in the last days. When you think back in time, you find some of the most powerful milestone moments of our faith. It was there:

1) Approximately 2000 years ago, Christ preached and performed miracles that would set the stage for His death and resurrection. (John 2:19-22)

2) Approximately 3000 years ago, Solomon built the great temple that would serve as God’s House Of Glory. (2 Chronicles 3:1)

3) And approximately 4000 years ago, Abraham was kept from sacrificing Isaac and was given the promise of Israel’s biblical inheritance. (Genesis 22:2)

From Abraham’s day until ours, a bitter historical root has woven itself forward to the current crisis that we have watched unfold in the exact location where I stood. But the story has a biblical precedent that helps us make the historical tie.

In Genesis 12, God calls Abraham to begin the great nation of Israel through his aged and barren wife Sarah. While waiting, Abraham resigns himself to the impossibility of such a work and he fathers Ishmael, through his maidservant Hagar, who begins to despise Sarah (Genesis 16:4). After Isaac is born (the next in the lineage of Israel), Ishmael (the father of the Arab race) reveals his selfish ambition, insecurity and jealousy (along with Hagar his mother) by desiring his place as heir to the nation. Ultimately, the bitterness Ishmael and Hagar reveal

requires that they be sent away. This poisonous spirit has afflicted the corporate Arab soul, where to this day, they despise the Jewish people and find themselves lusting after Israel's tiny inheritance and position with God. Only through accepting Christ have many been freed from this pervasive spirit.

Several millennia later, with the introduction of Islam into the Arab tribes, a spiritual and religious fervor was ignited in which they view their mission as a noble and divine cause even in their attempt to replace Israel in the top rank. So much so, they will cheat, kill and deceive in order to vie for that ever evasive spiritual position.

To intensify matters, the Arabs, who currently occupy the religious site of the Dome, are well aware that this place has been slated as the eventual landmark of the new temple of Israel and final sight where Christ will establish His throne. When this finally occurs, the true fulfillment of the Psalmist's prayer regarding Jerusalem's peace will take place. In Revelation 21:2,



To intensify matters, the Arabs, who currently occupy the religious site of the Dome, are well aware that this place has been slated as the eventual landmark of the new temple of Israel and final sight where Christ will establish His throne.

John writes, *"I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem—Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."* Too bad CNN won't be there to catch that on film.

THE BEST IS YET TO COME

No doubt it has taken its place among the top ten most infamous quotes in modern history. In 1899, Charles H. Duell went out on a proverbial limb and boldly proclaimed, *“Everything that can be invented has been invented.”* Thank goodness nobody listened. Little did he know, as the Carpenters would later sing, that the age of ingenuity had “only just begun.” And for a solid century now, Charles has become a legend in the C.E.A.S. (Crow-Eaters Anonymous Society) while his words remain forever bronzed as a lasting reminder.

As the twentieth century dawned, creativity flourished. If necessity is the mother of invention, then imagination is its father. And imagine people did. With every turn of a decade’s page, something more elaborate came on the scene.

In the 1900’s, the clothes washer, air conditioner and Wright brother’s “flying machine” arrived, while the disposable razor came from King Camp Gillette.

In the decade following 1910, electric traffic lights emerged, along with disposable scalpels and airline food. (Much to our dismay.)

In the Roaring 20’s, television debuted, though not in commercial form. Vladimir Zworykin gave us the cathode ray tube and iconoscope TV and, in 1924, Clarence Birdseye invented frozen foods.

In 1933, FM radio came about when New York native Edwin Howard Armstrong invented wide-band, or two-path, frequency modulation and, in 1939, Ivanovich Sikorsky flew the first successful helicopter.

The 1940’s brought microwave ovens and the Tupperware that shouldn’t go in them. And Edwin H. Land developed the Polaroid camera.

In the 1950’s, medical advances such as the polio vac-

cine and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) appeared.

By the 1960's, our homes were starting to become filled with audiocassettes, videotape recorders, touch-tone phones and hand-held calculators.

The 70's, along with bell-bottom jeans and disco music, brought microprocessors, personal computers and ATM's.

In the decade of the 1980's, Dr. Barney Clark became the first recipient of an artificial heart and IBM invented the CD-ROM drive.

Then in 1990, the World Wide Web came along with other technological and medical breakthroughs.

And a hundred years of progress has only shown that the best was yet to come.

In 1 Corinthians 2:9, Paul reminded a nearsighted church, *"No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him."*



Paul was an eternal optimist not forecasting a belief in mankind's spirit of achievement but a determined confidence in God's plans for those He loves.

Paul was an eternal optimist not forecasting a belief in mankind's spirit of achievement but a determined confidence in God's plans for those He loves. Simply put, He's got good things in store for you. And if anyone says anything different...thank goodness you don't have to listen.

INFINITY AND BEYOND

Just as the end of an old year gives way to reflections, the beginning of a New Year gives way to predictions. And like the old boardgame classic “Battleship,” these guessing games bring their fair share of “hits and misses.” Especially when it comes to first-year projections of a century that lies ahead.

Recently, the Los Angeles Times rehearsed some quotable quotes from the beginning of the last century. In the year 1900, the Ladies Home Journal Christmas issue consulted “the wisest and most careful men in our greatest institutions of science and learning” to help divine the future. Here are a few of their projections:

—“*Automobiles will be cheaper than horses are today.*”

—“*There will be no C, X or Q in our everyday alphabet.*

Spelling sounds will have been adopted, first by the newspapers and then by the public. English will be a language of condensed words expressing condensed ideas and will be more extensively spoken than any other.”

—“*Strawberries as large as apples will be eaten by our great-great-grandchildren for their Christmas dinners...raspberries and blackberries will be as large.*”

Nice try but horseshoes, hand grenades...yada, yada, yada.

While the Ladies Home Journal had a few misses, the December, 1900, issue of the Brooklyn Eagle made some surprisingly accurate predictions when it said:

—“*Compressed air and electricity will revolutionize present modes of transportation. Trains will travel at more than 100 mph.*” (High-speed trains, more prevalent in Europe than in the U.S., currently travel at speeds of 125 mph.)

—“*Mail will be delivered to homes in pneumatic tubes.*” (A premonition of e-mail?)

—“*All business will be done at home.*” (Not yet, though the number of home offices has increased tremendously in

the last decade including 2 million in California alone.”)

In the midst of it all, on December 31, 1899, the Portland Sunday Telegram ran an article titled “What Man Will Be.” It suggested that “man will be rid of depression, evil and malicious emotions and, because of an introspective knowledge of his own mind, will be able to control himself in a manner now apparently impossible.” Though the past one hundred years have brought great advancement in many ways, technology is at a loss to enhance man’s spiritual progress...and always will be.

Though we can boldly make predictions for next year and beyond, there is still one prediction that will never be equaled. That is when one of “the wisest and most careful men of God’s institution” helped divine the future approximately 27 centuries ago. He foretold of greater things to come when God would devise a solution to man’s deepest spiritual need, enter the human race and offer His answer.



He foretold of greater things to come when God would devise a solution to man’s deepest spiritual need, enter the human race and offer His answer.

“But he was (would be) pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.” (Isaiah 53:5)

Not only did it happen just as he said...it can never be improved upon. Some things will never change.

TIME FOR AN EVALUATION

Before a few years ago, if you had asked me to tell you about “paparazzi,” I might have mumbled something about a certain famous Italian opera star whose first name is Luciano. Or if I had to tell you a little history of the House of Windsor’s thousand years, I’d be tongue-tied beyond crumpets and tea. What a difference a day makes! The tragic loss of Britain’s Princess Diana was felt by the world and released an avalanche of sorrow, curiosity and evaluation.

Sadly, a loss of this magnitude often makes pseudo-experts of us all; newspapers, radios and televisions flood us with every angle of a story, ranging from Princess Diana’s frustrations to her vacations. A recount of her birth, family, fairy-tale wedding, bitter marriage and personal life have and will be under scrutiny for decades to come. Generally, it’s far more than we want or need to know.

Of all of the lessons that biographers and historians attempt to salvage from this poignant story, there is one that seems glaringly absent...the treasure of time given to us by our loving Lord. Some might offer that the beautiful young princess modeled it with AIDS victims and landmine research, notable pursuits in their own right. To what degree her humanitarian efforts correlated with her spiritual condition is not for us to speculate. But rather, we should relearn an age-old lesson given over 4,000 years ago to Moses, Israel’s great lawgiver, in the 90th Psalm.

“The days of our lives are seventy years; and if by reason of strength they are eighty years, yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away...So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.” (V. 10,12) The number of years is not an issue nor

a guarantee, but a reminder that whether they be long or brief, that we might number each day as a sacrifice unto our God.

The rapid nature of our lives was recently pointed out when I found a chart that broke down our relatively short time on this earth. It shows the years we've lived and the corresponding increments of time we have logged.

	<u>Months</u>	<u>Days</u>	<u>Hours</u>	<u>Minutes</u>	<u>Seconds</u>
At the age of 20	240	7,304	175,296	10,517,760	631,065,600
At the age of 30	360	10,957	262,968	15,778,080	946,684,800
At the age of 40	480	14,609	350,616	21,036,960	1,262,217,600
At the age of 50	600	18,262	438,288	26,297,280	1,577,836,800
At the age of 60	720	21,914	525,936	31,556,160	1,893,369,600
At the age of 70	840	25,567	613,608	36,816,480	2,208,988,800
At the age of 80	960	29,219	701,256	42,075,360	2,524,521,600



The number of years is not an issue nor a guarantee, but a reminder that whether they be long or brief, that we might number each day as a sacrifice unto our God.

So often, the death of a celebrity or friend triggers a temporal evaluation, and then it's business as usual. It's seldom enough to bring a lasting change. But eternal perspectives founded on a deep love for our Lord Jesus demand that our thoughts, choices, priorities and actions be weighed on His eternal scale. *“Jesus, let every second, minute, hour, day, month and year count for you. Amen.”* (Ephesians 5:16)

EUREKA

“Sesquicentennial” is not a word you use every day. In fact, much like two of Haley’s Comets, it’s something that comes around only occasionally...150 years to be exact. Most of us have probably seen it printed on the newest license plates. California is having a birthday this week so break out the cake and candles. This coming Saturday, September 9th, 2000, our grand old state is turning a whoppin’ buck-fifty.

As the nation’s 31st state, our beginnings were inauspicious to say the least. Up to 1848, there were only 900 people living in San Francisco (count them...9-0-0). Most small town civic events draw a bigger crowd than that. But then James Marshall, spending time at Sutter’s Mill, discovered a glistening particle called “gold.” Word spread like wildfire and everyone began to head west.

“Eureka” (which means “I found it”) was shouted and apparently heard from near and far. And long before they were a football team, these 49ers came in droves to stake their claim on the apparent riches that awaited. Towns were built, businesses established, trade pursued, and mines were dug. And by 1850, the Bay Area, known as the gateway to the gold fields, grew to over 25,000 people and California became an official state.

Soon new cities were born, oranges and grapes planted, Hollywood started, Disneyland was opened, and the Dodgers and Angels found new residences. OK, OK, too much, too fast. But you get the point. From those early days of mining came this incredible place that is now home to more people than any other state in the nation.

All because of an epidemic push toward wealth and riches. Even to this day, like the gold rush of ’49, most people will go to any length to find financial security of some form or another. But the Bible tells us that there is

another kind of riches that far supercedes what the world offers.

Somehow, I can't help but think that a "Eureka" shout is in order for the believer now and again. In a way, when you think of all that has been given to us in Christ, we have struck the mother lode. (Or to put it another way—the Father lode) This includes:

1) **A faith better than gold:** *"These have come so that your faith-of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire-may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed."* (1 Peter 1:7-8)

2) **A message better than gold:** *"The ordinances of the LORD are sure and altogether righteous. They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold."*(Psalm 19:9,10)

3) **A relationship better than gold:** *"I love those who love me, and those who seek me find me. With me are riches and honor, enduring wealth and prosperity. My fruit is better than fine gold; what I yield surpasses choice silver."* (Proverbs 8:17-19)



**In a way, when
you think of all
that has been
given to us in
Christ, we have
struck the
mother lode.**

Talk about something to shout about. While it's good to commemorate California's sesquicentennial event, it's even better to celebrate the quintessential one... "Christ in you, the hope of glory." (Colossians 1:17) Eureka!

GROUND ZERO

In the early 1990's, I made my first and only visit to the World Trade Center. Though I had been in New York on quite a few occasions, I had never gone to the Twin Towers. Not wanting to miss out on the grandest view in Manhattan, I found myself headed to the nearest elevator in the North Tower and starting my ascent.

Now mind you, acrophobia (or fear of heights) has never been a major obstacle over the years. Parachuting? Been there, done that. Cliff-jumping? All part of the river scene. Roller coasters? Yee-haa! Heights are so ingrained that the Eiffel Tower was part of my marriage proposal. But the Trade Center Towers...that's a different story (or a whole lot of different stories). To be honest with you, that building was high...queasy high. From the observation deck, you could see (or at least you felt like it) across state lines if you could see to your feet below you. In a word...unbelievable. But, then again, you would expect no less from a building that stands a quarter mile from base to roof.

So when we watched the Towers not only get hit by the planes but collapse to the earth below, we could hardly fathom the enormous power of its fall. Immediately, I thought that, much like the Oklahoma City bombing, explosives had been strategically placed by the terrorists to bring about a "double devastation." It all seemed perfectly timed and perfectly obvious. *After all, how else could buildings fall like that?* I thought. But later, I discovered that the plane fuel inferno set off temperatures reaching beyond 2000 degrees. Some people said, "The heat was so powerful that it melted steel beams like plastic straws." Obviously, the mammoth structures never stood a chance.

Now, all that stands as a memorial of those titanic towers is quite a few acres of rubble and a waving American flag in a location known as "Ground Zero." There is no more descriptive term to convey the plight of those buildings. While they once

stood proudly above the New York skyline, now they simply clutter the ground below. But it seems that “Ground Zero” represents a lot more of the city and our nation than meets the eye.

Tragedy has a way of doing that. Those things that we valued the least when things were good suddenly have a lot more value when things turn bad. Consider a few:

1. *Independence has been turned to dependence on God and on one another*
2. *Division has been traded in for unity*
3. *Apathy has been exchanged for gratitude*
4. *Valuing of things has fallen in comparison to valuing of people*

Each of us could find countless other changes that have been made in areas of

priorities. As 1 Peter 1:7,9 declares, *“These have come (trials and tragedies) so that your faith-of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire-may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed...for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”*



**Tragedy has a way
of doing that.
Those things that
we valued the least
when things were
good suddenly
have a lot more
value when things
turn bad.**

Like you, I'd do anything to reverse the loss of life that occurred. But if we knew that no lives would be taken, it might have been worth appealing for the fall of the Twin Towers long ago. It seems we needed it to bring America back to our roots and who we really are as a nation. As ugly as rubble and broken marble can be at “Ground Zero,” sometimes it's a better view than you'll ever find up top.

HEAVEN'S HEADLINES

On The Internet: WWW.HEAVEN'S HEADLINES.COM

Vol. 52

50¢

ENTERTAINMENT TODAY

One of the essential ingredients of the Gospel is Hope. "Hope for Humanity" - now wouldn't that make a great headline for the L.A. or New York Times?

What deserves to be on the front pages of our major newspapers? Just bad news? The standard thinking among the news media has traditionally been; "If it bleeds it leads." In God's Word, and God's economy, the headlines take a vastly different tone. "Salvation for Souls" or "Compassion for the Lost," could easily headline any daily newspaper that God wanted to publish.



Wouldn't it be wonderful if our secular news outlets could get the message? One of the essential

ingredients of the Gospel is Hope. "Hope for Humanity" - now wouldn't that make a great headline for the L.A. or New York Times?

What deserves to be on the front pages of our major newspapers? Just bad news? The standard thinking among the news media has traditionally been; "If it bleeds it leads." In God's Word, and God's economy, the headlines take a vastly different tone. "Salvation for Souls" or "Compassion for the Lost,"

Whether the coliseums of the gladiators, the theatre of Shakespeare's plays, the stadiums of modern athletes or the media of contemporary celebrities, entertainment has always captured our attention. And while our appreciation for those in center stage is appropriate, its lure can quickly cause us to esteem the "superficial" and "temporal." God, on the other hand, is constantly calling us back to what is "substantive" and "lasting."

11. **Got God?**
12. **Heaven's Highest Priced Possessions**
13. **The One And Only King**
14. **Truth Is Better Than Fiction**
15. **Dare To Dream**
16. **A Predictable God In An Unpredictable Time**
17. **God's Final Answer**
18. **When Out Is Out And In Is In**
19. **A Touch Of Glory**
20. **The Ultimate Team Game**
21. **A Force To Be Reckoned With**
22. **The Great Escape**
23. **The Real Grinch That Steals Christmas**
24. **Know God, Know Love**

GOT GOD?

No doubt, you've seen the commercials. If not, you've probably heard about them or at least run across a billboard on the freeway. The famous "Got Milk?" ads. Usually, the humorous spots have a running parallel. Someone takes a bite of a delicious dessert or milk-compatible food, the milk runs out and sheer panic sets in.

- 1) A young college student is eating a peanut butter sandwich as he's listening to a favorite quiz show on the radio. As the \$10,000 question is asked, "Who shot Alexander Hamilton in the famous duel?," he quickly calls the station and is picked as the special caller. With the last vestiges of his lactose evaporated, he tries to mutter out "Aaron Burr" without success as the 10-second phone time elapses.
- 2) In another scene, an aged cat-loving grandmother has taken in dozens of cats in her home but finds that when the milk's away, the cats will stray...and they turn on her.
- 3) Another favorite finds a loud-talking, ego-driven entrepreneur hit by a car as he is stepping into traffic only to wind up in a heavenly type setting with harped music, chocolate chip cookies, and the biggest refrigerator this side of Texas. Taking a bite of the delectable morsels, his worst nightmare is realized as he opens the giant icebox only to discover rows of empty milk cartons. Suddenly, he finds this might not be "heaven" after all.

You get the point. A masterful piece of marketing that elicits an incredible craving for a common item. It's Madison Avenue 101...take the smallest need within the human make-up and turn it into a world crisis. Strategists know how to do it. Identify the slightest flicker and toss a gallon of gasoline on it. You name it...cars, toothpaste, shoes and even mouthwash. It's the tyranny of the urgent, and it sells.

But the greatest hunger in our lives is revealed at the point where we realize how dry and empty our lives are without a close relationship with a loving God. David found that place. In Psalm 42, he compared his panting after God

as that of the deer that pants for streams of water. In Ecclesiastes 3, Solomon described an inherent vacuum in the heart of each person known as eternity in our hearts that can only be fulfilled in God. And in Isaiah 55:1, the prophet writes, “Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters... Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.”

In *A Passion For Holiness*, Charles Spurgeon wrote, “*You see the man’s character by the way in which his heart takes its pleasure. If any man truly loves God, he will grow like God. The revealed character of God is to some of us a joy forever, and this is a sure mark of grace. We are not what we should be; we are not what we want to be; we are not what we hope to be; we are not what we shall be; but we do love the name of the Lord, and this is the root of the matter. We shall be like Him, for we love Him.*”

Live long enough and you’ll discover the truth. Sin is an appetizer that will lead us in one of two directions.

Either it will lead us to further sin and a spiraling effect of emptiness or it will lead us to a soul-searching pursuit of true life through a loving Savior who held nothing back to fulfill our need for salvation and a new reason to live.

Actually, unlike Madison Avenue, God delights in taking the biggest needs and answering them through the simplest things. I guess you could call it “Grace 101.”



But the greatest hunger in our lives is revealed at the point where we realize how dry and empty our lives are without a close relationship with a loving God.

HEAVEN'S HIGHEST-PRICED POSSESSIONS

What is a person worth? You'll get a different answer depending on whose advice you seek. Ask a scientist and he'll tell you that we're worth about \$23 and change when you break down the net value to parts, labor, and warranty. After all, humans are a dime a dozen and the resell factor is a low flat fee at the most.

But then again, toss that same question to a gathering of marketing experts and you'll get a completely different response. Our culture has a way of evaluating a person's value to society based on how they look, sound or sell. In other words, your value to a company is strictly predicated on your ability to produce a return. The formula looks something like this: low demand, low value...high demand, high value.

An age-old debate that has cycled past office water-coolers a time or two is the inequity of pay for those that many see as vital to society and those others that are strictly entertainers. For example, some pull their hair out over the fact that the staple jobs of society such as teachers, doctors, builders and workers of every fashion seem to be less highly esteemed than their counterpart "celeb" earners. Consider the comparison of a typical worker and these in the "high profile" status. Here are some statistics:

1) In the actor category

- For "Touched by an Angel," Roma Downey receives \$100,000 per episode
- For "Walker Texas Ranger," Chuck Norris got a cool \$375,000 per show
- For "Friends", each cast member about \$800,000 per show (At 26 shows per season, pretty soon we're talking about a little money)

2) In the athletic department

- Olympic Gold Medals are projected to be worth about \$5 million for Ian Thorpe
- Fila gave Grant Hill \$80 million for 7 years to sport his image

—And Tiger Woods' new Nike contract will give him \$100 million for 5 years

Makes you almost wish you'd taken those grade school plays and P.E. classes a bit more seriously. The real argument here is not whether they deserve it or not. Obviously they do because company strategists are not out to lose money. Not to mention that these famous folk have worked hard at their trade and have become to one degree or another an indispensable part of a company's plans.

The bottom line of the value question, at least in financial terms, is what a person or group is willing to pay for someone or something. Plug in any item...a candy bar, an engagement ring, a polo shirt, a Chrysler

or a home. Though opinions may vary, that alone reveals its value to you and anyone else.

The same thing is true of our Lord Jesus. The objects that He most values were and are measured by what He was willing



**The objects that
He most values
were and are
measured by what
He was willing to
pay.**

to pay. Matthew 13:45-46 reminds us, *“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.”* You were the pearl and He was the price. In heaven's terms, that puts all of us at the high-demand category. I guess you could say you're an indispensable part of His plans.

THE ONE AND ONLY KING

Elvis-mania is back in fashion. Or some might argue it never left. The King of Rock 'n' Roll continues to be as popular as ever. Like with John F. Kennedy's assassination, most people can even remember where they were standing the day they heard he died.

Commemorating the crazy-legged crooner from Tupelo, Mississippi has almost become a national pastime. Sales of videos, CD's, figurine dolls, lunch boxes, thermoses, plates, stamps and even souvenir sideburns continue to break records.

For some, it is innocent nostalgia...sincere recollections of a special era: bobby socks, poodle skirts, and malt shops. For others, it's serious business...too serious.

In Elvis People: The Cult of the King, Ted Harrison documents the spiritual elements said to surround Presley's birth, life, death and afterlife. Die-hard followers compare Elvis to Christ, and some cite proofs of his divinity. Others who recognize his personal faith in Christ say he was a messenger from God. Thousands claim to have seen Elvis alive, or resurrected since his death in 1977. Elvis impersonators consider themselves part of a priesthood with a divine calling. And each August 16th, thousands of pilgrims trek to the Memphis mansion to honor him.

Don't ask me to explain how people become overly-enamored with a popular human being. I'll leave that to the psychologists and tabloids. What on the one hand can begin as simple admiration can quickly become a false obsession. They soon find themselves drifting into an unhealthy non-reality. While most would not consider themselves part of the Elvis fan club, let alone his cult, the enemy can persuasively blind our culture and dupe us into all kinds of idolatry including attainment, accumulations and adulations of all forms.

Appreciating Elvis' songs and style isn't wrong for the most part. We're talking entertainment...but little more.

But how 'bout commemorating something truly significant—someone and something that changes mankind to the core for eternity? Here are a few things to remember:

- 1) **The King's Ransom:** Our Savior gave His life as a ransom so that we might be set free from the clutches of sin and hell. (1 Timothy 2:6)
- 2) **The King's Inheritance:** Because of His sacrifice, we have been given every spiritual blessing and provision. (Ephesians 1:13,14)
- 3) **The King's Heritage:** Christ's sacrifice means that we reign with Him as royalty both now and forever. (Romans 5:17)
- 4) **The King's Return:** In the twinkling of an eye, Christ will return and take with Him those who have professed Him as Lord. (1 Thessalonians 4:16,17)



While most would not consider themselves part of the Elvis fan club, let alone his cult, the enemy can persuasively blind our culture and dupe us into all kinds of idolatry including attainment, accumulations and adulterations of all forms.

Celebrities and popular icons may bring special moments that we remember with fondness. But the heartfelt depth of our commitment and gratitude should be reserved for the One and Only King. To Him alone you should say, "Thank you. Thank you very much."

TRUTH IS BETTER THAN FICTION

For generations now, our society has had a fascination with the future. Just glance at some of the most popular books and films over the past few decades and you'll agree. Timeless novels such as George Orwell's 1984 prognosticated the potential of a "Big Brother" society watching your every move while 2001: A Space Odyssey celebrated man's adventure into the unknown. Add to these the Jetsons, Buck Rogers and Star Trek and you could gladly "go where no man has gone before."

Christians are not exempt from such interests and neither should they be. Not only for the curiosity of space travel and the computer age, but more importantly, for what God has planned. The only difference is that God's account of the future is more interested in the intentions of man's heart than the inventions of his mind.

In the early 1970's, several popular films came out describing biblical events in the days ahead. Some of you remember A Thief in the Night and A Distant Thunder that portrayed the Revelation account of the last days when the anti-Christ would establish his presence after the Rapture had occurred. I can still remember the cash registers in the grocery store scenes having the ability to "scan" an item without needing to type the amount on the keypad. I thought, "There's no way they'll be able to do that in my lifetime" but surprisingly it is so current it has almost become passé. Then after the mark of the beast was taken by people who had been left, their buying and selling power was void of cards and cash and tracked by their forehead or hand I.D. Again I thought, "We're light-years away" but then satellite technology now allows boats, cars and planes to be followed without a hitch. Can humans be far off?

Well, as Solomon said, "There is nothing new under the sun." Today, a new generation of readers are getting a first

hand look at the future through the fictional 12-part Left Behind series by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins. In fact, for the first time in history, a book from an evangelical publishing house opened at number one on the New York Times Bestseller list. The Indwelling: The Beast Takes Possession, with over 2 million copies sold, depicts the Rapture, the anti-Christ as a one-world dictator, 666 numerology, the conversion of Israel and other biblical plans. Everything you could ever want in a Christian thriller and more.

Whatever the reason for this interest, it shows that people's fascination with the future extends beyond the realm of curiosity and toward a desire for hope. Almost 2000 years ago, the church at Thessalonica was captivated and concerned about what was to come. Paul calmed them by responding, *"But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness... For*



The only difference is that God's account of the future is more interested in the intentions of man's heart than the inventions of his mind.

God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him." (1 Thessalonians 5:4,5,9,10) As the saintly school janitor said after he was asked to summarize what he was reading in Revelation ... "We win." When you think about it, space travel is kind of exciting. Especially when you think about going where "only one man has gone before."

DARE TO DREAM

Most high schools have them. Mine did. But Downey High School is only one of countless places to produce these overachievers and dreamers. I guess you could call them “Hall-of-Famers” of sorts. Sometimes they come in the form of a world-renowned name or face and other times their accomplishments are quiet yet profound.

Dreamers are a unique breed. They take flight by attaching wings of determination to their imaginations. Add a little passionate elbow grease and you’ve got the makings of a reality. Hans Salye wrote: “Realistic people with practical aims are rarely as realistic or practical in the long run of life as the dreamers who pursue their dreams.”

42 Little Rick and his young sister, Karen, loved to sing together around the house. As their voices began to break the puberty barrier, people noticed that their blend had a gentle and appealing sound. They had the goods and people knew it. Soon, this young sibling duo began to craft music that would have the whole world singing. Songs such as “Top of the World,” “Close To You” and “We’ve Only Just Begun” made them chart toppers in their early twenties. The Carpenters were dreamers.

Another Rick dared to dream as well. His ability to create was less in the music field and more in the structural field. His penchant for design caused him to build things in his mind before they ever took literal form. But again, that’s another mark of the dreamer. Setting the course in his mind’s eye. Shortly, he would become a world-renowned creator of theme parks including Disney World in Orlando, Florida. People never thought much of the Battaglia boy until his dreams became a reality.

But the greatest surprise of ol’ D.H.S. was Bobby Ballard. Most couldn’t understand his insatiable interest in the ocean. Seems he could never get enough of oceanography and

dreamed of the day he would sail the world in search of lost ships. But not just any ship. Bobby, now Robert, had his eye on a particular treasure. A grand old lady legend lost in the Atlantic Ocean in early April 1912. Chuck Swindoll wrote in Quest For Character, “History records she was kidnapped and coldly murdered by a giant iceberg off the coast of Newfoundland.” No one knew her whereabouts and the possibilities seemed insurmountable. For thirteen years, he pursued this famous hidden vessel...but Robert was on a quest.

Finally, on September 1, 1985, a strobe light penetrated its grave and a dream became a reality. Later, he would record these words: *“My first direct view of the Titanic lasted less than two minutes, but the stark sight of her immense black hull towering above the ocean floor will remain forever ingrained in my memory. My lifelong dream was to find this great ship, and during the past thirteen years the quest for her had dominated my life. Now, finally, the quest was over.”*



**Dreamers are a
unique breed.
They take flight by
attaching wings of
determination to
their imaginations.**

As good as albums, theme parks, and lost ships are, Paul found that the most incredible things happen when you let God direct your dreams. *“Now glory be to God, who by His mighty power at work within us is able to do far more than we would ever dare to ask or even dream of—infinity beyond our highest prayers, desires, thoughts or hopes.”* (Ephesians 3:20) (TLB) Go ahead. Dream with God. I dare you!

A PREDICTABLE GOD IN UNPREDICTABLE TIMES

The first three words of M. Scott Peck's award-winning book, The Road Less Traveled, couldn't have been more appropriate when he wrote, "Life is difficult." Which of us haven't found that to be true? But let me add another idea with which you are certain to agree. "Life is unpredictable" or as Forrest Gump might say, "You never know what you're gonna get."

Just ask Adre-Francois Rafray. Well, you can't because he's no longer with us. But if you could, he would tell you. Rafray grew up in Arles, France, and a little over 30 years ago, he thought he had a great deal. He would pay a 90-year old woman \$500 a month until she died, then move into her grand apartment in a town Vincent Van Gogh once roamed. You see, buying an apartment "en viager" or "for life" is common in France. The elderly owner gets to enjoy a monthly income from the buyer, who gambles on getting a real estate bargain provided that the owner dies in due time. Upon the owner's death, the buyer inherits the apartment, regardless of how much was paid.

There was only one glitch in 47 year-old Rafray's plan. He made a deal with a woman by the name of Jeanne Calmante. Jeanne, being 90, seemed certain to live at most another decade. Then in due time, Adre would take possession. The problem is Jeanne didn't stop at 100. Much like the Energizer Bunny, she kept going and going and going. She taunted death past 105, 110, 115, and was now running strong at 120. By then, things were growing perplexing. Now, after 30 years, Jeanne was 120 and Adre was up to 77. To that time, Adre-Francois had paid over \$184,000 for an apartment that he never got to live in. Then ironically, the death angel arrived. But not for Jeanne, mind you. No, she was still eating duck thighs, cheese and chocolate cake...all on Adre's tab. Rather death knocked on Adre's door. Sadly, he opened it. Then the

family took over the payments. But soon thereafter, Jeanne died in 1996 at the ripe old age of 121 and the Rafray family inherited their long-awaited investment. Unpredictable indeed.

Don't try to tell me God doesn't have a sense of humor. Just when you think you've got life figured out, He reshuffles the proverbial cards and brings you back to reality. He and He alone is in control of our destinies. Just as the words of James remind us in James 4:13-15, *"Now listen, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.' Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, 'If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that.'"*

Over the past few years, recent headlines have reminded us of the unforeseeable turns of life. On the major front, the Concorde, Littleton High School, and the absence of an



**Don't try to tell me
God doesn't have a
sense of humor.
Just when you think
you've got life fig-
ured out, he reshuf-
fles the proverbial
cards and brings
you back to reality.**

Oklahoma Government Building could tell you that. On the minor front, our daily unmet expectations, surprises and disappointments can cause us to wonder about our fragile nature in a similar way.

By no means would the Bible ever encourage a sense of dread or fear, but rather an honest recognition of Who we belong to and where we are going. Such confidence can only be found in a life dependent on God and not ourselves. Even Adre-Francois Rafray would have to agree.

GOD'S FINAL ANSWER

Trivia has become serious business these days. Take Regis for instance...please. It's not enough that he banters and raves to the morning audience on the Regis and Kelly Show, but now he's creeped into the evening time slot with Who Wants To Be A Millionaire? To top it all off, he's making big bucks for the show's creators and contestants, not to mention himself, on questions with little significance and less depth.

But that's the point...trivia is all about knowing little things that can make a big difference. Sometimes it is accumulated through hours of study on a subject and other times it is assimilated through a passing comment. But at the right time and the right place, it can come in handy. While far from trivial, it's no different when it comes to God's Word. Little things mean a lot. Here's a little numbers trivia at no extra charge that could help out if you're ever on *that* show or in a Bible Trivia Championship:

- 1) Isaiah has 66 chapters. The first 39 deal with God's law on Israel and the last 27 deal with God's mercy for Israel just like the 39 books of the Old Testament and 27 books of the New Testament.
- 2) Joshua has 24 chapters which parallels a 24-hour period. Like clockwork, its first 12 chapters deal with conquest and last 12 deal with dwelling in the land.
- 3) Proverbs has 31 chapters. Here, God gives prescriptions for wise living which can be taken everyday throughout the month.
- 4) "Fear not" appears 366 times in the Bible. That is one reminder that God is in control for each day of the year and leap year.

But if you'd really like some trivia that could change your life, you might be interested to know that the middle of the Bible is Psalm 118. Strangely enough, Psalm 117, the chapter that precedes it is the shortest chapter in the Bible with only 2 verses while Psalm 119, the one that follows it, is the longest chapter

with 176 verses. The Bible has 594 chapters before Psalm 118 and 594 chapters after Psalm 118. And if you add up all the chapters except Psalm 118, you get a total of 1188 chapters. Psalm 118:8 is the middle verse of the entire Bible and this central message gives great insight to each of us. It says, *“It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in man.”* That is the watershed choice that every person will make in his or her life.

John Huffman writes, *“The phone rings and a cosmic voice declares that you have just a few more minutes to live. Already your tombstone is being prepared. You are being given a choice as to what epitaph will be chiseled on that stone. You are welcome to fill in the blank, “He put his trust in...” How would you fill in the blank? On what are you basing your life? In what are you putting your trust? Whether it will ever appear chiseled in stone is questionable. But I can assure you that, in an eternal sense, you and I, right now, are chiseling into the very granite of eternity the reality of putting our trust in something or someone.”* The question for you and me is *“what?”* or *“who?”*



But I can assure you that, in an eternal sense, you and I, right now, are chiseling into the very granite of eternity the reality of putting our trust in something or someone.

The Old Testament word “trust” means to take refuge or have hope and it always leads to a trust in Christ. John 12:36 gives Jesus’ words which say it best, *“Put your trust in the light (Jesus Christ) while you have it, so that you may become sons of light.”* I guess it’s fair to say ... that’s God’s final answer.

WHEN OUT IS “OUT” AND IN IS “IN”

If necessity is the mother of invention, then challenges have to be its grandmother. Simply said, trials have a way of bringing changes in our lives...and what kinds of changes are up to you and me.

For the Coca-Cola Company, it came a few years back when Pepsi began to sneak up on them in the sales department. Instead of developing a new market strategy, they “blinked” and “flinched” and designed a new product. The New Coke was supposed to take the beverage world by storm but the taste was a bust. The old “Coke” was renamed “Coca-Cola Classic” and the carbonated corporation scrambled not to fizzle.

For DC Comics, it came in 1986 when sales of Superman comic books dropped to an all-time low. By giving a new identity to the classic super hero, they confused longtime fans and drew apathy from others.

Some were more fortunate. Music groups such as the Beatles traded in their mop-top locks for the Sergeant Pepper fad, and Madonna...well that's another story.

Sports teams are not beyond a new image occasionally themselves. In 1997, the Denver Broncos ridded themselves of their longstanding uniforms and donned an edgier appearance that led them to the next two Super Bowls. And soon after, the Los Angeles Lakers decided to trade their traditional court jerseys for a mod mesh model. The result...a couple more N.B.A. World Championships and a double dose of Staples Center celebrations.

The latest comer to this cutting edge component is none other than Nordstrom themselves who are encouraging you to “Reinvent Yourself.” They realize that in this race called life, outward change is the antidote to atrophy.

In God's economy, as they say, it's just the same...only different. Except it doesn't come from a new taste, plot, sound,

hairstyle or look. It comes from a new heart. To Him, outward change is out and inward change is in. And it happens most frequently in those who are willing to be shaped in His hands.

Samuel was reminded of that fact when he tried to anoint one of David's brothers. In 1 Samuel 16:7, we read God's reminder that *"Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart."*

There are various examples in the Old Testament of God's obsession with inner change. Words like "reforming" or "reshaping" are used to denote the idea of something old that becomes something new. Isaiah tells us in 43:19,21, *"See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland...the people I formed for myself that they may proclaim my praise."*

Then Jeremiah reiterates this reinvention when he writes about his vision of the potter who molded a pot but had to break it in order to reform the vessel. Jeremiah 18:4 says, *"So the*

potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him." God gives a message of hope to the prophet that still lives through the ages...that is that the potter did not throw away the pot but softened it with some water and made it into something brand new. I can't help but think of the great work that God did in men such as Jacob, Gideon, Peter, John, Mark and anyone who is willing to admit their need for Him. But then again, necessity has a way of doing those things.



In God's economy, as they say, it's just the same...only different. Except it doesn't come from a new taste, plot, sound, hairstyle or look. It comes from a new heart.

A TOUCH OF GLORY

Andy Warhol once said, "Everyone has 15 minutes of fame." This week it is Steven Spielberg's turn. Last week, it was Tom Cruise. A few weeks before that it was Mark McGwire. And on it goes. Interestingly enough, many people make it their life's ambition to find a spotlight and stay there. It becomes their measure of value. They reason, the more people that know about them and see what they've accomplished, the more their lives have meaning. Consequently, the better they feel about themselves.

When Warhol was quoted, he wasn't necessarily referring to T.V. news coverage, front page stories or radio interviews, though some do find that kind of attention. He, rather, was referring to a microcosm of glory that each person will find at some point in his life. Somehow, somewhere, some way...it is bound to come. Commonly, we've experienced it at birthdays, anniversaries, graduations, special achievements, and yes, though not as enjoyable, it will come at our funeral.

A writer for the Washington Post was commenting on the paradox of glory. He was standing in front of the nation's Capitol when he saw the former Secretary of State walking down the street. It struck him that this man, who had been a powerful player in the planning and strategizing of a previous presidential cabinet, was now a common person "lacking the exposure he once held." He seemed to be lost and lacking any real purpose or hope. That's the nature of glory. If we don't keep it in perspective, it will demoralize us.

Glory is a "what have you done for me lately?" business. People who are not currently in the news are what we refer to as "has-beens;" everyone from Donald Trump, Jerry Seinfeld and the Beatles to Lucille Ball, Jackie Gleason and Joe DiMaggio. Once they were at the height of popularity, and now they are simply remembered by press clippings and film clips.

The Greek (or New Testament) word for glory is “doxa.” It’s where we get the word “doxology” or the “glory of God.” The Hebrew (or Old Testament) word for glory is “kabod,” which means “weightiness.” We refer to God’s glory as that which has weightiness or substance. Unlike man, God’s glory comes not through what He has done but from Who He is. (Exodus 3:14) One person wrote, “It is the exercise and display of what constitutes the distinctive excellence of the subject to which it is spoken, thus, in respect to God, His glory is the manifestation of His divine attributes and perfections.”

Rather than pursuing personal glory, believers in Jesus have the privilege of manifesting His glory through their lives. As we honor Him through our commitment, He is given the glory that is due His name. In a sense, we become His crowning glory:

- 1) God’s glory is manifested by a righteous lifestyle (Matthew 5:16)
- 2) God’s glory is manifested in genuine humility (1 Corinthians 1:31)
- 3) God’s glory is manifested through praise and worship (1 Timothy 1:17)



Rather than pursuing personal glory, believers in Jesus have the privilege of manifesting His glory through their lives.

Personal glory isn't all that it's cracked up to be. It's the kind of glory that flames, flickers and fades. Ask any "has been." But then, if you want to experience a touch of true glory, worship the Eternal and Almighty God. The One who "was, and is, and is to come."

THE ULTIMATE TEAM GAME

Well, you've never seen so much hype in all your life. The teams, the competition, the big money, the international attention...and the Super Bowl won't be bad either. Of course, I'm referring to the new Survivor 2 series. Strategically placed to capture the attention of an exhilarated or waning football audience, depending on the closeness of the game, this Super Bowl of reality shows is primed to pique your interest.

Like supermodels cruising down a fashion runway, their promoters are gonna make you think it's way more serious than it really is. Death-defying, cataclysmic, earth-shaking to name a few. Evil Knieval, X-treme games and the WWF all rolled into one. Their mission, and they have chosen to accept it, is to survive not so much the harsh conditions of the Aussie Outback, but the critical scrutiny of the Nielsen Ratings. And the real thrill of the executive producers has little to do with the nature's wildlife but to keep you tuned in...and don't think they won't do whatever it takes to keep people watching.

While the Super Bowl has had 35 years to get their patented promotional machine rolling, it seems Survivor 2 has already passed them by a promotional and country mile. Consider the recipe they're using to gain the edge:

- 1) **Superb Team Names** (The Ogakors and the Kuchas! Makes you wish the NFL would go out on a limb like that. Imagine: the New York "Kuchas" defeat the Baltimore "Ogakors"...film at 11).
- 2) **Better Theme Song** (At \$1 million for a one-minute commercial, Survivor 2 spends its money in the editing room while the NFL wastes their cash on the players' mattresses and showers).
- 3) **More Visionary Planning** (While the Super Bowl is figuring out how to keep you watching until the

4th quarter, the Survivor show's goal is to have you captivated by "Survivor 39" just after tuning out "Super Bowl 72")

- 4) **Extraordinary Midshow Entertainment:** Survivor has water torture, boomerangs and bug-eating ... which, by the way, would make a better half-time show than N'Sync and the Backstreet Boys.
- 5) **Wilder Animals:** Survivor 2 has poisonous spiders, scorpions and crocodiles while Super Bowl 35 only has Ray Lewis and Tony Siragusa.
- 6) **Guaranteed Nail-biter:** Survivor guarantees a close ending while the Super Bowl often has the coach doused with Gatorade a little into the third quarter.

But there's one thing about the Super Bowl that I have to give the nod...and that's the energy and integrity it takes to win. Survivor has a bunch of manipulators but the Super Bowl has a bunch of real competitors. And like these play-



Survivor has a bunch of manipulators but the Super Bowl has a bunch of real competitors. And like these players, our mission is to win fair and square.

ers, our mission is to win fair and square. "Run in such a way as to get the prize," Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 9:24,25. "Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever." And guess what? If you play it just right, you're assured a trip to the Magic Kingdom.

A FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH

Star Wars Mania is back. Over two decades after the original galactic grand opening, George Lucas has stirred up a media and movie frenzy like none before. Plastered across almost every national magazine, newspaper or consumer products are the images of the Phantom Menace episode and its new cast of characters. Without doubt, it is the most eagerly awaited movie of all time

Not since the Beatles has this kind of hysteria hit so many entertainment junkies. U.S. employers are estimating it will cost \$293 million in company losses for those calling in “sick” on the movie’s debut on May 19th. In some cases, people have been in line for a month aspiring to be the first to see this can’t-miss-blockbuster. Pepsi has agreed to pay 2.5 billion over the next few years to spread the Star Wars word on every soda can, potato chip bag and Taco Bell poster across the land.

For those who have already purchased your “R2D2 License Plate Frames,” humor me for a moment. Star Wars is ultimately about good and evil. A celestial cowboy classic...except the six-shooters and horses are exchanged for the laser guns and space ships. Whatever the culture, setting or time frame, it’s a recipe for success because everyone can identify with it. But this action adventure adds an extra twist that appeals to all religions as well. It’s known as the force... a nebulous cosmic power that gives courage and strength when a person believes in it.

Lucas said, *“I put the Force into the movie in order to try to awaken a certain kind of spirituality in people—more a belief in God than a belief in any particular religious system. I think you should have an opinion about that. I think there is a God. No question. What that God is or what we know about that God, I’m not sure.”*

While we should little expect Lucas or his film to define

the Force in the same manner that Christianity would, there can be as much confusion created by explaining a nebulous God as there is about explaining God away altogether. Both leave a faith that is based on the wrong foundation.

Neil Anderson writes, *“We tend to think of faith as some kind of mystical quality which belongs in the realm of the spiritual, not in the practical, nuts-and-bolts arena of everyday living. But faith is more concrete than you may realize or care to admit.”* He gives three ideas:

1) **Faith Depends On Its Object:** The fact that you claim to believe is not the issue of faith. It’s what you believe or who you believe in that will determine whether or not your faith will be rewarded. (Hebrews 11:6)

2) **The Depth Of Faith Is Determined By The Depth Of Your Knowledge Of The Object:** In other words, deep faith occurs through a deeper relationship with a known God through Jesus Christ not an unknown force. (John 8:19)

3) **Faith Takes Action:** Faith without action is not faith, it’s dead and meaningless. There must be a commitment. (James 2:17,18)

Faith in Jesus Christ is really very simple. Nuts and bolts stuff. You see, “Long, long ago, in a Galilee far, far away, God became flesh and dwelt among us.” Nothin’ nebulous about that.



Faith in Jesus Christ is really very simple. Nuts and bolts stuff. You see, “Long, long ago, in a Galilee far, far away, God became flesh and dwelt among us.

THE GREAT ESCAPE

Born in 1874 in Budapest, Hungary, Eric Weiss had little idea of the notoriety that he would one day gain as a world-renowned performer. After settling in Appleton, Wisconsin, his father Samuel would struggle to support his family as a Rabbi for the German Zion Jewish Congregation. So at the age of 12, young Eric would leave home to make his way in the world and support his family. His move to New York would change his life and introduce him to the world of big-time magic.

Originally, he touted himself as “Eric the Great” in his attempt to draw recognition through his slight-of-hand card tricks at amusement parks, dime museums and Chicago’s World’s Fair in 1893 and would eventually become a “challenge escape artist.” But as he picked up a book written by internationally known magician Robert Houdini, the ambitious young man decided to change his name to “Houdini,” hoping to somehow emulate his mentor. Soon, a legend was in the making.

Before long, Houdini’s name would become synonymous with the ability to escape from any restraint or difficult situation. Young Harry began offering rewards to anyone who could successfully restrain him, first in handcuffs and straightjackets, then to coffins and the famous Water Torture Cell. For the underwater escapes, he practiced holding his breath in the bathtub for more than four minutes. Boldly, he would claim he could escape from any device...anytime, anywhere. And sure enough, he did.

As imitators tried to take advantage of his success, Houdini originated new and more difficult escapes. From those early years until 1926, his incredible ability captivated the entertainment world. On October 22nd of that year, he was in Montreal performing at the Princess Theatre when a young athlete from a local university asked if Houdini could actually withstand punches to his stomach. Before he was able to tighten up, the

man punched Houdini and unknowingly ruptured his appendix. The next few days brought on a condition of internal gangrene known as peritonitis, an inflammation of the abdominal cavity. On October 31st, he died making the claim that each anniversary of his death, his followers could expect him to perform his greatest escape and return. And each Halloween, many trek to his gravesite and find things are still the same.

Many years have come and gone since Houdini's passing and nothing has changed. He finally met his greatest challenge and lost. While he could escape everything else, the grave was an escape that only One other has performed and lived up to His billing.

A couple thousand years ago, Jesus laid a bold claim far greater than Houdini's. In John 2:19-22, we read, "*Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.' The Jews replied, 'It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?'* But the

temple he had spoken of was his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken."

And since the day Christ arose, countless have made the trek to the empty grave of "The Greatest Of Them All." Truly you could say, there was nothing up *His* sleeves...except maybe a couple of nail-scarred hands.



**While he could
escape everything
else, the grave was
an escape that
only One other has
performed and
lived up to His
billing.**

THE REAL GRINCH THAT STEALS CHRISTMAS

Dr. Seuss immortal rhymes are legendary. Many of us have been raised quoting the familiar lines from Green Eggs and Ham and The Cat In The Hat. But his most famous seasonal classic has always been The Grinch That Stole Christmas.

In November of 2000, the classic hit became a box office blockbuster thanks to the versatile acting of Jim Carrey. The Grinch, green face and all, is the tale of the resentful soul that lived in the hills of Whoville. After 53 years of hearing the singing, playing, eating, and singing of the “Whos” during Christmastime, he could not fathom the thought of one more year of such frivolity. So he sets a plan in motion.

Decked out in his Santa suit and hitched up with his antler-attired and pseudo-reindeer dog Max, the Grinch descends on the little town intent on stealing their joy.

Climbing down the chimneys like old St. Nick with empty bag in hand, he steals the stockings, the toys, the Who-pudding, the roast beast, and even the tree. And then he lies to Cindy-Lou in order to cover his tracks. Soon, he travels to every home and takes every Christmas item in every house...leaving nothing but old, crusty crumbs.

Then up to Mt. Crumpit he climbs, awaiting the sunrise in hopes that he hears the cries of children and parents. But instead of cries, he only hears singing which reveals to him that understanding Christmas' true meaning can bring a changed heart.

Child's play you might think. A fairy tale story with a happy ending. They always bring us Christmas cheer. But to be quite honest, the Bible reveals that there is a real Grinch that really does hate Christmas.

No place is that more evident than during those first Christmas celebrations about 2000 years ago. The place was a little town called Bethlehem. Outside the town, a man named

Herod detested the idea of joy being brought to the world. The Grinch was harmless...he stole a few stockings, pudding, and a few other replaceable items. Herod was another story. He was a puppet in the Enemy's hands who literally stole the lives of countless children. The Grinch gave everything back...but Herod played for keeps.

Matthew 2:16 records, *"When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi."* One man wrote, "The Holocaust at Bethlehem is a picture of how far evil will go to protect itself from the intrusion of goodness."

But Herod is really a picture of the Enemy of our souls who tries to undo and destroy all that Christ brings during the Christmas season. Far more intent than Herod himself, this Enemy tries to wreak havoc upon each Christmas season since the first one in Bethlehem.



Far more intent than Herod himself, this Enemy tries to wreak havoc upon each Christmas season since the first one in Bethlehem.

And more often than not, his onslaught comes from the inside more than the outside...discontentment, anxiety, temptation, confusion, indifference and selfishness which ultimately produce the outward results.

However, Christmas from that day to this loudly proclaims the joyous news. What the Enemy tried to steal... Christ has come to redeem (John 10:10). And as it says in the DSV Bible (the Dr. Seuss Version)... "Who-soever will may come."

KNOW GOD, KNOW LOVE

Well...sorry to be the bearer of bad news but it seems Tinseltown has experienced another marital casualty compounding the ranks of "Hollywood Has-Beens." Or as the great theologian Freddie Mercury once said, *"Another one bites the dust."* Yes, Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman, movies' poster children for matrimonial bliss, while lasting 10 years, have decided to call it quits.

Sadly, they are just one more of a long line of famous folks that have parted ways. In fact, it's hard to find a contemporary couple in the "celeb" corner outside of Paul Newman and Joanne Woodward who have lasted. And my guess is they made it either 1) because they are part of an era when marital splits were taboo or 2) she just can't give up the free salad dressing. In fact, in our day, we can pretty much guarantee that when one of these couples marches down the aisle it will end with a march to the courts.

You see, famous or not, God created relationships and He has the patent on them for both those that are in a marriage or those who one day aspire to it. It says so right in the book of Genesis and continues to throughout the Bible. The problem is, we somehow continue to believe that we can throw His instructions aside and make it work how we want rather than how He wants. Much like an ignored driver's manual, our relationships end up functioning at best on something less than all cylinders and at worst experience a total breakdown midway through the trip.

And much like the tango, a God-centered relationship requires two people that will commit themselves to following and honoring the Lord...nothing less. Basically, the success of a relationship is predicated on understanding that God's love is about molding our lives to Him and not trying to mold His to ours. When that happens, our other relationships will take care of themselves.

In his book, Man In The Mirror, Patrick Morley describes a condition known as Cultural Christianity that hits at the heart of our relationships with God and others. He writes, “*Cultural Christianity means to pursue the God we want instead of the God who is. It is the tendency to be shallow in our understanding of God, wanting him to be more of a gentle grandfather type who spoils us and lets us have our own way. It is sensing a need for God, but on our own terms. It is wanting the God we have underlined in our Bibles without wanting the rest of Him, too. It is God relative instead of God absolute. Cultural Christianity is Christianity made impotent. It is Christianity with little or no impact on the values and beliefs of our society. When the secular life view is merged with the Christian life view, neither one survives. Cultural Christianity requires God to grant us personal peace and affluence to prove He loves us. It is God love, but not God holy. Actually, God loves us so much that He will cleanse the cultural Christianity from our lives, like the silversmith purifies silver by burning off the dross.*”



Much like an ignored driver's manual, our relationships end up functioning at best on something less than all cylinders and at worst experience a total breakdown mid-way through the trip.

Ultimately, when we are ready to be purified, we will be ready to love. Or as the lesser-known John 3:16 (or 1 John 3:16) says, “*This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.*” Once we know God that way, His love will follow. Would someone please pass that on to Brad Pitt & Jennifer Aniston...or anyone else for that matter?

HEAVEN'S HEADLINES

On The Internet: WWW.HEAVEN'S HEADLINES.COM

Vol. 52

50¢

BUSINESS AND POLITICS

One of the essential ingredients of the Gospel is Hope. "Hope for Humanity" - now wouldn't that make a great headline for the L.A. or New York Times?

What deserves to be on the front pages of our major newspapers? Just bad news? The standard thinking among the news media has traditionally been; "If it bleeds it leads." In God's Word, and God's economy, the headlines take a vastly different tone. "Salvation for Souls" or "Compassion for the Lost," could easily headline any daily newspaper that God wanted to publish.



Wouldn't it be wonderful if our secular news outlets could get the message? One of the essential

ingredients of the Gospel is Hope. "Hope for Humanity" - now wouldn't that make a great headline for the L.A. or New York Times?

What deserves to be on the front pages of our major newspapers? Just bad news? The standard thinking among the news media has traditionally been; "If it bleeds it leads." In God's Word, and God's economy, the headlines take a vastly different tone. "Salvation for Souls" or "Compassion for the Lost,"

As revealed in all the modern bestsellers, "adaptability" and "competence" will make or break the strongest Fortune 500 company or the most powerful government. Yet, while certain principles are in a constant state of flux, leaders have discovered that qualities such as integrity, compassion and servanthood will determine the success or failure of any enterprise or endeavor.

- 25. Krispy Kreme Kristianity**
- 26. Sweat The Small Stuff**
- 27. Mixed Messages**
- 28. When Yes Means No**
- 29. History Lessons**
- 30. The Body Vs. The Body**
- 31. Crisis In Christianity**
- 32. Character Counts**

KRISPY KREME KRISTIANITY

Trends come and trends go. Think about some of the more popular ones...hula-hoops, bell-bottoms, slinkies, pet rocks, Rubik's cubes, and yes, even Ninja Turtles. But apparently, donuts are here to stay. Just drive down Imperial Highway to La Habra and you'll know exactly what I'm talking about. Most find it more fashionable to be seen with a scone, biscotti, danish or even french crescent than a dumb ol' donut. Not these people, thank you very little. They're donut addicts and proud of it.

Almost in cult-type fashion, these konnoisseurs of krispieness come from far and near to enjoy the taste and ambiance. You see, Krispy Kreme is more than a shop, it's an adventure. Stars such as Julia Roberts, Rosie O'Donnell and others have trekked from the Valley to savor this delectable 50-cent dough and are more than willing to stand in a line that resembles Space Mountain on opening day at Disneyland.

Somewhere around 60 years ago, this North Carolina-based donut shop developed a reputation in the South for a "melt-in-your-mouth, not-in-your hands" softness that makes cotton candy feel like an M & M. And you knew it was only a matter of time before such a great sensation would sweep our nation. These old-fashioned shops, now at 147 and counting, have a goal to establish 500 more stores in seven years, which means they're headed to an area near you.

While I've only been there two or twelve times, I can remember standing in the lines and not knowing what to expect. People were actually bonding by telling what they were wearing and where the line started the first time they ate there. One man told Newsweek, "It's great fun, because everyone talks to one another about their first Krispy Kreme experience." Somehow like a Mecca pilgrimage, but more than an annual event.

Just for the sake of argument, if Jesus were to visit the Krispy Kreme krowd, I wonder what He might tell them. He'd probably size up His audience and begin by saying something like,

“Consider the donuts of the shop...” He knew all too well how to take the natural and make it supernatural. I mean if we can learn from the lilies, the bread, the pearl, the water, the seeds and the weeds, why not the donut? He’d probably drop a few analogies of what makes these treats so appealing, but even more importantly, ask a few questions about your life to see what makes you more attractive to a hungry world.

- 1) **Is it fresh?** When the children of Israel were wandering the wilderness, they were provided manna daily. Yet one of the agreements God made with them was that they would only take enough for the day, which spoke something about the need for freshness in their lives and ours that comes daily through dependence on the Lord.
- 2) **Is it consistent?** One of the marks of quality, whether it has to do with baked goods or a believer’s life, is the daily faithfulness that is witnessed by those around you.



Just for the sake of argument, if Jesus were to visit the Krispy Kreme krowd, I wonder what He might tell them. He’d probably size up His audience and begin by saying something like, “Consider the donuts of the shop...”

- 3) **Is it flavorful?** Rice cakes rarely become restaurant entrees due to the bland and boring nature of the taste. When Jesus referred to being salt and never losing that flavor, He reminds us that a flavorful Christian is an appealing Christian.

Increasing your stock value is simply a matter of quality control. The more you are controlled by the Spirit, the greater quality of His life will be seen in you. Anyone want to start a franchise?

SWEAT THE SMALL STUFF

Universities teach it...Businesses live by it...Investors seek for it...Farmers reap from it...Relationships flourish under it...and Destinies are built with it. "What is it?" you may ask. To some, it is simply referred to as the 20/80 principle but to others, it's referred to as the "*Pareto Principle*."

While it sounds more like a Tom Clancy novel rather than a leadership idea, you'll quickly find that when time, energy, money and personnel are concentrated in the right areas, the benefits are strong. Focus these things on issues of lesser importance and a lesser return will appear. Studies have shown that individuals and organizations that learn the priorities of the Pareto Principle will acquire a four-fold return.

In John Maxwell's book, Developing The Leader Within You, he gives several examples of the 20/80 rule that effects almost every field or habit.

- 1) *Time: 20 percent of our time produces 80 percent of the results.*
- 2) *Relationships: 20 percent of the people take up 80 percent of our time.*
- 3) *Products: 20 percent of the products bring in 80 percent of the profit.*
- 4) *Reading: 20 percent of the books contain 80 percent of the content.*
- 5) *Job: 20 percent of our work gives us 80 percent of our satisfaction.*
- 6) *Speech: 20 percent of the presentation produces 80 percent of the impact.*
- 7) *Finances: 20 percent of the people make 80 percent of the money.*
- 8) *Leadership: 20 percent of the people will make 80 percent of the decisions.*
- 9) *Picnics: 20 percent of the people will eat 80 percent of the food!*

10) Churches: 20 percent of the churches will have 80 percent of the people.

Understanding this principle gives invaluable insight as to the reason why there is a large disparity between extraordinary and average. Though there are certain people who fall into the right priorities accidentally, they are far more the exception than the rule. Knowing what to do and following through with it will distinguish momentum from mediocrity.

Such is the case in our spiritual lives. It's one thing to know what to do. It's another thing to do it. As one famous speaker said, "Christians today are educated beyond their obedience." We are saturated with Christian television, radio, CD's, tapes, books, scripture memory and Bible study. We know what to do. But the question is, "Do we want to do it?"

In Matthew 22:36-40, Jesus, the originator of the Pareto Principle, gave solid advice to anyone looking to reap a sound return. As an attorney approached Him, he asked, "*Teacher, which*



**Such is the case in
our spiritual lives.
It's one thing to
know what to do.
It's another thing to
do it.**

is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

When you think about it, it doesn't seem possible. But it's true. Focus your time on these two little things and God guarantees more than a four-fold return. I may not be much of a betting man, but those are pretty good odds if you ask me.

MIXED MESSAGES

Art Linkletter and Bill Cosby popularized the idea that “Kids Say The Darndest Things,” but I’m beginning to believe that the little tykes haven’t cornered the market when it comes to communication confusion. Seems like businesses are getting into the act and “Man, are they good!” In our high tech world of cross-cultural connecting, getting their point across is no longer a no-brainer.

In China, the name Coca-Cola in Chinese was first rendered as Ke-Kou-le-la. Unfortunately, the Coke Company didn’t know the phrase means “babe the wax tadpole” or “female horse stuffed with wax” depending on the dialect. Coke then researched 40,000 Chinese characters and found a close phonetic equivalent, “Ko-Kei-ko-le” which can be loosely translated as “happiness in the mouth.”

In Taiwan, the translation of the Pepsi slogan “Come alive with the Pepsi Generation” came out as “Pepsi will bring your ancestors back from the dead.” And the Kentucky Fried Chicken slogan “finger-lickin’ good” came out as “eat your fingers off” in Chinese.”

When General Motors introduced the Chevy Nova in South America, it was apparently unaware that “No va” means “It won’t go.” After the company figured out why its marketing slogan wouldn’t, it renamed it “the Caribe” for its Spanish market.

And when Parker Pen marketed a ball point pen in Mexico, its ads were supposed to say, “It won’t leak in your pocket and embarrass you.” However, the company mistakenly thought the Spanish word “embarazar” meant embarrass. Instead the ad said that “It won’t leak in your pocket and make you pregnant.”

As hard as companies try, the best-laid slogans of mice and men can fall far short of success. But more important than the messages companies use to get your business is the

marketing God uses to get the world's attention. In fact, it surprises me that God's business has lasted so long. After all, market research, billboards, Madison Avenue agencies, television, radio and newspapers have never been His most appealing means to get His message across. His greatest marketing occurs through you and me.

Of Paul's many business cards, the title that most aptly declared his role for Christ was "Ambassador." Noah Webster would describe it as "a diplomatic agent accredited to a foreign government or power." People with a message. Delegates that represent one party to another. Not only does it have political implications but spiritual ones as well.

In 2 Corinthians 5:18-20, he says, *"All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And He has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are*

therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God."

Amazing things happen through authentic messengers who take their assignment seriously. Spiritually speaking...it might even raise a few ancestors from the dead.



**His greatest
marketing
occurs through
you and me.**

THE JABEZ PHENOMENON

If Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address is the most famous 2-minute speech in history, then we'd have to agree that Jabez' Prayer has become the most famous 48 words. There's one main difference though...Honest Abe's speech never hit #1 on the New York Times bestseller list but, after all these years, Mighty Little Jabez has.

Consider for a minute the fact that this minor Old Testament figure, who was able to remain obscured in the recesses of biblical genealogies for almost 2500 years, has now become a major celebrity of sorts since author Bruce Wilkinson elaborated his cry to God from 1 Chronicles 4:10 in his simple book "The Prayer of Jabez."

Inspired by a sermon given in 1974 by Richard Seume, then-chaplain of Dallas Theological Seminary, Wilkinson had been teaching on the prayer for 25 years when Dr. James Dobson heard a tape in late 1999 and asked him to speak at the May 2000 National Day of Prayer on the subject. Multnomah Publishing encouraged him to put together a book for the event which was completed just in time. Originally only 26,000 were printed and over that summer another 46,000. In November of last year, another 384,000 copies came out. In February of this year, 1.1 million more were produced and in March, 2 million others and, with several million more since, the sales totals have now reached 7.6 million copies.

So popular has the prayer become that now there is a leather-bound addition, Jabez Christmas ornaments, vanilla-scented candles and mouse pads, as well as Jabez backpacks in which kids can even "carry a prayer" to school. A website has been established (www.prayerofjabez.com) along with jewelry close behind. Thankfully, the Jabez candy bar (I'm serious) was rejected. If the popularity of Jabez' prayer continues, it might knock off the charts Thomas Kincaide, who leads the Christian industry with Lighthouse coffee mugs, lazy-boy chairs and Dr. Scholl's

Lighthouse corn pads. (I'm not serious about that one).

Of course with all the press, both advocates and adversaries have been plentiful. One of the opponents of the book, Mike Yaconelli, former editor of the Door, claims that "Americans have perfected the art of reducing complicated truths into formulas and products," while proponents of the prayer will give even more reasons why God honors it.

Frankly, from the time I heard about the book last year, I continue to be on the proponent side. I find it hard to believe that God isn't looking for people who want to "be blessed and enlarge their territory" for His glory. And if the motives are selfish, God is capable of sorting through it all.

Consider the pages of reports I've recorded this year from people I know, including business owners doubling, people moving into ever-broadening ministry impact, job promotions, miraculous financial provision, community outreach, increased salvations, greater trust in Him and deeper tithing commitments to increased blessings.

When it comes right down to it, the Jabez phenomenon has little to do with the obscure Old Testament prophet and everything to do with a God who challenges us to ask for a greater part in expanding His kingdom. And if you have to buy a backpack to remember that, by all means do it.



I find it hard to believe that God isn't looking for people who want to "be blessed and enlarge their territory" for his glory. And if the motives are selfish, God is capable of sorting through it all.

HISTORY LESSONS

The dreaded words seemed to come at the most inopportune moment...

“Good morning, class. Would you please take out a pencil and piece of paper? We’re going to take a pop quiz.”
(Ouch! History was not my favorite subject and I always questioned its value.)

For some reason, Mr. Meyers delighted in surprising our 9th grade class.

“Question #1—What institution’s motto was, ‘Let every student be plainly instructed, and earnestly pressed to consider well, the main end of his life and studies is, to know God and Jesus Christ is eternal life?’”

(Uh-oh! Any hints, Mr. Meyers?)

“Question #2—Who said the following: ‘Whoever shall introduce into public affairs the principles of primitive Christianity will change the face of the world?’”

(Oh, man...the quicksand is definitely rising!)

“Question #3—Name the man that said, ‘I believe that the next half century will determine if we will advance the cause of Christian civilization or revert to the horrors of brutal paganism.’”

(Strike three! Oh, Lord, please send an earthquake.)

His voice scratched, “I’ll let you grade your own paper!”
(Mr. Meyers always had a way of adding insult to injury.)

“The answer to #1 is Harvard University.”

(Isn’t that the poison Ivy League school back east?)

“The answer to #2 is Benjamin Franklin.”

(Seems to me he discovered more than electricity.)

“The answer to #3 is Theodore Roosevelt.”

(No wonder they put him on Mount Rushmore.)

I never realized the impact that Christianity had played on our nation. These institutions and individuals knew something that we often seem to forget...as the Christian

faith goes, so goes the nation. It is frightening to consider how the mighty have fallen apparently to a state of disrepair. And the answers to our dilemma seem scarce.

Solomon, usually the giver of wisdom, was the receiver of this sage advice when he was told, *“If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”* (2 Chronicles 7:14)

O.K. friends. Take out your pencil and paper. Who’s the author of that quote? Unlike Mr. Meyers, I’ll give you a hint. He loves you more than you’ll ever know.



**These institutions
and individuals
knew something
that we often
seem to forget...
as the Christian
faith goes, so
goes the nation.**

THE BODY VS. THE BODY

Former professional wrestler and current Minnesota Governor, Jesse Ventura, has done his share of trash talking in the ring but now he's taken it to the political arena. Some thought that the World Wrestling Federation and Legislative Branch had a lot in common before "The Body" entered the governor's mansion but now they're sure of it. Some see the similarities as uncanny...they're paid to entertain, their opinions don't seem to mean much, and like a circus side-show, you somehow can't help but watch.

Just like any confident wrestler, he's willing to take on all challengers. But, this time, instead of his opponent being Jimmy "The Super Fly" Snooka, the Iron Sheik, or even the Hulkster himself, he's taking on the Church. And it's going to take a lot more than a Full Nelson or Hammer-Lock to slam this Body. Unlike the WWF though, he's learning that in politics you have to back your talk with brains not brawn.

Seems the Honorable Governor's poll numbers are dipping dramatically since he did a recent interview where he categorized religion as "a sham and a crutch for the weak-minded people who need strength in numbers." Since that time, Jesse has been cornered in his own ring.

On NBC's Meet the Press, World Magazine reported, that Tim Russert began to put the squeeze on the former pro and he started to cry "Uncle!" (At least, in his own way.) World writes: "Russert asked Governor Ventura to explain his remarks in which he denigrated religious beliefs. Mr. Russert pointed out that 'some three million' Minnesotans 'are members of organized religion,' and asked whether the governor 'really' considered 'priests and nuns and ministers and rabbis' weak minded.

Governor: "I see many cases of organized religion just simply going out and becoming a money-making machine and a business, the business of selling religion and religious beliefs."

Russert: "Who, in particular, troubles you with that?"

Governor: "No one in particular. I just believe that there's honesty and integrity that has to happen and I believe that if you look at the Jesus Christ that I know, he hung out with the worst people that there was." (One...the referee starts the count)

Russert: "Do you believe in God?"

Governor: "Absolutely."

Russert: "Do you consider yourself a Christian?"

Governor: "Yes, but I don't believe necessarily that I need a church to go to. I can go—my religious beliefs can be by a lake, they can be on a hill, they can be in the solitude of my own office. And I believe that there's no set example of what people's beliefs should be." (Two...he's feeling the heat)

Russert: "But do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Savior?"

Governor: "Yeah, according to, you know, the religious beliefs that I have." (Three...Sorry, Governor, you've just been pinned)

Apparently, Governor Jesse hasn't learned that "we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against powers of this dark world..." (Ephesians 6:12a)

Talk about a cage-match. That's one you dare not enter without a powerful tag team partner. I'm sure Jesus would be glad to help if the Governor ever starts to feel, ah, you know, "weak."



Talk about a cage-match. That's one you dare not enter without a powerful tag team partner.

THE CRISIS IN CHRISTIANITY

By now, if you haven't heard that the United States has entered a war in Eastern Europe, you've either canceled your subscription to the L.A. Times, fasted the evening news for a few weeks or you've soldered your television to TBN. While some of us are tempted to hide our heads in an "ostrich-type" manner, this "Crisis in Kosovo" is worth following up on, simply for matters of care and prayer for those head-long in the battle.

Senator John McCain, a former prisoner of war in Vietnam and expert on military strategy, has been front and center in the media's firing line. Reporters have bee-lined to his doorstep to get his take on NATO and the United States' options in their current military predicament. In a recent Newsweek article, he was asked what we learned from Vietnam that can be applied to this mission. He replied:

"One of the effects of that defeat is that our number one priority now seems to be the safety of troops, not the achievement of objectives. But that's no way to win a war. Just look at this conflict so far: the first few days of bombings against Milosevic (the Yugoslavian leader) were spent taking out air defenses—insuring the safety of pilots and crews, instead of inflicting maximum damage on the Serbs. Not only didn't it work, it gave Milosevic time to continue his campaign of ethnic cleansing. We thought we could win this on the cheap. Well, we can't."

Though some may differ in their mindset toward this current crisis, we have to admit that if we've learned anything from the wars of the last couple centuries, it's exactly that—If we're not willing to wholeheartedly commit to the process, it's a no-win situation. Senator McCain said it best. "Once we're involved, there is no alternative to victory, and the consequences of failure are profound."

Might I suggest that the Senator's words have deep appli-

cation not only to the military warfare in which we, as a nation, are engaged, but also the spiritual warfare in which we, as Christians, have enlisted? Once we are drafted in God's army, we are automatically sent to war. No boot camp, no special assignments, no desk jobs...it's front-line duty for everyone and we aren't going to win this on the cheap. Reserve officers (or weekend warriors) won't cut it. It requires a daily fulfillment of our assignment.

I'm not so sure that there isn't a "Crisis in Christianity" today. If some believers attempt to be involved just enough to don the military uniform, but not enough to bruise or bloody themselves (let alone be a "casualty for the cause"), we settle for a watered-down warfare void of Spirit-filled submission, service and sacrifice.

The Apostle Paul knew something about victory in his spiritual life when he wrote in 2 Corinthians 10:3-6: "*For though we live in the world we are not carrying on a worldly*



**Once we are
drafted in God's
army, we are
automatically sent
to war.**

war, for the weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete."

Senator John and the Apostle Paul seem to agree, "*Once we're involved, there is no alternative to victory, and the consequences of failure are profound.*" 'Nuff said.

CHARACTER COUNTS

“Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of men and citizens.”

All right, who said it? The media would probably refer to him as a right-winged radical thrusting his non-solicited opinions on our age of enlightenment. (Hint #1- He’s a famous leader.) After all, haven’t we moved beyond this spiritual mumbo-jumbo? (Hint #2- He was a U.S. President.) Morality and character aren’t the issue anymore, according to the sidewalk polls, but rather the ability to perform a task. (Give up? He was the first U.S. President; that’s right—George Washington.)

I wonder how his final public speech, given about 200 years ago, would fly on our contemporary airwaves. We’ve become a country that is run by public opinion and the percentages clearly lean on the side of relativism. From the time Bill Clinton wagged his finger at America denying any charges, lasting repentance seems to have been stranded by the wayside. As well as the fact that truth has been tattered with technicality. Or so it seems.

The CNN street report brought the Americans of today in front of the camera with their independent views, but the opinions seem consistent—“Even if it is true, he’s only human. Let him go on with the job of running the country.” This decision wasn’t made over the past few months; it was made, initially, in November of 1992. In the build-up to that election, a widespread vote was made—character isn’t an issue and morality doesn’t matter. In a world absent of absolutes, we could be absolutely blind to issues of reputation and lifestyle. Stick with the “real issue”—could he do the job?

When Solomon became king, God informed him of the contract that would define the basis of our Lord's continued blessing of the nation he would lead. *"If My people, who are called by My name, will humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land."* (2 Chronicles 7:14) That truth has never changed. It's still in God's bylaws. Though laid down for Israel, the principle has been in force in America since the beginning. Therefore, while Christians should never be in the business of "picking up stones," the past White House difficulties should bring a personal character evaluation rather than using it to absolve us of our own weaknesses—which, by the way, is the reason most people use the "only human" argument.

"Only human" just doesn't cut it anymore. God offers what Nicoderm advertises—"the power to choose; the power to change" through surrendering to Him. And if you've cut down any cherry trees lately, your Father is quick to forgive.



From the time Bill Clinton wagged his finger at America denying any charges, lasting repentance seems to have been stranded by the wayside.

HEAVEN'S HEADLINES

On The Internet: WWW.HEAVEN'S HEADLINES.COM

Vol. 52

50¢

THE SPORTS PAGE

One of the essential ingredients of the Gospel is Hope. "Hope for Humanity" - now wouldn't that make a great headline for the L.A. or New York Times?

What deserves to be on the front pages of our major newspapers? Just bad news? The standard thinking among the news media has traditionally been: "If it bleeds it leads." In God's Word, and God's economy, the headlines take a vastly different tone. "Salvation for Souls" or "Compassion for the Lost," could easily headline any daily newspaper that God wanted to publish.



Wouldn't it be wonderful if our secular news outlets could get the message? One of the essential

ingredients of the Gospel is Hope. "Hope for Humanity" - now wouldn't that make a great headline for the L.A. or New York Times?

What deserves to be on the front pages of our major newspapers? Just bad news? The standard thinking among the news media has traditionally been: "If it bleeds it leads." In God's Word, and God's economy, the headlines take a vastly different tone. "Salvation for Souls" or "Compassion for the Lost,"

Over 50 times in the Bible, the apostle Paul promotes the importance of athletic competition. The parallels of sports and the spiritual life, in his day and ours, are innumerable. We are encouraged to run, fight and be disciplined in that in which we compete. But in 1 Timothy 4:8, he adds, *"For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come."*

- 33. March Madness**
- 34. The Name Of The Game**
- 35. Cross Training**
- 36. Our Crowning Glory**
- 37. A Zone Of Your Own**
- 38. A Worthy Goal**
- 39. Extreme Games**
- 40. Fierce And Fair Weather Fans**
- 41. Prime-Time Prayers**
- 42. The Consummate Closing Ceremonies**

MARCH MADNESS

College basketball fanatics are experiencing a hoop frenzy about now. Traditionally, March Madness (so named because it's **March** and fans exhibit **madness**) is so popular because of the tournament style (64 teams begin and 1 national champion ends), strategy, underdog victories, last second shots, and maniacal shouting fans. It's not a recent phenomenon, though. It's been around longer than the game itself. You see, God started March Madness. It says so right in the Bible.

The nation of Israel was a low-seed in the tournament to the Promised Land. Matched against opponents twice their stature, the Coach and Captain of the Lord's Host took his pint-sized squad of misfits against the world's most powerful teams. You think the Blue Devils are tough, compare them to the Canaanites and Amorites and they'd run for their Carolina hills. (Not to mention the Hivites, Jebusites, Hittites and Perizzites.) Tough bracket, to say the least.

Under Joshua's leadership, God had strategically led this unorthodox underdog team through hard-fought battles in the most unique ways. But few compared to the showdown at Jericho. Our Lord's game-plan can at times boggle the most innovative minds. Jericho had gone into a stall and was running the four corners. Hoping they could run the clock down, they pulled up the drawbridge and settled in. Read on:

*"Now Jericho was tightly shut up because of the Israelites. No one went out and no one came in. Then the Lord said to Joshua, "See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men. **March** around the city once with all the armed men. Do this for six days. Have seven priests carry trumpets of rams' horns in front of the ark. On the seventh day, **march** around the city seven times, with the priests blowing the trumpets." (Joshua 6:1-4)*

Talk about march...and seven days of it. Sometimes obedience is quiet trust. We think that battles are won through hand-to-hand combat, not hikes—through sound strategies, not Sunday strolls. Joshua probably took out a Q-tip because he wasn't sure what he thought he heard. "God, did you say march? Are you sure you don't mean torch?" But march it was and march he did. He was learning that God sometimes does His greatest work if we are willing to actively trust His unusual tactics. We continue.

"When the trumpets sounded, the people shouted, and at the sound of the trumpet, when the people gave a loud shout, the wall collapsed so every man charged straight in, and they took the city. They devoted the city to the Lord and destroyed with the sword every living thing in it—men and women, young and old, cattle, sheep and donkeys." (Joshua 6:20,21)

Talk about madness...the walls and all heaven broke loose. Sometimes obedience is loud action: people shouting,



Our Lord's game-plan can at times boggle the most innovative minds.

trumpets blowing and warriors battling. This time God commanded them to fight and fight they did. Israel got the "W" (Win) and God got the game ball.

Knowing what to do and when is important in spiritual victories. God's willing to tell us if we'll only listen. Who ever thought that Q-tips could bring championships?

THE NAME OF THE GAME

Super Bowl XXXIII! The sports world's version of Madison Avenue, Ringling Brothers and the Oscars all rolled into one. For non-athletic types, another perfectly good wasted television channel. For gridiron fans, it's the *crème de la crème* of adrenaline rushes...one of the few occasions where "gaudy" is an understatement. Makes the Seinfeld finale look like a Gilligan's Island rerun. And oh, how we love it.

That's the name of the game...market and market big. Three cheers for the Super Bowl—"Hype, Hype, Hooray!" And hype they do. Define it any way you like: they will enliven, promote, publicize or make any pitch to grab your attention. It's Cal Worthington in pads and it doesn't get any better than this, folks.

What other event can ask \$1.6 million for a half-minute commercial and companies line up at the door? That's approximately \$50,000 per second or the rough equivalent of Bill Gates' interest earnings on a bad day. Some estimate somewhere around a billion or three fans will watch. Here's a preview of coming attractions:

1) 7 hours of pre-game on the Fox Channel

(Talk about overkill. The host channel will be able to evaluate the player profiles including eating habits, shoe sizes, deodorants, hairstyles and favorite air freshener, if time allows.)

2) Significant Rivalries

(Sportscasters will scrutinize ad nauseam how Bronco coach Mike Shanahan hurt Falcon coach Dan Reeves who hurt Bronco quarterback John Elway who hurt a Falcon cheerleader with one of his 70 m.p.h. spirals... So are the days of our lives.)

3) Super Bowl Reviews

(Sports Illustrated reported that ESPN will cele-

brate a look back at the 1968 New York Jets “20 years after their Super Sunday victory” shown in 1989. In a sense, they’re commemorating the 10th anniversary of the 20th anniversary of Super Bowl III.)

4) Grand Opening Commercials

(The Super Bowls within the Super Bowl. Will Coke defeat Pepsi? Can Reeboks measure up to Nike? Will Tostitos maintain the Tortilla Chip Crown?)

Hopefully, they’ll be able to squeeze a little game into the mix. To those of you who can quote the winner and score of Super Bowl XVIII (or read Roman numerals for that matter), don’t misunderstand. It should be fun. It’s just that sometimes people place too much significance on the insignificant and render insignificant the significant. As much as the Apostle Paul was a sports fanatic, it never compared to his passion for



As much as the Apostle Paul was a sports fanatic, it never compared to his passion for his Savior.

his Savior. Paul knew all too well the world’s hype but also understood heaven’s hope. In 1 Corinthians 9:25 he writes, *“To win the contest you must deny yourselves many things that would keep you from doing your best. An athlete goes to all this trouble just to win a blue ribbon or a silver cup, but we do it for a heavenly reward that never disappears.”* Hey, now that would make a good commercial. Want to chip in?

CROSS TRAINING

If you are like most people, it probably makes sense that some kind of exercise is an important part of a healthy lifestyle. But like most people, you probably have found that fitting it into your schedule is sometimes a challenge. At times, our reasons are fairly legitimate but more often than not, they are as sour as expired milk. Just like anything else in life, you have to find a way to pay now or you are going to have to pay later.

Steven Head, health educator with Sports Therapy Services in McLean, Virginia, doesn't buy the "too busy" theory though. He says, "*We seem to find time for things that are important to us, no matter how busy we are.*" Ain't it the truth?

Surveys reveal five common excuses for not beginning an exercise program:

- 1) **Intimidation.** Peg Jordan, spokeswoman for the Aerobics and Fitness Association in Sherman Oaks evaluated the statistics of 1880 people about fitness motivation and found that more than 80% saw exercise as "too scientific, too complicated...so that beginners risked exposing their incompetence and ineptitude."
- 2) **Impatience.** Susan Kalish, executive director of the American Medical Athletic Association in Bethesda, Maryland argues that "People want a quick fix. Even though it took them 30 years to get out of shape, when they don't get fit overnight, they blame their genes."
- 3) **Unrealistic Expectations.** "People who exercise in search of the perfect body are doomed to failure," says Kelly Brownell, director at the Yale University Center for Eating and Weight Disorders. "But if they are looking to become healthier, happier, more energetic...then exercise can deliver."

- 4) **Denial.** “Many people are in denial that health problems could happen to them,” says Carol Kleinman, a therapist in Maryland. “Then when they have a heart attack or physical problem, all of a sudden they have the motivation to reorder their priorities to exercise.”
- 5) **Irrelevance.** Pam Peeke, assistant professor of medicine at the University of Maryland said that people falsely believe, “With today’s technology, it’s no longer necessary to move to exist. Exercise doesn’t add to people’s income, and many people consider it another chore to add to a time-starved life.”

Peeke adds that physical movement is essential to health, especially in handling stress as her book, *Fight Fat at Forty*, contends that sedentary living turns our natural “fight or flight” response into an obesity-promoting “stew and chew.”

May I suggest that there is another kind of exercise that we



Just like anything else in life, you have to find a way to pay now or you are going to have to pay later.

know is important to a healthy spiritual life, and like others, we at times neglect to fit it into our schedules. We even tend to use all the time-worn excuses from intimidation to irrelevance. Of course I’m referring to studying God’s Word. Paul tells Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, *“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”* Gives a whole new meaning to the idea of “working out” your salvation, doesn’t it?

OUR CROWNING GLORY

They're baaaaack!!! No, I'm not talking about furbies or a scene from *Poltergeist* but rather the Summer Olympics. On Friday, September 15th, 2000, Australia's Opening Ceremonies became the spectacular of the millennium...at least so far, as a mere 3.5 billion tune in around the planet. And you can assume that since they began preparing for that moment 8 years earlier, you knew it would be good, eh mate? Some folks invite a few friends over to their home for a barbecue...Sydney invited the world. So, for them, it wasn't a bad idea to throw a couple more shrimp on the barby.

The question is, "Which venues of this sports spectacular will find their place in athletic history?" For over 100 years now, they have brought forth some of the most memorable highlights of the 20th century. Consider a few of the most important:

- 1) **1992 in Barcelona**— Derek Redmond shows his indomitable spirit as he refuses to quit and limps through his 200 meter race with his father's assistance following a torn hamstring.
- 2) **1984 in Los Angeles**— Mary Decker sprawled helplessly inside the Coliseum track as her last hopes for a medal are crushed by Zola Budd's interference.
- 3) **1972 in Munich**— 11 Israeli athletes are taken hostage by the PLO terrorist group and murdered before a world audience.
- 4) **1960 in Rome**— Wilma Rudolph overcomes polio, scarlet fever and double pneumonia as a child to become the world's fastest woman.

All of these stand as monuments of triumph and tragedy in competition where the events themselves can take a backseat to the human interest stories that surround them. But over 64 years ago, one bright event positioned itself among the most moving.

The year was 1936 and Adolph Hitler was in the middle of his anti-human campaign of creating what he considered a master race. As hosts of the games, though, the city of Berlin and Hitler underestimated the talents of a young African-American named Jesse Owens. He went on to win the 100 meters, 200 meters and 4 x 100 meters at the Führer's great displeasure. But the greatest moment is...the rest of the story.

Having just begun the Olympics, Owens was competing in the long jump when he found himself one jump away from elimination. It was then that a competitor by the name of Luz Long, a blond-haired, blue-eyed German, told Owens to draw a line several inches in front of his take-off mark. Owen's jump won the gold...and 3 more.

The story is reminiscent of two friends long ago from very different backgrounds named David and Jonathan. One was from a shepherd's field and the other from a palace. While Jonathan had every right to ignore his rival because of his

father's vengeance, he willingly sacrificed his place in history to advance that of his friend.

What better example do we find in scripture of what Christ did for us? *"Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness."* (Philippians 2:6,7) In every sense, He gave up His crown so you could have yours. Now that's a story that should interest every human.



While Jonathan had every right to ignore his rival because of his father's vengeance, he willingly sacrificed his place in history to advance that of his friend.

A ZONE OF YOUR OWN

Zones come in all makes and models. Airports have loading and unloading zones, Rod Sterling has the Twilight Zone, travelers have time zones, football players have end zones, environmentalists have o-zones and dieticians emphasize the body zone.

But there is another kind of zone that transcends explanation, that athletes experience that take them to new heights of performance. If you've ever experienced it while playing a game, you know what I'm talking about. While I've had my fair share of off nights in sports, there were a few occasions in high school and college where it seemed things were clicking to such a degree, you almost felt like singing the Oklahoma movie phrase "everything's going my way." Spirals were tighter, shots were straighter, hits were farther, passes were crisper, vision was better and anything you did made it "a beautiful morning and a beautiful day." Regardless of the sport, whether football, basketball, soccer or tennis, being in the "zone" tends to do that for you.

The latest poster boy for the "zone" is none other than a young man named Tiger Woods. He's writing the textbook on Golf for Dummies and making every player in the world feel embarrassingly inadequate in a game that seems so simple but can be oh-so-hard. At the age of 24, his victory at golf's 129-year-old course at St. Andrews allowed him to become the youngest player ever to win Golf's Grand Slam. He now has won the game's greatest prizes at the PGA Championship convincingly, the British Cup by 8 strokes, the Masters by 12 strokes and the U.S. Open by 15 strokes. (Any connoisseur of golf can tell you what that means.) To win one of these trophies in a lifetime is a dream for most professional players. To win two, an outside shot. To win three is even more rare. And to win four has been accomplished by only four other players in the history of the sport. Make no mistake about it...he's in the zone and it's become a habit.

You see, the zone is all about readying yourself for the moment. It's not a luck thing...it's a practice thing. And there are

several ways to bring it about:

- 1) **Preparation.** From his appearance on the “Mike Douglas Show” at the age of 2 in 1978 to this day, he has worked at perfecting his game to a “tee.”
- 2) **Concentration.** Tiger has a collection of golf videos, as one announcer said, “that would make Blockbuster Video jealous.” He religiously studies each fairway, bunker and green of every course he plays.
- 3) **Meditation.** Good athletes will imagine themselves successfully accomplishing the task before they take a swing or step on the course.
- 4) **Expectation.** Greatness comes through avoiding complacency and demanding more of yourself than the competition.

While there are many parallels to sports and faith, as Paul referenced over 50 times, there are none so evident as what it requires to be victorious. Preparing through prayer, studying



Preparing through prayer, studying God's word, meditating on His ways and expecting to defeat the opposition.

God's word, meditating on His ways and expecting to defeat the opposition. John wrote, *“This is the victory (original word: nike) that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.”* (1 John 5:4,5) As far as championships go, it's a place where a cross will serve you far better than a swoosh.

A WORTHY GOAL

Well, it's official...soccer is king of the mountain (or should I say "queen?"). Only one day after the U.S. Women's World Cup victory over China in 1998, it seems like every little girl in the nation went to the local Toys 'R Us to purchase a Mia Hamm jersey and Gatorade bottle. And as embarrassing as it is to admit...I kind of enjoyed it all.

You see, the problem is, soccer has never been our family's favorite pastime. We ranked it right above Christmas fruitcake and right below Limburger. Rumor has it that none of the Risser boys even kicked during pregnancy for fear of repercussions after birth. The only thing black and white allowed in our house was the newspaper and that was after close scrutiny. And we even had our own bedtime version of 1 Corinthians 13 we quoted before turning in... "And these three things remain: Paint drying, grass growing, and soccer...but the least interesting of these is soccer." In a word...painful!

But, oh, how times have changed. I've become a closet groupie. Not necessarily because of the hard-core play, fast-action, lightning pace, or high scoring; rather, the life lessons that translate into championships either win or lose. It's refreshing in our day to see teams that truly reveal what team sports are all about.

Most of us saw that idea portrayed in the commercials leading up to the final game. One girl on the team going on a date with a young man and the rest of the team tagging along; another showing the whole team riding a tandem bicycle singing, "Wherever we go...whatever we do...we're gonna go through it together."

Tony DiCicco, the U.S. Women's Coach, incorporated specifically designed mental exercises in order to build team unity. Newsweek mentioned that, a few years back, players learned to lead one another blindfolded down treacherous cliffs. Then just a few days before the World Cup Championship, the

team formed a line after practice and tried to move in perfect symmetry while holding balloons between their bodies. And to boot, roommates were switched at every stop to prevent cliques from forming.

At each point, there was a refusal to take the glory that belonged to the team. Mia Hamm characterized such an attitude when she said, *“People don’t want to hear that I’m no better than my teammates; they want me to say, ‘I’m this or I’m that, but I’m not. Everything I am I owe to this team.’”* And Kristine Lilly said, *“Just doing my job,”* in response to questions about the header that saved the game. That’s teamwork at its best.

I’m not sure what the Apostle Paul would have felt about soccer. But personal bias aside, he would have noticed a certain unity at work that would have been included in his Sunday morning column. Something like, *“The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ...as it is, there are many parts,*



I’m not sure what the Apostle Paul would have felt about soccer.

But personal bias aside, he would have noticed a certain unity at work that would have been included in his Sunday morning column.

but one body. So that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.” (1 Corinthians 12:18,20,25-27)

I guess when it comes down to it, the church can learn a lot from soccer. But please don’t tell anyone that you heard it from me.

EXTREME GAMES

“It is good to grasp the one and not let go of the other. The man who fears God will avoid all extremes.” Ecclesiastes 7:18

Well, it's that time of year sports fans. No, I'm not talking about football game faces or baseball pennant races, I'm talking the “extreme games.” The faint of heart need not apply. In fact, if you've ever experienced a cardiovascular condition or happen to be pregnant, you might avoid these rides. “It's a Small World” and “Peter Pan” are more suited for you. These are ‘E’ tickets all the way and the ‘E’ is for “extremely fanatical.”

Extreme games are all about risk taking and partial insanity. In other words, the next stop is a padded cell. These are people that not only live on the edge but will occasionally step over it. Unlike the healed demoniac of Mark 5, they are clothed but not in their right minds. Years ago, they called them “thrill-seekers.” People who caught bullets in their teeth (how do you practice that?), jumped over speeding cars, wrestled alligators and climbed skyscrapers barehanded.

Today, even age has no bearing. In the 80 and over category, one octogenarian started bungee-jumping. After attempting his first dive, someone asked, “What were your first words after you got down?” He replied, “Give me back my teeth!” But these extremes weren't enough solo. Someone thought he could improve these adrenaline addictions and turned them into competitive sports. Now the list includes rock climbing, skydiving, bicycle jumping, snowboarding, and risky skateboarding.

While no one should be arrested for a zest for life, avoiding extremes of a spiritual nature, as Solomon would say, leads to balance in Christ. He gives a picture of a person holding onto an object with one hand as well as the other. The circus high wire act demonstrates this. The tightrope walker stands

far above the center ring with a thin rope to walk on and a steadying pole to hold onto. While grasping one side, he dare not let go of the other or else his fate will be inevitable...an imbalanced tumble.

Balance in our spiritual lives requires a focus just like balance on the highwire. But strangely enough, the fear that is spoken of by the wise author of Ecclesiastes had to do with an increasing love and respect for God. Balancing occurs in various places:

Grace and Truth: John 1:14 tells us that grace without truth leads to license or “sloppy agape” while truth without grace leads to legalism.

Mercy and Justice: In Psalm 140:6,12, the Psalmist blends God’s divine attributes of mercy and justice. Mercy without justice brings tolerance and justice without mercy an inflexible death sentence.

Humility and Authority: Finally, 2 Corinthians 12:21 and 13:10 speak of this balance. Humility alone brings powerlessness and authority alone control.



Balance in our spiritual lives requires a focus just like balance on the highwire.

There is one spiritual extreme that will never take us off course and to which balance will always occur. That is a passion for Jesus. Ephesians 1:17 says, *“I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.”* There’s no greater thrill than that.

FIERCE AND FAIR WEATHER FANS

Well, Rams fans, as Ricky said to Lucy when Little Ricky was about to be born... "The Time Has Come." After years of waiting, and I do mean years, the St. Louis team has finally got an actual shot at the World Championship. Not since 1951 (long before the NFC/AFC merger) have the Rams won the big one. It's amazing when you think about it. Elvis wasn't popular yet, J.F.K. was still a freshman Senator, television was in it's infant stages and the first Super Bowl was still 16 years off.

However, a few years back, L.A. fans grew impatient and weary of pulling for a team that had become legendary for "near misses" and "semi-greatness" only to disappoint us season after season. After all, we agonized over the "Lambs" roller-coaster performances. We winced, ached and groaned over each pursuit of the Holy Grail of Sports Awards...the Lombardi Trophy.

96

Soon, there was no love lost between the front office and the fans. And so in 1994, though Georgia Frontiere (the Rams owner) was already a millionaire, as swiftly as Jed and the Clampetts, she "packed up the truck and moved to St. Lou-ie." It had something to do with the fans' unwillingness to spend \$260 million on a new stadium. We thought, "Sure we'll buy your '0 for 43 championship team' a new stadium...NOT." (Maybe we'll even change the name of our state to "Georgia." Oops, that one has already been used.) So off she went to drown in her own "Missouri" and we hadn't seen hide nor hair of her since. We said "good riddance" and wiped the dust off our collective seat cushions and, judging from that move, Los Angeles fans haven't shed a tear over it...until a few years later. Now, our team was in the Super Bowl and *we wanted them back!*

Seems the same scenario played out in Houston, Texas, a few years ago. Tennessee came calling and their owner accepted the invitation. These Houstonians lived and died in their famous state-of-the-art Astrodome, Sunday after Sunday, only to

find their commitment reaping few rewards. That is, until the Oilers moved and miraculously started winning, too. To make matters worse, their team even changed names as if they were in a witness protection program.

It's all speculative, mind you, but while I believe that new stadiums, fans, cities and, of course, draft choices have spurred the Rams and Titans on to these great heights, I also have to wonder if sometimes we can give up a little too soon on what lies right around the corner.

Commitment to God and His ways requires that we have a “stick-to-itiveness” and persistence that is unceasing even when we don't see results or when it's fourth and nine and the clock is winding down. It means believing that *“His ways are higher than our ways, and His thoughts are higher than our thoughts.”* (Isaiah 55:9,10)

In Galatians 6:9,10, Paul says to the early church, *“And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.”* (KJV)

We see it all around us:

- 1) **Praying for a loved one's salvation** (1 Thessalonians 5:17)
- 2) **Faithfulness at a task or job** (Ephesians 3:21)
- 3) **Godly living in a rocky relationship** (Romans 12:18)

Meanwhile, all is forgiven with Georgia and our Rams. Amazing how time and Super Bowls heal all wounds. And to boot, we even saved \$260 million in the process.



**Commitment to God
and His ways
requires that we have
a “stick-to-itiveness”...**

PRIME TIME PRAYERS

Dick Vitale won't ever be confused with Socrates, Aristotle or Confucius, but then again, they won't ever be confused with him either. The truth is, he's become legendary in the basketball world for catchy phrases. The noted ESPN sportscaster's favorite slogans have become commonplace in sports rhetoric and if you're unfamiliar with the N.C.A.A. collegiate court craziness known as "March Madness" you better break out a dictionary.

M.D.A., for example, is a "Multi-Dimensional-Animal" or a player that can do it all. Shooting the "J" simply means a player that can hit a "Jump Shot" from anywhere on the court. And handling the "Rock" refers to a person's dribbling abilities.

But my favorite is a Prime Time Player, also known as a "P.T.P.," who is able to keep his composure and score during the game's most pressured moments. While the team's back is against the wall, this individual wants the ball in his hands to either "do or die." They've been in these situations countless times and know exactly what to do. It's Michael Jordan in 1982, Keith Smart in 1987 and Christian Laettner in 1992. With little to no time left, they let the shot fly and, of course, it's nothing but net.

However, there is a type of P.T.P. that supercedes anything that you'll ever see on the hardwood. I refer to them as "Prime Time *Prayers*." While they won't always be mistaken as elite athletes, they have a similar spiritual prowess that can't be denied... ice in the veins, fire in the heart and a preconceived game plan.

Cindy Hartman is one such "Prime Time Prayer." In September of 1994, she walked into her house to answer the phone and was confronted by a burglar. He ripped the phone cord out of the wall and ordered her into a closet. Cindy dropped to her knees and asked the burglar if she could pray for him. "I want you to know that God loves you and I forgive you," she said.

The burglar, shocked by her response, apologized for what he had done. Then he yelled outside to a woman in a pickup truck.

“We’ve got to unload all of this. This is a Christian home and a Christian family. We can’t do this to them.” As Cindy remained on her knees, the burglar returned the furniture he had taken from her home. Then he took the bullets out of his gun, handed the gun to her and walked out the door.

Talk about pressure. Much like a seasoned basketball star who has polished his or her game through innumerable hours of training, the P.T.P. reflexively responds under pressure to an all-powerful God who hears and acts on his behalf.

In Exodus 14, Moses came upon a certain “March Madness” of his own as his Egyptian foes put on the full court press. While the Israelites found themselves up against the Red Sea wall with no way out, verse 11 says, *“As Pharaoh approached, the Israelites looked up, and there were the Egyptians, marching after them. They were terrified and cried out to the LORD.”*

With great composure, Moses knew exactly what to do. Verses 21 and 22 tell us, *“Moses stretched out his hand over the sea,*

and all that night the LORD drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, and the Israelites marched through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left.



Cindy dropped to her knees and asked the burglar if she could pray for him. “I want you to know that God loves you and I forgive you,” she said.

God pulled off the ultimate “pick and roll.” He had picked the Israelites and rolled back the water, and they scored a victory. But you can expect those kinds of things when you’re a P.T.P.

THE

CONSUMMATE CLOSING CEREMONY

In the modern era of the Olympic Games, which began in 1896, only two world venues have been held in the nation of Australia.

The most recent, the games of the 27th Olympiad, were held over the summer of 2000 in Sydney. But the first, the games of the 15th Olympiad, occurred in the city of Melbourne in 1956. The striking feature of those games, unlike any other in the past or present, was not so much the spectacular nature of the opening and closing ceremonies, but rather the simple and deeply impressive singing by massed choirs of the “Hallelujah Chorus” from Handel’s *Messiah*. I can imagine being there as voices around the world declared the praises of God. It must have been a foretaste of heaven.

As athletes looked on from all nations, they were reminded of what it took to bring them to this place. Men and women from every land were willing to commit themselves to the preparation and pursuit of their dreams, which were now being fulfilled.

When you look to God’s Word, you find many training parallels required from both the Olympian and the believer that make our dreams a reality:

- 1) **Like the Olympian, we are called to rigorous training:** *“Take time and trouble to keep yourself spiritually fit. Bodily fitness has a limited value, but spiritual fitness is of unlimited value, for it holds promise both for this present life and the life to come.”* (1 Timothy 4:8)
- 2) **Like the Olympian, we are determined to win:** *“Do you remember how, on the racing-track, every competitor runs, but only one wins the prize? Well, you ought to run with your minds fixed on winning the prize!...I run the race then with determination. I am no shadow-boxer, I really fight! I am my body’s sternest master, for fear that when I have preached to others I should myself*

be disqualified.” (1 Corinthians 9:24-27)

- 3) **Like the Olympian, we must play by the rules:** *“I anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor’s crown unless he competes according to the rules.”* (2 Timothy 2:5)
- 4) **Like the Olympian, we will face obstacles:** *“You were running well. Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth?”* (Galatians 5:7)
- 5) **Like the Olympian, we focus our eyes:** *“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.”* (Hebrews 12:2)

Greater still than all of these is the prize for which we aspire. The Olympian strives for a medal of gold, silver or bronze...the believer for a crown that will last forever. 2 Timothy 4:8 says, *“Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have*

longed for his appearing.” On that day, you’ll mount the victor’s stand and hear the Judge’s words, *“Well done, thou good and faithful servant.”*

And the way I see it, just like the Aussies celebrated back in 1956, a world chorus will begin heaven’s national anthem not much different from Handel’s *Messiah*. And I can guarantee you that there won’t be a dry eye in the place.



**On that day, you’ll
mount the victor’s
stand and hear the
Judge’s words,
“Well done, thou
good and faithful
servant.”**

HEAVEN'S HEADLINES

On The Internet: WWW.HEAVEN'S.HEADLINES.COM

Vol. 52

50¢

HOLIDAY HEADLINES

One of the essential ingredients of the Gospel is Hope. "Hope for Humanity" - now wouldn't that make a great headline for the L.A. or New York Times?

What deserves to be on the front pages of our major newspapers? Just bad news? The standard thinking among the news media has traditionally been: "If it bleeds it leads." In God's Word, and God's economy, the headlines take a vastly different tone. "Salvation for Souls" or "Compassion for the Lost," could easily headline any daily newspaper that God wanted to publish.



Wouldn't it be wonderful if our secular news outlets could get the message? One of the essential

ingredients of the Gospel is Hope. "Hope for Humanity" - now wouldn't that make a great headline for the L.A. or New York Times?

What deserves to be on the front pages of our major newspapers? Just bad news? The standard thinking among the news media has traditionally been: "If it bleeds it leads." In God's Word, and God's economy, the headlines take a vastly different tone. "Salvation for Souls" or "Compassion for the Lost,"

Throughout our calendar year, days of celebration have been set aside to remember special events, people and traditions. These events include everything from New Year's Day and President's Day to Easter and Christmas. And in every case, we find opportunities to give God thanks for all that He has done through His faithfulness to us through provision and protection.

- 43. New Year's Dance**
- 44. Whose Hands?**
- 45. First Love**
- 46. Titanic Victory**
- 47. Mama's Boy**
- 48. War And Remembrance**
- 49. A Dad For All Seasons**
- 50. Pens And Swords**
- 51. Holy-Ween**
- 52. The Lights Of Christmas**
- 53. Christmas Time**

A NEW YEAR'S DANCE

May I have the envelope please?

At the risk of sounding like a night at the Oscars or Grammys, it seems like everyone has made their selections for the year, decade, century and the millennium. U.S. News and World Report, Newsweek, A&E, Lifetime, ESPN, People, and yes, even the National Enquirer. Solid piece of journalism that it is, they realize like the next guy that closure and sales come best with such year-end tallies and awards.

But most of us don't care what the purveyors and historians think, we'd rather turn to the man on the streets. You see, rumor has it, the people have spoken. And like E.F. Hutton, when the people talk, it's time to listen. Time magazine polled the people's choice for the top 20 events of this century. In ascending order of the top 5, we can see what truly made an impact on our society. And now the drum-roll...

5) *World War II (1939)*

4) *U.S. Civil Rights movement (1964)*

3) *Ghandi opposes Britain with civil disobedience (1915)*

2) *First landing on the moon (1969)*

And the number one event voted by the public as the most significant of the 20th century...*Elvis teaches American teens to rock 'n' roll*. For the record, it started in 1954.

Incidentally, our "Man from Graceland" was voted as Time's most influential person of the 20th century as well. Just above Martin Luther King (6), Albert Einstein (5), Billy Graham (4), Adolph Hitler (3) and Yitzhak Rabin (2). Can you imagine that?

Of course, as they say in politics, you can never trust the polls. After all, Elvis' dance craze was given the nod over WWI, the atomic bomb, and the invention of the airplane while Elvis himself beat out Mother Teresa, Winston Churchill and F.D.R. But neither can you ignore that the polls speak loud and clear.

I don't think it takes a forensic scientist to do an autopsy on this survey. The truth is, while there is a segment that viewed him as a rebel rouser in shaky trousers, for countless others, Elvis personified the "Happy Days" era...a time when life was uncomplicated and was experienced in its most simplistic form.

Think about it...the smoke of the Depression and World War II had not fully cleared and the dreaded events of the J.F.K. assassination and Vietnam protests had not yet appeared. In the middle of it all was a slice of simplicity that allowed society to function without the walls going up and lives feeling torn down.

Centuries and millenniums come and go. But patterns will always run the same route. It's the nature of life. Ahead, lay times of every kind. Or, as one wise man wrote about three millennia ago in Ecclesiastes 3, *"There is a time for every-*



Centuries and millenniums come and go. But patterns will always run the same route. It's the nature of life.

born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build, a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance..."

While we're not always sure what God has in store, we can be reminded what Corrie Ten Boom once said, "You can always trust an unknown future to a known God."

Now that's something to dance about.

WHOSE HANDS?

Though I could appear to have a penchant for the obvious...a New Year always brings new things. That means new resolutions, new opportunities, new goals, new desires and new dreams. But in many cases, newness can also bring a sense of the unknown, the unfamiliar and the uncomfortable. As someone once said, "I don't know what the future holds but I do know Who holds the future." And just as importantly, you can be assured of Who holds you.

A few years back, Wayne Watson's song *The Touch Of The Master's Hand* described the familiar story of the violin set to be auctioned. As the auctioneer removed the dusty instrument from its case, he started the bidding at a dollar or two. Just as it was about to be sold, a master violinist picked up the decaying piece and began to tune the strings and tighten the bow only to extract the most beautiful sound from the aging tool. Immediately, the auctioneer restarted the bidding at one then two thousand dollars. What made the difference? The message was clear...it was the touch of the master's hand.

But even more clear is the pleasure the Great Master of our hearts finds in taking people of weathered dreams and decaying ambitions only to remind us again what He can do in the lives of those who place themselves in His hands for His use.

Recently, at the conclusion of his message at a Promise Keepers Conference in Dallas, Bishop Kenneth Ulmer gave perspective to what it means to be in the right hands:

- A basketball in my hands is worth about \$19...A basketball in Michael Jordan's hands is worth about \$36 million...it depends on whose hands it's in.
- A baseball in my hands is worth about \$6...A baseball in Mark McGwire's hands is worth \$19 million...it depends on whose hands it's in.

- A tennis racket in my hands is useless...A tennis racket in Pete Sampras' hands is a Wimbledon Championship...it depends on whose hands it's in.
- A slingshot in my hand is a kid's toy...A sling shot in David's hand is a mighty weapon...it depends on whose hands it's in.
- Two fish and five loaves in my hands is a couple of fish sandwiches...Two fish and five loaves in God's hands will feed thousands...it depends on whose hands it's in.
- Nails in my hands might produce a birdhouse...Nails in Jesus Christ's hands will produce salvation for the entire world...it depends on whose hands it's in.

In 2 Timothy 2:20-21, Paul writes, *"In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for noble purposes and some for ignoble. If a man cleanses himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for*

noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work."

Bishop Ulmer would add...put your concerns, your worries, your fears, your hopes, your dreams, your families and your relationships in God's hands because...when it all comes down to it, it depends on whose hands *you* are in.



But even more clear is the pleasure the Great Master of our hearts finds in taking people of weathered dreams and decaying ambitions only to remind us again what He can do in the lives of those who place themselves in His hands for His use.

FIRST LOVE

Valentine's Day showers us with Cupids, hearts, flowers, and gushy cards...but what is this love that the world celebrates? Most of us can remember falling in love with someone or something for the first time.

I remember my first "date." In my sixteen-year-old mind, my future was established and my plans for marriage were moving along quite nicely. Emotions were running high about my future bride, but then my second date stopped all that.

I remember my first car. That old red hand-me-down Toyota Corolla was a Ferrari Testarosa as far as I was concerned. I was begging my parents to let me run errands for them just to drive that mean machine. But of course, it became just a mode of transportation in six months.

Then I remember my first house. I loved it. It was nothing elaborate, but Stephanie and I could call it our own. But true to form, my love for that place drifted as it became a place to live.

The problem with love is that we associate it too often with emotions. That isn't to say that emotions don't play a major role in love, but rather that they are "the caboose and not the engine of love." In the initial stages, emotions always bring choices. Insert any idea into the equation—girlfriend or boyfriend, cars, houses, Christmas gifts and most anything else. All of these cause us to want to care for them and cater to them because they are so special to us. But then something strange happens. The excitement that was once compelling can become lethargic if we're not careful.

In the book of Revelation, the Apostle John addressed several New Testament churches that in many ways were exemplary in their Christian duties. In chapter 2:2-4 he writes to the Ephesians regarding Christ's heart toward them,

“I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary. Yet I hold this against you. You have forsaken your first love.” (NIV)

Somewhere along the line, their “first love for the Lord” had drifted away and they were operating on remote control. While Christ once gave them butterflies, He was now just part of their routine. This February 14th, a whole lot of love will be expressed to friends, spouses and children. All heartfelt. All deserving. All meaningful. But rekindling our first love for our Savior will be our greatest Valentine’s gift—

- 1) Return to the things that made you love Him in the first place (Rev. 2:4)
- 2) Remember the way you gave your all for Him (Rev. 2:5a)
- 3) Repent of the things that have taken precedence over Him (Rev. 2:5b)



In my sixteen-year-old mind, my future was established and my plans for marriage were moving along quite nicely. Emotions were running high about my future bride but then my second date stopped all that.

It’s the least we can do for the One who “demonstrated His love for us in that while we were yet sinners, He died for us.” (Romans 5:8) Choosing to love Him is the greatest decision anyone has ever made. Or ever will make for that matter.

TITANIC VICTORY

Certain names are synonymous with a descriptive idea. For instance, if you refer to someone as “Einstein,” it’s usually a compliment to his intelligence. If someone is spoken of as “Hercules,” you’re probably talking about his strength. And if you refer to a driver as “Mario,” it most likely means that you’re asking him to slow down.

But a few years back, the word “Titanic” would have brought several thoughts to mind. In the wake of the Academy Awards, you might have thought of the all-time record-setting, blockbuster movie that brought in 11 Oscars. You remember director James Cameron lifting his arms in victory and self-proclamation as the “king of the world.” DeCaprio and Winslet became household names, and anyone associated with the film seemed to be honored in some way. And for the person who has everything, I read that you could take a vacation to the original sight of the wreckage, with a deep-sea dive thrown in...all for the unbelievably low price of \$33,000.

But in the 85 years preceding the movie, Titanic meant “disaster.” The maiden voyage, in early April, 1912, boasted the most unsinkable vessel the high seas had ever known. The ship’s christening raised the standard of luxury liners to a new level. Designers prepared the ship for every eventuality and were optimistic that the worst weather or challenge dare not test itself against this ocean queen. Nothing, they thought, could stop this boat.

Nothing that is...except an iceberg. The Atlantic frozen mass punctured the ship, the hull was flooded with water, and the unsinkable monster plummeted into the depths, and over 1,500 people lost their lives. Devastating, tragic, catastrophic...and its monument rests on the ocean floor off the coast of Newfoundland.

Easter reminds us of a similar tragedy. God’s maiden voyage to earth, like the Titanic, was christened with a humble, yet

spectacular celebration that included angels, animals, stables, shepherds and two astounded parents who we gladly remember at Christmas. Jesus, God in flesh, had entered into the human race. As He grew, few believed that this Titanic of an individual was sinkable. He healed the sick, walked on water, fed the thousands, confronted the enemy and even raised the dead.

Surely, this Designer of the universe was prepared to face every possible tempest or storm that He encountered. Without a doubt, no one or no thing could overthrow His quest to reconcile man to Himself. Nothing could stop Him.

Nothing that is...except a cross. On the surface, it too, looked like a disaster. The last week in Jerusalem culminated in an angry mob and an unjustified crucifixion...all because He claimed to be God. And like the iceberg, the enemy mocked this Divine Vessel and taunted His death and burial. But, unlike the accidental nature of the Titanic, this disaster was planned from the beginning of eternity. And the empty tomb



As He grew, few believed that this Titanic of an individual was sinkable. He healed the sick, walked on water, fed the thousands, confronted the enemy and even raised the dead.

forever symbolizes God's ultimate reign. Jesus refused to remain submerged and was raised on that Easter Sunday morning in awesome victory.

The Titanic forever reminds us of the tragedy of lost lives. If you want to see it, all it takes is \$33,000 and a deep-sea dive to a sunken ship. But the cross reminds us of the hope of salvation. If you want to find it, all it takes is a submitted heart to a Risen Lord. Oh yeah...and did I mention it's free?

MAMA'S BOY

Mama's boy...slice it anyway you want; it's never a compliment. Such labels conjure up images of a person attached to his mother by the apron strings or still dependent on her every utterance. Society spurns such individuals as weak or helpless for such glaring deficiencies and hopeless to ever amount to anything or anyone. Real men never admit affection to mom, don't eat quiche and must act like John Wayne or Arnold Schwarzenegger at all times. It's the American way.

Paul Harvey, the great orator, put it this way: "Ted was eternally seven. He was a mama's boy. Letters began, 'Darling Beloved Little Motherling.' She and he had a compulsion for cleanliness. Back and forth. Ted and his mother...were one and the same."

Frank wouldn't dare go to school without his mother. And the school...was Harvard University. Frank's mother had an extraordinary drive for perfection, and she focused it all on Frank. For six full decades, she tried to organize her son's life in minute detail...and Frank loved every minute of it.

And what about David? When David was a big boy in the army, he never stopped writing his mother. In fact, he once swiped a Top Secret Directive to order a Mother's Day card. All through David's life, he subconsciously imitated mama. Her laugh. Her expressions. The simplest smile.

So...can you be too close to your mother? Well, if you can't, you might turn out to look like Teddy Roosevelt...

or Franklin Delano Roosevelt...

or Dwight David Eisenhower...

or others like John F. Kennedy...

(And the list goes on)

Even Lyndon Johnson's most cherished school paper

was entitled: ‘I’d Rather Be A Mama’s Boy.’”

Of course, while absolving responsibility to others is never an answer, can we ever say thanks enough to Mom?...Not this side of heaven!

Whether you’re a mama’s boy or a mama’s girl, convey your appreciation in some special way today:

1. **Pray for her:** Tell her you are praying for her and follow through. (Colossians 1:3)
 2. **Nurture her:** An “I love you,” special card or tangible act goes a long way for your “Darling Beloved Little Motherling.” (Philippians 6:2)
 3. **Thank her:** Let her know she has done and is doing a great job. (1 Thessalonians 5:18)
- Being a mama’s boy isn’t so bad. Quiche, anyone?



**Even Lyndon
Johnson’s most
cherished school
paper was enti-
tled: ‘I’d Rather
Be A Mama’s
Boy.’”**

WAR AND REMEMBRANCE

In Steven Spielberg's 1998 epic war movie, Saving Private Ryan, the opening scene depicts 21 of the most vivid and memorable moments in motion picture history. With a quiet focus, platoons of allied soldiers are approaching the beaches of Normandy on warships, knowing that in only a few minutes, they will be met by German units unleashing a cacophony of mortar shells, machine gun rounds and artillery fire.

On this D-Day Invasion, as line upon line disembark from their ships and attempt to approach the beach, man after man is gunned down in his attempt to advance toward the steep shoreline inclines which hold the opposition's mounted ammunition and arsenal. Fortunately, for our sake, we know the ending as the allied forces penetrated the Nazi barrier and went on to obtain victory. But not without a tremendous sacrifice. And today, not far from these shores, stand hundreds of crosses that memorialize those men who gave their lives that we might be free.

These crosses are but a few of the memorials that call to mind the honorable and selfless ways soldiers over the centuries have sacrificed their lives for the freedom of others. One author wrote, "Memorials have always been useful to societies to establish and confirm common values, to send messages of posterity about what is significant and worth preserving." Memorials have become an important part of who we are and what we stand for. Consider some of our most cherished sights which include Yorktown, Bunker Hill, Gettysburg, Little Big Horn, the Vietnam Memorial Wall and Pearl Harbor to name a few. Each of these places and monuments tells an important story of the ideals that we hold so dearly and a message that is worth retelling decade after decade.

However, memorials and monuments are not a tradition of recent history but one handed to us from millenniums past. In Exodus 12:14, on the eve of their release from Egypt's

bondage, Moses reminded the Israelites of the importance of remembering what God was about to do. *“And this day shall be unto you for a memorial, and you shall keep it a feast throughout your generations.”* And on the Jordan crossing, Joshua brought to light the magnitude of their future entrance into the Promised Land. In Joshua 4:6-7, it says, *“When your children ask you, ‘What do these stones mean?’ then tell them that the flow of the Jordan was cut off before the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD. When it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. These stones are to be a memorial to the people of Israel forever.”*

On this Memorial Day weekend, as our country sets aside this special time to honor those to whom honor is due, take a few moments to:

1) **Remember the ones who served for you:** These are represented by countless men and women who served their country to bring America liberty.



Each of these places and monuments tells an important story of the ideals that we hold so dearly and a message that is worth retelling decade after decade.

2) **Remember the ones who died for you:** Generations of soldiers whose heroism played a critical part in making and keeping our nation free.

3) **Remember the One who lives for you:** Our Savior who died and lives that we might have freedom from spiritual oppression and inherit eternal life.

May we never forget the debt we owe for a freedom that has cost so many...so much.

A DAD FOR ALL SEASONS

Most people have heard of the “bell curve.” It’s that strangely shaped graph, ironically shaped like a “bell,” that for years has been used by teachers to assess the average grading level of a class. For instance, a small number of students will get “F’s,” a slightly higher number get “D’s,” a rising and proportionately greater amount receive “C’s,” a lesser number receive “B’s,” and a few get “A’s.” (Like a bell, it rises and falls.)

While most have heard of the bell curve, the majority are unaware of the “dad curve.” (Actually, it’s an inverted bell shape.) It starts high, descends to a valley and then rises again. Much like students, dads are constantly being graded by their children. Not that the grading determines a dad’s success or failure, for only the Lord can assess that, but rather the child’s opinion of a dad over a lifetime will continue to change, whether he’s failed, is average or has been perfect.

Ann Landers said it best in her article “My Father When I Was...”

My Father When I Was...

4 years old: *My daddy can do anything.*

5 years old: *My daddy knows a whole lot.*

6 years old: *My dad is smarter than your dad.*

8 years old: *My dad doesn’t exactly know everything.*

10 years old: *In the olden days when my dad grew up, things sure were different.*

12 years old: *Oh, well, naturally, Father doesn’t know anything about that. He is too old to remember his childhood.*

14 years old: *Don’t pay attention to my father. He is so out of touch!*

21 years old: *Him? My goodness he’s hopeless-*

ly out-of-date.

25 years old: Dad knows a little bit about it, but then he should because he's been around so long.

30 years old: Maybe we should ask Dad what he thinks. After all, he's had a lot of experience.

35 years old: I'm not doing a single thing until I talk to Dad.

40 years old: I wonder how Dad would have handled it? He was so wise and had a world of experience.

50 years old: I'd give anything if Dad were here now so I could talk this over with him. Too bad I didn't appreciate how smart he was. I could have learned a lot from him.

Though seasons undoubtedly will change, effective fathering requires constant dependence upon the Lord so



Not that the grading determines a dad's success or failure, for only the Lord can assess that, but rather the child's opinion of a dad over a lifetime will continue to change, whether he's failed, is average or has been perfect.

that you can faithfully fulfill your calling in this vital area. In Ephesians 6:14, Paul says, *"And now a word to all fathers. Don't keep scolding and nagging your children, making them angry and resentful. Rather, bring them up with the loving discipline the Lord himself approves, with suggestions and godly advice."* (TLB) Your kids will thank you for it later. Might even give you an "A."

PENS AND SWORDS

A famous author once wrote, “*The pen is mightier than the sword,*” and hardly anyone could argue that point. But rarely, when it comes to freedom, does one go without the other. That is especially true in the case of our nation’s heroic fight for freedom during the Revolutionary War.

When you survey the lives of the 56 men who were willing to seal the Declaration of Independence with their names, they knew that their own potential capturing might also seal their fate. Yet to them, no cost was too great for national freedom. The final signature of the document was none other than John Hancock who when writing his own “John Hancock” with a bold and flamboyant flair retorted that “It’s so King George in England can read it without putting on his spectacles.” Men of words. Men of action.

Drafted by Thomas Jefferson and several other men, the Declaration of Independence expresses the ideals of individual liberty which were summarized as being “self-evident truth” and set forth a series of grievances against the King to express to the world the ties that would be broken between the new colonies and the mother country. They wrote:

“When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness...

And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually

pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our Sacred Honor.”

A closer look would soon reveal that their powerful actions spoke as loudly as the powerful words that set the sails of our country's course.

- Many of the signers lost their property and possessions during the Revolutionary War.

- Twelve had their homes ransacked and burned; three died from exhaustion.

- Two lost their sons serving in the Revolutionary Army; another had two sons captured.

- Five signers were captured by the British as traitors, and tortured before they died.

- Nine of the 56 fought and died from wounds or hardships of the Revolutionary War.

All of this...so that we could be free.

Even still, we can't help but be reminded of another who

gave His life on a cross for a different kind of freedom. Galatians 5:1 declares, *“It was for freedom, that Christ has set us free. No longer to be subject to the yoke of slavery.”*

It's important to return often to the “self-evident truth” that another tyrant desires to hold us captive...a dictator called sin. Thankfully, for our sake though, God's actions speak loudly...just like His words.



**A closer look
would soon
reveal that their
powerful actions
spoke as loudly
as the powerful
words that set the
sails of our coun-
try's course.**

HOLY-WEEN

I was a weird kid. People might argue that things haven't changed much but I was even weirder when I was young. Just ask my neighbors.

The year was 1972 and Halloween fell on a Wednesday. It was the one chance during the year to stock up on free candy by begging goodies off the neighbors. Since mid-week church was a staple in our spiritual diet, I knew that I wouldn't have a chance to trick-or-treat as in past years. After all, the choicest sweets were always given during the prime hours, during church, and I was destined to get the hard-unwrapped kind.

That's when I devised a great plan. "What if I went out on Tuesday, October 30th? Then I could load up *and* go to church." Getting my parents' confused yet validating permission, off I went (you could do that back then) with pillow case in hand and sporting my junior league basketball uniform. You can imagine my neighbor's expression. "Halloween is tomorrow night, Terry." "I know, Mr. Johnson, but I have church," I said. Some were prepared. Most of them, though, kindly found something in the refrigerator or cupboard that resembled candy but it wasn't the Hershey's, 3 Musketeers or Snickers type I had hoped for.

Halloween was simple then. One or two nights out of the year and it was on to bigger and better things like Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Not so today. Now when people sing, "It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas" they could just as easily be hailing the Halloween season rather than the weather change. It has become another national reason to spend, decorate and play.

*Halloween is ranked #1 among holidays in candy sales—
ahead of Valentine's day.*

*Halloween is ranked #2 for home decorating—behind
Christmas.*

Halloween is ranked #3 in party-themed merchandise—behind Super Bowl Sunday and New Year’s Eve.

Halloween has become a 2.4 billion dollar national holiday season.

There are usually two camps of Christians when we approach this time of year and both make a pretty good case (some even in the same family).

Camp Number 1— The Fearless Minimizers: They usually say something like, “Halloween was fine when I was a kid and it’s fine today. Why shouldn’t my kids have a good time?” Good point. The truth is, though, this has become, to many cults and satanists, the Pagan equivalent of Christmas. Big time warfare is occurring for the fall of Christians worldwide and you are part of that spiritual agenda. (For these I say pray.)

Camp Number 2— The Fearful Maximizers: They usually say something like, “Satan is behind everything that

Halloween has to offer. My kids will never have anything to do with it.” There is relevancy there too, but let’s not forget that we can approach it in a healthy way without finding a demon under every Reese’s. (For these I say play.)

Why not split the difference at our Harvestfaire? You can have your candy and eat it too. As strange as it seems, we can honor the Lord *and* play in a godly manner...I’m kinda weird that way.



**You can imagine
my neighbor’s
expression.
“Halloween is
tomorrow night,
Terry.” “I know,
Mr. Johnson, but I
have church,” I
said.**

THE LIGHT OF CHRISTMAS

Try to imagine a Christmas without lights? Jennings Osborne probably can't. It seems a few years back, he lit his home in Little Rock, Arkansas, with 3 million of them. Count 'em...3 and six 0's. That's 30,000 boxes of 100 and a glow that could give you a Coppertone suntan. I'll bet every Wal-Mart and Sam's Club in the state were racing fast and furious to restock their shelves when Ol' Jen paid a visit. For some people, a few reindeer, a plastic Santa and a little manger scene just won't cut it. His life's motto is, "If you're gonna do it, do it big." And big he does.

Problem is, Osborne's philosophy wouldn't fly in California these days. We're having an energy shortage and Southern California Edison is frowning upon such grandiose displays this Christmas. This new challenge has threatened to put a little damper on the Yuletide festivities. Christmas without lights? That's like Starbuck's without coffee, McDonald's without Big Macs and Firestone without tires. (O.K....bad example.) But you get the point. It's just not the same.

Roy Rivenburg, L.A. Times columnist, gave some thoughtful (though not so helpful) suggestions that can bring a glimmer of hope in low-wattage winter.

—*Require Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer to switch to an energy-efficient fluorescent nose bulb.*

—*Use California's vast, untapped reserve of hamster power. Connect Christmas tree lights to the exercise wheels inside the hamster cage.*

—*Glow-in-the-dark tree ornaments.*

—*Synchronize all twinkling lights so that when Northern California bulbs flash on, Southern California lights flash off, thereby slashing peak electricity consumption.*

—*Finally, six words...Burn leftover Florida chads for heat.*

Many years ago, there was another light shortage. Worse

than the kind we're having this winter...actually a place with no light whatsoever. C.S. Lewis described it so well. *"It was always winter, but never Christmas."* What a bleak and depressing depiction that is. In some places around the world, the Christmas light is the one thing that makes the winter bearable. It's the proverbial light in the middle of the tunnel.

Israel was the place. Having faced years of captivity from the Assyrian empire around 700 B.C. (and later the Babylonians), a message came from Isaiah that would bring a radiant glimmer in the darkness through his suffering servant prophecy. In Isaiah 49:6, he foretold, *"I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."* Jump ahead 700 years and you find Simeon in the temple as he holds the baby Jesus in his hands and relates the fulfillment of Isaiah's words in Luke 2:25. He says,

"Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, accord-

ing to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people." Ol' Jen from Little

Rock would have to agree with Ol' Simeon from Jerusalem...God had done it up big.

It's good news to everyone! We'll never have a Light-shortage ever again.



**Many years ago,
there was another
light shortage.**

**Worse than the
kind we're having
this winter...actual-
ly a place with no
light whatsoever.**

CHRISTMAS TIME

Whether you're a fan of H.G. Wells or Michael J. Fox, for many decades, time travel has been an intriguing and fascinating illusion. Some have day-dreamed of hopping into a time machine and setting a digital date of destination while others have mentally escaped into a DeLorean sports car and driven into the city sky. Which of us at one time or another has not wondered what it must have been like to live during the days of the Old West, the Revolutionary War or Medieval Times? Been there...done that!

Years ago, in a book entitled A Sense of History, many authors and scholars were asked to tell which historical event they would have like to have witnessed...if they could travel in time. Each was asked to respond to the same question, "What is the one scene in American history you would have most liked to have witnessed—and why?" You can imagine some of the responses:

124 -One person said he would have liked to have been among that small company of sailors in the moonlit predawn moment, October 12, 1492, when a lookout aboard a small vessel hailed the sand cliffs of an island never before seen by the eyes of Europeans.

—Another said he would like to have been with Lewis and Clark in November of 1805 when they first glimpsed the objects of the labor, the Pacific Ocean. He wished he could have looked over the shoulder of William Clark as he scribbled in his log book, "Ocean in view...oh, the joy!"

—An interesting selection came from one who wished he could have witnessed that intimate, nostalgic moment when Abraham Lincoln, the President-elect, said farewell to his neighbors in Springfield.

—One wanted to be by Franklin Delano Roosevelt's side on December 7, 1941, when he received news of the Japanese attack. He said he would like to have seen the one

who brought the Pearl Harbor dispatch and then to find out whom Roosevelt contacted first...and to have known when he first began his “Day of Infamy” speech.

While there are many great scenes in American history, what if we would expand it out to Biblical history? There seem to be so many to choose from. Talking with Adam and Eve in the garden, staring as Abraham lifts his knife at Moriah, standing by Moses at the Red Sea and cheering for David against Goliath to name a few.

But none would compare to the quiet stirrings of a tiny babe that Bethlehem night more than 2000 years ago. Luke quoted the angels’ words to the shepherds by saying, *“I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you. You will find the baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.”* (2:10-12)



This Christmas, as I travel back in time, I can picture myself standing in the stable straw, observing the stillness of the evening air and taking in the surroundings of the most spectacular night this world has ever known.

This Christmas, as I travel back in time, I can picture myself standing in the stable straw, observing the stillness of the evening air and taking in the surroundings of the most spectacular night this world has ever known.

Better than finding the new world, spotting the Pacific, Lincoln leaving Springfield and Roosevelt in the oval office all combined. As I peer over Mary’s shoulders, I can’t forget the angels’ message, “Savior in view...oh, the joy!”

HEAVEN'S HEADLINES

On The Internet: WWW.HEAVEN'S HEADLINES.COM

Vol. 52

50¢

INVESTMENT ADVICE

One of the essential ingredients of the Gospel is Hope. "Hope for Humanity" - now wouldn't that make a great headline for the L.A. or New York Times?

What deserves to be on the front pages of our major newspapers? Just bad news? The standard thinking among the news media has traditionally been; "If it bleeds it leads." In God's Word, and God's economy, the headlines take a vastly different tone. "Salvation for Souls" or "Compassion for the Lost," could easily headline any daily newspaper that God wanted to publish.



Wouldn't it be wonderful if our secular news outlets could get the message? One of the essential

ingredients of the Gospel is Hope. "Hope for Humanity" - now wouldn't that make a great headline for the L.A. or New York Times?

What deserves to be on the front pages of our major newspapers? Just bad news? The standard thinking among the news media has traditionally been; "If it bleeds it leads." In God's Word, and God's economy, the headlines take a vastly different tone. "Salvation for Souls" or "Compassion for the Lost,"

God's recurring principles of sowing and reaping as well as storing up treasures remind us that key to the successful life in His kingdom is proper stewardship.

Stewardship with our personal lives, families, finances, materials and areas of oversight will truly determine our growth and rewards in this life and the next.

- 54. Bible Reading Is Fundamental**
- 55. The Best Kept Secret**
- 56. Perfect Rest**
- 57. Simplicity Of Sympathy**
- 58. God's Heart For The World**
- 59. A Grounded Faith**
- 60. The Power Of Words**
- 61. Itchy Faith**
- 62. Loving Without Regret**
- 63. A Time To Laugh**
- 64. Vision Is More Than Meets The Eye**

BIBLE READING IS FUNDAMENTAL

School is back in session and studies are revealing some appalling statistics about our national averages. Illiteracy seems to be a chronic ailment that plagues our educational system with more gloomy reports on the horizon. Teachers and parents have been baffled by the progress (or lack thereof) of the reading skills of students.

But most of us don't realize that, in some form or another, similar challenges strike us in varying ways. Not necessarily in our ability to read as much as our willingness to read. In some cases, it's something as simple as directions.

Take, for instance, the following call that came into a Computer Tech Support:

Caller: *"Hello, is this Tech Support?"*

Tech: *"Yes, it is. How may I help you?"*

Caller: *"The cup holder on my personal computer is broken and I am within my warranty period. How do I go about getting it fixed?"*

Tech: *"I'm sorry, but did you say a cup holder?"*

Caller: *"Yes, it's attached to the front of my computer."*

Tech: *"Please excuse me if I seem a bit stumped. It's because I am. Did you receive that as part of a promotional, at a trade show? How did you get this cup holder? Does it have any trademark on it?"*

Caller: *"It came with my computer. I don't know anything about a promotional. It just has '4x' on it."*

At this point the Tech Rep had to mute the caller, because he started to laugh. The caller had been using the load drawer of the CD-ROM drive as a cup holder, and snapped it off the drive. (If you're still puzzled, ask a computer literate friend to explain it to you.) Personally, I use a Styrofoam cup on my drive. It doesn't weigh as much.

When it comes to Bible illiteracy, in many of our cases, it has more to do with a learning disinterest rather than a

learning disorder. And boy, do we pay a price! While ignoring directions in your computer manual can cause a technical breakdown, neglecting His directions in your “life manual” can bring a spiritual breakdown. In Psalm 119, we find a few of the benefits of reading His instructions to us:

- 1) **It purifies my heart** (v. 9-11): God’s word works as a cleansing agent.
- 2) **It discerns my thoughts** (v. 29): It gives us a divinely-objective point of view regarding the way that I live and the choices that I make.
- 3) **It’s a source of peace** (v. 61,62): In the Bible, we find comfort for our souls.
- 4) **It fills me with joy** (v. 111): The result of reading is a wellspring of life.

There is only one remedy to this problem. We must take time to read the Bible and ask some easy questions as we do.

1) What is the obvious, plain meaning of the text?



While ignoring directions in your computer manual can cause a technical breakdown, neglecting His directions in your “life manual” can bring a spiritual breakdown.

(Matthew 13:36) 2) What practical applications do I need to see (Matthew 7:24-27) 3) Is there a promise for me to enjoy or commandment to obey? (2 Peter 1:2-11) 4) Are there facts to be known? (Acts 4:12) It’s really so simple but it’s carving out the time that seems so hard. If all else fails, you might try what I do. Get yourself some coffee or hot chocolate...but for heaven’s sake, make sure the cup is Styrofoam!

THE BEST KEPT SECRET

Political correctness has rendered us a paranoid and paralyzed people. Speak a word inappropriately, be it ever so slightly, and “anything you say can and will be held against you in a court of law.” College classes are being taught on “sensitivity awareness” to avoid hurting people’s feelings and Grimm’s Fairy Tales has even been revised with a kinder more gentler tone. Whether you tend to believe that people are too touchy or too offensive, often, a surgeon’s skill is required to explore certain themes.

Christians aren’t exempt from such dealings. Take tithing, for instance. Say it quietly. Now say it loudly. (Shhhhh...Not that loud. Someone might hear it.) It can be a little bit precarious to bring it up lest the message be wrongly received. If you have found and applied this secret, it requires all your personal will power to avoid yelling “Eureka” in a crowded theater or church. If you haven’t, it usually raises a jaundiced eye. Put another way, it’s the kind of word that warms your heart or gives you heartburn.

Pastors have found it becoming politically and spiritually incorrect to mention it to people. Here’s the dilemma. On the one hand, if you mention it, then some people immediately conclude that churches are after their money. On the other hand, if you don’t mention it, we run the risk of missing out on one of the greatest benefits in serving Christ...the ability to bless and be blessed.

Over the years, at certain points, I have heard practically every reason why people sometimes view tithing as an option clause and can, in some cases, believe it has little significance to God’s blessing spiritually, relationally, emotionally and financially. Here are a few of those theories:

- 1) **Consumer Giving Theory:** Much like the movies, restaurants, stores and concerts, giving can be based on the return product (or, in other words, “Good service means good tip”).
- 2) **Surplus Theory:** As long as all the bills are taken care of,

- and things weren't too tight, I can afford to give to God.
- 3) **Guilt Theory:** The motivation was strong as long as they were reminded, but would eventually wane. Soon, though, another dose of guilt is needed.
 - 4) **Flush Theory:** You guessed it. It's the idea that giving to God was about as beneficial as stepping into the restroom and dropping it into the "porcelain retainer."
 - 5) **Token Theory:** Here, enough is done to keep the Lord at bay.

You may have developed more false theories not listed here. Like a defense attorney scanning for loopholes, we can often search for reasons it just doesn't work.

But the Bible gives us many more reasons why it does. In Luke 6:38, Jesus reminds us to *"Give, and it shall be given unto you. Pressed down, shaken together and running over. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."* If you've ever tested His theory, you know that there is nothing like it in the world.




On the one hand, if you mention it, then some people immediately conclude that churches are after their money. On the other hand, if you don't mention it, we run the risk of missing out on one of the greatest benefits in serving Christ...the ability to bless and be blessed.

I hope you don't misunderstand. Frankly, I am astounded by the faithfulness of God's people in tithing, offerings, missions and more. I just don't want anyone to miss out on one of the greatest joys around. It may not be politically or spiritually correct, but, hey, some secrets are too good to keep.

PERFECT REST

Ty's wife sat with a psychiatrist wondering what she could do to stop his snoring. Sympathetic, the psychiatrist said, "Does it bother you?" "No, it embarrasses me. It's the rest of the congregation that's bothered." Preachers get a bad rap, don't they? Sometimes it's deserved...I take that back; most of the time it's deserved.

132  Actually, the Bible gives an amusing account in Acts 20 of another man named Ty who came to church and the most unexpected thing occurred. *"On Sunday we gathered for a Communion service, with Paul preaching. And since he was leaving the next day, he talked until midnight! The upstairs room where we met was lighted with many flickering lamps; and as Paul spoke on and on, a young man named Eutychus, sitting on the windowsill, went fast asleep and fell three stories to his death below. Paul went down and took him into his arms. 'Don't worry,' he said, 'he's all right!' And he was! What a wave of awesome joy swept through the crowd! They all went back upstairs and ate the Lord's Supper together; (not to be dissuaded) then Paul preached another long sermon – so it was dawn when he finally left them!"* (V.7-12; TLB) And you think we go over a little occasionally. Here you have the first case of a man being bored to death (or preached to death). That would have been a humiliating blemish on Paul's resumé.

While picturing this scene may crack a smile, sleep is no longer a laughing matter. Though pastors can have complicity to some degree, usually it's our own choice. And we're paying a severe price for it. Sleep scientists say we're a nation of people who aren't getting enough sleep and cheating ourselves out of at least one hour a day. Consequently, we are less productive and alert than we could be. We're also more likely to be forgetful, angry, cranky and irritable.

Although sleep requirements vary, Americans are generally trading sleep for work, television and activities. And you can bet

that, as Christians, it is affecting our spiritual walk. Be on your guard. The enemy will use a simple and practical discipline as this to wreak havoc on our spiritual state:

- 1) **It affects our ability and desire to read His Word:** At the least, tiredness will allow the enemy to shortcut your devotions or gain little from them. At the most, we risk skipping out on them all together which forfeits His strength and growth in us. (Isaiah 26:3)
- 2) **It affects our ability and desire to hear His Word:** Wearing down physically assures your attention span will rank low on the receptivity scale. (Romans 10:17)
- 3) **It affects our ability and desire to pray:** A tired believer will rarely have a zealous prayer life. (2 Thessalonians 1:11)
- 4) **It affects our ability and desire to invest in our greatest priorities:** God, your spouse, your children, family and friends usually will get a short-fused, less than

Spirit-filled response if we don't order this area of our lives. (Matthew 11:28,29)

Practical areas play an important role in our spiritual well-being. The experts suggest exercising regularly, eating a proper diet and avoiding caffeine food and drinks six hours before bed. But spiritual rest comes from a Good Book, a pure heart and frequent times of prayer. Oh, and if you snore...try not to interrupt the rest of the church.



Although sleep requirements vary, Americans are generally trading sleep for work, television and activities. And you can bet that, as Christians, it is affecting our spiritual walk.

THE SIMPLICITY OF SYMPATHY

Simplify. The popularity of this theme is proving to be more appealing in a day of complexity. Homes are being sold, corporations are being abandoned and many are finding that the encumbrances that were once necessary for contentment are now expendable. Consumers are trading what society has said will make us happy for what we believe will make us happy. Either we're discovering that Honda is right or Honda has discovered that we are right.

Simplicity extends beyond the realm of consumerism though. It fits nicely in our Christian vocabulary as well, especially when it comes to being a comforter or encourager to others. Misled into believing that eloquence or extravagance is the key to effective ministry, many are discovering that it doesn't take much to impact a life (whether that be a person who is running on "E" or someone whose tank is completely dry). After all, you don't have to have experienced another person's pain to show care for them.

Years ago, I read a letter to Abby Van Buren that appropriately communicates what people are looking for at a time of loss but, of course, we don't have to wait. We can extend encouragement today.

"Dear Abby, All I want is to have my loss acknowledged. Do people fear a scene? The best thing I have ever done is join the Widowed Persons Service sponsored by the AARP (American Association of Retired People) and local community organizations. I also joined a bereavement group sponsored by Hospice. Only other widowed people know how I feel and take my feelings seriously. The following appeared in a recent W.P.S. newsletter. I hope you think it is worth printing: AFTER SOMEONE HAS DIED, SAY... 'What I always liked about () was ().' 'I'll never forget the time that he and I ().' 'May I take the kids to the beach today?' 'It's O.K. Tell me again about ().' 'I just phoned to say hello.' 'Tuesday will be

a tough day for you. May we spend it together?’ ‘I thought you might need a hug or someone to hold your hand today.’ ‘You don’t have to hide the tears.’ ‘I’d love to (trim your bushes, etc.). May I do it for you?’ The best thing anybody (who did not know my husband personally) said to me was, ‘I was so sorry to read about your husband’s death. Would you like to talk about it?’ LOVE, A WIDOW IN NEW LONDON, CONNECTICUT.”

As we scan the Scriptures, we find that certain people had a knack for sympathy and encouraging others. When David was being hounded by King Saul year after year, Jonathan was strategically available to stand beside his friend even at the risk of his father’s rage. (1 Samuel 18:3) When Naomi was to return to Israel after the loss of her husband, Ruth determined to be her companion and sacrifice her own needs. (Ruth 1:16) When Mary and Martha’s brother Lazarus died, Jesus was present not necessarily to deliver a



As we scan the Scriptures, we find that certain people had a knack for sympathy and encouraging others.

dissertation on “eschatological theology,” but simply to cry with them. (John 11:35)

We make comforting others far too complicated. If we are willing, the Holy Spirit is willing to work through us. Finding candidates for consolation are as easy as throwing a pea in the ocean. Don’t say that I told you, but the person sitting next to you could use it. I’m sure they’d let you give them a hug or handshake if you asked really nicely.

GOD'S HEART FOR THE WORLD

A commitment to missions is always preceded by a clear understanding of God's heart to reach lost people of all races, creeds, and languages. Without the belief that our Lord so values each soul that He died for each one and without the belief that He passionately pursues the salvaging of each one (Luke 15:1-7), our desire to participate in His pursuit will be fleeting at best and non-existent at worst.

God's call upon each believer to the mission of world evangelism will always vary in pragmatics yet coincide in purpose; the rescue of prisoners held captive to sin. Only the power of Jesus Christ can do that.

We often disqualify ourselves from His plan simply because we capitulate to the false assumption that our contribution of time, talent and gifts means little. Furthermore, missions and ministry, in our minds, are reserved for people and places beyond our reach. But as one author clearly stated, "We need missionaries in the marketplace as well as in Pango Pango." Our mission field begins in our own hearts, then extends to our families, friends, co-workers, neighbors, then wherever else the Lord may lead, to the uttermost ends of the earth!

Abraham's calling in Genesis included a blessing upon His family, His nation and all peoples on earth. God's love was never exclusive; it was always for all nations. In the New Testament, no less than five times, God's Word says, "Go and make disciples in all the world." (Matthew 28:19, Mark 16:15, Luke 24:47, John 20:21, Acts 1:8) When the disciples discovered God's intent, they, too, adopted it as their own and would not be hindered from proclaiming the Good News.

John Mott, an early twentieth-century missionary, desired to win the entire world to Jesus Christ. His travels took him to Europe, the Middle East, Africa, India, Latin

America, Australia, China, Japan and the islands of the Pacific. Everywhere he went, he led men and women to Christ. In 1946, he was honored with the Nobel Peace Prize. Mott summed up the definition of a call when he said, “The awareness of a need and the capacity to meet that need—this constitutes a call.”

History teaches us that God will use anyone who is willing to heed His call. Even if we have no great gifts to offer, a heart submitted to God’s plan, on the basis of the Lord’s love for mankind and redemptive promise, can change individuals and nations. In 1 Corinthians 1:27-30, the Apostle Paul says, “*But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before Him. It is because of Him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom*

from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.” The key to cooperating with God has little to do with our qualifications and everything to do with our obedience. Are we foolish enough to believe He can use us?



**History
teaches us that
God will use any-
one who is willing
to heed His call.**

FAITH

Having visited the Holy Land a while back, I find myself more convinced than ever that God has made our faith so easy to believe. He has given us so many ways to verify the backdrop of Scripture that you almost have to work at it to not believe what the Bible says. The nation of Israel, only 360 miles long and 60 miles wide, is only the size of Vermont but large enough to encompass over 90% of the events of the Bible. This small piece of land, where Africa, Europe, Asia and the Middle East meet, was strategically picked as the land where God touched down.

As I sat in a chair and read my Bible on the south shore of the Sea of Galilee, I pictured Jesus walking along and calling his disciples from net-menders to life-changers. (Mark 3:16ff) Then I stood on the northern end of Galilee, at the sight of the Mount of Beatitudes, and couldn't help but be reminded of Christ's tradition-breaking message of the Sermon on the Mount and its timeless themes. (Matthew 5-7) Soon, as I walked by the excavations of Jericho, I envisioned the Joshua-led seven-day march that culminated in the collapse of the city and another Israel victory. (Joshua 6) And later, strolling along the Jerusalem wall, I could almost hear Nehemiah's team hammering and rebuilding the city following the exile. (Nehemiah 1)

Many faiths and religions are so spiritually minded...they are no earthly good. Their ideas and philosophies are based in theory rather than practicum. Not so with Christianity. Everything happened with real people, in real places, at a real time in history. And they all serve to remind us that our beliefs are grounded in solid facts and faces. Put it under an attorney's cross-examination and you find proof of overwhelming proportions. Consider the facts:

- 1) **The Evidence of our Faith:** Evidence is defined as something legally submitted to a court to ascertain the truth of a matter. One such example is the Bedouin shepherd discoveries in the Dead Sea Scrolls. In 1947, a young boy came upon the scrolls of Isaiah (and other books) that were written 200 years prior to Christ's birth. This revealed that the

prophecies of Christ were written and confirmed before He was even born.

- 2) **The History of our Faith:** History refers to a chronological record of significant events that include an explanation of their causes. Someone once said, “History is His-story,” meaning Jesus as God embedded Himself into our timeline for everyone to see and experience. The division of A.D. and B.C. denote the most significant figure in history to whom we have adjusted our calendars.
- 3) **The Rationality of our Faith:** Rationality is an explanation of controlling principles of opinion, belief, practice or phenomena. When it comes to Christ and his claims, as C.S. Lewis mentioned, there are only three options...liar, lunatic or Lord.

But the strongest statement of the Christian faith came on a plot of land on the outskirts of Old Jerusalem where, almost 2000 years ago, a cross held a man in place. Soon, thereafter, He was laid in a



But the strongest statement of the Christian faith came on a plot of land on the outskirts of Old Jerusalem where, almost 2000 years ago, a cross held a man in place.

tomb in a tiny garden which stands empty as a reminder of victory over sin, death and hell. The apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15:13,14, *“If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is our faith.”* Conversely, because He did...we do too.

Some people question that an old, rugged cross and a barren, empty tomb could really make much difference. But it's not that hard to believe when you think about it.

THE POWER OF WORDS

Growing up in the South, Texas that is, definitely had its advantages and disadvantages. From birth, you quickly became acquainted with fine cuisines such as grits and weather trolls such as tornadoes. There was a hint of positive pride being connected to the pioneer heroes of the famous Alamo battle and the reputable Dallas Cowboys. (How times have changed!) And while everything isn't big in Texas, the state seemed to take three weeks to drive across which somehow made you feel like it was its own country.

However, Texans have a reputation of communicating in an unusual manner which creates problems when leaving that indigenous zone. I know...I were one. Words like reckon, fixin' to and idinit (isn't it) scarcely could be translated by western folk.

Recently, I dusted off my copy of "How to Speak Southern" and thought I'd invite you into the wonderful world of drawl. Ya'll can rate your abilities.

1. Arn: An electrical instrument used to remove wrinkles from clothing. "Ah'm not gonna arn today. It's too hot."
2. Bleeve: Expression of intent or faith. "Ah bleeve we ought to go to church this Sunday."
3. Flares: The colorful, sweet-smelling part of a plant. "If your wife's mad at you, it's smart to take her some flares."
4. Keer: To be concerned. "That girl don't keer about him."
5. Ratcheer: On this spot. "Jeest put the groceries ratcheer."
6. Warshrag: A cloth used for cleaning people and dishes. "Hang up that warshrag when you're done with it."

How did you do? If you got one or two right, consider

yourself a learned linguist. If you got more than three, let's go have a bobbycue and tawk. I spect you've been there.

There is no getting around it. Our words give us away. Communication experts can often hear any dialect and tell us where we're from.

While Paul was known to throw out a "reckon" (Romans 8:18) or two, I believe he was a strong advocate of words that would represent our Lord Jesus. Do our words convey our spiritual roots? Citizens of heaven speak with certain characteristics.

1) **Words That Glorify Our Lord:** Psalm 19:14 says, *"Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in Thy sight."*

2) **Words That Build Up Others:** *"With the same tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it, we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness...My brothers, it should not be."* (James 3:9,10)



Do our words convey our spiritual roots? Citizens of heaven speak with certain characteristics.

3) Words That Exude

Grace: *"Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope you have...But do this with gentleness and respect."* (1 Peter 3:15)

Your words say a lot. And that can be a great thing. There's no greater thrill than to have someone say, "He's the spittin' image of his Father." (Romans 8:29)

ITCHY FAITH

While certain expressions are less known, few have difficulty understanding what they mean. Take “*itchy face*,” for example. Some conclude that it pertains to a person who has fallen head long into a poison ivy plant or the deep desire to ease the irritation of chicken pox. Though these definitions are appropriate, Webster (if it was in his famous book) would probably describe it as “an engaged woman’s irrepressible urge to scratch her nose or facial feature with the intention of exposing a certain ring to friends or strangers.” In other words, they’ve got good news and they’re not gonna wait for you to ask—they’ll tell you.

It was a Sunday evening, March 7, 1993, when I experienced it first hand. My family and I were in Paris (the city ...not the lake) and Stephanie (my soon-to-be fiancée) was traveling along. I had already purchased the ring back home and was planning all along where I would ask her. Finally, I convinced her that, though we were ready to go home the next day, we needed one last look from the Eiffel Tower observation deck.

For the most part it went off without a hitch...except for stepping on her feet twice, the temporary return to vocal puberty, and residue of dinner salad in my teeth. In a word...smoooooth. She started to yell excitedly and I started to hide, which attracted the attention of three French policemen and half of France. Somehow, at least she says, she couldn’t contain herself.

As we road down the elevator, she was hit with a rare case of “itchy face.” News that was so exciting that she started telling everyone. Mind you, most of the people in that elevator had no clue what she was saying to them but she didn’t care. She began to tell others as if they were best friends. The elevator operator just rolled his eyes in a “You’re-the-4,000th-couple-today look” on this big pile of sheet metal.

It got me thinking...as good as news of birth announcements, engagements, weddings and milestones may be, there is no news that compares to THE GOOD NEWS. While women may get “itchy face,” Christians should have an “itchy faith.” It’s sort of a, try as I might, I-can’t-stop-talk-ing-about-Jesus feeling. We don’t have to look far in Acts to see the epidemic proportions that hit the early church.

“When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus...But to stop this thing from spreading any further among the people, we must warn these men to speak no longer to anyone in this name. Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John replied, ‘Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God’s sight to obey you rather than God. For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.’” (Acts 4:13,17-19)



We don't have to look far in Acts to see the epidemic proportions that hit the early church.

Something had hit them that was “spreading,” and they “couldn’t help but speak about it.” Itchy face comes and goes, but itchy faith is incurable. Increased exposure to Jesus seems to have that effect on a person.

LOVING WITHOUT REGRET

Regret. It's one of the insidious words that mock us and hovers over our heads long after an event has transpired. It reminds us of "what might have been" or a "road not taken." In short, it's something that we knew to do and chose not to do for whatever reason. Maybe it was apathy...stubbornness...procrastination...pride...wrong choices or any number of hindrances that cause us to live in a state of remorse.

Talk to individuals or couples for any length of time and you'll notice this common thread of humanity. It usually comes out something like, "I wish I had told her how much I cared," or "If I could only do it over again, I would have done it differently."

Search the New Testament high and low and you'll find something noticeably absent. Jesus never regretted anything that He ever did. Oh sure, you say, "Being God helps to avoid such problems." But we also need to see the same Spirit that is in Christ is in us. Following Jesus' example, we can learn to live daily by the Spirit's gentle nudges.

- 1) **His purpose was always before Him** (Mark 5:45 – *"For the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister; and to give His life as a ransom for many."*)
- 2) **His timing was always perfect** (Matthew 26:18 – *"The Teacher says: 'My appointed time is near.'"*)
- 3) **His task was always completed** (John 19:30 – *"When He had received the drink, Jesus said, 'It is finished.' With that, He bowed His head and gave up His spirit."*)
- 4) **His love was always revealed** (Mark 8:2 – *"I have compassion for these people, they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat."*)

Something else is noticeably absent in reading the Scriptures. It struck me some time ago that Jesus never said,

“I love you.” You might think that there is something wrong with that fact except that Jesus never had to say it because He always showed it. He knew that “later” or “maybe another time” might be too late. If He were Latin He would say *carpe diem* (seize the day). Who knows if you’ll get another chance?

While these anonymous words aren’t from the Bible, they just as easily might be given by a scriptural author. They touched me and I believe they will you.

*If you are ever going to love me, love me now, while I can know
The sweet and tender feelings which from true affection flow
Love me now while I am living, do not wait until I am gone
And then have it chiseled in marble, sweet words on ice – cold stone
If you ever have tender thoughts of me, please tell me now
If you wait until I am sleeping, never to awaken
There will be death between us, and I won’t hear you then*

*So, if you love me, even a little bit,
Let me know it while I am living
so I can treasure it.*



**Eliminating regret
totally may not be
possible. But
expressing your
love is a good
place to start.**

Eliminating regret totally may not be possible. But expressing your love is a good place to start (John 15:12). In fact, why don’t you tell someone near to you? You won’t regret it!

A TIME TO LAUGH

Victor Hugo referred to it as “the sun that drives winter from the human face”...Karl Barth called it the “closest thing to the grace of God”...and Will Rogers encouraged people to “have as much of it as they can while they’re here on earth.” Of course, I’m referring to good old-fashioned laughter... God’s sure-fire antidote for the world-weary warrior.

Now, granted, life is going to have its fair share of challenges. Solomon told us so in Ecclesiastes 3:4. “*There’s a time to weep,*” he said and don’t we know it. You don’t have to go chasing down reasons to be sorrowful...they’ll line up for you. Through circumstances, the news, relationships, traffic, sicknesses and even the weather at times. Always plentiful and always available, like CNN or ESPN, 24 hours a day. However, Solomon added “*there’s a time to laugh*” as well. The difference with laughter is that you have to go to it or at least learn to see it before you reap the benefits.

Not long ago, I picked up an anonymous article entitled, “Things to do when you’re bored at Wal-mart.” It’s talking to people who don’t mind having a good time:

- 1) *Set the alarm clocks to go off at ten minute intervals throughout the day.*
- 2) *Move “Caution: Wet Floor” signs to carpeted area.*
- 3) *Look into the security camera and use it as a mirror to floss your teeth.*
- 4) *Ask other customers if they have any Grey Poupon.*
- 5) *Lastly, put M & M’s on layaway.*

While I’m not sure Solomon had a convenience store in mind, I can’t help but think it did have something to do with seeing from a different perspective and responding to it. But rather than the type of laughter that involves a worldly approach or the ridicule of another individual, it’s based in a joy that comes from our relationship with God.

Ogden Nash went so far as to say that if the German peo-

ple had had a sense of humor in World War II, they would never have let Adolph Hitler deceive them. Instead, the first time they saw some fellow goose-stepping and raising a stiff arm to shout, “Heil Hitler,” they’d have keeled over in sidesplitting laughter. Really, it’s a God-given appeal to see the light side of life in order that we don’t get over-weighted by the heavier side.

“The secret to enjoying uninhibited spontaneity as a Christian,” Neil Anderson writes, “is in removing the inhibitors. Chief among the inhibitors of Christian fun is our tendency to keep up appearances. We don’t want to look out of place or be thought less of by others so we stifle spontaneity with a form of false decorum. That’s people-pleasing and Paul suggested that anybody who lives to please people isn’t serving Christ.”

In 2 Samuel 6, after the Ark of the Covenant had been captured by the Philistines, David finally witnesses its return.



“The secret to enjoying uninhibited spontaneity as a Christian,” Neil Anderson writes, “is in removing the inhibitors...”

Upon its arrival, he begins to laugh and leap in celebration only to get a queen-size lashing from his party-pooing wife Michal. Instead of stopping, David simply kept on worshipping because He knew it was from the Lord.

I can’t help but think he passed on the message to his son, Solomon. Maybe even something to the effect of what C.S. Lewis said when he wrote, “God takes joy very seriously.” Come to think of it, maybe we should too.

VISION IS MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE

If you were asked to define the word “vision,” most of us would probably start in the realm of our human ability to view things on a physical level. That’s not a bad description. Oftentimes, our visual capacity dictates far more than we care to acknowledge. Relationships, activities, transportation, perceptions and much more are greatly enhanced or severely hindered by our eyesight. Just ask anyone who has experienced myopia, dyslexia or blindness. It’s limiting to say the least.

One teacher told how he flunked a test in Bible College. The question was asked, “What was Paul’s vision on the Road to Damascus?” He wrote, “20/20.” Nice try but no cigar or candy bar. Vision must never be limited to the physical realm lest we confine ourselves to the *here and now of the present and forfeit the there and then of the future.*

Robert Woodruff, President of Coca Cola from 1923 to 1955, a 32-year span, cast the following vision for Coca-Cola. Right after World War II, he said, “In my lifetime, I want everyone to have tasted Coke.” His target inspired a visionary fire.

Whether we are referring to a child that sets her sights on a law practice at an early age or an up-and-coming business that knows it has a product to market, vision is that “dare-to-dream spirit” that makes or breaks greatness.

Churches are no different. Solomon said in Proverbs 29:18 that people without it will surely suffer. “*Where there is no vision, the people perish.*” Otherwise, people tailspin off into varying directions and lose sight of their assignment.

With that in view, let us always hold strongly to our calling.

1) **Message:** “*Lord, help us to be a church that is always aware of the lost. Enable us by your power to communicate the Gospel in contemporary ways to reach the heart of those who don’t know you.*”

- 2) **Maturity:** *“We ask that you would continue to create at the Florence Avenue Foursquare Church a community of Biblically functioning believers in healthy relationships with You and one another.”*
- 3) **Ministry:** *“Grant me the ability and desire to discover the joy of contributing as a unique and integral part of this fellowship. Thank you for giving me the specially designed gifts that I might offer for Your glory.”*
- 4) **Missions:** *“May I see the mission field of my family, friendships, workplace and divine appointments you might arrange so that I would be an instrument of healing and wholeness as your representative to others.”*

I’m reminded of the cartoon where two Eskimos are sitting in chairs, fishing through holes in the ice. The fella on the right has draped his line through the typical disk-like

opening...about the size of a manhole.



“In my lifetime I want everyone to have tasted Coke.” His target inspired a visionary fire.

The Eskimo on the left has his line in the water, too. He also waits calmly for a nibble. His hole, however, is more like a crater, a Coliseum-sized opening that reaches to the horizon...in the shape of a whale. Now that’s what I call *“vision.”*

HEAVEN'S HEADLINES

On The Internet: WWW.HEAVEN'S.HEADLINES.COM

Vol. 52

506

GOD'S WANT ADS

One of the essential ingredients of the Gospel is Hope. "Hope for Humanity" - now wouldn't that make a great headline for the L.A. or New York Times?

What deserves to be on the front pages of our major newspapers? Just bad news? The standard thinking among the news media has traditionally been; "If it bleeds it leads." In God's Word, and God's economy, the headlines take a vastly different tone. "Salvation for Souls" or "Compassion for the Lost," could easily headline any daily newspaper that God wanted to publish.



Wouldn't it be wonderful if our secular news outlets could get the message? One of the essential

ingredients of the Gospel is Hope. "Hope for Humanity" - now wouldn't that make a great headline for the L.A. or New York Times?

What deserves to be on the front pages of our major newspapers? Just bad news? The standard thinking among the news media has traditionally been; "If it bleeds it leads." In God's Word, and God's economy, the headlines take a vastly different tone. "Salvation for Souls" or "Compassion for the Lost,"

If God were to put out a modern "Want Ads" section, what would He ask for? Probably not a job description but, rather, a heart condition. Maybe the prophet Micah gives us insight in Micah 6:8, when he writes, *"And what does God require (or want) of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."* People who focus on fulfilling these areas of conviction bring change to their own lives and others.

65. Home Improvement
66. God's Perfect Timing
67. Polka-Dotted Grace
68. Adoption
69. No-Godders
70. Old School
71. Happy New Year?
72. Christianese
73. Non-Prophet Organizations
74. The Power Of Eternity
75. When Time Stands Still

HOME IMPROVEMENT

Homebuyers usually come in two forms. The first are those that buy brand new. No walls to refinish, no rooms to repaint, no chips to repair, and no cupboards to replace. It's ready to go and ready to show.

The second are what are known as "fixer-uppers." The fine print in the real estate magazines and ads remind them that with just a little bit of elbow-grease, vision and investment, your dream home awaits. Tear out the carpet here and patch a hole there and it's "just like new."

Without a doubt, if you were to classify God in one of these two categories, He would definitely fall into the fixer-upper range. Not that He couldn't afford new and not because heaven's mansions have termite problems or need foundation inspectors, it's just that God likes a good project...but his best projects are in the homes of our hearts.

Robert Munger, a professor of mine several years ago, summed it up nicely when he wrote a booklet entitled, My Heart, Christ's Home. He reminds us that when Christ is looking for a home, he never finds one that is not, in some way or another, in need of some major renovations as well as minor touch-ups. Dr. Munger used his own heart as an analogy on how the Lord moved through each room of this home as he became increasingly more uncomfortable with what Jesus saw.

1) **The Study** (that controlled his thoughts), 2) **The Dining Room** (that held his appetites for life), 3) **The Living Room** (which caused him to evaluate what time he spent with God), 4) **The Workroom** (where he spent time for the temporary or eternal), 5) **The Rec Room** (where activities and associations happened) and 6) **The Hall Closet** (a place that held junk yet to be cleaned out). As Jesus walked through each room, His intent was obvious...to make it new. C.S. Lewis spoke further on this idea:

“I think many of us, when Christ has enabled us to overcome one or two sins that were an obvious nuisance, are inclined to feel (though we do not put it into words) that we are now good enough. He has done all we wanted Him to do and we should be obliged if he would leave us alone. As we say, ‘I never expected to be a saint, I only wanted to be a decent ordinary man....’

But the question is not what we intend ourselves to be, but what he intended us to be when He made us. Imagine yourself as a living house. God comes in to rebuild that house. At first, perhaps, you can understand what He is doing. He is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof and so on; you knew that those jobs needed doing and so you are not surprised. But presently He starts knocking the house about in a way that hurts abominably and does not seem to make sense. What on earth is He up to? The explanation is that He is building quite a different house from the one you thought of—



He reminds us that when Christ is looking for a home, he never finds one that is not, in some way or another, in need of some major renovations as well as minor touch-ups.

throwing out a new wing here, putting on an extra floor there, running up towers, making courtyards. You thought you were going to be made into a decent little cottage; but He is building a palace. He intends to come and live in it Himself.”

And by the way, this is no “do-it-yourself” job. If you want it done right, call the Expert.

GOD'S PERFECT TIMING

Talk about timing and you'll usually get a few perspectives. To the amateur piano player, it's the ability to pace herself to the ticking metronome until it becomes an innate sense of pace. To the movie director, it's knowing when the gallant hero should arrive to rescue the distressed damsel from the approaching train. To the athlete, it's learning how to thread the needle for an uncontested lay up or pinpointed spiral between two defensive backs. And to the army general, it's knowing exactly when and where to attack to maximize a military victory.

In John Maxwell's book, The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership, he addresses the importance of a leader's timing when it comes to making decisions. He gives four theories that make or break the success of a person's venture:

- 1) The **wrong** decision made at the **wrong** time leads to disaster.
- 2) The **wrong** decision made at the **right** time brings resistance.
- 3) The **right** decision made at the **wrong** time is a mistake.
- 4) The **right** decision made at the **right** time results in success.

If we were to use such a standard to gauge God's timing in our personal lives, I wonder what kind of grade would we give Him? While we would never doubt that our omnipotent (all-powerful) and omniscient (all-knowing) God must know and work in ways far beyond our abilities to see (Isaiah 55:9,10), we can't help but at times question when He delays.

Take, for example, a couple places in the book of John where you really had to wonder if Jesus' timing had gone awry:

Case #1—In John 6:16,17, Jesus had sent the disciples across the turbulent waters of the Sea of Galilee. John writes, "*That evening Jesus' followers went down to Lake Galilee. It was dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. The followers got into a boat and started across the lake to Capernaum. But by now a strong wind was blowing, and the waves on the lake were getting bigger.*" A couple

thoughts should jump out at us. First, strong winds were blowing, and second, Jesus was nowhere in sight.

Case #2—In John 11:1-44, Jesus receives a request from Mary and Martha to come heal their brother Lazarus who is about to die. John adds in verses 3-6, “*So the sisters sent word to Jesus, ‘Lord, the one you love is sick.’ When he heard this, Jesus said, ‘This sickness will not end in death.’ Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. Yet when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days. Then he said to his disciples, ‘Let us go back to Judea.’*” It makes us wonder if we read it correctly. Again, strong winds are blowing and Jesus is nowhere to be found. Not only that, the Bible tells us He went somewhere else.

Talk about bad timing. If we were to put it in Maxwell’s terms, it couldn’t be more apparent that these circumstances had *disaster* written all over them...or, in other words, Jesus was making the wrong decision at the wrong time. But then again, was He? When you read, as Paul Harvey would say, “the rest of the story,” you find

that Jesus was right on time. He walked out on the water to show that, even in the darkest hour, He was present and they could trust Him. And though Lazarus had already died, Jesus proved that He was the “Resurrection and the Life.”

One of these days, we’re going to realize that it’s always best to set our clocks to His timing rather than attempting to set His clock to our timing. I can guarantee you that each time it happens, it will always be the right decision at the right time.



**One of these days,
we’re going to realize
that it’s always
best to set our
clocks to His timing
rather than attempt-
ing to set His clock
to our timing.**

POLKA-DOTTED GRACE

“A rose is a rose by any other name” and we’d probably all agree. But having a penchant for the obvious, I would have to add, “A thorn is a thorn by any other name” as well. Call them what you will, but they always have the same effect.

Peter saw them as “sufferings.” (1 Peter 5:9) Asaph referred to them as “burdens.” (Psalm 73:5) James? He liked to use the word “trials.” (James 1:2) John would transpose them as “afflictions.” (Revelation 2:9) And Paul...like a veteran umpire just called ‘em as he saw ‘em. They were just plain ol’ “thorns” to him. (2 Corinthians 12:7)

Those circumstances and challenges of life that steal the prize out of our proverbial cereal boxes and make our top “bad hair day” list. Everything from devastating hits to modest irritations, we’ve all been there at one time or another wondering “what in the world could come out of this?”

Considering some of the sometimes awfully amusing evidence:

- In 1992, Frank Perkins of Los Angeles made an attempt on the world flagpole sitting record. Suffering from the flu he came down eight hours short of the 400-day record. His sponsor had gone bust, his girlfriend had left him and his phone and electricity had been cut off.
- Then Iraqi terrorist, Khay Rahnajet, didn’t pay enough postage on a letter bomb. It came back with “return to sender” stamped on it. Forgetting it was the bomb, he opened it and was blown to bits.
- But the best came when a woman came home to find her husband in the kitchen, shaking frantically with what looked like a wire running from his waist towards the electric kettle. Intending to jolt him away from the deadly current, she whacked him with a handy plank of wood by the back door, breaking his arm in two places. Till that moment, he had been happily listening to his Walkman radio.

Whether they are self-inflicted, nature-inflicted, God-inflicted, others-inflicted or enemy-inflicted isn't so much the point. We can become so preoccupied through asking the "Why's" and "Who's" and "Where's" and "When's" and "How's" that we completely lose track of the "What's." While these ideas have merit when it comes to alleviating more gasoline being thrown on the fire, the secret of success of passing the test of life's trials comes through seeing what God can do in using that experience to bring us closer to Him.

Maybe it's the diagnosis of cancer, a closed vocational door, a runaway child, a failing marriage, a dwindling business, an obstinate co-worker or an asphyxiating financial circumstance. God wants us to ask, "Lord, what are you working in me through this trial?"

In 1 Peter 1:6-7, the aging Apostle writes, *"In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed."*



We can become so preoccupied through asking the "Why's" and "Who's" and "Where's" and "When's" and "How's" that we completely lose track of the "What's."

The word all kinds means "multi-faceted" or "various." Its original root meant "poiki-loi," "polka-dotted" or "colorfully striped" as is used of Joseph's coat.

But we are reminded for every polka-dotted or colorfully striped trial, there is a polka-dotted and colorfully striped grace to carry us through. (2 Corinthians 12:9) No "ifs," "ands" or "buts." And spiritually speaking, it doesn't hurt to keep your Walkman at a moderate volume.

ADOPTION

Take the Test! What do Moses, Superman and Cabbage Patch Kids have in common? Here's a little hint...if you are a believer; you can throw your name in as well. Do you give up? As they say on Jeopardy...“What is adoption?”

All of us recall the story of Moses' rescue from the Nile by Pharaoh's daughter. His mother and sister, Jochebed and Miriam set him in a basket in the hope of a miracle. They got one. Pharaoh's mandate to kill all of the Israelite babies was foiled by his own daughter's attachment to the child and would later become a burr in his saddle...and the rest is Hebrew history.

Superman's rescue, while fictitious, has a dramatic flavor as well. His parents from Krypton, aware of impending destruction, placed him in a capsule, which arrived on planet earth. While driving in the country, his “earthling” parents found this abandoned baby and adopted him as their own.

And Cabbage Patch dolls have won the hearts of countless young girls across the world. Uniquely certified as parents, the adolescent adopters of these dolls get a taste of motherhood at an early age.

Adoption can often be seen as second best, an unfortunate footnote in the lives of many. It can often breed lingering insecurities regarding our belongingness and plant seeds of doubt far into adulthood. If we've been there, we know. If we haven't, we need to be sensitive. God has instilled within us a deep need to belong so that such a revelation sends tremors of rejection through our souls.

Not so with our Lord. He has a totally different perspective. Adoption to Him is first class. While many people have no choice as to what child will arrive or what parents will steer their future, adoption is all about choice. The way God sees it, if you were adopted, you were deliber-

ately chosen into that family with all the rights and privileges that follow.

Ephesians 1:4,5 says, “*For he chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love He predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will.*” Note closely the four words: “chose,” “predestined,” “pleasure” and “will.” These ideas encapsulate God’s initiating and passionate heart in adoption. Once we were not part of His family and now we are.

Consider a few of the benefits:

1. **Identity** (Romans 8:15) We are now known as sons rather than slaves.
2. **Holy Spirit** (Romans 8:23) His presence, comfort and strength for every need.
3. **Privileges** (Romans 9:4,5) All of the blessings and promises of God’s family.



The way God sees it, if you were adopted, you were deliberately chosen into that family with all the rights and privileges that follow.

Adoption places us in *high company*...Moses, Superman and even the famous Cabbage Patch doll. But, better yet, it places us into the *highest family*...the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. How does it feel to be more powerful than a locomotive?

NO-GODDERS

P.T. Barnum, the great owner of the Barnum and Bailey Circus once said, "There is a sucker born every minute." I can't give the precise statistics he does but I would have difficulty refuting his assessment. After all, people can be cajoled, coaxed, manipulated and enticed into believing and doing just about anything. It's no wonder, God refers to us as sheep. We're a bumbling breed to say the least.

Recently, I heard about a group that is gaining ground called the "Flat-Earth Society." There are about 500 or so members in the United States and, yes, they actually believe the earth is flat. Present any evidence or proof to the contrary and you'll only get a blank stare. They know what they believe and they don't care to be contested.

Madelyn Murray O'Hare has been a spokesperson for another group that has been around longer than the "Flat-Earthers." They're called the "No-Godders" or also known as "Atheists." Present your case about a Divine Being and they'll stare you down...might even spit on you. They will protest every Christian rally and appeal everything that resembles righteousness, from the "In God We Trust" on our money to the "Baby Jesus" on our Christmas cards.

Psalm 14:1 says, "*The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God.' They are corrupt, their deeds are vile; there is no one who does good.*" Suckers, sheep or fools. None of them is flattering, yet that is what sin does to all of us. We deny the great redemptive pitch that God has made through nature, history and His Son, and choose to believe the enemy who would blind us to our Lord's greatness. (John 10:10)

Consider a few pieces of his evidence that demand our attention:

1) **The Weather.** The temperature of the Sun has been calculated to be 12,000 degrees Fahrenheit. (Slightly higher than Needles, California.) If the Sun were to be 100 degrees

hotter, it would turn our planet and people into a deep-fried delicacy. If it were 100 degrees cooler, we'd all be frozen cool pops. Creation or coincidence?

2) **The Woodpecker.** God has created the woodpecker so that it has an extremely hard beak and a very soft brain. In the process of "evolution," the 1000 pounds of pressure that this bird expels would either crush beak growth or destroy the brain. You choose. Isn't creation the only option?

3) **The Watch.** Take apart a watch completely and place the pieces in a clear container. Begin to shake profusely. Now shake lightly. Shake here and shake there. Shake everywhere. How long do you believe it would take to shake the pieces back together into a watch? How about the universe? Only a Creator could bring such order.

Suckers may lose a little money, and Flat-Earthers a little respect, but it's the No-Godders I'm concerned about. They

refuse to logically and rationally consider the evidence that surrounds them each day. *"The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands."* (Psalms 19:1) It's so hard for some to accept. I'm starting to think it has a lot more to do with accountability than believability.



It's no wonder, God refers to us as sheep. We're a bumbling breed to say the least.

OLD SCHOOL

I'm old school and proud of it. You see, somehow and somewhere, I found myself reminiscing about the *good old days*...way back in the 70's and early 80's and how life has changed.

It's true, I'm a little too young to have earned the right to say I placed candles on my Christmas tree rather than lights, listened to Uncle Milty on the radio, took the Edsel for a Sunday afternoon spin or seen the Beatles in concert. But...old school I've become and old school I'll remain.

Alright, I'll admit that our modern technology beats the old stuff hands down. All these newfangled gadgets such as Nintendo, Playstation, power calculators, Palm Pilots, television watches, Pentium 3 laptops and hand-held CD players have made life a little more streamlined. And even though I loved pong, Pac-man, the abacus, the Royal typewriter, 8-track players and record albums, I'll own up that they don't compare.

And granted, maybe our entertainment and athletic abilities have advanced just a tad. In my day, Davy and Goliath claymation paled in comparison to Chicken Run...and Stars Wars battles is a league below Independence Day. And after all these years, I have to confess that Michael Jordan was a little bit better than Magic, Bird and West.

And, it's possible that exploration has improved. In my early years, landing someone on the moon was a marvel while, today, NASA is shooting shuttles and space ships to infinity and beyond. There seems to be no limit to what can be accomplished. Add to these things scientific discoveries, medical breakthroughs, an increase in knowledge and the greatest potential to reach the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ and you've got "a great time to be alive." And yet, I'm still old school.

You see, when it comes right down to it, there's one reason and one reason only I'm holding on. It's not that I miss most

of the things of days gone by. They've generally been replaced by a new and improved version. But I'm still old school because of prayer. Many of us recall a day, not so long ago, when school prayer was not only accepted but encouraged. Public schools would open their day by honoring God and invite others to join in. Today, prayer in school has become an anathema and the Supreme Court has made it illegal...in the classroom, at graduation and even at football games. But thankfully, like other times in history, its absence has aroused a new interest.

In mid-September, millions of high school students around the world will gather at the annual "See You At The Pole" rally and surround their campuses with prayer. Over 56,000 schools will be represented as countless young people will band together under the theme "A Generation Seeking God" and recommit themselves to a new spiritual intensity as they seek an intimacy with Christ.



You see, when it comes right down to it, there's one reason and one reason only I'm holding on. It's not that I miss most of the things of days gone by. They've generally been replaced by a new and improved version. But I'm still old school because of prayer.

David wrote in Psalm 24:3-6, *"Who may ascend the hill of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false. He will receive blessing from the LORD and vindication from God his Savior. Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek your face, O God of Jacob."* That's what you call old school...and no one's going to improve on that.

HAPPY NEW YEAR?

Driving through Delaware in late September six years ago, I was midstream on an East Coast tour of friends and famous sights as my mind enjoyed a mental shutdown mode from the rigors of life. This “whirlwind week” began in New York, progressed to Virginia, went back up through D.C., with the final destination back in the Big Apple. Invigoration and exhaustion can exist on the same trip, I soon discovered.

Late summer was a beautiful time to travel because the humidity had died down (though residue remained) and the cool Fall had not yet peaked. Somehow, I felt like I had the best of both worlds even though the excursion included a flat tire.

The rental car radio had been playing upbeat music when the announcer came on the air with the weather forecast. “Today is the first day of Fall,” he offered. “It will start at 2:43 p.m.” I thought, “I knew they had it down to the day...but the time?”

Call it coincidence, call it God, or call it climate, but right at 2:43 p.m. (the car had a clock), it started to sprinkle. I pondered to myself, “I wish we had weather forecasters like that on the West Coast. This guy must have gone to an advanced meteorological institution.” Fall had begun and the new season was christened with a subtle shower.

Generally, we wait until January to emphasize newness, and rightfully so. The post-Christmas blues are quickly alleviated by the introduction of resolutions, clean slates and new beginnings.

But if the truth be known, late September is probably more of a new year than the New Year. At least in practicality if not celebration. *The end of summer vacations*, time off with children, and later sunsets are reminders that it’s back to business though, in all reality, work never really stopped.

School schedules, from kindergarten to graduate studies, have been strongly ingrained in our mindset (even after we're through) that something new is occurring. And finally, *businesses* often approach this time of year as their fiscal beginning.

As we approach this new season of Fall, refuse to reside in the status quo of your spiritual life. God offers His unfathomable care and invites us into a new level of commitment. (Matthew 22:37)

In our hearts: That we would grow in His love by the newness of our hearts. *"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; His mercies never come to an end. They are new every morning."* (Lamentations 3:23)

In our souls: That we would increase in His character by the newness of our souls. *"Behold, old things have passed away and all things have become new."* (2 Corinthians 5:17)

In our minds: That we would expand in His righteousness by the newness of our minds. *"Don't be conformed, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds."* (Romans 12:2)



God offers His unfathomable care and invites us into a new level of commitment.

Unlike the announcer on the radio, I can't tell you whether your future forecast involves rain or sunshine. I couldn't even guess. But I do know that it begins with God and starts around 2:43 p.m. Eastern Standard Time.

CHRISTIANESE

There are certain places that scare me to death. When I was a kid, it was that abandoned house down the block that I knew was haunted. Or that crawl space beneath our home that monsters occupied. The thought of venturing there was not pleasant.

Even though I've grown up, things are similar. While years of reality checks have alleviated my fear of monsters, today it has transferred into new fears. Especially computer stores. You see, I suffer from a common ailment know as "cyberphobia" or fear of computers. Doctors tell me it's a mild case and should progress through increased exposure. But for some reason, I chose to extend myself faster than recommended.

Some time ago, I made a rare visit to a cyber-store and true to form, my nightmare came true. The minute I walked in, I felt like every junkie in the place spotted me. Maybe it was my mouth hanging open as if aliens had landed. Or maybe it was the look of being "clueless." Either way, I felt like I had been issued a dunce cap and ushered into the Harvard Ph.D. program. Immediately, I gravitated to the section with manuals. Books entitled Windows for Idiots and DOS for the Lobotomized fit me like a custom-made suit. Apparently, there were other cyberphobes on the planet.

Failing to remain unnoticeable, a salesperson came over. "Can I help you?" he said. "Do you have one of the dillamabobs that make one of those thingamagigs?" I responded. I had heard that anything with "gigs" sounds computerish. Unimpressed, he said, "Is this a multi-task, 48 megabyte hard drive system?" "Ahhhh, yeah!" trying to sound confident. Somehow, the conversation went south from there. I'm not sure I know what I needed, and he wasn't sure why I was allowed in the door. We never quite connected.

Christians have an indigenous language just like computer experts. It's called "Christianese." Much like my computer

store experience, it can distance us from the non-Christian. People who are unfamiliar with our faith are befuddled when we say, “Are you washed in the blood?” “I’m redeemed, are you?” and “God loves the lost.” These are common language to a fellow believer but gibberish to the unreached. As we become more aware, God will help us to speak a language that communicates to those around us:

- 1) **Take time to listen:** A deep empathy usually opens the door that we might minister to their hurts. (James 1:19)
- 2) **Offer to pray:** Prayer speaks that you care and identifies your commitment to Christ without cramming your witness down their throats. (James 5:16)
- 3) **Show kind acts unconditionally:** James says, “*Faith without works is dead.*” (James 2:17) Are we any different from others?



**Christians have
an indigenous
language just like
computer
experts.**

- 4) **Communicate your faith practically:** Paul attempted to be “*all things to all people.*” Say something like, “In church, I heard... What do you think about that?” Or “I was reading my Bible and saw...have you ever thought about that?”

One more thing. Assume they want what you’ve got. They may not know how to ask for it or speak the language, but they can sure identify someone who cares.

NON-PROPHET ORGANIZATIONS

Listening to the radio the other day, I heard something that caught my attention. Can't tell you who said it or the station, but it was one of those "cud quotes" you just keep on chewing. The speaker said, "*Seems as if everyone wants to be a prophet these days...but no one wants to be a disciple.*" Ouch! Like one of those paint balls pounding on the back of the leg, it had sort of a linger of sting. But, ain't it the truth?

End-time prophecies are all the rage. Some Christians might even consider "Prophets Anonymous." In many cases, it a borderline addiction. ("Hello, my name is Steve...and I'm an end-times prophet.") Bible sleuths, both professional and amateur, past and present, and near and far, have been trying to understand our days like a 500 piece jigsaw puzzle. About the same way golf has soared in popularity, most people feel they might as well take a "hack" at it. And hack they do. They reason, "If I study hard enough, then maybe I can crack the code of Christ's return."

Dwight L. Moody, the famous evangelist, once got onto C.I. Scofield, the Bible expositor, for his overzealous nature of biblical intellectualism. He mentioned that Scofield's intense preoccupation with the academic side of the Christian faith brought the danger of losing his heart of discipleship. The same could be said for the students of the second coming. (Especially dogmatic pre-ers, mid-ders and post-ers.)

For decades, people have been trying to figure out when Jesus would return. Dates from 1914 to 1968 to 1982 to 1988 to 1992 to the year 2000, these theological office pools have been wrong. Some were so convinced that they sold their belongings and headed for the tops of mountains. I guess mountains give them a head-start to heaven.

Grant Jeffreys, in his book, Countdown to Armageddon, gave factual and compelling evidence for the fact that the Tribulation would start in 1993 and be completed in the year

2000 based on chronological data and calendars connected to the book of Daniel, Christ's birth and Israel's rebirth as a nation. Either the Tribulation is not as bad as we thought or he missed it. Hal Lindsay, a foremost expert on prophecy, gives great insight into Revelation and prophetic verses but also has been wrong a time or two on the timing of future events. And now, recently, Tim LaHaye's bestsellers are sweeping across the nation with breakneck speed and creating new-found interest in these age-old questions of dates and details.

The reason that guesses on such topics as Christ's return are so futile is because of a simple verse in Mark 13:32 which says, "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." (I looked up "no one" in the original Greek language and the word is actually translated "no one.") So as much as we try to guess, it is really nothing more than a optimistic wishing.

Now, don't misunderstand me. I am not advocating



Christians should always keep one eye in the sky. But, true effectiveness in the kingdom requires that we commit to love Jesus and let God handle the rest in His timing.

ignoring prophetic research and refusing to keep our heads perched heavenward. Christians should always keep one eye in the sky. But, true effectiveness in the kingdom requires that we commit to love Jesus and let God handle the rest in His timing. C.S. Lewis used to say, "Plan as if the Lord isn't going to come for 50 years, but live as if He's coming today." Sounds like good discipleship, if you ask me.

THE POWER OF ETERNITY

Doctors have chuckled at some of the more peculiar ailments described by patients, including: “Migrating” headaches, “Prospect” glands, “Mental” pause, and “Scat cans” of the brain. One man mentioned that someone quit breathing and had to have “Artificial Insemination.” Then a woman requested a “monogram.” Another complained of pain in the “palms of my feet.”

Still another told the doctor before her operation: “Don’t worry. If anything happens, my son has the power of eternity.” (Attorney—maybe; eternity—no.)

God is gracious to give our marvelous medics a spoonful of sugar while they make the medicine go down. But whether you work with patients, clients, children or plain ol’ regular folks, you’ve heard similar slips of the tongue. You’ve probably even made one yourself. A changed letter here or a reversed word there and, oh, what difference it makes. You soon ask yourself, “Do they know what they just said?”

Power of eternity is a phrase that should catch our collective attention. Though I risk sounding like a killjoy amidst our funnybone frenzy, power of eternity is generally no laughing matter. The problem is, so many people have been deceived by the Enemy into believing that eternity will be given to anyone who believes *anything*. The popular answer “All roads lead to the same mountains” gives way to “I’ll give power of eternity to who or what I like.”

A myriad of people are chasing crystals, psychics, tarot cards, cults, false religions, leaders, worldly pleasures or just being good (whatever that means). Like a smorgasbord at a buffet restaurant, we get to choose whatever we want. And choose we do. When it comes to Satan, he loves to make us believe these things somehow give us life abundant and life eternal. His one objective: Keep them from finding the One that truly gives the power of eternity...Jesus Christ.

Following Jesus' healing of the blind man, He speaks of His authority over this life and eternal life. He says, "*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that you may have life, and have it to the full.*" (John 10:10)

You see, power of eternity belongs to Jesus and Jesus alone. The Bible clearly attributes to Him unmistakable authority:

- 1) **Jesus claimed Himself to be God** (Matthew 12:1-14; Mark 2:1-12; John 8:58)
- 2) **His disciples claimed Him to be God** (Matthew 16:13-20; John 20:24-28; Colossians 1:15-19)
- 3) **His opponents knew His claims to be God** (Mark 2:7; John 8:57-59)

Whether it's Buddha, Confucious, Mohammed, Joseph Smith, Jim Jones or Shirley Maclaine...tarot cards, pleasures or being nice; they're all the *thief's* way to get you way off-track. There is only One who was great enough to make the



**There is only One
who was great
enough to make
the claims He did
and live up to
them.**

claims He did and live up to them. "*But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.*" (Romans 6:22)

Now that's what I call power.

WHEN TIME STANDS STILL

Every decade or so, one or two events will occur that makes our nation stop in its collective tracks and pay close attention. Whether it's our fascination or the historical implications, the phenomenon of these riveting occurrences etch an indelible imprint into our minds that forever remain. We can tell people the year it happened (if not the day), the place we were standing and what we were doing when we first heard the news.

Depending on your age, you may or may not recall. But while most days expire without these time markers, somehow these catch our eye:

Do you remember John F. Kennedy's assassination in 1963? the Apollo 11 capsule landing in 1969? the death of Elvis Presley in 1977? the attempted assassination of Ronald Reagan in 1981? the explosion of the Space Shuttle Challenger in 1986? and the O.J. Simpson verdict in 1995?

Different events and different responses, but if you were up on current news, at least for a moment, the cross-hairs of our rifles aimed in unison as time stood still.

The nation of Israel experienced such moments. They couldn't help but remember what they were doing and where they were standing when the Red Sea parted (Exodus 13:18), the water flowed from the rock at Horeb (Exodus 17:6) and the Jordan River opened (Joshua 3:15). But there was a day in Israel's history where time *literally* stood still.

In Joshua 10, Joshua, battling the five Amorite nations, was concerned because he was surrounded and if darkness fell they would be overpowered. So Joshua asked the Lord to make the sun hold its position. *"And the sun and the moon didn't move until the Israelite army had finished the destruction of its enemies!"* (Joshua 10:13) And the sun remained in place for an entire day.

Recently, at Green Belt, Maryland, NASA astronauts and

scientists were checking the position of the sun, moon and planets out in space and where they would be 100 years and 1000 years from now. They have to know this so they won't send a satellite up and have it bump into something later on in its orbits. They ran the computer measurement back and forth over the centuries and it came to a halt. The computer stopped and put up a red signal, which meant that there was something wrong either with the information fed into it or with the results as compared to the standards. They found there was a day missing in space in elapsed time. A Christian man on the team remembered Joshua's missing day in the Bible. They checked the computers going back into the time it was written and found that there was a 23 hour and 20 minute gap. (Incidentally, in 2 Kings 20:9-11, Isaiah's word to Hezekiah reveals where the extra 40 minutes were found.)

It's a rare occasion when time stands still...but some day soon, it'll happen again.



It's a rare occasion when time stands still...but some day soon, it'll happen again.

Christ will return and everyone's collective eyes will be watching and *"at the name of Jesus every knee will bow... and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."* (Philippians 2:10,11)

Not only will time stand still...it will be no more. Come to think of it, maybe it's worth knowing where you're standing before it even happens.

If you would like to obtain more copies of “Heaven’s Headlines,” please write the Florence Avenue Foursquare Church and include a \$10 donation per book (which includes shipping and handling). All proceeds will go to Foursquare Missions Press and Foursquare Missions International.

Florence Avenue Foursquare Church

Attn: Communication Department

11457 E. Florence Avenue

Santa Fe Springs, CA 90670

In these extraordinary times, what if you opened up the morning newspaper and read a headline proclaiming...

EXTRA: GOD LOVES YOU!

Corrie Ten Boom, Nazi concentration camp survivor, once told a story about walking into an old antique shop. While browsing through the various items, she casually glanced up to spot what looked to be a worn and tattered rug suspended parallel to the floor from the ceiling. Inquiring about the unique and obviously unattractive piece, the shopkeeper recommended she venture up the stairs to look from above. As she ascended the stairwell, she eyed the rug from a different viewpoint only to discover the most beautiful woven tapestry of colors and patterns that anyone could imagine. She had seen it from a different perspective.

Heaven's Headlines is all about perspective. But rather than seeing from man's vantage point, it's seeing from God's. In the midst of a nation—a world—that is tattered and in need of healing, He is at work bringing beauty and hope. It's His unchanging truth in the midst of a changing world. Daily, God wants to deliver a message of His love. Good News indeed!

Terry Risser is pastor of the Florence Avenue Foursquare Church in Santa Fe Springs, California. He graduated from LIFE Bible College and Fuller Seminary. He and his wife, Stephanie, live in Downey.



Foursquare Missions Press