

INDIA BLOGS - 3

Lessons Learned in India

2016 - 2018



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INDIA BLOGS – FEBRUARY 2016 to 2017

Blog 435: ABOVE THE CLOUDS THE SUN IS ALWAYS SHINING

It was raining in London (no surprise) when we got on our plane for our ride home – heavy rain and dark clouds everywhere. When we landed in Philadelphia it was cold and overcast. But in-between the skies were beautiful! One of the nice things about flying is that the trip itself is never foggy and rainy *because* planes fly above the clouds. There, the sun is always shining. From inside *the plane, you look down* and see only the tops of beautiful white clouds.

Viewed from underneath, though, they are dark and wet. What makes the difference? It is our perspective. Looking down on life from God's perspective everything is bright and beautiful. If only it were so simple for us to rise *above the clouds and see life from God's perspective*. It may appear gloomy *where we look*, but that is just because we don't have God's viewpoint.

So when you're going through a *storm, fly above it* to where the air is clear. Rise up near to God and see the *storm* through the eyes of Faith for that is where the sun is always shining. You do not have to stay under the clouds. You can rise above them, and soar on the wings of Faith. There the view is better and the sun is always shining. (February 15, 2016 Doylestown, PA)

Hebrews 11:1-4 *Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. 2 This is what the ancients were commended for. 3 By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible. 4 By faith Abel brought God a better offering than Cain did. By faith he was commended as righteous, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith Abel still speaks, even though he is dead.*

If you are going through a difficult time in life now, ask God to help you see it from His perspective. Recognize that He is still in control and can help you raise above it so you aren't defeated by it. If you know someone going through a difficult time pray this for them as well.

Blog 436: PHYSICAL WATER LEADS TO LIVING WATER

The purpose of our Christian Training Organization is to train and encourage pastors in their ministry. We help with financial and other needs on a very limited basis, as funds are available. Recently some have donated water wells and sewing machines for the communities where pastors we support and work closely with are located. These not only help in a great way but also open the door to share the gospel with people in these communities. If God is leading you to give for these things that is wonderful, but please remember the great needs of the pastors for training and for books. I have two books to be translated and printed this year, How To study the Bible and How to Write Sermons. Please consider donating to our fund so these can go ahead as planned. Below is an email from Pastor Moses about the new water well. (22 February, 2016 Doylestown, PA)

By God's grace I was able to reach the place for drilling the water well with some of the Pastors there, So Thank you very much for your help for drilling the water well, It is near the Pacific Ocean, Because of the Ocean, they have no sweet water for drinking, Since they have the salt water, so they hardly have the drinking water, and very limited points, where they have sweet water in that area. There are 1000 people with the children, two Dalit villages, and one major Non Christian communities living, they are people who come to the Pastors conferences every year, where Pastor Jerry teaches.

The Pastor was praying for the water well since two months, and asked the village head for the water well for several times, he did not do that, but the Pastor started praying for the water well, and when he came to the conference, he asked us to help with water well, so we prayed, God helped through you all, Praise the Lord.

So all the women walk 1km from their houses for drinking water, every day for drinking water, during rainy season, and hot season, they really faced much difficult to have the drinking water, when they heard they have got a water well, everyone was So Happy with the Pastor, and even Non-Christians appreciated the help from Christians from America, so I have explained the Donors, heart for helping people who do not have drinking water to help, like Jesus, who gives the Living water. It was good to the Pastors to share the gospel to Non-Christians, because of the good work of the Christian people. It was good, and now the women children are very happy to have the water well close to them, and they can drink, and give water to Animals.

Ephesians 4:28 Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need.

What do you have that you can share with those you know in your family or neighborhood that will help them in life while showing them the love of Jesus? Pray and listen to any the Lord may put on your heart now or in the days to come.

Blog 437: UNTO THE LEAST OF THESE...

In the last blog I showed you pictures of new water well. New sewing machines have been donated through CTO as well. These are wonderful ways to help the people in India, for indeed the needs are great. These can be donated through CTO by designating your gifts for them, but please remember our needs for finances to train pastors who will train others as well. The most pressing financial need for CTO at the moment is to fund the translation and printing of the 2 new books on studying and preaching the Bible. Below is an email from Pastor Moses about the donated sewing machines. (Feb 26, 2016, Doylestown, PA)

Here are some of the women from Dalit community trained, got certificate from sewing school, we had a Passion for these helpless women, to train in their Dalit community, where there are 26 women graduated, there are 3 of them are very poor, could not able to buy sewing machine, but continuing in Prayers for it, among the 3, two of them were given the sewing machine as a gift to their self-employment in their home.

Vani is married, to two children one boy who is 6 and a girl who is 4. She got a polio ,in her left leg, is a crippled, and she can work at home, cook, wash clothes ,but could not go to any outside job. Her husband goes to daily work in the field, does not have any land, even does not have own house, they stay in rented house, so she was praying for the machine, so the Lord has provided to help their family with stitching clothes for others to get earn some money to help their family. She was so happy for getting the new sewing machine.

Revathi also comes from Dalit community, is married, and had two sons, 5 and 6. They have small house to live, and her husband goes to labor work, earns little, so started coming to our sewing school, and learned all the skills, and now able to stitch the clothes, but does not have money to buy, but she was praying for the sewing machine, and God helped her sewing machine through you, she was so much thankful to you who helped her.

Matthew 25:39-40 Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

Thank God for His blessings to you this day. Name as many of them as you can. Pray for those throughout the world, even in this country, who lack the basic needs for life.

Blog 438: “GOD SAYS I AM”

A unique individual visited our church recently. Clearly he has a depth to him that comes from experiencing much in life. He looked a bit beat up around the edges, but moving ahead day by day. I asked him if he had accepted Jesus as his Savior, if he was a Christian. His answer is something I have been thinking about since. It was simple yet profound. He simply said, “God says I am.”

That’s great, isn’t it! That’s what really matters, what God says, not what we say. We have nothing to boast about in ourselves, and the more we grow in Him the less reason we find why He should love and accept us. But if God says we are His then we are and for us to doubt it, deny it, question it or overanalyze it.

Am I a Christian? God says I am, because I truly do believe in His son. And if God says so that settles it for all eternity.

Are you a Christian? If God says so you are, if He doesn’t you aren’t. You can know NOW what He says about you, you don’t have to wait until you die and stand before Him. Here’s what He says: (February 29, 2016 Doylestown, PA)

Acts 16:31 “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.”

Romans 10:9 If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

John 3:16 ¹⁶ For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Do you sometimes doubt or question your salvation? Does the enemy put questions in your mind about God’s love for and acceptance of you? Read the verses above again. They are true. God doesn’t lie. If you believe that Jesus is God’s Son come to earth to pay for your sins on the cross then God says you are one of His children – for all eternity!

Blog 439: HOW IT ALL STARTED

Someone asked me recently about how I got started going to India. I often think about that because I never have liked to travel, and I don’t like speaking to groups of people I don’t know. So how did I end up on the other side of the world speaking to all these pastors who don’t even know English? Here’s how it all began:

Our church had been sponsoring the work of an India couple who lived and worked in the USA. They had a ministry to school children and pastors in India and from time to time would take a group from their near-by church to go minister. Since we supported them they came each year to update the church on their ministry in India.

Each time he would come he would say what missionaries are supposed to say, “You should come to India with me and help train pastors there.” I always said what pastors are supposed to say to missionaries who say that, “Maybe someday but not now.” I had no interest in going at all. That is, until one time when he asked me and God immediately told me to go by putting an interest and desire

in my heart to help train pastors in India. I remember it clearly. It was January 2005 but seems like just yesterday.

I joined another pastor and a group from there church who went in January 2006. I didn't know anything about India, even what city we were going to when we got there. We had a week of pastors training which the other pastor and I taught, saw some of India, and came home. In fact, 3 of the men at that first conference came to a conference I had in the same building 10 years later, January of 2016. It was great seeing them again!

God put a strong desire in my heart to return and do it again, so I returned with just the missionary couple and we had another conference the next year. I had met Pastor Moses the first trip when he did some translating for my sessions, and I saw him again the second trip. Because there wasn't room for me to stay with the missionary couple I ended up staying in Pastor Moses' home. The following year, when the couple from India didn't have a pastors' conference planned, I went to India alone and Pastor Moses and I started having conferences. And the rest, as they say, is history! As for the danger of ministering there, there is no safer place to be than in the center of God's will.

I sometimes wonder what would have happened if I hadn't responded to that small, gentle urging from God to go to India. What if my fears would have kept me from going? I'm sure God would have used someone else to do what I have done, but what blessing and stretching and growth I would have missed! I'm so glad I responded in obedience, even though it's by far the hardest thing I've ever done. Then I wonder if there are other blessings I have missed, other privileges I have turned down, other opportunities to minister I have turned my back on. I hope not, but probably I have. I'm glad God didn't give up on me, and hasn't stopped trying to use me. I'm glad I obeyed! (March 4, 2016, Doylestown, PA 18901)

Deuteronomy 28:1-3 If you fully obey the Lord your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations on earth. All these blessings will come on you and accompany you if you obey the Lord your God: You will be blessed in the city and blessed in the country.

What blessings can you see in your life today because of your obedience to God in the past? Wasn't the blessing well worth the cost of obedience? Is there any area of obedience in your life you are now struggling with? What can you learn from past obedience that will help motivate you to obey God now in this as well?

Blog 440: CHANGES.....

Since we are creatures of habit and familiarity, most people would rather not have a lot of changes in their lives. That is particularly true of me! However, changes are inevitable. Life brings them. God allows them. They give us opportunities to trust Him more.

My ministry is going through changes and so am I. As of June 30, after 35 years of pastoring, I will no longer be a pastor at Main Street Baptist Church in Doylestown (June 26 will be my final Sunday and sermon). That brings big changes in responsibility as well as income. A few weeks after that the church will leave its building, change its name, and look for a new location and ministry impact. I don't know what the future will hold for our World View camps without this building, that is up to God. I'm not even sure about my India ministry. I must renew my Visa to India this summer and many pastors and Christian workers are now being denied Visas, or entry into the country even if they have a valid Visa. My youngest son is moving out of state this May to pursue his future. My youngest daughter has a fine career and a serious relationship and is moving ahead quickly in both.

Nancy's work status at the hospital has gone from full time to part time, and may drop even more this summer.

We'd like to eventually move to a warmer climate where we can be near our children and grandchildren. We want to be able to help them now and have it convenient for them to help us when we need it in the future. However with six children living in various parts of the country, and most not settled in a permanent location, it's hard to know exactly where that place may be.

Somehow I thought retirement meant settling down, downsizing life's activities and responsibilities, having life in order and living a predictable, semi-boring life. Why God has so many changes for us all at once, in virtually every area of life, I do not know. He is totally silent about my future. Clearly He is behind everything. All this happening within a few months is far beyond coincidence.

Changes. We can't avoid them. They give us a chance to apply what God has taught us in the past to new situations in the future. They stretch us. They are part of God's process to make us more like Jesus. They are inevitable. Life is full of changes.

The only thing that does not change is God Himself. He is "Hua," "the God Who does not change. In Psalm 102:25-27 we read: "In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You remain; they will all wear out like a garment. Like clothing you will change them and they will be discarded. But You remain the same, and Your years will never end." God never changes. Because He is always the same, we can face whatever changes come our way.

We can face change because the One Who never changes is always with us. Are you going through changes in your life? Don't focus on the changes; keep your eyes on the God Who never changes. (Doylestown, PA, February 23, 2015)

Malachi 3:6 "I the Lord do not change.

Numbers 23:19 God is not human, that he should lie, not a human being, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?

James 1:17 Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

What changes are taking place in your life now? Rest your faith in the God Who does not change to help you through them. Thank Him for the opportunities He gives you to feast on His unchanging love and care.

Blog 441: SOMETHING HAPPENED TO ME IN INDIA...

Something happened when I was in India that I haven't talked about. I think of it often but haven't had words to express it before now. I prefer not to write about myself, but I do feel God wants me to share this about what He has done so I will. What happened was that I left India feeling much, MUCH closer to God than I ever have before. My love for Him and awe at Who He is and what He has done for us is much greater than it ever was. Praise for Him easily overflows from my heart. He is much more real to me than ever before.

This developed in me gradually through the time there and I could sense it happening. It is because of the great privilege of giving His plan of redemption through the Bible in each conference as I taught the Bible Overview. It was emotionally and physically draining to teach but spiritually uplifting. It was humbling to get to share that great message day after day after day. I did

experience what I can only call a special anointing and filling of His Holy Spirit Who gave me the energy and words to speak.

Starting with the Old Testament and showing our need as well as God's plan of provision of salvation through the shedding of innocent blood set the stage. Eden, sacrifices, Abraham sacrificing Isaac, the Passover deliverance, the Kinsman-Redeemer in Ruth and the prophecies and revelation of the coming Messiah all build to the birth of Jesus. Talking about Him leaving heaven, being God and man in one, His miracles and His teaching, and especially talking about His cruel death in detail was moving for me and all those listening. I talked about all Jesus went through and why He did it, culminating with His victorious death and resurrection. Then, after covering the New Testament and Jesus' headship over the church today, I talked about the rapture, tribulation and His Second Coming to remove sin and Satan forever. I have several excellent and very effective magical tricks I use to emphasize the main points. The men applaud Jesus and are greatly touched, as am I, by His power and love. It is just awesome to share this daily. It touches me more deeply each time. Doing this has changed me in many ways. I am more aware of God's presence moment-by-moment in my life. I understand and appreciate my salvation more than ever. I feel and experience His love and acceptance of me much more than I ever have before. I could go on and on.

Something happened to Nancy as well. Her faith has grown much stronger and deeper as her confidence in God and His goodness increases. But I'll let her tell her own story some time.

I say this not to focus on us, but to testify to the faithfulness and love of God for us. I still can't find words that adequately describe it all, or give Him the credit and honor due Him – just that He is a wonderful, amazing, awesome, loving, giving, forgiving God! We only get to scratch the surface of that in this life. I am glad He allowed us to scratch a little deeper during this past trip to India. (Doylestown, PA March 10, 2016)

Ephesians 1:3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

Have you been growing closer to God as the years pass? Pray and ask Him to continue to reveal Himself to you, and for you to be open and alert to notice and appreciate what He has done and is doing for you.

Blog 442: THE NEXT STAGE

(I wrote this in the fall of 2015) As summer transfers into fall and, before long, winter, I see the same going on in my own life. Winter isn't here yet, but clearly it is coming. I can tell that, too – I don't have the energy, resilience, memory or motivation I had before. Physically I'm doing OK but things are changing. As I transition out of pastoring, and as I go through 35 years' worth of sermons, memories and stuff stored at the church, I find myself looking back at the past. I have lots of good memories, but also things I would have done differently as well.

As I turn toward the next stage in my life I also look back at the stage just over, for where I am going is greatly influenced by where I've been. I'm glad I don't have more regrets than I do. Life is precious. Time is valuable. We only get to live once and only have one life to live. Seldom does life turn out like we expected it would. In achievements and what the world calls 'success' we may feel we fall short of our goal. But what really matters is the real, inner us, the part the Lord blesses and prospers when we let Him. That is what really matters, for it is all we can take with us anyway.

Despite everyone always telling me how fast the years would go, I must say that I am still surprised at how quickly they came and went. Of course that is in hindsight. My memories are good

ones. God has blessed me far beyond what I deserve or could even imagine. The richness of His grace is truly amazing.

As I look at it all I wish I would have spent more time with God – in prayer, Bible reading, etc. I also wish I would have spent more time with my wife and family. I wish I could have been a better husband and father. And I wish the Eagles could have won the Super Bowl at least once – but we can't get everything we want, can we?

I am glad I kept growing in knowledge and application of the Bible. I'm glad I took care of my health. I'm glad I took time to keep in touch with old friends and develop new ones. I'm glad I had the privilege of being involved in my children's lives through home schooling. I'm glad I had a front row seat in watching God change the lives of people around me. And I'm glad I stayed in one place and one church all these years. Mostly I'm glad God isn't done with me yet. I'm glad I will always be able to say, even on my dying day, that the best is yet to come! (Doylestown, PA March 21, 2016)

Job 32:7 I thought, 'Age should speak; advanced years should teach wisdom.'

Isaiah 46:4 Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you.

I Chronicles 29:28 David died at a good old age, having enjoyed long life, wealth and honor. His son Solomon succeeded him as king.

How would you evaluate your life up to this stage? As long as you are alive it isn't too late to change. What can you start (or stop) doing today so that years from now you will be able to look back with greater satisfaction? Ask God to help you make the very best use you can of the time He has given you.

Blog 443: GOD ANSWERS EVENTUALLY, JUST NOT QUICKLY (Jeremiah 29:10)

(First in a series of seven blogs on Jeremiah 29:10-14)

Wouldn't it be great to have a magic gene to grant your deepest wish? You could immediately have whatever you felt you needed. Sometimes it's easy to think that's how God should respond to our desires. We just assume He'll show up on time and make things perfect once again.

The people in Jeremiah's day faced these same things. God had warned they would go into captivity for their sin and turning from God. But like today, they didn't believe it would really happen. They felt their country was safe. After all, God delivered them from the Egyptians and the Assyrians; surely He would deliver them from the Babylonians as well. As is often the case today, they had an entitlement mentality as far as God went, assuming that God would deliver them and they would all 'live happily ever after.'

But the Jews were taken into captivity. So God gave them His message through His prophet Jeremiah. Jeremiah wrote a letter from Jerusalem to those in captivity in Babylon which is recorded in Jeremiah 29. In it he tells them not to get discouraged but to settle in and make the best of it for God would deliver them, but not for another 70 years. To us God says the same thing, He will deliver but not right away so settle into this life and make the best of things until He returns. We, too, are living in captivity in a foreign environment longing for our real home.

God's promise through Jeremiah started in 29:10: "This is what the Lord says: 'When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place.'" This is the prophecy that prompted Daniel to ask God what would come after these 70 years. In response God gave Daniel the outline of history until He returns recorded in Daniel 9.

God affirmed that deliverance was coming eventually, but not quickly. He could have done it immediately but needed to teach them things first. They needed to see their need to repent and get back right with God. If He'd have delivered them right away that might never have happened. When you pray, make sure God's delays aren't to bring you to repentance. If there is anything between you and Him remove it immediately.

Another reason for delaying is because God was doing other things during this time. Daniel ministered in Babylon and wrote his book. Nebuchadnezzar and many others in Babylon became believers. Several Old Testament books were written (2 Kings, Lamentations, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and Psalm 137). If God is delaying an answer to your prayers it is because He has a good reason. There are things He is currently accomplishing by delaying. Remember, His delays are not denials. God answers eventually, just not quickly. (Doylestown, PA March 28, 2016)

Romans 8:28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

James 5:16 The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

Could God be delaying something in your life because there is a sin of which you need to repent? If so, pray and confess it now. If you aren't sure, ask Him to show you anything that might be there.

Think of a request you feel God has not been meeting. What has He been teaching you while you wait?

What other things has He accomplished while you wait?

Pray and ask for the fruit of patience so you can persevere until He knows the time is right to provide.

Blog 444: WHAT IS GOD PLANNING FOR YOU? (Jeremiah 29:11)

(2nd in a series of seven blogs on Jeremiah 29:10-14)

I'm sure you've heard it said that God has a wonderful plan for your lives. While that is true, sometimes it can be hard to believe when a handicapped child is born, a loved one dies, unemployment looms, a marriage struggles or a mate gets cancer. What we need to do then is to lean on God's promises given in His Word.

The people in Jeremiah's day had just gone into captivity. (See previous Blog: God Answers Eventually, Just Not Quickly). Their armies had been defeated, their nation destroyed, and many of the people killed. The rest were taken into bondage, either in the land or transported back to Babylon. The people were wondering what was happening, why God allowed this to happen. So God dictated a letter to Jeremiah to send to them. It is in Jeremiah 29.

First of all, God tells them He will deliver them eventually, just not quickly (29:10). Then He gives them a wonderful promise, but one that probably seemed lifeless to them at the time. "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. (Jeremiah 29:11)"

Did you know God has plans for you? Not just a plan, but plans, plural. That means He is thinking about you – a lot. He thinks about you because He loves you and you bring Him pleasure – just like you enjoy thinking about your children. He thinks about you because He has dreams of what He wants you to become in life. However, unlike a parent, He can do something to bring those dreams to reality.

Those plans include conforming us to the image of Jesus – making us more and more like Jesus every day. He alone knows how to do that in us and He promises He will bring it to pass (Phil 1:6). We may not always like the process, but it is guaranteed we will love the product! (Doylestown, PA April 4, 2016)

Psalm 139:16 says “All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.”

Psalm 40:5 Many, O Lord my God, are the wonders you have done. The things you planned for us no one can recount to you; were I to speak and tell of them, they would be too many to declare.

Philippians 1:6 being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

Take a few moments to look back over your life and all God has done to bring you to this point. Has He made any mistakes? Could you have done better?

Now thank Him for His perfect plans for you. Resubmit to them and to Him, trusting He is working all this for your good.

The hardest part of all, though, is to thank Him for what is going on in your life now. Recognize it as God's perfect plan for you and stop fighting it or trying to change it.

Blog 445: ALL TALK BUT NO ACTION

“Everyone talks about the weather but no one does anything about it” (Mark Twain). That certainly is true of the harsh weather so many places in the USA have experience during this past winter. It's true of India, too, where temperatures are starting to soar. Everyone talks about how bad is sometimes, been but no one does anything to change it. That's because we can't! We have no control over the weather. All we can do is talk. What happens is out of our control.

But it isn't out of God's control! He controls the weather (Psalm 77:16-18; 148:8; 42:7; Jonah 1:4). He controls everything else as well. Everything! Despite all our advancements in the sciences, man really can't control that much in life today. We like to think we are in control but we are not. A simple, beautiful, tiny thing like a snowflake (in large amounts) can shut down a large city and change everyone's plans in just a few hours. It's one of the little ways God has of reminding us that He is God and we are not!

No, we are not in control of everything. In fact we aren't in control of very much. But that's OK, because we know the One Who is in total control of absolutely everything, and we know He has our ultimate best interests at heart. We can't control everything, but don't need to because God already does! (Doylestown, PA April 11, 2016))

1 Chronicles 29:11-12 “Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power, and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, O LORD, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all. Wealth and honor come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all.”

Do you feel out of control of your own life? Are you trying to control something in your life that just won't be controlled by you? Surrender it to the One Who is sovereign over it all and Who has promised to do what is best for your growth and His glory!

Blog 446: IS GOD REALLY GOOD – ALL THE TIME? (Jeremiah 29:11)

(3rd in a series of seven blogs on Jeremiah 29:10-14)

There once was an old man who was very poor. In an attempt to take care of his family, he pooled all of his money and bought a horse. The people in town thought that this was a foolish thing to do because “things happen to horses.” Sure enough, a few days later, the horse was missing. The town’s people came to the poor old man and said: “Oh what a tragedy!” But the old man was very wise and replied, “We don’t know yet if this is going to be a tragedy or a blessing.” A few days later, the horse returned, and trailing behind him was a herd of 15 wild horses. Again, the town’s people came back to the old man and said, “You were right! This was a blessing and not a tragedy.” But, again, the old man answered, “Well, we really don’t know yet if this is a blessing or a tragedy.” A few days later, his only son was breaking in one of the wild mustangs when he was thrown. While lying on the ground, the horse trampled him and shattered his leg. The town’s people returned, saying: “It’s true, what a tragedy! Your only son is now crippled for life!” But this happened right before the war started and all the other young men from the town were called away to WAR. And none returned. When the people from the town came to speak to the old man, they said, “Now, we understand.”

The message of that little story is that we shouldn’t be so quick to determine if what God is doing in our lives is ‘good’ or ‘bad.’ God has plans for us, and they are always good. “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. (Jeremiah 29:11)” (see previous 2 blogs for background information)

Not only does God have plans for us, they are GOOD plans. So why do we often think that if we totally submit to God and tell Him He can do anything He wants with us, that it will be painful and miserable? Why do we think that if we surrender totally to Him He’ll send us to Africa to live in a mud hut and eat raw insects? God has GOOD plans for us – not to change circumstances so we don’t need to trust Him, but to change us within so we draw closer to Him.

Note, too, that He alone knows the plans – we don’t. We can’t. He just reveals them bit by bit as we trust and obey. If we knew the whole plan we’d balk, complain and try to ‘improve’ it. But God knows our tomorrows better than we know our yesterdays. He sees the whole perspective. Shouldn’t it be great to know our future is in the hands of Someone who knows everything about the future as well as us and is committed to bringing about the very best for us?

He promises to prosper us, not to harm us. He guarantees to do what we need, even if it isn’t always what we want. He can be counted on to do what we would want if we had all the information He has. He may not prosper us financially, but that is temporary. He will prosper us spiritually, and that is eternal.

So if God doesn’t give you what you pray for it’s because He has something far better in mind. (Doylestown, PA April 18, 2016)

Romans 8:28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.

Job 9:12 if he snatches away, who can stop him? Who can say to him, 'What are you doing?'

Job 5:9 He performs wonders that cannot be fathomed, miracles that cannot be counted.

Job 37:23 The Almighty is beyond our reach and exalted in power; in his justice and great righteousness, he does not oppress.

Are you guilty of evaluating everything that happens in life as ‘good’ or ‘bad’ and second guessing God on what He is doing and why? Apologize to Him now if you are guilty of this.

Can you think of times in the past when you thought something God was doing wasn't good, but now you can see the good results of it? Thank Him for that.

What situation are you now facing that you think isn't good? Put your faith in Him instead.

Blog 447: THE CHRISTIAN AND THE CURRENT ELECTION

Yesterday in church I preached about something I never preach about – politics and the upcoming election. Since I'm retiring in 2 months I can't be fired for preaching about this! The reason I chose this subject is that this coming election is posing quite a challenge to evangelical Christian voters. I hear a lot of talk about "the lesser of two evils." I feel it's important for pastors to give their people some guidance at this difficult time, so here's a short summary of what I said.

As Christians we are responsible to support our government in all ways (Titus 3:1) and that includes voting. Even though unfairly imprisoned for preaching the gospel, while in chains Paul wrote about the importance of supporting the government (Romans 13:1-7). Our one vote might not seem to matter in the big picture of an election, but we are responsible and accountable for our use of our vote. Size isn't the issue, stewardship of it is, like with the widow who gave just 2 mites (Mark 12:41-42). If we don't vote we give others the right to choose for us. Then we are responsible before God for their choice, for we gave up our right to choose! Even when we do vote we are responsible for our country as it stands before God (Nehemiah 1:4-11; Daniel 9:4-5). If we don't exercise the power we do have then we are all the more accountable. So not voting is not an option.

But how does God expect us to vote when all we have to choose between is the lesser of two evils? If we vote that way, we are still endorsing evil! Of course, unless Jesus Himself runs for office, every person running will have a sin nature (Romans 3:23; Jeremiah 17:9). So every election, in effect, is for the lesser of two evils. So clearly we can't make our choice on who is less evil.

What God does hold us responsible for is the moral and spiritual tone of our nation (Romans 14:34). That is the central issue for Christians. While the economy, military power, medical insurance, employment, etc., are important, it is the moral issues that face us that are the most important. God created human life in His image and the sanctity of life is of key importance to Him, much more than our economy!

God is concerned about the life of the unborn, and the USA is guilty of 60 million abortions since 1973! God is concerned about those who are born as well. All races are equal in His sight and are to be treated in that way. Race of background nationality do not matter. God is supremely interested in how we handle the 30 million illegal immigrants in our country. He is concerned about mankind worldwide as well. There are 100,000 to 150,000 Christians martyred throughout the world each year. The USA is the most powerful, influential nation in the world and must do all it can to protect these and others who are unfairly treated. He is very interested in how we treat the Jews and the nation Israel as well. If we support Israel as much as we can or fail to do so can make all the difference in if our country continues or fails (Genesis 12:3).

These must be the issues we as Christians consider first in our upcoming election. If we are still uncomfortable with the names on the ballot, we have the choice to write in a name of our choosing. They may not win, although Abraham Lincoln won as a third party candidate. By doing so we will be fulfilling our responsibility to God for doing our part, and that is all He expects of us.

We are not responsible for how others vote, just ourselves. God is in sovereign control of the USA (John 19:11; 2 Chronicles 20:6; Acts 17:26; Daniel 2:21; 4:17,25). He does what He pleases (Psalm 115:3; Daniel 4:35; Romans 9:21; Lamentations 3:37-38). Whatever happens in the

upcoming election, God will use it for His good and His glory (Genesis 50:20), and if it's for His good then it is for our good as well (Romans 8:28; Ephesians 1:11). So don't fear the future, don't be apathetic, but do vote with God's approval as your standard. (April 25, 2016 Doylestown, PA)

Romans 13:1-7 Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.

Psalms 115:3 Our God is in heaven; He does whatever pleases Him.

What is your attitude towards our country and the upcoming election? Is it pleasing to God? Are you being a good steward of the privilege and responsibility He has given you for the future of this country?

Blog 448: LISTEN TO THE GOD WHO LISTENS TO YOU (Jeremiah 29:12)

(4th in a series of seven blogs on Jeremiah 29:10-14)

The Jews went into captivity for 70 years because of their disobedience to God. They expected God to show up and bail them out as He had done so many times in the past. But this time God had a more important lesson for them to learn – to turn to Him and trust Him alone. God sent them a letter through Jeremiah (Jeremiah 29, see previous 3 blogs). He tells them He will deliver them eventually, but not quickly (verse 10). He reassures them He has good plans for them, plans to prosper them and not harm them (verse 11). Then He promises He will listen to them – but first He gives a condition.

Jeremiah 29:12 “Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you.” Before He listens to them, they must listen to Him! ‘Then’ He says. It will take 70 years for them to repent and turn to Him. He will answer when they call, but they must call first. Why is it we call on God as a last resort, when our plans and solutions have not worked? Why not call on Him right away? Why does it take us so long, too, to listen to Him?

“I will listen to you” (v. 12) He promises, and what a wonderful promise that is. Can you imagine the God of the universe, the creator of this all, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords listening when you talk to Him? In Hebrew idiom ‘listening’ doesn’t just mean taking in content. It means acting. When we ask a child, ‘do you hear me’ we imply that will he will act on what he hears. God is promising to act on what He hears from us when we call upon Him.

Before God listens to us, though, we must listen to Him. What is more important – what you have to say to God or what God has to say to you? Which do you spend the most time in, telling God what you would like Him to do or listening to what He has to say to you? When you speak to God you aren’t saying anything He doesn’t already know. But when He speaks to you He is conveying information and guidance that is desperately needed. No one likes someone who talks all the time but doesn’t listen, yet often we are like that with God.

Sometimes God goes to drastic measures to get us to listen when we won’t any other way. That’s why the Jews were in captivity for 70 years. God gave them a major ‘time out’ to get their attention so they would listen to Him. Finally they repented, turned to Him, and reconnected their relationship with Him. Is God listening to you? He will if you listen to Him first. (May 9, 2016 Doylestown, PA)

Ezekiel 12:2 “These people have ears to hear but they never hear eyes to see, but they never see”

John 16:13 but when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.

1 Kings 19:11-13 The LORD said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by." Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. 12 After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. 13 When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Then a voice said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

How much time have you spent listening to God today? What about this week?

How important it is to your relationships to listen to people? How important is it to God.

What does it take for God to get your attention so you will listen to Him? What could you do to make sure you listen before it gets to this point?

Spend some time listening to God now – don't put it off until you have more time or you'll never do it. God doesn't give you so much to do that you don't have time to listen to Him.

Blog 449: SEEKING GOD OR HIS BLESSINGS? (Jeremiah 29:13)

(5th in a series of seven blogs on Jeremiah 29:10-14)

We've been looking at God's promises in Jeremiah 29 to the Jews in captivity (see the previous 4 blogs to get the background for this). God promises He will be there for them when they call upon Him (verse 12). But just what does it mean to 'call upon God'?

Calling upon Him doesn't mean sending up a quick request during a TV commercial or passing on the 'to do' list we give Him every morning in our prayer time. Calling upon Him means turning totally and only to Him for our needs. A basic rule of Bible interpretation is to let Scripture interpret Scripture. The next verse, Jeremiah 29:13, tells us what God means when He says we are to 'call on Him.'

"You will seek Me and find Me when you seek Me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13). This is the key to a close connection to God – seeking Him. But notice what God says. He doesn't say we are to seek His blessings. He says we are to seek HIM. Honestly, is it closeness to God you want, or the benefits that come to you from that? Is He the greatest treasure, the most wonderful blessing you can ever have? When we have close intimacy with Him everything else follows. If we don't have it, nothing will substitute.

Parents: do you want your children to seek to be close to you because they love you, or because of how they benefit from you? Meister Eckhard (c. 1260-1327) says, "If we seek God for our own good and profit, we are not seeking God." If there are self-centered motives we don't seek God, we just seek our own benefit. How awful to use the God of the universe who created us and died for us to meet our own needs! "You will seek Me and find Me when you seek Me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13). (May 16, 2016 Doylestown, PA)

Phil 3:7-11 But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. 8 What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law,

but that which is through faith in Christ — the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. 10 I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Honestly spend a few moments asking God to search your heart (Psalm 139)? Do you really seek Him above and before all else? Or do you mainly seek what He can do in the way of help, blessing, peace, etc., in your life?

Spend a few moments seeking Him and Him alone.

Blog 450: FROM GRADUATION TO RETIREMENT

We have two big events going on in our household these days. My life, in many ways, is starting to wind down as I will be retiring from pastoring next month. On the other hand, the lives of my children are winding up as they recently finished their education and training and are preparing to move into the next stage of their lives. As my race is getting closer to the finish line, theirs is just leaving the starting line.

As a lifelong runner, I know a little about running and races. For instance, the start and the finish are particularly important times. They have great potential for gain but also for disaster. They call for particular alertness. A bad start can undermine the whole race, while a poor finish can negate the hard work that has come before it. It's important to start strong, run a consistent race, and then finish strong at the end. The same is true of living the Christian life.

For those who are at the start of their Christian race, there are some particular challenges to be alert to. Stumbling, in a race of in life, often happens. Falling isn't the worse thing, but staying down is. It may be a slight stumble, or perhaps someone else has knocked you off course, or even a terrible crash you yourself are responsible for. Get up and keep moving as soon as you can. Confess your sin (1 John 1:9) and get moving again. Mark as a young man quit on the first missionary journey with Paul, but years later Paul writes about how valuable he has become to the ministry. Peter, at his start, denied the Lord three times, but went on to be one of the greatest leaders in the church. Moses killed an Egyptian shortly after beginning to serve the Lord, but later led the Jews out of Egypt.

The other obstacle for starting well is distractions. In running and life, one must keep their eyes on the goal (Christlikeness for the Christian). Temptation, sin, worldly pleasures, even good things that take too great a role in life distract from following Jesus. Keep your eyes always and only on Him (Luke 13:32; 2 Corinthians 5:9; Philippians 3:9-12, 14; Matthew 6:33).

For those of us coming toward the end of our race, we want to make sure we finish well (Philippians 1:6; 2 Timothy 4:7-8; Acts 20:24; 1 Corinthians 9:24). A danger we must be aware of is looking to the past and let some failure, hurt or sin in the past interfere with our running a strong race now. Forget what is in the past and only look ahead (Philippians 3:13-14).

The other potential danger is to grow weary, get tired and start to coast (Galatians 6:9; Hebrews 12:3). Many a good race has been hurt by the runner not giving his all to the very end. David backed off his responsibility to lead his men and stayed home where he saw Bathsheba and sinner with her, marring his race. The key to finishing strong is to start strong and persevere all the way through to the finish line (2 Timothy 4:7-8). That means being consistent day in and day out in prayer and personal devotions, Bible study, and fellowship with other Christians and times of personal and corporate worship. Make sure there are not unconfessed sins and you are growing closer to and more like Jesus at all times.

A story that has shaped my personal value system from when I was very young is the story of the tortoise and the hare. The importance of keeping moving ahead at all times is key (Hebrews 12:1-2). Pray, worship, study, fellowship, confess, forgive, witness, love and enjoy – every day, for the rest of your life! (May 23, 2016 Doylestown, PA)

Galatians 6:9 Let us know become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap; if we do not give up.

Hebrews 12:1-2 Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.

Philippians 1:6 being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it onto completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

Where are you in your life race – near the start, in the middle or towards the end? How are you doing? How is your perseverance?

Are you more like the tortoise or the hare? Whichever you are, pray for perseverance.

Blog 451: THE CHRISTIAN GOD IS A HEALING GOD

I've often written about those I have met in India who came to salvation because they discovered, when no one else could help them, that "the Christian God is a healing God." God uses physical healing to show He can heal spiritually as well (Matthew 9:5; Mark 2:9; Luke 5:23). I recently read the testimonies of 5 men who went on a Southern Baptist Church sponsored mission trip to India which included the areas we visit. They made it very clear they wouldn't pray for healing except for the deaf to hear the gospel. The reason they gave was that if some people were healed, crowds would start bringing people from everywhere and that would hinder their preaching the gospel.

In the first case, one of the men and his interpreter saw a man with whom they could speak. However, he was deaf. The man prayed for him with his interpreter translating the message, asking God to restore the deaf man's hearing so he could hear the gospel. The man reflected that he could hear and they shared him the gospel with him. He rejected it and started to walk away. As he did, his hearing was completely taken away again.

The second case involved one of the men and his interpreter spotting a woman sitting by the side of the street. The interpreter told him there is no use talking to her because she is deaf and dumb, cannot hear nor speak. The man then said they would pray for her anyway. He asked God to give her the ability to hear the gospel and she started making signs that she could hear. After they shared the gospel with her, she suddenly started excitedly speaking. Her husband heard her and ran over to the place where she was. The first words he ever heard his wife say were "I want Jesus in my life!" He started shouting and jumping and calling people and running around while a crowd gathered around the woman. She was filled with joy as a result of having received Christ and, in addition, being able to speak and hear.

The third and last case involved another man as he was on his way to catch the ride back to the airport. He and his interpreter then spotted an older lady lying on the ground and he asked his interpreter about talking to her. His interpreter told him there was no use since she cannot hear. The man then said "Well, let's see what God says about it." The man then got down very close to her, putting his hand on her head and prayed, asking God to restore her hearing so that she could hear the gospel. After hearing what the interpreter said, she received Christ and started kissing the missionary's hands and feet. He then asked her if there was anything he could pray for her about. She said "Yes, I am paralyzed and I cannot walk. Would you pray for the Lord to heal my

paralysis?” He was a little reluctant because he did not want to draw a crowd. However, he did pray for her that God would heal her from her paralysis after they were gone, providing she would use her legs to preach the gospel to her own people. They finished and he and the interpreter started toward the car. They got about 50 feet away and heard someone calling loudly. He looked back and the lady was not only standing up but walking toward him as well. He said she was walking as well as he was. Somehow, this didn’t register with him until the five men were on the plane.

As they later talked about all they had seen, they started crying. This is something for a bunch of guys about 50-60 years old! This all started when they realized what God was doing in the lives of the people in India. Again, they made it clear that they considered prayer of pivotal importance for the success of the trip, both from the church and from individuals. (May 30, 2016 Doylestown, PA)

Mark 2:9-12 Which is easier: to say to this paralyzed man, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, take your mat and walk’? 10 But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.” So he said to the man, 11 “I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.” 12 He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, “We have never seen anything like this!”

Matthew 15:29-31 Jesus left there and went along the Sea of Galilee. Then he went up on a mountainside and sat down. 30 Great crowds came to him, bringing the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute and many others, and laid them at his feet; and he healed them. 31 The people were amazed when they saw the mute speaking; the crippled made well, the lame walking and the blind seeing. And they praised the God of Israel.

PRAISE GOD for His greatness and power, for His love and mercy, for reaching down to those who can’t reach up to Him, for His forgiveness and restoration and for the privilege of knowing and serving Him!!!

Blog 452: IS IT WORTH IT?

Last month I asked you to pray for a Christian India doctor who was doing medical missionary work in India and was told he could not return when he left for a medical conference in Greece. He tried to go back but was denied entrance. All he could find out was that the Indian consulate which issued his papers in the USA had issued an order to keep him from returning to India. After a long, draining, very difficult time he was separated from his wife and children, who were allowed to enter India, and was escorted to a flight out of India. His wife and children will pack up their things and travel to join him when they can.

This is what he wrote about it: “This has been one of the most difficult days of my life. I don’t think I’ve cried this long or hard for many years. I wept as I sat down in my seat and watched India disappear away through the windows of the plane. This land and people we love so much that we gave up our lives in the US to come and live here. These group of young doctors and nurses that we have loved getting to see grow in their medical knowledge and spiritual maturity while I was with them.

“It was a difficult day because it broke my heart to see my family from behind the cordoned off section of the immigration detention center. It was hard to watch them cry, not knowing when they would see me again. It was hard to see my wife, knowing that there was nothing she could do - realizing that I have never been this far away from her since we were married almost 13 years ago.

“Since I was sixteen, God had placed a burden on my heart to return to India to care for those that had little and in caring for them share God’s love with them. I met my wife, a wonderful, godly woman who shared a similar passion to go to India. God has led us through undergraduate, medical

school and residency with this one aim of serving the people of India with good holistic medical care. This has been our dream and where we felt that God has led us now for over 17 years.

“So where does that leave us now? I don’t know. Our heart still burns for India and to see this nation transformed. Both my wife and I are first borns and planners. We have always made decisions after thinking through it carefully, praying about it, planning and then finally committing. That is how most of our married life has been. We always knew what our lives would likely look like a few months from now or a few years from now.

“This is the first time in my life that I don’t know where I’ll sleep tonight. I don’t know when I will see my family again. I don’t know what I’ll do tomorrow. I don’t know what my next few months or year ahead will look like. Perhaps that is the difficult lesson God is teaching us - trust Him day by day. Trust him hour by hour because we don’t have any other choice.

“One of the thoughts that I’ve been struggling with this past month is where is my home? I think a few weeks ago I would have said India. And three years ago I would have said the U.S. But now we have no home. One of the hardest things for me to grapple with is the reality that the land that gave birth to me no longer considers me welcome. However, what the Lord has been reminding me of constantly this month has been is that this is not my home. I will never find the rest and peace that I long for in a home here. It is a place that many before us have walked. To be sojourners in a land, longing for a home yet to come. Hebrews 11:35-40.

“As I was praying for the past few days, I had been reading through the book of Acts and I took particular courage from the words that the Lord spoke to Paul after he was arrested in Acts 23. He said in Acts 23:11, “The following night the Lord stood near Paul and said, “Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome.” I still don’t know why the Lord brought those verses to me powerfully as I was reading through Acts but my denial of entry into India is no accident. It was part of His plan and will for our lives. We are confident that the same God who has lead us so clearly these past 17 years will continue to guide us - our only hope is that whatever happens to us that it might serve to further the mission of helping people to know the great and magnificent love of Christ.

“A final question that I wondered about as I cried out before the Lord this morning was this question of “Is it worth it?” “Is it worth it for me to be treated like a criminal for your name’s sake?” “Is it worth it for me to lose my home, my job, my career for your name’s sake?” “Is it worth it for me to not see my wife and my children for your name’s sake?” “Is it worth it for me to live a life of uncertainty for your name’s sake?” “Is it worth it for me to have spent 17 years following Your leading to India and then seem to have lost it all for your name’s sake?” “Is it worth it for me to watch my children weep because they don’t know when they will see me again for your name’s sake?” And the answer is, “Yes. Yes Lord, it is worth it, because You are worthy!” (May 16, 2016 Doylestown, PA)

Hebrews 11:13-16 All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. 14 People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. 15 If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

How would you answer that question about your life and what you have gone through to faithfully serve the Lord? Has it been worth it? If so, tell the Lord it’s been worth it!

PRAY FOR this faithful servant, and hundreds like him around the world who give up everything to spread the good news of Jesus Christ. Pray for courage, peace and faithfulness for them and their families.

Blog 453: SEEK AND FIND (Jeremiah 29:13)

(6th in a series of seven blogs on Jeremiah 29:10-14)

Recently my son lost his new mp3 player while we were on vacation. He spent hours looking everywhere for it. He just wouldn't give up until he found it about a week later. Now if he had lost a pencil, a candy bar or even a dollar bill I know he wouldn't have looked that long and hard. You see, the time and effort you spend looking for something shows how much you value it. If the item you are seeking has lots of value to you then you will diligently search until you find it. If it isn't that important you won't look very hard. So having said that – how much effort do you spend seeking God? How important to you is a closer relationship with God?

“You will seek Me and find Me when you seek Me with all your heart” (Jeremiah 29:13 – see previous 5 blogs). To seek for God means to hunger and thirst for Him like a deer pants for streams of water. It means to love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. It means to seek with ALL YOUR HEART.

Why does God phrase it this way, “with all your heart?” Why does He demand ALL of us when we seek Him? Isn't it good enough to just seek Him? No, because how much effort you spend seeking something shows how important it is to you. If we want everything from God we must give everything to God. If we want to be first to God, He must be first to us. God deserves our all and He needs our all to give us His all. We need to give Him our all for His sake as well as our own.

Seeking God with ALL our heart is costly. Jesus told the stories about the man who found a treasure in a field and sold everything to buy it (Mt 13:44). He also told about a merchant who sold everything he had to buy a special pearl (Mt 13:45). To get what their hearts desired more than anything else cost them everything. We can't just add some 'God' to everything else in our lives. We have to replace everything else with Him. We must seek Him with our whole heart. It may be our head that starts to seek God, but it is our heart that finds Him!

When we do that God promises He will be found. He's not hiding or playing hard to get. He wants to be found. But He can only really be found by the heart that seeks Him totally and only. Remember, how much effort you spend looking for something shows how important it is to you. How much effort do you spend seeking a closer walk with God? (June 13, 2016 Doylestown, PA)

Deuteronomy 4:29 But if from there you seek the Lord your God, you will find him if you look for him with all your heart and with all your soul.

Matthew 7:7-8 “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 8 for everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

Matthew 13:44 “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. 45 “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. 46 When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.

Take a few moments to memorize Jeremiah 29:13 “You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.” Write it on a piece of paper and put it where you will see it many times today. Meditate on it.

Thank God for His promise that we can and will find Him, that He wants to be found. Spend some time in His presence, 'finding' Him and the sweet fellowship that come.

Blog 454: GETTING OUT OF CAPTIVITY (Jeremiah 29:14)

(7th in a series of seven blogs on Jeremiah 29:10-14)

The Jews who were taken captive into Babylon longed for the day they would be able to go home. God promised He would release them from their bondage and restore them – one day. The longer they waited the more they wanted it to happen. God promised it and they eventually believed it. Jeremiah 29 records God's promise to them. (See the previous 6 blogs about Jeremiah 29.)

"I will be found by you," declares the Lord, "and will bring you back from captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you," declares the Lord, "and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile." (Jeremiah 29:14) We can identify with that, for we, too, look forward to leaving this land of bondage and being set free to return to our home in heaven. We look forward to God's presence and remember His promise to come take us home to be with Him.

"I will" God says so it's as good as done. He doesn't say He may, or He'll try but that He WILL do it. It took 70 years in captivity, but finally they looked to Him to return home – at least some of them did. Some responded to Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah and returned home. Unfortunately most of the Jews had become so comfortable in their bondage they didn't long for home any more. How comfortable are you? How much do you think of your heavenly home and God's promise to take you there one day (by death or by rapture)? It took the Jews 70 years to start longing for home. How much better to start longing for it when young instead of waiting until we are old to think about heaven.

In the meantime, we can learn from Jeremiah 29 about how to live in captivity until we are released. First, we see the importance of giving up false hopes of a quick fix or easy way out. God will provide eventually, but He usually won't provide quickly (verse 10). So, secondly, accept what you are going through as from the hands of a loving God who has plans to prosper you and not to harm you (Jeremiah 29:11). Make sure, third, you listen to God and respond to what He says. When you do so He will listen to you as well (Jeremiah 29:12). Then, fourth, make sure you seek God totally and completely, with your whole heart. Don't just seek His blessings but seek a closer intimacy with Him (Jeremiah 29:13). Finally (fifth) remember His promises to bring you out of this place of bondage to your eternal home with Him forever (Jeremiah 29:14). All of this is temporary and one day will be over. (June 20, 2016 Doylestown, PA)

John 14:1-6 "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. 2 In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. 4 You know the way to the place where I am going." 5 Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" 6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Read Jeremiah 29:10-14 from your Bible. What promises or challenges apply to you in your present situation?

Blog 455: TODAY I TURN 70

Today I turn 70. It's a milestone. In less than two weeks I retire as pastor of Main Street Baptist Church in Doylestown PA after serving as pastor there for 35 of my 70 years. Another milestone. June 26 is my last Sunday. A special service is planned (contact my wife Nancy for more information since I don't know what all is planned - Nancy@schmoyer.net). June 26 is also the last service in our building for it has been sold and the congregation is seeking a new location. Still another milestone.

Today also starts our last World View Plus camp for teens in this location. For 13 years we've been having a week long summer camp as well as fall retreat and spring leaders training. 50 teens arrive today. It's one of my very favorite ministries. I speak multiple times a day and it is a great week of fun, fellowship and blessings. God is clearly present.

God has been so very good to me during these years. I become more and more aware of His greatness and majesty, His love and grace and His power and protection. I thank Him for the privilege of ministering for Him all these years. He has given me a wonderful wife, children and grandchildren, all whom love and serve the Lord. I couldn't have asked for a better church or ministries in which God allowed me to be involved. Home schooling, India, World View for teens, marriage and family retreats, writing books, and many many more all have been a great privilege and rich blessing. I look forward to more time with my wife, children and grandchildren, and also serving in any way God allows. I especially look forward to continuing to draw closer to my Lord as I learn more about Him and His wonderful love and grace.

I will continue my World View Plus ministry, India, marriage retreats (March 10-12, 2017 – see <http://family.christiantrainingonline.org/> for more info or to register) and spiritual warfare counseling. I will be pastor emeritus at MSBC and help there as needed. God is good, and He just keeps getting better!

Philippians 1:6 being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

The older I get the more I find myself trusting in and relying on His promises. They have proved to be solid and dependable in the past and I know will continue to be so in the present. This is one of my favorite. Which promises mean the most to you?

Blog 456: GOD DOESN'T NEED ME, I NEED HIM

Yesterday I retired from pastoring after spending the last 25 years at Main Street Baptist Church in Doylestown. Many, many thanks to those of you who came and/or wrote something for me. It is very humbling and extremely gratifying to hear all you said. If even half of it is true I am a deeply blessed man!

I shared 2 lessons I learned in my 70 years of life. The first lesson is that God doesn't need me but I need Him. While that may seem obvious, and while it's something we have always known in our heads, it seems to take a while for us to really plunge the depths of this truth.

When I started in ministry I was very excited at the opportunity to use my gifts and talents for God. There was so much I wanted to accomplish. I was "expecting great things from God and doing great things for God." I knew I needed His help to carry out these desires but I had no doubt with God's assistance they would happen.

The older I got, though, the more clearly I saw that I have nothing to offer. It's not a teamwork operation; it's all His grace and mercy. I felt like a little boy thinking he can hit a baseball a mile when

it is really his father standing behind him, wrapping his arms around his son and holding the bat with him that is making contact with the ball. Without my heavenly Father's arms wrapped around me I'd miss it by a mile every time. Every once in a while, when I insist on doing things my way, God lets me see how unable I am to produce what I desire.

Truly it's not about me, it's all about Him! As I slowly but surely mature spiritually I find God keeps getting bigger and bigger. I, by comparison, keep getting smaller and smaller. And that's not a bad feeling! There's something freeing about "letting go and letting God." When I think I have nothing to offer He does something to encourage me to keep on going.

There's a real peace that comes with letting God be God, with recognizing He doesn't need me to run His Kingdom down here and to humbly come to the conclusion that I can't do ANYthing without Him. When that becomes more than words but takes on reality in my life then I start listening to Him more. I spend less time asking Him to help me with what I am doing and more asking Him what He wants me to do. I've seen some of my biggest plans lying in ruins by the wayside, but I find He has used me to touch lives at times and in ways I didn't expect. I've learned that people come before program. I'm here to serve others; they aren't here to serve me. I've got more peace and more patience because I know that if I am in His will then He will bring whatever results He wants whenever He wants them. God doesn't measure success by numbers (people, dollars, possessions, etc.) but by faithfulness. So I've learned to spend more and more time making sure I am doing what He wants and less and less trying to get Him to prop me up and bless my plans.

I've retired from pastoring Main Street Baptist Church, but my ministries through CTO in India for teens, in spiritual warfare and marriage retreats will continue. And it is true more than ever, God doesn't need me but I need Him all the more! (June 27, 2016 Doylestown PA)

Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Romans 12:1-2 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.

If God withheld His grace and help from your life, what would it be like? What could you accomplish for Him on your own, without His help? How often do you try to do this?

How natural is it for you to give credit to God for EVERYthing that happens?

Blog 457: A GOOD WIFE IS WORTH MORE THAN RUBIES

June 26 I retired from pastoring after spending the last 35 years at Main Street Baptist Church in Doylestown (I inadvertently said 25 last blog). It was a wonderful service which I will always remember. I shared 2 lessons I learned in my 70 years of life. The first lesson is that God doesn't need me but I need Him. I wrote about that in my last blog. This time I want to write about the second lesson, a good wife is worth more than rubies.

God has blessed me with a wonderful wife or I wouldn't be where I am today. The longer I am married to her the more I appreciate the fine person she is and the more I thank God for such a special gift. Her behind-the-scenes work and faithfulness in my life and ministry is invaluable. Her faithful, deep prayer life accomplishes more for the Kingdom than my frantic activity. She is my greatest prayer supporter. Through her I have learned about God's unconditional love for me,

because I've seen it demonstrated through her. I understand God can and will forgive me for she has exemplified that time and time again. I can trust His faithfulness better because I see it lived out in her life.

Sometimes we think we could accomplish more in life if it weren't for the needs of our mates and families. We can resent the time they take. Perhaps I could have done more in quantity without my wife and family, but that wouldn't have lasted. The quality would have been far less, and even so I'm sure I would have burnt out or disqualified myself in some way without her. Learning to meet her needs first doesn't take away from my ministry, it enriches it by maturing me. Whatever I put into her I get back many times over. Learning to put someone before myself hasn't been easy but has been essential in marriage and ministry.

The main lessons I've learned in life and the greatest spiritual and emotional growth I've experienced in life have come through my marriage. Things haven't always been easy or perfect, and they still aren't. God uses our imperfections and our conflicts to teach me about humility, service, and apologizing, forgiving and accepting forgiveness. These things can't be learned from a book, only from life.

Any time you take two people who are opposites and put them together there will be struggles. Male and female, introvert and extrovert, first born and baby of the family – we are as opposite as we can be. Then add a fully active sin nature in each of us and you have a sure formula for conflict. The major lessons of life, love and growth which I've learned have come through my marriage and family, not my ministry. By comparison ministry is easier. Others are easier to impress, they don't need as much from me and I can keep them at a safe distance. None of that is true of my wife.

I am amazed at how we continue to grow deeper and deeper in love daily, how we enjoy each other, how deeply we are bonded together and at the history and understanding we share. Our greatest pains are caused by each other, but so are our greatest joys. And the joys far outweigh the pain. The older I get and the further I go in life the more I realize that a good wife IS worth far more than rubies. And so is a good husband for you women reading this! (July 4, 2016 Doylestown, PA)

Proverbs 31:10-12 A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies. Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value. She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life.

Proverbs 31:30-31 Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised. Give her the reward she has earned, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate.

1 Peter 3:7 Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

How much do you truly value your mate? How much do you resent the demands they put on you?

What do you truly sacrifice to meet your mate's needs? What more should you be doing?

When is the last time you told them how much they mean to you? Do so now (sometime today).

Spend some time in prayer thanking God for them and praying for their needs.

Blog 458: THE MORE I GROW THE FURTHER AWAY I AM

On June 26 I retired after being pastor of Main Street Baptist Church in Doylestown for 35 years. I've taken some time to look back at the main lessons God has taught me during that time. Here's one:

In my retirement service and an earlier blog I talked about the most important lesson I have learned in my life and ministry: God doesn't need me, I need Him. I want to follow that up with a principle that somewhat overlaps: the more I grow the further away I am from being what I want to be.

A few years ago I started learning Hindi to help my ministry time in India. I thought if I could learn the alphabet, some simple sentence structure and a bit of vocab I'd be fine. Not so! I've learned far more than that, but I seem to be further than ever from where I want to be. The more I learn the more I realize I don't know!

As I have grown spiritually over the years and my awareness of Who and What God really is has matured. Instead of feeling like I am closer to the goal of Christlikeness I feel like I am further and further away. I see more and more areas in my life that just don't measure up to His perfection. When I start getting victory in one area of weakness I then find five more places where work is needed! The more I grow the more I become conscious of how far I still have to grow! The greater God becomes in my mind and heart the larger the gap between He and I grows.

It's interesting to note that Paul experienced this as well. At the start of his ministry he wrote that he was the least of all apostles. Later he said he was the least of all believers and at the end he recognized he was the least of all people. That's the way it works: the more we grow the more we know we need to grow. It's like opening a wardrobe door and finding a whole new 'Narnia' in your life that needs to come under the control of the Holy Spirit!

For example, I used to be quite good at giving advice on raising children. I had all the answers, just ask and I'd tell you what to do. Then I had children of my own. Soon I realized I don't know nearly as much as I thought I did. Growth and experience has helped me realize the same thing spiritually: I don't know all the answers, in fact I have fewer and fewer as time goes on. But I know God has them and am better able to trust Him through it all.

I look forward to the remaining years of my life, knowing God will continue to work in me. Despite all the work that needs to be done, I can look back over the years and see where He has changed me. I know He will continue to do so. There will always be areas in my life that need work. Some need a lot of work while others have made progress over the years. It's like a sculptor carving a model. First he painfully removes large chunks of marble that aren't part of the final product and then he starts sanding and finally polishing. Next he moves to another part and starts with the hammer and chisel again. Can you see Him working that way in your life? Think about it and you'll see His work. He's the master sculptor and is committed to making you into the image of His Son. His work may be painful sometimes, but the product is always worth it! (July 18, 2016 Doylestown, PA)

Philippians 1:6 being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

Romans 7:14-19 We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.

Where have you grown spiritually the most in the last year? Why?

Where is God working on you right now to stretch and mature you?

What can you do to help with the work He is doing in you?

Blog 459: INTIMACY WITH GOD IS STILL MY NUMBER ONE GOAL

On June 26 I retired after being pastor of Main Street Baptist Church in Doylestown for 35 years. I've taken some time to look back at the main lessons God has taught me during that time. Here's one:

Intimacy doesn't come naturally or easily for me. It's easier to hide behind my work and stay busy. However there has always been a deep desire in my heart to know God deeper, to really connect with Him in the fullest way possible. Early on in my ministry I made 'intimacy' with God my number one goal. Paul's words to the Philippians (3:7-14) about wanting to "know" Jesus have taken root in my heart. I want to know Him, not just about Him!

As I look back on my life I can see God slowly but surely bringing that about in my life. He has used my wife and children to teach me about emotional intimacy. It takes time to develop real intimacy. That is true of any relationship, including our relationship with God. There is a big price to pay for it: time, vulnerability and humility are just a few.

Putting up walls, playing it safe, keeping others and God at a safe distance – these are easy and come naturally to us. We learn how to pretend and fake for the sake of others. That's an occupational hazard for all Christians.

Dallas Willard once said, "The greatest enemy of intimacy with God is service for God." It's so easy to get wrapped up in producing more and more. We start seeing others and even God in terms of how they can help us accomplish more in life. Working with God and others to achieve a common goal is safe and predictable. Men especially, who are naturally production oriented and thrive on challenges and competition, can easily replace relationship to God with service for God.

I've found, though, that nothing substitutes for intimacy with God. The time spent in prayer and worship, when His Spirit ministers to me, can become times of sweet fellowship which I desire more than anything else. My time spent with Him can't just be about work-related issues (what to do when, how, etc.). It must be about relationship – my need for Him, my love for Him and His love for me, my worship of Him, etc. It's the same in marriage. Relationships don't grow when communication is just about how to more efficiently function together towards a common goal. Relationships grow when we listen to our mates, speak from our hearts, share our love and appreciation of them and let them love us in return.

Intimacy doesn't just 'happen.' It takes work, it takes making it a priority and it takes putting it before programs and production. Without it life is empty. Without it we just go through the motions. Without it we eventually burn out or find ourselves pursuing some sinful substitute. For guys pornography often becomes a substitute for real intimacy. For girls it can be romance novels (even Christian ones), TV programs or movies.

There is no simple formula for intimacy. It has to be something you desire more than anything else or it won't happen. As I said, it takes time, vulnerability and humility. But it is definitely worth it. It's what heaven will be all about! It's a taste of heaven on earth now. Sure, we'll be serving God in heaven, but it will be based on true intimacy with Him. Why wait until then when we can start experiencing it now? (July 25, 2016 Doylestown, PA)

Philippians 3:10 I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Deuteronomy 6:4-5 Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

On a scale of 1 to 10, where would you say you are in your intimacy with your mate?

On a scale of 1 to 10, where would you say you are in your intimacy with God?

Honestly ask yourself what keeps your intimacy with God from growing. What roadblocks are in the way? What can you do about them?

Blog 460: WE CAN'T EVALUATE OUR WORTH BY THE USE OF OUR GIFTS

On June 26 I retired after being pastor of Main Street Baptist Church in Doylestown for 35 years. I've taken some time to look back at the main lessons God has taught me during that time. Here's one:

Another important truth I've learned is not to evaluate my worth or growth as a person just by my ability to use the gifts God has given me. My spiritual gifts are mainly teaching/preaching and counseling. As I've practiced them for five decades I can see that there has been growth and improvement in these areas. My wife says I'm at the top of my game now in ministry. I should be, since I've spent thousands of hours over the years honing these skills. It's nice to look back and see the improvement made and efficiency attained in these areas.

I thank God for this, because it is His grace and His Spirit that has brought these about. However I've no illusion that I could have done this on my own. I know what these 'skills' would look like should He withdraw His Spirit and His help from me. On my own, I would be a real failure in these areas. He gets all the credit for them.

It's important for me to realize this because if I don't I start thinking that somehow I am pretty good as a person because of what I do. It's easy for us, especially for men, to evaluate ourselves by what we do instead of who we are. Who I am as a person, though, is entirely different than what I've learned to do in using the gifts God has given me. I am not defined by what I produce but by who I am inside, separate from how I perform my ministry duties. Does that make sense? Are you following me here? I hope so for I believe this is very important for each one of us.

When God looks at me He isn't impressed by my last sermon or counseling session. He looks at my heart, at the real me. Judas was skilled in ministry, so much so that he was trusted with the money bag. No one suspected Judas when Jesus said someone would betray Him. Judas was probably one of the most talented and personable disciples. He could function very well. But none of that mattered, did it?

I enjoy teaching, preaching and counseling. I have a great desire to do these things and do them well. I feel great when that happens. However, hardly a Sunday goes by when, standing at the door after the service listening to people complement the message, I don't remember Howard Hendrick's description of that event as the "glorification of the worm." It helps me remember where the credit really belongs. I don't want to take credit for what He does, that would be stealing His glory.

I don't want to use God's gifts to impress others, myself or God. I can enjoy what He has given me and does through me but I can't take credit for it myself and I can't evaluate myself as a human being just by how I can perform. And neither can you. So if you are getting more effective and skillful in using the gifts and talents God has given you – great! But don't take credit for it. Don't use that to evaluate your worth or your spiritual growth. Thank God for using you and doing those things through you, but don't take credit for them. They are what you do (by God's grace), not who you are! (August 1, 2016 Doylestown, PA)

1 Corinthians 15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them — yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.

Romans 15:17 *Therefore I glory in Christ Jesus in my service to God.*

How much emphasis do you put on the successful use of your spiritual gifts? Are you tempted to take pride in them?

If God removed His grace and power from your life, what would change?

How do you measure your spiritual growth? How does God measure it?

Blog 461: HUMILITY NEVER COMES NATURALLY

On June 26 I retired after being pastor of Main Street Baptist Church in Doylestown for 35 years. I've taken some time to look back at the main lessons God has taught me during that time. Here's one:

As I think of the lessons I have learned in my life of ministry I must include my battle with pride. Pride can be a very subtle thing, but it is extremely dangerous! When I think I have it licked in one area of life it pops up in another. Not only that, but it's very hard for me to recognize it in my own life! I can pick it out in others quite easily but am almost totally blinded to it in my own life.

I'm told I need to feel good about myself, have confidence in what I believe and enjoy who I am and what I've accomplished. When doing that I have to be VERY careful I don't slip into pride. Yet if I go to the opposite extreme and put myself down all the time that is still pride. It's an over-emphasis of self, a self-centeredness and self-focus. There really isn't any difference between saying I'm better than others and saying I'm worse than others. The focus is still on me. And that is pride.

In football a team will start setting up what they feel can be a scoring play long before running that particular play. They do little things that will influence the defense so that when they run the special play they have the maximum advantage to make it successful. I feel like Satan does the same thing to me. There is something said, then something else happens, and before I know it pride has scored on me again!

The best I can do is to keep asking God to show me pride and to keep me from it. It's too narrow a tightrope for me to walk alone! I truly don't want to be acting in pride. But I also am often unaware of it in its early stages. Daily I must ask God to keep me from it, to show it to me and to help me keep from it. I've learned to have a healthy respect for the damage it can do and the deceitful ways it can manifest itself. It's not a matter of 'if' it hits me but 'when' it hits, for it certainly will.

My wife has been my biggest help in pointing out pride to me before I recognize it. Wanting to always be right, reacting against constructive criticism, little critical things I say about others, attitudes to other ministries, these and others are subtle ways she can see pride before I see it. Admitting my failures without feeling like a failure is hard for me. Loving myself and letting others love me when I'm wrong isn't easy. It's all about pride. Pride is at the root of all sin. Self-centeredness is the opposite of God-centeredness and other-centeredness. It's such a large part of our 'flesh' that we will have to deal with it as long as we live in these bodies. Thank God for His patience and mercy with us!
(August 8, 2016 Doylestown, PA)

Proverbs 11:1 *When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom.*

Daniel 4:37 *Those who walk in pride he is able to humble.*

Proverbs 16:18 *Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.*

Where or when is your biggest problem with pride? What can you do about it?

How do you respond to criticism? How critical are you of others who challenge you?

Ask your mate or best friend to honestly tell you where they see pride in your life. Ask them to tell you every time they see you reacting in pride.

Write down a detailed list of where pride manifests itself in your life. Pray about this every day for the next week.

Blog 462: STOP THE WORLD, I WANT TO GET OFF!

Is it just me, or does it seem like the world we are living in is going a bit crazy? Mass killings, police shootings, terrorist's attacks and the like are getting so common we aren't surprised when another one happens. And it isn't just somewhere else, it's in malls, airports, restaurants, markets and even churches hear us. There is not where that feels immune and safe anymore.

I grew up in the 50's with the cold war and bomb shelters. But all that was long distance. This current wave of violence is up close and personal. Every indication is that it will just get worse and not better. There doesn't seem to be a solution to the murder or the terrorist acts. The world is spinning out of control and who can stop it?

Don't fear! That is what the enemy wants. God is still in control. He is the ultimate victor. Keep your eyes on Him, not on the world around you. Remember that this world is not your home. As the song says, we are just passing through. Now is a great time to share the gospel with others for it alone offers hope and stability. Reach out to those with no solid ground under them and tell them about Jesus. He alone can bring peace and security in times like these. He is the answer to what the world, and everyone in it, need. We know the answer – let's make sure we keep our eyes and faith on Him and that we share this with as many as we can. (August 1, 2016 Doylestown, PA)

Matthew 24:6 You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come.

Hebrews 12:1-2 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.

Psalms 16:8 I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

How do you respond to what is happening in the world around you?

Does it motivate you to deeper trust and more prayer?

Commit to keeping your eyes always and only on Jesus – and consider spending less time watching the news and more time reading your Bible!

Blog 463: WHERE IS AMERICA HEADING?

What is happening to the land of the free and the home of the brave? Who feels free and safe these days? Violence is commonplace. We seem to have somehow lost our moral compass as well. A presidential election should instill us with a sense of hope and optimism, but that isn't the case this year.

And "In God We Trust"? The few who do trust in Him find themselves in a minority that is losing rights while everyone else seems to be gaining rights. We seem to be weaker within as a nation and our international impact and reputation is fast fading as well. Instead of the title 'Christian'

bringing respect and privilege, it now brings ridicule and rejection. Who could have imagined so many negative changes in our nation in such a short time?

As Christian we better get used to minority status quickly. The cost of unashamedly following Jesus is getting higher each year. What will it be like for our grandchildren (unless Jesus comes back first)?

Christians in India have never had the privileges and blessings we have had in this country. They can only imagine what it would be like to live here. However it is getting easier for us to imagine what it is like for them there where they are persecuted for their faith. The government, who should be protecting them, is often their worst enemy. There is a high price to be paid for calling one's self a follower of Jesus in India. The price in this country is quickly rising. Are you ready? Will you stay faithful no matter the cost? Will your family? (August 15, 2016 Doylestown, PA)

Matthew 5:12 Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

John 15:18 If the world hate you, you know that it hated me before it hated you.

John 15:20 Remember the word that I said to you; The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you;

2 Corinthians 12:10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

2 Timothy 3:12 Yes, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

1 Peter 4:12 Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you:

Is there any way you have been compromising your faith to avoid criticism? Ask God for wisdom and courage in how you should respond in such circumstances.

Pray for your church leaders and those leading the church nationally, that they would have courage to stand in the face of ridicule and rejection. Pray for your own local church as well.

Blog 464: WHY SO MUCH VIOLENCE?

On July 29 a pastor in an area where we hold conferences was beaten and murdered. Please pray for his family, his church and all the pastors and Christians in India. For more information go to <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Andhra-Pradesh,-Maoists-torture-and-kill-a-Protestant-pastor-38194.html> or <http://www.christianpost.com/news/christian-pastor-unwavering-faith-jesus-brutally-murdered-india-100s-rebels-167438/> Pictures can be found at <http://christianpersecutionindia.blogspot.com/>.

It seems that violence is becoming more and more common in the USA, India and around the whole world. It shouldn't surprise us, for Jesus said it would happen. ***Matthew 24:6-12 "You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains. "Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold...."***

Unfortunately it's nothing new. God sent the flood in Noah's day because of the great increase of evil in the world (Genesis 6:11, 13). In fact, God hates violence with a passion. ***Psalm 11:5 The LORD examines the righteous, but the wicked, those who love violence, He hates with a passion.***

Satan is behind the upswing in violence in our country and world today. He is like a hungry lion looking to bring destruction wherever he can. ***1 Peter 5:8 Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.*** He is behind the increasing blood lust in people who kill and destroy. Many do so knowing they will be killed in the process of bringing death to others. They not only don't mind, they are driven kill others and themselves as well. That's not natural for humans, but it is for Satan and his forces. His purpose is to destroy (1 Peter 5:8), in fact that is what his name means (Revelation 9:11). The prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2) is gaining more and more power as mankind turns further from the true God and opens itself up more and more to the lies and deceptions of Satan. He especially likes to attack God's people (Christians and Jews) as well as any who are weak or helpless. Jesus said He followers would be violently attacked (Matthew 11:12).

We do know who the eventual victor will be though. If you are a follower of Jesus, keep your eyes on Him for one day He will return and remove all violence forever. Then we will dwell in peace and safety forever. All violence and violent people will be confined to hell which will be the most violent place ever. But we who believe in Him will dwell in security forever. ***Isaiah 60:18 No longer will violence be heard in your land, nor ruin or destruction within your borders, but you will call your walls Salvation and your gates Praise.*** (August 8, 2015 Doylestown PA)

Habakkuk 1:2-3 How long, LORD, must I call for help, but you do not listen? Or cry out to you, "Violence!" but you do not save? Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrongdoing? Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife, and conflict abounds.

Psalm 7:9 Bring to an end the violence of the wicked and make the righteous secure - you, the righteous God who probes minds and hearts.

Blog 465: INDIA IN THE OLYMPICS – IMPROVEMENT NEEDED

As I watched the Olympics (a favorite pastime of mine) I not only watched for USA athletes but also those from India. I follow the news and events in India and was looking forward to see how their competitors would do. India sent more athletes to the Olympics than in the past and got a bronze medal in women's wrestling and silver in women's badminton. For such a large country that is not much. The men lost their doubles tennis bronze match and a female gymnast lost in bronze medal competition in the vault. One of their very best athletes didn't even participate because of a doping scandal. Some of the momentum from the games has carried over to motivate current athletes in India as well as inspire those who are just beginning.

India is challenging its young athletes to train better and harder and to increase their focus their commitment to excellence. If that large a group of people can get their act together they can be a real force in world athletics in years to come. They definitely are far from their potential.

I can't help but thinking of another large group of people who are not impacting their world nearly as much as could be done. The worldwide church is a massive, powerful group of people, but we don't seem to be having much impact on the direction things are going in our country or the world. Clearly we are not meeting our potential. Perhaps we, too, need to increase our focus and

commitment to putting Jesus first in everything we do and to sharing Him and His truth with the world around us. Maybe our focus gets too tied up in the activities of daily living, or improving our conditions and church programs or making material advancements.

Despite persecution and death, the early Christians were committed to following Jesus whatever the cost. They were able to turn their whole culture from materialism, hedonism, immorality and self-centered pursuit of pleasure as the main goal in life. The Biblical world view they lived and spoke of improved life for everyone. The same needs to be done today. It can happen if the church reaches its potential. And who is the church? You and me. That's where it starts. I can't do anything about you but I can renew my commitment and focus to be the best child of God I can possible be and share Him with others. I hope you do the same. (September 12, 2016 Doylestown, PA)

Acts 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Matthew 28:19-20 Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

2 Timothy 4:7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

How are you doing in your walk with the Lord? Are you in top shape spiritually, or have you lost something in your relationship with God? How are you doing with the basics: Bible reading, prayer, worship, holiness in life and talking to others about Jesus? What areas of life do you need to work on to get back in top spiritual shape? What should do to start today, to start right now?

Blog 466: WHEN THE MONSOONS OF LIFE HIT

It is monsoon time in India. Since we don't have these rains in the USA it's hard to imagine what they are like. Imagine living in a climate like Arizona but having spontaneous torrential rains at any time from June to September? The temperatures are very high and the rains don't do much to cool things off. With millions of people living on the street and in makeshift huts the rain can cause much damage to them and their few possessions. The suffering is great in the heat, but often increases during the rains as things are destroyed and washed away.

Yet there are some benefits, if one looks for them. Dark clouds block the relentless rays of the sun. The air is cooler during the rain. Pollution is cleansed from the air, at least until the rain stops. The constant noise of the cities is drowning out by the sound of rain falling on the earth. And, of course, the earth needs the moisture. It's the only time in the year it rains and the ground soaks it up. Reservoirs need to be filled, as do rivers and lakes. Despite how difficult they are when they are happening, the monsoons are essential to life in India.

As I said, we don't have monsoons in the USA. But we do have times in our lives when the normal difficult grind all of a sudden gets worse. Unexpected storms hit us hard and bring suffering and misery. As do the monsoons, they leave for a while only to return again and again. Yet they, too, are necessary for our spiritual growth and wellbeing. They humble us, they help us reset our focus on what really matters in life, they cause us to go running back to God for help and comfort, and they wash away apathy and refresh our spirits inwardly despite all that is going on around us.

Where would we be if there were never any difficulties or problems in life? It sounds great, but would we be better, stronger people? Remember, God's purpose for us in this life is not to give us an

easy time now but to help us grow for all eternity and for Him to be glorified by how we respond to these storms. If you see a monsoon approaching or if you are in the middle of one now, remember God uses it for a good purpose. (September 19, 2016 Doylestown, PA)

Romans 8:28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who[a] have been called according to his purpose.

Hebrews 12:11 No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

1 Peter 4:12 Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you 13 But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.

What is your attitude to things that don't go as you planned? Do you trust that God has a plan and purpose in the difficulty? Do you seek what it is so you can learn and grow from it? Do you encourage others in this way when storms come into their lives?

Blog 467: MY FAMILY IS MY FIRST MINISTRY

On June 26 I retired after being pastor of Main Street Baptist Church in Doylestown for 35 years. I've taken some time to look back at the main lessons God has taught me during that time. Here's one:

As I look back on my life I now have a perspective that I didn't have many years ago. My children are grown, most of them married and on their own. My impact on their life has largely been made. I thank God that He convicted me at the start of my marriage of the importance of making my family my number one congregation. Others have come and gone but my family is still my family. There is no one I have had more influence on or ever will have more influence on than my children and my wife.

Jesus' top priority while on earth was His 'family' of disciples, not the crowds and not new programs and projects. He put them and their needs first, often withdrawing from the crowds or sending people away to spend time with His disciples. His pattern is ours to follow today. There is no one you will reproduce yourself in more completely than your children. And you WILL reproduce yourself in them, for good or for bad. You can't abdicate; you will totally influence their lives. The only question is what the influence will be, not if you will have influence. Children are like soft clay which you are forming and molding into whatever image you choose. Even if you are too busy to be with them much, that forms an image of rejection and unimportance in them. You are forming them and will form them more than anyone else.

It's it a shame that PK's and MK's often have a reputation for rebellion and disobedience. Whose fault is that? God Himself says that if we can't manage our families then we can't manage His church. Your children need you more than your church or your job. It's too bad we get our ego so wrapped up in our service for God and our 'success' in the eyes of others that we miss what is most important. God gave us our children to disciple for Him. Nothing is more important! He will never lead us to neglect our children for the sake of other things. They are precious to Him and He entrusts them to us. He will never give us too much to do so that we don't have time for them. That comes from wrong priorities in our own lives.

My children are grown and mostly gone, and one of my greatest joys in life is watching them serve the Lord and follow Him. "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth." (3 John 4). Each one of them has chosen to stay faithful to God and serve Him wholeheartedly. I take great pleasure in that, although I don't take credit for it. That is between them

and God and there are too many factors involved for me to think I did that. I can rest in the fact that, as far as I was able at the time, I did my best to love them and teach them about God. I certainly wasn't perfect, and I did have responsibilities that demanded time and attention, but I always knew they were my number one priority and I greatly enjoyed raising them for the Lord. God gets the credit for how they turned out. I am thankful I don't have to live with too many regrets. As they say, no one on their death bed wishes they would have spent more time at work! Make sure this is right in your life now. (September 26, 2016 Doylestown, PA)

1 Tim 3:4-5 He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?)

Titus 1:6 An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient.

Proverbs 22:6 Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.

I'm sure you would agree and say your family is your number 1 priority, but what if you had to prove it? What hard proof can you present that shows you put your children before your work?

If your children would be old enough to talk (and perhaps they are) would they say that they know they come before your work?

Pray for each one individually, bringing their needs, their weaknesses and their futures before the Lord in prayer.

Blog 468: PACE YOURSELF, LIFE IS A MARATHON, NOT A SPRINT

On June 26 I retired after being pastor of Main Street Baptist Church in Doylestown for 35 years. I've taken some time to look back at the main lessons God has taught me during that time. Here's one:

I enjoy running and have been running regularly since my early teens. I don't go as fast as I did but I can still go as far, it just takes longer. I don't mind, though, for running is about getting there, not about getting there fast. I've learned the same thing is true in life as well. As I approach my retirement years and look back on my life of ministry, I can better appreciate that life is a marathon, not a sprint, so it's important to pace ones' self.

The statistic that only one in 10 of those who enter ministry when young will retire from ministry is staggering. Many factors contribute to this, but lack of setting a proper pace often contributes in a great way. The ministry is about quality, not quantity. I know that's hard to practice when starting out with everyone watching and evaluating you by what you produce. Just remember, if you are a pastor or leader, God uses an entirely different yard stick to measure you by than most of those in your church.

When the apostle John was asked how he justified a hobby of raising pigeons when there was so much that needed to be done for the kingdom, it is said that he got his bow and pointed out that, in order to be effective when needed, it couldn't be tightly strung at all times. A similar illustration goes back to whaling days. The harpooner whose job it was to spear the whale was not allowed to join in the rowing which got the boat in position. He has to be rested and prepared for the important work entrusted to him. All Christians must pace themselves so they are sharp and ready for key events in life.

That doesn't mean we are to be lazy or avoid hard work, but it does mean we are to pace ourselves so we can finish the marathon, not burn out before the end. We must be a good steward of

the time, energy and opportunities God gives us. Even Jesus often said no to good things in order to be able to do the best. He paced Himself, despite only having a little over 3 years to accomplish all that needed doing. Those living for God today are often admired for their business, as if that means they are important and productive in what will count in eternity.

Anyone can overcommit and be too busy. There will be times when it is unavoidable, but as a typical life style it is not what God wants. He gives us 24 hours in a day so we know He won't give us 25 hours' worth of work to do. If we have more to do than time to do it we are doing things He hasn't given us. He wants us to include play, fun, relaxation and enjoyment as well. God has created a beautiful world full of colors, sounds, smells and tastes for us to enjoy. Are you doing so?

I've just retired at age 70, but I don't ever want to stop ministering. Age and health may require I down shift into a slower gear, but now I hope to focus on what I can do best and enjoy doing most in ministry. I don't ever want to stop. Quality wise my most productive days are coming. I just need to pace myself properly.

The tortoise and the hare tale has always been one of my favorite stories and has shaped my life philosophy. There's a lot of wisdom in it – consistency in a pace we can maintain over the long haul is the only way to complete the course. Run with perseverance, not with speed! (October 3, 2016 Doylestown, PA)

Hebrews 12:1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

Luke 5:16 But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-2 There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven: a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, ...

If you keep going at the pace you are currently going at, will you last until retirement? What changes should you make?

How do you determine a proper balance between work and relaxation? Is your life balanced? What does your mate or best friend say?

Blog 469: TEAMWORK: INDIA AND HERE

When in India I tell you about the Pastor's Conferences, how smoothly they go, and how God blesses all who attend. Wonderful things happen, and we are always invited to return soon and stay longer. What I haven't talked about is the months of planning, praying and research that leads up to the events. Pastor Moses and others take numerous long trips to various areas looking for just the right locations. They talk to local pastors, ones they know who work with us and others they meet for the first time. They look for places where God is working and the pastors are in need of training, where there are resources for a conference, where we can safely spend two or more days training pastors, and where they will use what was taught to improve their lives and ministries. Transportation must be available, a source of food for all the men and wives, places to sleep for those who stay over and a host of other considerations. It must be done for as little cost as possible, yet with a guaranteed good outcome.

Meanwhile I spend much time and work on the books and lessons for my ministry there. Taking care of the finances here and making my plans and arrangements takes my time. New magic tricks, applicable new lessons for pastors and wives conferences as well as youth conferences,

multiple sermons for speaking in churches, and all that it takes for the legal and governmental work for a non-profit are some of the things I do.

I trust them to have everything ready so all goes smoothly and we can reach the maximum number of pastors and wives in the very best way possible. The focus of the conferences is on the teaching so all other issues must be done ahead of time. I trust them with my safety. Since I don't speak, or understand their language I have no way of knowing what they are saying, but I trust them completely.

They trust me to provide the necessary finances so they can pay the bills they have. They trust me to present teaching that is Biblical, applicable and easily understood. They trust me to write and pay the costs for books that are Biblical, practical and easy to understand. They trust me to trust them with most of the plans and decisions about how things happen. I offer opinions and make suggestions, and if there is something I feel strongly about they respect that. But mainly we work together. We must. It's the only way this could possibly work. (October 10, Doylestown, PA)

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up.

1 Corinthians 3:6-9 I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth. Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building.

1 Corinthians 12:12-13 For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many.

Who do you depend on in life? Who trusts you to do your part for their sake? Pray for those you are teamed with, and make sure you are doing your part as you should.

Remember we are teamed with God, and He certainly does His part 100%. How about you, can He depend on you to do what is required of you for His sake?

Blog 470: SOME THINGS CAN'T BE LEARNED ALONE

When I first started going to India, over 10 years ago, I developed an interest in learning Hindi. I wanted to better understand how the peoples thought process worked, and to be able to communicate with them in some simple way. I didn't have anyone to teach me so I taught myself the basics through various books and web sites. Unfortunately very few in the part of India I visit speak Hindi, although it is the national language. More speak English than Hindi! It is taught in school, but that is often like the French you learned in school many years ago. Can you carry on a conversation in it now?

There are many Hindi words that have found their way into the language of the area I visit. Many are used in signs and even in English. So learning Hindi has helped. It's hard to keep up with it for I lose my motivation with no one to speak to.

Several times I've tried learning the local dialect where I minister. All I say and write is translated into it. But it is the fastest-spoken language on earth (more syllables per second than any other) and very hard to pick up from books. The letters and their combination are very enormous. I

need a native speaker to communicate with, to help me learn the language. Until I find someone her with interest and ability I'll just stumble along making very little progress.

The same is true in learning to live as a Christian. A lot can be learned from books, sermons and web sites, but they can only take you a small way. What is needed is a real live Christian to mentor you and help you learn and grow. Yet often today we are too busy, shy, and fearful of rejection or just not motivated to take the step to ask someone to help us grow, or even to offer our help to someone younger in the faith. We need each other, but it takes courage to reach out to another Christian to ask for help or offer help. Who can you ask to help you? To whom can you offer your help? (October 17, 2016 Doylestown, PA)

2 Timothy 2:2 The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

Proverbs 27:17 Iron sharpens iron, So one man sharpens another.

Proverbs 13:20 He who walks with wise men will be wise, But the companion of fools will suffer harm.

Who in your life is helping you grow as a Christian by encouraging you, praying with you, pointing out truths in God's Word to you and giving you sound, Biblical advice and wisdom about situations you face in life? To grow to be the Christian God wants you to be you need someone in this role in your life.

Who have you taken under your wing to mentor and help grow? Is there someone younger in the faith that you have reached out to for the purpose of encouraging them, praying with them, pointing out truths in God's Word to them and give them sound, Biblical advice and wisdom? To grow and to help another to grow to be the Christian God wants them to be, you need a person whose life you are building into.

Blog 471: THE BIBLE GETS BETTER ALL THE TIME

On June 26 I retired after being pastor of Main Street Baptist Church in Doylestown for 35 years. I've taken some time to look back at the main lessons God has taught me during that time. Here's one:

In college and seminary I developed a great appreciation for the Bible as the living, inspired Word of God. I came away with an awesome respect for it. It is the main tool of my trade. My knowledge of it and skill in using it has grown as I have grown. As I look back on my lifetime as a Christian I realize there has been a subtle change in my attitude to the Bible. I respect it more than ever, but I've also been developing a real love for it! I love it because it reveals God, and the more I know about Him the more I love Him and trust Him.

No longer is it just a tool to help me accomplish my ministry, it has become my lifeline to God, my anchor and rock in life. I not only like and appreciate it, I find myself totally needing it. The better I know the facts of the Bible the more I realize there is a depth to it that can never be plunged in this life. I am learning it with more than my mind but also with my heart. It has become very precious and special to me.

Some of my early trips to India were especially difficult for me. I found myself turning to God's Word in a deeper way than I ever had before. God's comfort and promises were what got me through. God's Word was the only thing that kept me going. I learned a deeper appreciation for the physical book itself from the believers there who will never set their Bible on the floor nor put anything on top of it. I also discovered a deeper need in myself for its truths than ever before. I held my Bible when trying to get to sleep at night. I kept touching it all night long. That physical contact was vital to

keeping my faith and focus on God alone. I read a chapter first thing every morning and last thing every night. I read it as a love letter from God to me, not looking for ideas for messages or things I can use in my teaching. That has been very refreshing and keeps my focus where it needs to be. It speaks words of life to my heart, soul and spirit. I'm learning to listen with my heart and soul, not just my mind. We Baptists are labeled "people of the book." I like that. But I don't just want the book in my head; I want it in my heart.

My involvement in spiritual warfare ministry has taught me that it is only God's Word that carries authority against evil forces, not mine or anyone else's. Satan and his demons must obey God's Word when we use it. There is real power in the Word of God when we believe and quote it. That's how Jesus overcame temptations in the wilderness and it's the sword of the Spirit which Paul talks about – our only offensive weapon.

The Bible comes more amazing to me as I go on in life. The more I know the less I find I really know! It's simple enough for a child to understand, but the greatest scholar can spend a lifetime in just one part of it and never get to the full depth of it. It speaks to our mind, emotions and spirit all at once.

The older I become and therefore the less of life I have left to live, the harder I cling to God's promises, not just about this life but also about the future. I'm not as interested in covering a lot of ground in my reading and study (quantity) but in going deeper in just a few verses (quality). Don't rush your reading, go slow, meditate, mull over a verse or phrase, ask God to speak to you through it and listen to what He says. Go deep, don't go fast. (October 24, 2016 Doylestown, PA)

2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,

Psalms 119:9-11 How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. 11 I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

Where are you in your growing love for the Bible? Is it just a tool of your trade, or the living Word of God which speaks truth to your heart?

How much time each day do you spend in devotional reading and study of the Word?

What is your favorite Bible passage or promise? Why?

Blog 472: I COULDN'T MAKE IT WITHOUT OTHER CHRISTIANS

On June 26 I retired after being pastor of Main Street Baptist Church in Doylestown for 35 years. I've taken some time to look back at the main lessons God has taught me during that time. Here's one:

When my wife and I travel it seems God always puts other Christians in our path. We look forward to our lives crossing with these friends whom we just haven't met yet! Not too long ago we traveled to Puerto Rico and God sprinkled a steady stream of believers throughout our trip. When I go to India the help and support of believers there is essential. The further I am from home the more I appreciate fellowship with a brother or sister in Jesus.

Even when I'm not traveling, I'm still quite far from my real home in heaven. Here, too, fellowship with other believers is very important. Close contact with believers I have known a long time is a precious, valuable asset to my life's journey. The older I become the more I value Christian fellowship: with those I've known a lifetime as well as with those I just meet.

I'm been learning through the years how to let people get closer to me and how I can get to know them deeper as well. I appreciate others more and more as fellow travelers who are making their way to the same eternal city I am. I enjoy their friendship, need their encouragement and learn from their example. A long, hard journey is always easier when in the company of faithful companions. That is why God gives us each other to help us through this life.

When I first meet someone who is a Christian, an instant bond is formed. It doesn't matter what culture or country they come from, what color they are or what language they speak. We share the same values and priorities. We have the same world view. Jesus in me connects with Jesus in them. We are children of the same Father – and that makes us brothers and sisters. We fight the same enemy. We'll spend eternity together, so why not start enjoying each other while here?

Jesus Himself needed human fellowship. He would withdraw from the crowds and get away with just the disciples. He needed them. Unfortunately they weren't always supportive of Him, like in Gethsemane before His arrest. However if He needed others we certainly do as well. The more I progress in life the more I realize how much I need other believers and what a blessing it is that God puts them in my life. (October 31, 2016 Doylestown, PA)

Acts 2:42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Hebrews 10:25 Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another — and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Do you really appreciate other believers in your life, or do you just see them as tools to use in helping you accomplish your ministry goals?

How much time a week do you spend in Christian fellowship – fun and closeness with no agenda but to enjoy each other?

When do you most need the support and fellowship of other believers?

Think of those in your past whom God has used to really help you on your journey. Pray for them. Thank them (mail, email or in person) again today for the role they played in your life.

Blog 473: INVEST IN YOUR HEALTH EVERY DAY

On June 26 I retired after being pastor of Main Street Baptist Church in Doylestown for 35 years. I've taken some time to look back at the main lessons God has taught me during that time. Here's one:

Healthy living has always been a top priority of. As a child I became convicted of the importance of proper diet, rest and exercise. God has blessed me with excellent health even though I am 70. It's taken time and effort, but it has been worth it.

God has given me one life and one body in which to live that life. While I have no desire to stay on this earth longer than God wants, I can affect the quality of my time here. Being a good steward of what God has given me includes stewardship of my body. Eating healthy food is a must. Getting enough rest and sleep are also essential. Exercise is crucial, not optional.

Although exercise takes time I know I have gained more productive time than I have lost. I function more efficiently all day and sleep better at night when I exercise. I rarely get sick and have missed hardly any time due to illness my whole life. My quality of life is better. I save money and time by not visiting doctors and being in the hospital. I set a better example for others. I enjoy life better. I even enjoy my times of exercise each day. The last several years my wife has been running or biking with me several times a week and these have become special times for us to share together

as well. I travel to India yearly and am able to keep up a very active schedule in difficult living conditions while there. So I know the time I have invested in exercise have been well worth it in all ways.

I owe it to my family and church, my wife and children, myself and especially to God to be a good steward of all he has given me, including my health and body. So do you!

1 Kings 19:3-6 Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. ... Then he lay down under the tree and fell asleep. All at once an angel touched him and said, "Get up and eat." He looked around, and there by his head was a cake of bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again.

Psalms 127:2 In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat — for he grants sleep to those he loves.

1 Corinthians 9:27 No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

What are some of the good things you do to stay healthy?

Is God convicting you about your stewardship of your body? Where is improvement needed: diet, rest or exercise (or more than one)?

Write down several steps you can take starting today to become a better steward of your health.

Pray and ask God to give you the self-control needed to make these changes starting now.

Blog 474: A LESSON FROM MY MARIGOLDS

Every spring we plant marigold seeds outside our house. They are from the dried flowers I get off of last year's marigolds. Because we don't have a yard, we plant them in pots. They don't need a lot of maintenance, but they do need regular water or they will quickly shrivel and die. Every day I must water them. It's a reminder of the importance of God's people being watered by His Word every day (Ephesians 5:26).

What really impresses me about these plants, though, is that no matter how little nourishment the plants have they make sure the flowers stay strong and healthy. Even as fall comes and they start to die, the flowers stay upright and bright. It's obvious the plants exist for the flowers, that is their whole purpose of living. The flowers hold the key to the future of the species, for they hold the seeds for the next generation of plants. The plant literally gives up its life in order to assure future plants will grow. The flowers also bring beauty and joy, but their main purpose is to reproduce.

Oh that we were as serious about reproducing as my marigolds! May God use us to show His beauty and glory to the world, but may we never lose sight of the importance of propagating our faith so there are future generations to follow. And that isn't just the responsibility of young plants, the older my marigolds get the more intent they seem to be on spreading their seeds for a future crop of plants. May we be committed to do the same! (November 14, 2016 Doylestown, PA)

2 Corinthians 2:14 But thanks be to God, who always leads us as captives in Christ's triumphal procession and uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere.

2 Timothy 4:2 Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.

John 1:41 He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means Christ).

What lessons is God teaching you from my marigolds?

Have you lost your hunger for souls, your desire to spread the Word wherever you can?

What can you do to 'jump start' your desire to share the gospel with others?

Blog 475: TRAPPED!

One of my lesser known 'skills' is catching live flies in my hand. My young children were impressed, now my grandchildren are. It works every time – if you know one secret. You don't grab for where the fly is but where it's going to be. Every time they see movement they fly straight up extremely fast, so don't grab where they are or you'll miss them. Instead grab the air about 5" above them and they'll fly right into your hand. It works every time. It looks impressive but is really simple for every fly does the same thing when startled.

I wonder if it is that easy for Satan to startle us and know exactly where we'll go, then set up his trap there for us there! Maybe that's why we often get caught time after time after time. Stress comes so we run to our drug of choice: shopping, eating, watching TV, impatience, worry or ungodly web sites. Perhaps we have conflict with our mate or children so we withdraw, become passive aggressive, nag or pick on everything they do. It could be anything. Just think about it in your life. (November 21, 2016 Doylestown, PA)

Psalms 141:9 Keep me safe from the traps set by evildoers, from the snares they have laid for me.

2 Timothy 2:26⁶ and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.

2 Corinthians 2:11 in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.

What seems to hit you often? How do you automatically respond? Ask God to give you wisdom about this and how to apply it to your own life.

BLOG 476: I'M FINALLY LEARNING WHAT WORSHIP REALLY IS

On June 26 I retired after being pastor of Main Street Baptist Church in Doylestown for 35 years. I've taken some time to look back at the main lessons God has taught me during that time. Here's one:

No one who knows me would say I am an emotional person. That's fine, I like the way I am. However when it comes to worship there have been many times through the years when I wished it were easier for me to display emotion. Yes, I know worship comes from deep within and doesn't have to manifest itself in emotion. I'm learning to worship in ways that are meaningful and real for me.

As I've grown in my knowledge and understanding of Who and What God is, so I have grown in my response to Him in worship. As I have become more and more aware of God's love for me as an individual (not just loving me on the group plan with everyone else) I find myself better able to reply to that love by loving Him back. That is the heart of real worship.

Worship is all about Him. It's not about me and how 'good' I feel – it's just about Him. In fact, the first two times "worship" is used in the Bible are when Abraham took Isaac up the mountain to sacrifice him (Genesis 22:5) and when Job heard the news that all of his children were killed (Job 1:20). Those certainly weren't emotionally high times for either of them! Still, they kept their eyes on

Who and What God is, and that is what worship is all about. As I grow in my relationship with Him and know Him better, so my worship of Him also improves. I find myself better able to thank Him, praise Him and love Him.

Giving thanks to God is good, but that usually is based on my understanding of what God has done and my approval of it. What about when, like Job and Abraham, I don't understand or approve? That's when praise and worship take over, for that is affirming the goodness of God Himself despite the circumstances in our lives. That touches the heart of God – loving Him when we don't understand or like what is happening.

One avenue that really helps me worship God is music. I love Southern Gospel music and listen to it often. Although I have a terrible singing voice, when alone I sing along with the songs to which I am listening. The words form and express my thoughts and the music brings out an emotional response.

I've learned to not equate worship with a very moving service or song, though. Worship is much more than that and goes way beyond that. I've also learned to make sure worship is focused on Him, not on how great I am feeling. Too often we want to worship because it makes us feel good instead of because it makes God feel good! We use worship as a way to give ourselves a spiritual high. We feel our church services should provide that, or we'll go to a different church. That is far from what worship really is.

Worship takes time and it takes effort. I schedule time alone either jogging or at church. I often listen to my mp3 player. The music leads me to worship as I respond to the goodness and greatness of God. I don't put a time limit on this for it takes time to worship. Any relationship takes time to develop and it especially takes time for close, meaningful interactions to take place. They can't be rushed or they will be aborted. God isn't interested in being squeezed into our busy schedule. He wants (and deserves) the best of our time and energy. Do you give it to Him? (December 5, 2016 Doylestown, PA)

Psalms 100 Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. 2 Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. 3 Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. 4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. 5 For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.

How do you define worship for yourself?

How much time each week do you spend in real worship?

When do you worship best?

Schedule an extended period of time this week when you can get away from distractions and focus only on Him.

Take time to sit where you are and worship Him now.

BLOG 477: MONEY IS A GREAT SERVANT BUT A TERRIBLE MASTER

On June 26 I retired after being pastor of Main Street Baptist Church in Doylestown for 35 years. I've taken some time to look back at the main lessons God has taught me during that time. Here's one:

As I come near the close this series of blogs on what I've learned in life I must mention money. It's a great servant but a terrible master. I learned good financial principles from my parent's example and that has helped me avoid a lot of financial problems. Money is great when it serves me, but if I start to serve it then it becomes a terrible master.

God has provided well for me financially. We don't have an extravagant lifestyle and many would say we don't earn a lot of money, but we've kept down our expenses and are quite content to live within our means. I thank God that misuse of money has not been one of my weaknesses. My wife and I both are frugal but still enjoy sharing generously. We find a balance that works for us between spending and saving. We have found some ways of using money that bring enjoyment to us and we thank God for this.

The danger with money is when it becomes a substitute for trust in God. Too many people evaluate themselves and their 'success' in life in terms of dollars and possessions. Money does not bring security. In fact the more money God entrusts a person with the more they are accountable for their stewardship of this important resource.

We've established some principles concerning money which we have tried to pass on to our children. One is to not spend what you don't have. God gives us 24 hours of time in a day and that's all we have. It's a limited resource and we must learn to live within it, although we often try to stretch it to its limit. Unfortunately today we can spend money we don't have, and the temptation to do so can be great. But that will catch up with you and can cause many problems. Make sure you don't spend money you don't have.

A second principle we teach is that you can only spend your money once. While this might seem obvious, the truth behind it is that if you use it for the wrong thing then it won't be there for what God intended it to be used for. In this country, with very few exceptions, God gives us the amount of money He knows we will need to live on plus extra to use for His Kingdom. He knows what He wants us to use it for. That's why a budget can be a good way of discovering God's will for the use of your money and make sure you stay within your limits. I can spend money I have (principle 1) but I must also spend it for what God intended it to be spend for (principle 2). If not I won't have it for what I really need, nor will I properly use some of it for His Kingdom. That's why we always remember that we can only spend our money once so we need to make sure we use it wisely. (December 12, 2016 Doylestown, PA)

Philippians 4:11-13 I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. 12 I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. 13 I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

1 Timothy 6:10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.

Hebrews 13:5 Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."

Are you spending money you don't have? Why is that unwise to do?

Do you have a workable budget you stick to? If not, how can you be sure you are making the best use of the money God gives you?

If Jesus would sit down with you tonight and all your financial expenditures would be laid out before Him, what would He say? Would He make any suggestions? If so, what?

Pray and commit your finances to God. Ask Him to direct you in their correct use. Write down any changes you need to make and apply them immediately.

BLOG 478: SATAN IS REAL BUT GOD IS GREATER

On June 26 I retired after being pastor of Main Street Baptist Church in Doylestown for 35 years. I've taken some time to look back at the main lessons God has taught me during that time. Here's one:

When I started pastoring 40 years ago I never imagined I'd have a ministry in spiritual warfare. I didn't even know what spiritual warfare was until about 25 years ago. I knew some Christians who struggled with sin and didn't seem to have victory no matter how hard they tried or how much they trusted God. No amount of counseling helped. It seemed like something greater than themselves was controlling them. One of my own children was being influenced by something evil as well. God in his mercy brought some men into my life who taught me about spiritual warfare and deliverance from demonizing.

Paul says "we are not ignorant of Satan's devices" (2 Corinthians 2:5-11) but I was very ignorant. Since that time I have been ministering to those in need of spiritual warfare counseling. I have read many books and talked to lots of people. God has been teaching me and helping me learn how to help those who are attacked by Satan and his forces.

Being involved in this is very humbling but also very encouraging. Seeing God's power at work in such a real way is simply awesome. Having a front row seat as lives are changed and people who have been defeated begin to live in victory is wonderful to see. The internet opens up many doors to minister and daily I hear from people throughout the world. I counsel them through email and a web site. I thank God for the privilege! I have no idea why He chose me to be trained and gifted in this but I'm glad He did!

Satan really covers his trail in our 'sophisticated' culture where his workings are given psychological terms and explained away as chemical imbalances or some such thing. But in the New Testament when Jesus ran into people with the same symptoms He cast demons out of them and they were instantly healed. As our culture moves further and further from a Biblical foundation the powers of darkness are getting a stronger hold and becoming bolder in their actions. Still, most American Christians don't really take Satan and demons seriously until they run into their blatant work on a mission trip somewhere.

The greatest impact this has had on me personally is to deepen my faith in God and to better appreciate the power of the cross. All hail the power of Jesus' name! (December 26, 2016 Doylestown, PA)

2 Corinthians 2:11 in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.

Ephesians 6:10-12 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

How aware are YOU of the enemy's schemes against you, your family and your ministry?

If Satan were to oppose you or your ministry, what kinds of things might he use to discourage and defeat you?

What can you do to have victory over this?

For more information on the subject of spiritual warfare contact me at jerry@schmoyer.net and I'll send you a free copy of my Spiritual Warfare Handbook.

BLOG 490: STAND WITH US IN PRAYER

In a few weeks Nancy and I will be going to India. I know many of you pray for us when we are there, and we are extremely grateful. But we need you to start praying now as well. Last year there was a group of people willing to pray every day. I sent special updates and prayer requests, things I didn't or couldn't send to my whole mailing list. The faithful praying of these people is what made our time there safe and successful. We are in need of those willing to be part of this again this coming year. You will receive a special email concerning specific requests to pray for and also a short devotional about issues related to prayer. The first four blogs will contain principles I have written to help with spiritual warfare praying. Others will be about various topics concerning prayer. Let me know if you would like to be on this email list and be part of this special group committed to regular pray for this trip to Israel. Please pray for us and the Christians in India.

One of my favorite passages about prayer is **Colossians 1:9-14**. In it Paul explains what he requests for the believers in Colossae. It is an excellent pattern for us to follow today. His prayer is that they **"be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding."** Please pray for Pastor Moses, Nancy and myself to have this as we plan and prepare for the upcoming conferences. Pray for the pastors in India to have this as well. Pray God will give us this now and while we are ministering in India as well.

Paul prays for this for them so they will live a holy life and bear fruit in all they do as they grow in the knowledge of God and are strengthened by His power. Pray we, too, would be **"strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might."** Pastor Moses and I are growing older, and the enemy steps up his work against us each year in response to the help this brings to God's kingdom of love and light as well as the damage that is done to Satan's kingdom of evil and darkness. Bringing light into places of darkness is serious business and brings great opposition.

As you pray for us, use your Bible and read and apply each phrase of Colossians 1:9-14 in prayer for us, for the pastors in India and for yourselves and your church leaders as well. Of great encouragement to me is the knowledge that many faithful Indian Christians and churches pray daily for us. Let's remember them as well. (November 28, 2016 Doylestown, PA)

***"Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer."* –Romans 12:12**

***"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God."* –Philippians 4:6**

***"Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful."* –Colossians 4:2**

"Pray continually" -1 Thessalonians 5:17

SPECIAL PRAYER REQUEST: My new book, "Studying the Bible," has been translated and printed. Its partner, "Preaching and Teaching the Bible," is almost finished being translated and still needs to be printed. It is over a month behind schedule and going slowly. I really need it for the conferences in January. Pray it would be completed, that anything trying to hold it up would be removed. Last year's book wasn't finished until months after I left India and that was a great disappointment for all. Pray that wouldn't be the case again in 2017. Thanks!

BLOG 491: PRINCIPLES OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE PRAYING 1

Following are some principles for spiritual warfare praying. This is the first of four blogs on this. If you have observations or principles you have learned please share them with me

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These are principles to help you with your spiritual warfare praying. Is it OK for someone to tell you how to pray? The disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray and He did (Luke 11:1-2). He never taught His disciples to preach but did teach them to pray!

Prayer is the key to all spiritual warfare work. Prayer is not preliminary to the battle, it IS the battle. As Ab Lincoln said, "If I had 8 hours to chop down a tree I'd spend the first 6 sharpening the ax."

Make sure there is no unconfessed sin in your life (1 John 1:9), especially bitterness or any form of unforgiveness (Ephesians 4:26). Be sensitive to any sin God shows you as you pray. If anything needs to be made right, so as soon as you can. Fill yourself instead with God's Word and meditate on it.

We are at war (Ephesians 6:12). Spiritual warfare is hard for it is war, a battle to the end. Victory doesn't come from defending ourselves, only when we take the sword of the Spirit and go on the offensive (Ephesians 6:17). Be aggressive and bold in your prayer. Attack where Satan's forces are working. We have God's power (Acts 1:8; John 14:12; Luke 9:1; 10:9) and authority (Matthew 8:18-20; Luke 9:1, 10; 10:17-19). In Jesus' name we have nothing to fear (Luke 10:17). But everything must be done in His name/power/authority. "In Jesus' name" is not a phrase we use lightly; it has all the power in the universe behind it.

Sometimes spiritual warfare prayer is not about fighting a battle, but about keeping ready so the enemy knows you are praying and will focus on anything he does as soon as you are aware of it. Spiritual warfare prayer isn't just for times of battle, but for every day. Stand your watch, be ready. (December 5, 2016 Doylestown, PA)

Make notes of how these principles can apply to your own prayer life. Integrate what God is showing you into your own daily prayer time.

BLOG 492: PRINCIPLES OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE PRAYING 2

Following are some principles for spiritual warfare praying. This is the second of four blogs on this. If you have observations or principles you have learned please share them with me
jerry@schmoyer.net

Educate yourself about spiritual warfare so you know how to better fight the enemy.

If you see sin or problem areas in the life of the person for whom you are praying, you can pray against the demonic force behind it by calling the demon by the name of the sin/problem: anger, lust, greed, fear, pride, self-centeredness, depression, etc. Pray directly against the demon doing it, for the symptom will be his name (Matthew 12:29; 16:18-19).

Do not be surprised if you are attacked with the same things with which the person you are praying for is struggling: depression, confusion, impatience, anxiety, etc. Rebuke it as it tries to work against you. Rebuke it in the other person as well. One reason God allows this is to help you know what the person is experiencing and how to pray against it. You may also be hit with headaches, distraction, etc., or even chills or coldness. This is all from the enemy. Rebuke it and persevere in prayer.

Praying for someone's deliverance is solemn, serious business. Unless they fill the void with God's Holy Spirit many stronger demons will come fill that space (Matthew 12:45; Luke 11:26).

You can't force deliverance on anyone. God respects a person's free will. So pray they will clearly see the issues involved and the freedom God offers. Pray for God's mercy for a temporary

restraining of all demonic activity against the person so their free will is truly free to see the situation as it is and decide what they want. And don't assume they won't choose to go back to their sin!

We pray from our secure position of being one in Christ (Ephesians 1). He is our Father (Romans 8:15) and friend (John 15:15-16). He lives within us (John 14:7). We have nothing to fear! (December 12, 2016 Doylestown, PA)

Make notes of how these principles can apply to your own prayer life. Integrate what God is showing you into your own daily prayer time.

BLOG 493: PRINCIPLES OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE PRAYING 3

Following are some principles for spiritual warfare praying. This is the third of four blogs on this. If you have observations or principles you have learned please share them with me

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Do your best, even if you are unsure or inexperienced. Like any parent, God just wants us to do our best. He'll do the rest. The Holy Spirit takes our poor prayer efforts and turns them into what they should be (Romans 8:26-27). And remember, whatever you do, no matter how poorly you think it is done, is better than doing nothing!

Quote or read Scripture as much as possible. Jesus quoted the Word to defeat Satan when tempted (Matthew 4:1-10) and Paul says the Word is our sword, our only offensive weapon (Ephesians 2:17). God's Word is what demons must listen to, not our human words. Victory comes through His Word (Psalm 119:9-11). Quote or read 1 John 4:4; 1:6-7; Hebrews 2:14-15; Colossians 2:15; Revelation 2:11; 12:7-9; 20:1-7.

Make praise an important part of spiritual warfare praying. There is power in praise (Nehemiah 8:10, 2 Chronicles 20:22; Psalm 22:3; Acts 16:25-26). This comes through reading the Bible, especially the Psalms, and also through singing hymns and Christian songs. They hate hearing "A Mighty Fortress is Our God" and songs like it.

Pray for a hedge of protection (wall, garrison, fortress, and stockade – however you want to picture it) around yourself, your family and loved ones and your property and possessions when you start. Pray for this for the person you are praying for as well – while you are praying and afterwards. Forbid any forces to seek revenge or retribution against you or the person you are interceding for (John 1:10-11; 3:23; Psalm 34:7-8; 106:23; 1 Samuel 5:5; 2 Kings 6:8-18).

Because Satan is limited to being in one place at a time, it is very unlikely you will ever deal with him. Commands made to him are understood by God and demons to apply to the demons are currently battling. It is more accurate to address them to demons or evil spirits, instead of Satan.

Like with all prayer, it is not always God's will to grant your request right away, or even in the future. Jesus said some demons are more difficult to defeat and take more faith and power to dislodge (Matthew 9:14-29) so long term perseverance is needed (2 Corinthians 4:16-18). David prayed and fasted for 3 weeks before God's messenger angel broke through (Daniel 10:13). Somehow God uses the prayers of the saints to strengthen angels in their battles for us. (December 19, 2016 Doylestown, PA)

Make notes of how these principles can apply to your own prayer life. Integrate what God is showing you into your own daily prayer time.

BLOG 494: PRINCIPLES OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE PRAYING 4

Following are some principles for spiritual warfare praying. This is the fourth of four blogs on this. If you have observations or principles you have learned please share them with me

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If God does not bring deliverance, even when the person you are praying for seeks it and follows God to the best of their ability, God will use the oppression to bring forth spiritual growth in the person to have Himself glorified. He will provide grace to endure the attacks, as with Paul (2 Corinthian 12:7-10).

Spiritual warfare praying is, like all prayer, talking to God – but with the added dimension of being aware demons are listening as well. Our prayer is always addressed to God, in the power of the Holy Spirit, because of what Jesus did for us on the cross. But while praying to Him we can use our God-given authority to rebuke, take back access, silence or cast our demons. We don't have to ask God to do that, He has given us the authority to do it; o within our prayer to Him can be commands to the demons as well.

Prayer can be out loud or silent, depending on the circumstances and how you feel God is leading you. Demons can out thoughts into our minds so they can probably also know our thoughts, at least to some extent. Sinful thoughts give them access so they are aware of those thoughts. Righteous thoughts, commitments to God, praise and commands against them are also things they are aware of. God seems to allow them direct access to these, and He personally conveys them to the demons in such a way as to make sure they obey. Angels are greatly involved in this process as well.

Always pray in faith, never fear (James 1:5-8; Mark 11:23-24; Proverbs 18:21; Ephesians 6:16; Revelation 12:11). Keep your thoughts always and only on Jesus, never the enemy. Praying out loud can be a good way to focus your thoughts and proclaim your faith to God, angels and demons listening in.

You can pray to put the sins of the one in bondage under the blood of Jesus so they are better able to their own need to confess these sins themselves. This is temporary, any only by God's mercy when He chooses to do so for as long as He chooses to do so. It does not remove their accountability for those sins in this life or the next, but wakens the demons' control over them so they can better see the sin for what it is. Most issues you pray against will be from generational sin in the family line, and you can pray to have that broken. But when the individual participates in those sins by their own free will, then that also becomes another opening to be dealt with as well. Putting the sin under the blood of Jesus for them can temporarily weaken its hold so they can repent and turn from it. (Matthew 16:19; 12:29). Be sensitive to God's leading in praying for this. (December 26, 2016 Doylestown, PA)

Make notes of how these principles can apply to your own prayer life. Integrate what God is showing you into your own daily prayer time.

BLOG 495: GIVING & GETTING AT CHRISTMAS

Recently we spent time with a friend we have known for many years. His circumstances are such that he is often in need of help, but never able to do anything for us. It's easy for us to give to him, but not always for him to receive. I can identify. When I was going to seminary there were those who helped me even though I could never pay them back. That was a hard lesson for this German who was raised to always pay his own way and never be indebted to anyone. I learned how hard it was for me to just graciously receive something and not be able to pay the person back.

My only sibling, my sister Judy (who died from cancer at age 33) had a favorite Bible verse. It was Acts 20:35, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." That is true, but it is also true that it is a lot EASIER to give than to receive.

This Christmas time, enjoy giving gifts to others, but especially to those who can't give anything back. Also graciously accept the gifts others give to you, particularly if they are more than you are able to give back. If you aren't able to give as you'd like, and others give you a lot more than you can give them, receive the gifts graciously. You have the harder role. Don't let pride get in the way of enjoying the blessings others bestow on you. They are being blessed by giving and you by receiving. Remember, if you don't receive the gift, others won't be able to be blessed by giving it. Cordially receive the gifts you don't deserve. Ultimately they all come from God. And while you are at it, kindly receive all the undeserved gifts Jesus gives you as well. He is the ultimate gift giver, and we are the blessed recipients of His generosity. That is what Christmas is really all about. (December 19, 2016 Doylestown, PA)

Acts 20:35 In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' "

Proverbs 11:24-25 One person gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed.

2 Corinthians 9:7 Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

Who can you give to this week who can't give back to you? It could be time, money or encouragement. Ask God to give you an opportunity to give without receiving.

Who will be giving you more than you can give back to them? Ask God to help you receive it graciously, knowing God will bless them for giving as well as you for receiving.

(Blogs 496-532 are about the Lord's Prayer. Some were sent to those committing to pray every day for our India trip in 2017. I added the rest for completeness. If you want to skip them and go back to blogs strictly about India go to Blog 533.)

BLOG 496: THE LORDS PRAYER CONTAINS IT ALL (Lord's Prayer 1)

"The Lord's Prayer was able to contain it all." These are the words Helmut Thielecke, pastor of the Church of the Hospitallers in Stuttgart, Germany, to explain why he preached on the Lord's Prayer during the last terrifying days of World War II. It may seem an odd choice for such a time, with the constant fear and desperation his listeners faced as their homes were bombed and lives destroyed, but it brought the hope and comfort they needed.

This is a prayer used by all Christians throughout the centuries. It is simple yet profound. Shared by Christians everywhere, it is part of the glue which gives us a commonality. The Lord's Prayer has been used by Christians since the days of the early church. Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant churches all use it widely.

One of the things that appeals to us in this prayer is that it challenges us to know Jesus in a better and deeper way. When properly understood and used, it stretches our intimacy with Him. Yet often we either neglect to use it entirely, or we use it so often it becomes rote ritual with no real thought or meaning. It's a prayer we all know but seldom really understand.

When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray (Luke 11:1) this is the prayer Jesus gave. It was not meant to be repeated over and over without thought, but was to be a framework, a model, a pattern and a guide for how we pray. What does prayer look like? It looks like the Lord's Prayer.

How old were you when you first learned to pray the Lord's Prayer? What memories does it evoke? How often do you use it? Pray it now, thinking of all it contains. If you don't know it by heart you can read it in Matthew 6:9-13. (December 30, 2016 Doylestown, PA)

BLOG 497: SIMPLE AND TO THE POINT (Lord's Prayer 2)

The Lord's Prayer is given in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), right about in the very middle. Jesus has been talking about true and false giving and fasting. He also talks about true and false prayer. False prayer comes from our lips, true prayer from our hearts.

Notice how simple this prayer is. There are no long words or confusing theological teachings. It is simple and to the point. It is also brief, containing only about 65 words. "Your kingdom come." "Your will be done." These requests are short and to the point. Prayer doesn't have to be long, fancy, eloquent, emotional or detailed to be effective. Short and direct is fine, too. Yet everything that could be covered in prayer is covered in this prayer. God and us, the past, present and future, each person in the Trinity, all our needs, everything is included.

The first half of the prayer focuses on God: His name, His kingdom and His will are emphasized. We are talking to our Father about Himself. The second part is about us, though: forgive us, give us, and lead us. Now we are talking to our Father about His family. Prayer begins with God, not with us. But then bringing our needs to Him is legitimate and important.

Read the prayer Jesus gave them slowly, reverently, praying it as you read it: "This, then, is how you should pray: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, 10 your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. 11 Give us today our daily bread. 12 Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'" (Matthew 6:9-13) (January 2, 2017 Doylestown, PA)

BLOG 498: IF GOD KNOWS ALL, WHY PRAY? (Lord's Prayer 3)

When we talk about prayer sooner or later the questions arises, if God is sovereign why bother to pray? If He knows everything and does what He knows is best, why should we even consider trying to inform Him or influence Him by our prayer?

Well, first of all, prayer isn't to inform God. He knows everything already. There is nothing new for Him to learn. Nothing ever surprises Him. And in prayer we aren't trying to convince God to care for us. He wants to do that, in fact He has promised to do so (Philippians 4:19; Psalm 23:1; 34:10; Jeremiah 31:25). After all, He is Jehovah-Jireh, "The Lord Will provide" (Genesis 22:14).

However God has invited us to bring our needs to Him. We are told to ask, seek and knock (Matthew 7:7-8). He already knows our needs, in fact He knows them better than we do (Romans 8:26). We can be glad God isn't a magic jinee that automatically does all we ask and meets every wish we express. We'd be spoiled children were that the case. Human parents don't do that for their children, and certainly our heavenly father doesn't spoil His children, either. We don't really know what we need because our perspective is skewed by our own experiences and desire for immediate and total comfort. We are to ask, but we are also to let the final decision as to what is really best for

us up to God. That's why we need childlike faith. When we get to heaven we will realize that God made the right choice for us every single time.

So then, if God knows bests why pray? We pray because God commands us to do so, because prayer does make a difference (James 5:16). We pray because God invites us to partner with Him in His great work of advancing His kingdom on earth. It's as if God sets voluntary limits on what He does in the world so that we can take part in that work by praying and seeing the results. Dr Billy Graham said that there are rooms in heaven filled with answers to prayers which no one on earth has asked for. He's right!

Think of a father watching his child try to put together a puzzle. He could help her but doesn't do so until she asks. Even then, He works with her, teaching and assisting her. He doesn't take over and do the whole thing himself. But first he waits to be asked, to be invited, to have the child recognize their need of his help and humble themselves asking for it. God, too, longs to come to our aid, but often He waits until He is asked.

Is there a need in your life, or the life of a loved one, which you haven't been bringing to Him? Maybe it's too easy, or too hard. Perhaps you've stopped persevering in prayer, or don't know if God cares or not. Bring it to Him like a child bringing their needs to a loving parent. Then let Him help. (January 4, 2017 Doylestown, PA)

BLOG 499: PRAYER IS A MATTER OF THE HEART, NOT MOUTH (Lord's Prayer 4)

Prayer is not a matter of choosing the right words to use to sway God and gain what we desire, prayer is instead an intimate heart relationship between two who love each other deeply. God looks for a sincere heart, not eloquent words – the same as a parent does with their needy child.

Prayer is based on an attitude of knowing that in the end everything depends on God and not on us. It reminds us that He is God and we are not. A lack of prayer is often indicative of the fact that we've forgotten who is really in charge and think we can run the show ourselves.

Our part in prayer is to sincerely and honestly bring our deepest concerns to the throne of God and leave them there. His part is to listen and to graciously answer them in His own time and way, according to His own will. Prayer is an act by which we recognize His sovereign control over all and we humble submit to Him and His plan for our lives. It is not a way to manipulate God to do what we want but a means to yield to His sovereign, perfect purpose in everything.

God wants us to pray. Our prayers do matter. They make a difference. He doesn't 'need' our prayers, but in His grace He has invited us to join Him in what He is doing in our lives and in the world. He wants us to partner with Him, to share our thoughts and desire with Him, to bring all our needs and concerns to Him, and to trust that He will do the very best thing for them. He will do the very thing we would ask if we knew everything He knows. We don't, so we trust Him. Still we talk to Him about anything and everything. We need it. He desires it. Prayer does make a difference.

Spend some time in prayer, humble yielding each thing you pray about to His loving, gracious, sovereign will. (January 6, 2017 Doylestown, PA)

BLOG 500: WE ARE NOT IN THIS ALONE! (Lord's Prayer 5)

When asked how to pray, Jesus gave the well-known words, "Our Father..." Notice the first word – OUR. The Lord's Prayer is not a private prayer. The words "I" and "me" are nowhere to be

found. Often our prayers are self-focused, as if we are the only ones facing the difficulties we face in life and we above all others have the most difficult time of anyone. Such is not the case! We are all in this together and all face the same things in life (1 Corinthians 10:13). Starting with the word “our” reminds us from the beginning that we are not alone in the difficulties we face, the trials that come our way and the struggles we must face. They are common to all of us!

“Our” also implies we are part of a larger group of believers, a fellowship, a community of God’s children around the world and through the ages. We are part of a family. We are not facing these things alone. We are part of a family with a common heritage, entered into by a common new birth experience. We are not to just think of ourselves when we pray. We are to lean on each other and gain strength from each other, helping others bear their burdens in life as they help us (Galatians 6:1).

When we think we are alone, we face worse things than others face, when we don’t pray for others or allow them to pray for us, when we don’t turn to fellow believers for help in times of need, then the burden becomes too much for us. Only when we join with others in praying “OUR Father” does it become more manageable.

You are not facing things that others don’t face, and you are not facing them alone. Think for a few minutes of the many implications of these statements. What difference would they make in how you pray if you truly believed them and thought of them when praying? As you pray today, apply these principles to your prayer time. (January 9, 2017 Doylestown, PA)

BLOG 501: GOD AS FATHER (Lord’s Prayer 6)

Do you feel comfortable addressing God as “Father”? What memories or images does that title bring up? Did your relationship with your earthly father make it easier or harder for you to think of God as ‘Father’? And one more question: if so many have such imperfect memories and images from the word ‘father,’ why do you think God wants us to call Him by that title?

When Jesus taught the disciples how to pray He could have addressed God by any of a vast number of titles including God, Lord, Master, Jehovah, Righteous One, etc. Why “Father”? For one thing, it clearly implies that only those who are His children through faith can come to Him in this way. A child has access to their parent in a way other children do not, and that is true of us with our heavenly Father as well. So only true believers can pray this prayer. It is not for Buddhists, Hindus or Muslims. This is not a general prayer given for anyone to pray. It’s given to those who are God’s children by spiritual birth. Only we can pray this.

Another reason He wants us to call Him “Father” is that when we do we are recognizing He knows all about us and cares for what is best for us. Whatever a good father on earth should do for his children, that’s what God in heaven does for His. Only He does it totally, completely and perfectly.

A child has access to their parent whenever needed – no appointment, standing in line, doing something to qualify. That’s how it is with us and God as well. Even though He is running the universe and keeping everything going as He should, He is never too busy for us to come to Him.

Try to picture the perfect earthly father, one who always know, understand and care, one who was willing and able to do whatever was best for you in the long run, one loved you so much he couldn’t possibly love you and more and whose love was so deep that no matter what you did he wouldn’t love you any less. Wouldn’t it be great to have a father like that? You do, you know. He may not be your earthly father, but you have a Father in heaven who is that way. Won’t you let Him love you today? Will you put your total faith and trust in Him? Can you allow yourself to find comfort

in His loving care? He wants to be your Father if you'll let Him. Invite Him to be that in your life right now. (January 10, 2017 Doylestown, PA)

BLOG 502: IT'S ALL ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS (Lord's Prayer 7)

How many times have you heard it said that Christianity is a relationship, not a religion? Do you know what people mean by that phrase? As Christians we have a close connection with the God of the universe. There is personal rapport. We aren't numbers trying to appease a distant power. We are emotionally and spiritually bonded to God Himself. We are in a relationship.

We see different aspects of this relationship in the Lord's Prayer. "Our Father," of course, shows a Father/child relationship. That is the predominate relationship which encompasses all the others. It speaks of a loving, caring, nurturing, protecting and providing parent who is always there for a trusting child. It sums up what Christianity is all about.

But there are other relationships seen in this prayer as well. "Holy (hallowed) is Your name" focus on the Deity/worshipper relationship. Because He is Holy God we are to worship Him. "Your kingdom come" implies a Sovereign/subject relationship. He is God and we long for the day when we can live in close harmony with Him in His kingdom.

A Master/servant relationship is referred to when we pray "Your will be done." We are here to serve Him, not to try to get Him to serve us, something we often forget. "Give us our daily bread" brings to mind a Benefactor/beneficiary relationship. We are dependent on Him for our needs, even our mundane, basic daily needs.

"Forgive us our sins/debts" clearly connects us as sinners with our Savior. We come to Him needing cleansing and He provides it for us. "Lead us not into temptation" denotes a Guide/pilgrim relationship. He provides direction and guidance for we who desperately need it.

All these relationships are covered in the Lord's Prayer, but the overriding one is the first, the Father/child relationship. What could be better than having a loving Heavenly Father who cares for us because of His deep love and who knows and does what is best for us in the long run.

"Our Father" is not just the start of the prayer. It summarizes the whole thing. It itself is the prayer. Just praying "Father" says it all. Spend a few minutes calling God "Father" and think of all the implications and ramifications that come from that simple word.

BLOG 503: OUR FRIEND IN HIGH PLACES (Lord's Prayer 8)

"Our Father WHO IS IN HEAVEN" is how Jesus started the Lord's Prayer. We think of the significance of "Our" and "Father," but we often skip over the phrase "Who is in heaven." It's often a throwaway phrase, something so obvious we don't have to think about it. He is in heaven; we are on earth, big deal, nothing new, and something we've always known. But it must mean more than that or Jesus wouldn't have included it.

What is referred to by 'heaven' anyway? Heaven is the center of the universe, the seat of all authority and power, where everything is perfect and done according to God's will. We on earth are limited to this little ball of dirt spinning around larger balls in a corner of a galaxy called the Milky Way which is just one of millions in the universe. We are less than a speck on a speck, when seen from heaven's perspective. We are in a position of weakness and insignificance compared to 'heaven.' When we say "Our Father in heaven" we are recognizing how far He is above us and beyond us. We are remembering that He has authority and power to hear us and help us when we pray. It is

because God is in heaven that we can talk to Him with the assurance He can do something about our needs and difficulties.

Think of it this way. “Our” Father speaks of the community we have with each other. We do not pray alone, we pray with others. “Father” speaks of our family relationship with Him, I pray to the One who cares for me. “In heaven” adds the note of authority. Not only does He love me as a father but He has the power to do whatever is needed for me as God in heaven. His Fatherly love is His motive; His position in heaven is His ability to do whatever is necessary. God’s love alone is wonderful, but weak and ineffective. His power alone is great, but cold and distant. However when you compare the two, His love and power, you have an unbeatable combination. And that’s what we have in this first phrase, “Our Father Who is in heaven.”

Every single word in this prayer is important and packs much meaning. He is “Our (loving) Father” who is not limited as we but is above all us “in heaven.” That means there isn’t a need in our life that He can’t meet. If it doesn’t seem He is meeting it then we know it isn’t because He doesn’t care about us, for He perfectly and totally loves us as our Father. And we know that it isn’t because He isn’t able to meet it for since He is “in heaven” He can do all things. No, if He doesn’t meet it in the time and way we would like it is because He knows there is something more important for our growth and His glory. Does an earthly parent meet every want in the time and way their child demands? Of course not, no good parent would. Neither does our heavenly Father. He cares, and He is able. If He doesn’t seem to meet that need we must trust His Father’s heart that He knows best.

Is there anything you are dealing with that is causing you to doubt His love or power? Think about these things and turn them over to “Our Father, Who is in heaven.”

BLOG 504: THE PRIVILEGE OF CALLING GOD ‘FATHER’ (Lord’s Prayer 9)

The key to understanding the Lord’s Prayer is understanding the word “father.” Jesus says we are to talk to God in a father-child way. That is special and unique. In the Old Testament God didn’t invite His people to call Him ‘Father.’ Hardly anyone addressed Him in that way. Then came Jesus and He called God ‘Father’ all the time. Jesus says that He is our Father, too, for we are brothers and sisters with Jesus and each other. In Jesus God is revealing Himself in a new way, in a family way, as a loving father. There are several implications in calling God “Father.”

“Father” implies origin. It refers to paternity, source of all. God our Father is our source. In the Doxology we sing, “Praise God from Whom all blessings flow.” Acts 17:25 asserts that “In Him we live and move and have our being.” When we call God “Father” we are recognizing that He is the ultimate source of all things good and wonderful.

Also, “Father” speaks of parental authority. “You are the parent and we are not!” How often must we remind our children who is the parent and who isn’t? He is God and we are not. He has the right to do as He pleases, and fortunately for us what pleases Him is for ultimate good as well. Even in pain and difficult circumstances we are not to throw a tantrum and say He doesn’t love us. We are not to act like spoiled children. He is God and we are not!

Another aspect of the term “Father” is that of tender, loving care. In the Old Testament the unique Hebrew word “hesed” expresses this well. It speaks of a deep, tender, loyal love that is shown by all God’s actions and deeds. No matter what we do God can’t love us anymore. No matter what we do He can’t love us any less. His love is loyal, unconditional, always there. He is our greatest fan, our biggest supporter, our most loyal cheerleader. He isn’t sitting at a distance watching us with a frown on His face. He is right here with us, heart wrapped up in all we do, pulling for us (but allowing us our own free will) and celebrating every victory, no matter how slight.

Take a few moments to meditate on this. Reread this last paragraph if necessary and picture God and His 'hesed' for you. Soak it in. Enjoy it, and His eternal love.

BLOG 505: GOOD NEWS FOR PRODIGALS (Lord's Prayer 10)

Jesus tells us to pray "Our Father" when we pray, addressing God as our very own father. Too often, though, the word "father" brings more bad memories than good ones. That can greatly influence our 'father' concept. So how can we correctly understand God as our 'Father'?

Jesus told a story in Luke 15:11-32 that wonderfully illustrates what God our Father is really like. We call it the Parable of the Prodigal Son, but it should better be called the Parable of the Loving Father, for that is the real focus. The story is about a younger brother who took his inheritance, one half of the family estate, and wasted it in careless living. He found himself living with pigs he was taking care of, longing to have some of their food. So he decided to go back and try to get a job working for his father, but the question was whether the father would take him back. He was embarrassed and humiliated. He had wasted half of his father's life savings. He thought he knew it all but clearly he didn't. He was miserable from his sin.

Think of how it was for the father. He lost a large part of the fortune he had worked so long and hard to amass. He lost his reputation in the community for sure, the servants and others spread the word of what happened. Dysfunctional families make good gossip. They talked about him behind his back, blaming either him or the son, or both! But the worst pain for the father was that he had lost his son, whom he loved. His dream for the boy's future is shattered and he is left with a huge hole in his heart. Words cannot express the pain, sadness and loss the father is feeling. But look what happens when the son returns.

First of all, the father sees the son first. He's been watching far into the distance for his son's return. When he sees his son in the far distance throws aside all dignity and pride and runs to his son, embracing him and welcoming him home. He runs to him. He can't get there fast enough. He showers him with kisses, the sign of forgiveness. He gives him a robe, the sign of honor. He is also given a ring, the sign of authority. That, too, is restored by his father.

Sandals are given him, a sign of freedom, and a feast, the sign of a joyful welcome. They celebrate because of the father's joy at his safe return. The father did all this because of his love for the son.

What does it mean to call God 'Father'? That's what it means. No matter what we have done or for how long, God knows and loves us anyway. He is waiting to welcome and forgive, to restore and to celebrate. That is the God we are praying to. Do you need to come back to Him? He waits with open arms. Enjoy His love and restoration. He is our "Father."

BLOG 506: FATHER HUNGER (Lord's Prayer 11)

Counselors and therapists have coined a word to describe children who grow up in a family without a strong and compassionate father figure. He may have died, abandoned his family, or be so busy working and doing other things that he isn't involved in the lives of his family. Children who grow up without a father present in their lives are said to have "father hunger." They desperately look for someone or something to fill the void: alcohol, drugs, relationships, work, sex, things, etc. They don't find their needs met by any substitute, though. They have a father hunger that is never filled.

On a much larger scale, that is the story of all mankind. We were made to know God but our sin has separated us from Him. The Father is not absent; it is us who have left Him. Still, we have a Father hunger that nothing can satisfy but God our Father.

You see, our God is a Father! "Our Father in heaven" says it all. Everything else in the prayer is just the P.S. These simple words say it all. Everything God has for us and that He is for us is wrapped up in the word "Father." When we come to Him we are not coming to an angry God, but to a friendly Father. He loves us so much He gave His own Son to redeem us.

Satan's biggest lie is that God doesn't care, that we are Fatherless, that there is no one watching over us. If Satan can get us to believe that his work is done. But it is a lie, for there is Someone who does care for us more than we can imagine, Someone who wants us to call Him 'Father.' Someone who wants to be a perfect Father to us.

Do you see God as your heavenly Father? Do you let Him love you, or do you withdraw from His love and block it? Do you trust Him as your Father, no matter how your earthly father treated you? Are you willing to come back to Him and enjoy Him as your Father? Spend some time with your Father now.

BLOG 507: TAKING GOD SERIOUSLY (Lord's Prayer 12)

The Lord's Prayer is one we love and use often because it is so simple and understandable. That is, most of it is simple and understandable. Unfortunately the first phrase we are given to pray, "Hallowed be Your name," is the one that makes the least sense to us. We often just pass over it, assuming it is something archaic that doesn't really apply to us today. "Hallowed." Whoever uses that word in every day conversation today? What does it even mean? Let's just quickly skip over it and get to what we do understand: give us our daily bread, forgive us our sins and help us do your will. Now those are things we can pray about!

Yet Jesus doesn't start with them. He starts with this strange phrase, "Hallowed by Your name." "Hallowed" reminds us of Halloween, but what does that have to do with prayer? If we try to put a religious slant to it we think of monks chanting as they walk through cloistered halls. Frankly, the word sounds like something from the 12th Century, not something we'd pray today.

On top of that, we don't really know what the word means. So we pass over it to get to our concerns of daily needs and forgiveness. But Jesus doesn't start His model prayer with our concerns, He starts with God's concerns, that God's name be "hallowed," or "made holy."

To "hallow" something means to make it sacred, worthy of highest veneration and respect. Abraham Lincoln, in his famous Gettysburg Address, declared, "We cannot hallow, we cannot consecrate, we cannot dedicate this ground." Why? Because the men who fought and died on that ground already made it a special, sacred place through their suffering and sacrifice. The battlefield is, to this day, honored because of what happened there.

So when we pray "hallowed by Your name" we are really praying, "God, may Your name be treated with the respect, the honor, the holiness it deserves." We hallow God's name when we treat it with the highest respect, for that is what He is worthy of. That's the first thing Jesus wants us to pray.

Think of that phrase as you pray it. Don't jump over it or see it as a throw-away phrase until you get to praying about your own concerns. Start with God's first concern, His holy reputation. Honor Him; thank Him for being the holy God He is. Truly, holy is His name!

BLOG 508: WHAT'S IN A NAME (Lord's Prayer 13)

We talked about what “hallowed” in the Lord’s Prayer means: “holy, sacred, honored.” “Holy be Your Name” therefore means “May Your Name be special, sacred, holy, honored.” That we can now understand. But why does Jesus say it is God’s NAME that is to be held in special respect? What is there about a name we are to revere?

First, we must understand that our names identify us. They mean something. They communicate history, tradition and values. Names are more than a designation, like a serial number. In Bible times a person’s name stood for he himself, his character, what he was like. Abram’s name was changed to signify God’s new plan for His life. “Peter” means “Rock,” a reference to Peter’s rock-like faith. In Bible times when you used someone’s name you weren’t just identifying him, you were identifying his character.

So what thoughts pop into your mind when you hear the name “God”? What character traits stand out in your mind? The Bible over and over uses the name of God to stand for the Person and character of God (Psalm 8:1; 20:7; 23:3; 25:11). We are told that “everyone who calls in the name of the Lord will be saved” (Joel 2:32; Acts 2:21; Romans 10:13). God’s name represents who He is. It embodies His character.

That’s why the Third Commandment says we aren’t to take the name of the Lord in vain (Exodus 20:7). Taking Him lightly or flippantly is the exact opposite of making His name holy, special or sacred. To “hallow” God’s name means to take it seriously.

So what is the character of this One Whose name embodies Who and what He is? We see Him clearly in Jesus of Nazareth, the One who came as a baby born in Bethlehem. He came to show God’s glory (Hebrews 1:3). He is God with hands and feet, eyes to see and ears to hear. God has a voice. He touches lepers because no one is too dirty for Him. He speaks to beggars because He is never too busy for anyone. He feeds multitudes because He can meet any of our needs. He washes the disciples’ feet because no job is too menial for Him. He hung on a cross, rejected and tortured, because He loved us too much to allow us to be separated from Him for eternity. That’s the One Who’s name, Who’s character, Who’s person we are to recognize as holy.

Spend some time “hallowing” God’s name. Think of His holiness, His specialness, the honor and respect He deserves because of Who and what He is. Praise Him. Worship Him. Spend time with the first thing God tells us to pray for, that He be honored on earth.

BLOG 509: HALLOWING GODS NAME IN OUR DAILY LIVES (Lord's Prayer 14)

Are you a Christian? Do people know you as a ‘Christian’? Do you know just what it means to be known as a Christian? It means you are labeled with the name of Christ. You are associated with Him. What He stands for you stand for. As people see you and me they form their opinions of Christ because we are labeled as a follower of His, an example of what He is like. His reputation is affected by our lives and our reputation. What an awesome responsibility!

So when you pray “Hallowed by Your name” you are praying a prayer that you yourself are answering by your very life. Your prayer is that others would see God’s greatness and majesty, His love and power, the way He can forgive and restore, how He changes lives. Now how can others see that about God? By seeing it in the lives of those who take His name. When we pray for His name to be hallowed we are praying that God enable us to show that we are redeemed so that in our lives He may be glorified. We are praying that we want Him to enable us to reflect Him in such a way that others desire to know Him as well. You are praying, “God, help me to live so that Your name, Your

character, Your reputation is made great in the lives of those watching me. Use me so they will see your glory reflected in me.”

When we pray this we are actually praying against our own natural tendencies and sinful living. Inside of all of us is something called pride that makes us want to do everything we can to make our own name great, to draw attention to ourselves, to get credit for all we do, to impress others with our character and person. So when we pray “holy be Your name” we are in effect saying, “God, make your name great instead of my name. My name is in the background. Make sure you get all the credit for everything good and right in my life.”

This is a serious prayer to pray. As a Christian, we bear the name of our heavenly Father. Do you want others to notice what a great God He is so that He is recognized and honored? Then let Him work in you and through you to show others what He is like. In effect you are asking God to help you answer your own prayer. How we live and act does reflect on God, because we bear His name. It is easy to pray that God’s name be seen as special in the world, it is another to realize we must reflect that to others by our lives for this prayer to be answered. What can the world conclude about God by watching your life?

BLOG 510: SMALL PRAYERS AND BIG PRAYERS (Lord’s Prayer 15)

Sometimes are prayers are too small. We pray for simple, personal needs and desires. There is nothing wrong with that. In fact, later in the Lord’s Prayer those things are covered. However there is also a time for big prayers, prayers that require an Almighty God to do answer. When we come to the second petition of the Lord’s Prayer, “Your Kingdom come,” it is as if God Himself says, “Ask me for something big, something hard. Ask me to send My Kingdom to the earth!”

Now that’s a big request, that’s serious business. It’s asking Jesus to come back and bring down the curtain on world history. It’s implying that until that happens we want Him to invade our world and transform us, having His Kingdom now reign and rule in our hearts. That’s serious business indeed.

Notice, too, that this is the shortest petition in the Lord’s Prayer – 4 words in Greek, 3 in English. Clearly length does not indicate importance when it comes to praying. There is nothing wrong with long prayers, nothing at all. But they aren’t ‘better’ than shorter prayers just because more words are used. God hears our heart and answers in response to our desire, not the number of our words (Mark 12:40; Luke 20:47).

In addition, this is a command. It’s an imperative in the Greek. It’s not a suggestion or a sentimental statement, but a strong, heart-felt entreaty. And in the Greek the verb is placed first for emphasis. Literally the prayer is “Come now, Kingdom of God!” We aren’t praying for patience to wait until it finally comes, we are requesting it to come right away, in its totality or at least in my life. There is urgency about this, dissatisfaction with how things are going and an all-encompassing need for God’s Kingdom to come RIGHT NOW!

Yes, that’s a big prayer. So keep praying your small prayers but don’t neglect to pray the big prayers God wants you to pray as well. Pray now, and mean it, “Lord, I really want your Kingdom to come right here and right now, today!” That’s the very first request Jesus tells us to make when we pray. If you want to pray like Jesus wants you to pray then you’ll start your prayer with this.

BLOG 511: WHAT IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD? (Lord's Prayer 16)

In the previous blog we saw the importance of praying a big prayer for God to establish His Kingdom on earth right now. But just what do we mean when we pray for His Kingdom to come? What does “Your Kingdom come” really mean? Just what are we praying for?

The Kingdom of God, or Kingdom of Heaven, essentially the same thing, is something Jesus talked about almost every day. The Bible never precisely defines it, but its basic mean is pretty clear. A kingdom requires a king who rules, subjects who are ruled by the king, and a place where this takes place. We have a King, Jesus, who rules His subjects, believers who submit to His will. This is what heaven is all about – God’s will being perfectly done in the lives of His people. Jesus says we should pray this happens on earth as well. Thus this kingdom we are to pray for is a society on earth in which God’s will is as perfectly done as it is in heaven. That’s what “Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” refers to.

Jesus wants us to pray, first of all, that His perfect will is carried out on earth as it is in heaven. That means we are praying for Him to return and remove evil, establishing His perfect rule here as it was before Adam and Eve sinned. But it means more than that. It means we desire to make this same kingdom concept of completely following God’s will the main thing in our lives starting right now. When we pray “Your Kingdom come” we are also saying “My kingdom go.” This life isn’t about what we want but about doing God’s will in every area of our life. We can’t be living for God’s Kingdom and our own kingdom at the same time; it’s one or the other!

Praying for God’s Kingdom to come begins in our own life. We enter by faith as a little child (Luke 18:17) and are born into God’s family. Without this we cannot see this Kingdom (John 3:5). Then we desire to live for Him. We want His values to predominate our thinking and decision making. We want His cause to be advanced by all we say and do. It isn’t about us and our advancement but about Him and His advancement. Pray this for your family as well, and your church and the whole nation (Proverbs 14:34).

“Your kingdom come” is not a passive prayer. It is an imperative, a command, an urgent desire to live your life exactly as God would have you live it for Him. Are you doing so? Can you pray “Your Kingdom come” and mean it? Do so right now.

BLOG 512: WHAT'S SO GREAT ABOUT THE KINGDOM? Part 1 (Lord's Prayer 17)

When Jesus taught His disciples how to pray He said the very first thing they should pray for was for His Kingdom to come to earth. That means having God’s perfect will being done in every life, starting with ours right now. But why is this “Kingdom” so important to Jesus that it should be the first thing we pray for?

For one thing, it was the central issue of Jesus’ ministry. It’s what He was making available to those who would repent and follow Him (Matthew 4:17). He came to offer this to mankind (Luke 4:43; John 18:36-37) and was making it available to any who would enter (Matthew 4:23; Luke 17:21). Jesus came to establish a new society on earth, one that was made up of people who would be fully dedicated to doing God’s will before their own will. This would be a way of life totally different than those who weren’t following Him would live. It would be a life based on the truth of His Word and the absolutes contained in it. This Kingdom would be populated by those who recognized and followed His truth. In effect Jesus was saying, “If you want to be in My Kingdom you have to be a follower of the truth. You can’t remain neutral about Me or what I am saying. You have to make a commitment to serve Me before yourself or anyone else.”

In doing this we are being totally different from others around us. Our moral commitment to His truth totally changes everything. We look at life from a different perspective. Our decisions are based on different values. Our relationships, our goals, our use of time and money, all these are completely different for those who live by Kingdom values and truths. Jesus wants us to pray that everyone would live in this way. It's why He came to earth. It's important to Him that we pray for this as well.

Another reason the Kingdom is so important to Jesus is that it is the only thing that will last forever. Nothing else does, certainly not people. Someone can be well known and very popular in one generation, but a couple generations later be totally forgotten (Ecclesiastes 9:5). There is no permanence in this world. Only God's work on earth will stand forever, and this is called His 'Kingdom' (Hebrews 12:28). Gabriel told Mary her Son would rule over God's Kingdom forever because there would be no end to it (Luke 1:33).

Everyone alive can be divided into one of two groups: those who live by earthly values or those who live by Kingdom values. Those living for this life will receive their reward in this life, but those who live for the eternal values of the Kingdom will receive an eternal Kingdom reward. We can live for the kingdom of the world or the Kingdom of God. Not both. The choice is ours. Which are you living for?

BLOG 513: WHAT'S SO GREAT ABOUT THE KINGDOM? Part 2 (Lord's Prayer 18)

We've been talking the importance of the Kingdom and why Jesus wants us to fervently pray for it to come before praying for anything else. We saw that one reason is that it is because it was the central issue in Jesus' ministry on earth. Another reason is because it is the only thing that will last forever. These are other reasons as well.

The Kingdom of God is the only possible explanation why some people live the way they do. Those living out God's will in their lives are different from the rest of the world. We live for something beyond this life, something more than what is easiest and most pleasurable in this moment (Luke 18:29-30). Kingdom values challenge earthly values. To those not following them, people living by Kingdom principles seem unusual and strange. We forgive those who don't deserve it or ask for it. We turn the other cheek instead of retaliating and getting revenge. Our morals keep us from many of the things the world considers 'fun.' Honesty is more important than seeing what we can get away with. We freely share our time and possessions with those who cannot pay us back. We put people before things. We are different. Why? Because we live by Kingdom truth.

Why are so many Christians in so many places willing to give up all to follow Jesus, even their own lives? How can we explain such crazy behavior? Only know that it is Kingdom behavior, putting God's will before our own and living for His truth instead of our comfort. Understanding the Kingdom is the only way to understand why committed Christians live as they do.

Also, living for God's Kingdom gives meaning and purpose to life. It shows us where history is going. Others often see no point to history. Life becomes a big joke with no meaning or purpose. Mankind just keeps making the same mistakes, going on endless cycles of nothingness. We are random happenings of chance that evolved into more complex beings, but that's all we are. The problem with this having this kind of a view of mankind and our movement through history is that we will have this perspective of our individual lives. There is no ultimate meaning or purpose, it's all a joke, it happens then it's over – that's all there is. But when we look at life from God's viewpoint we see He has a plan and purpose from creation to when He returns. History is His-story. God created us with a purpose in mind, to spend eternity with Him in heaven, enjoying, worshipping and serving Him. That is His grand plan, and that's another reason praying for His Kingdom to come is so

important because then His purpose will reach its ultimate climax – sin gone and perfection on earth forever.

That's what the Kingdom is all about – God's perfect will being done on earth as it is in heaven. It's what God's people of all ages have been praying for and waiting for. One day it will come. Pray it would come soon in the world, and immediately in your own life.

BLOG 514: THE PRAYER THAT GOD ALWAYS ANSWERS (Lord's Prayer 19)

Often people complain that it seems their prayers never get answered. What can they do so God will answer their prayers? The problem, though, is not how we pray, but what we pray. There is one prayer that God always answers. If we pray this prayer we know without a doubt it will be answered. Do you know what the prayer is that is always answered? Its four simple one-syllable words: "Thy will be done" (Matthew 6:10). Pray that and mean it and it will always be answered.

Unfortunately many people pray these words without the faintest notion of what they are praying. They ask for God's will to be done, but don't know what that will is. They can just become words we recite by memory without any real intention of doing what we can to see that the Father's will is indeed done.

Too often it's tempting to pray for MY will to be done, for God to change His will to match my desire. Or we want Him to rubber stamp what we want and make that His will. But doesn't do that and He never will. It is HIS will that must be done.

The Greek grammar used here is interesting as well. The request is for something to be done right now, immediately, this instant. It isn't a request for something in the far distant future but for this very instant. Also this is a command. It is an imperative. It's not a mild wish or a suggestion. It is praying, "I really, really want your perfect will to be done in me and this world this very instant!"

It's a difficult prayer to sincerely say because it is admitting that God has a will for our lives which may be different than our own plans and desires. On top of that it is stating that when our will conflicts with his we want His will to prevail over our will. That can mean discomfort, pain or even suffering. There are no guarantees in life. As Christians we are not guaranteed life will be smooth, easy, painless or enjoyable. But we are guaranteed that, if we let Him, God will have His will done in and through us. He also promises He won't give us more than we can bear with His help, that He will always be with us and will never leave or forsake us. That we are guaranteed, and what could be better than that!

BLOG 515: ON EARTH AS IN HEAVEN? (Lord's Prayer 20)

When Jesus taught His disciples to pray He first told them to pray for the PERSON of God, "Holy be Your name." Then he said to pray for the PROGRAM of God, "Your kingdom come." Not He is saying to pray for the PURPOSE of God, "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." These are the first three petitions, all focusing on God and not man.

God's purpose in this world and in our lives is to have His will done as it is done in heaven (Matthew 6:10). Just how is His will done in heaven? First, look at the universe and how the moon, sun, stars, galaxies and everything obeys His will. It moves in perfect harmony as God wills it to move.

Think, too, of the angels in heaven and how they do God's will. They surround His throne obeying His every command, worshipping and serving in any way God would wish, always being in perfect fellowship with God and with each other. They "do His bidding" and "obey His word" (Psalm

103:20). God's will is always done in heaven, 100% of the time. Never is His will not done. When it is done it is done instantly, no waiting or hesitating or putting off even for a moment. No sooner is God's will known than it is carried out.

When His will is done, it is done completely, every detail taken care of, nothing left even the slightest bit unfinished. It never has to be checked up on or redone. In addition to these, His will is done with a heart attitude of joy. There is never any complaining, selfishness or self-centeredness. Never any fear as a motive, or things done to impress or manipulate God. Obedience is instantaneous, complete and joyful.

That's what we are praying for when we pray that His will be done on earth as it is in heaven. That means we are committing to do His will, whatever He asks, as soon as He asks, and with a joyful spirit. Is that how you follow God's will? Is your faithfulness, your holiness, your trust and obedience done as the angels in heaven do so? That's what we pray for when we pray, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

BLOG 516: GIVING UP CONTROL (Lord's Prayer 21)

"Your Will be done (Matthew 6:10)." Four simple one-syllable words that are very easy to pronounce, but much harder to really mean. Saying them is easy, praying them much more difficult. The reason it is so hard to really mean these words is because implied in them is that we are giving up control of our own life. God has a will for my life, but I have my own plans and desires. When we pray this part of the Lord's Prayer we are asking that His will take precedence over our will. Only one will can be done at a time, either ours or God's.

Often we don't even know what His will is for our lives, so how can we follow it daily? We know God's will by learning His Word (Psalm 119:18). In His Word we see what He commands us to do as well as forbids us to do. We get to know Him and His character so we know how He feels about various situations. In God's Word we see God's heart, and when we understand that we'll know what His will is for us in life.

But knowing His will also means listening to His still, small voice when He speaks to us as He did to Elijah (1 Kings 19:11-13). He doesn't shout. Nor does He use some great emotional or supernatural experience to communicate with us, just a quiet whisper (1 Kings 19:12). It's a voice we need to learn to recognize. He may put His thoughts into our minds (John 2:22; 14:26) or a desire in our hearts (Luke 24:32; Psalm 39:1-3). His Spirit will communicate to us what He wants us to do, or not do.

"Your will be done" is difficult to pray sincerely because it means we are letting go of our plans for what we think we need and trusting God for what He knows is best for our growth and His glory in the long run. We call Him "Father" because He is worthy of that trust.

Do you trust Him enough to truly pray "Your will, not mine, be done"? Do you know Him and His Word well enough to know what that will is for you in your life?

BLOG 517: PRAYING AGAINST THE STATUS QUO (Lord's Prayer 22)

Are you aware that when you pray "Your will be done" (Matthew 6:10) you are praying for a God-ordained rebellion? You are asking that the status quo of this world be upset and overthrown. You are asking God to take action to make things right, in your own life and also in the world at large.

It's clear that God's will is seldom done on earth. Killing unborn babies is not His will; neither is homosexuality or other forms of immorality. Divorce is not His will, or abuse, or pornography, or

adultery, or ethnic cleansing. Materialism, self-centeredness, greed and using others for one's own benefit is not His will. In fact, there is very little that goes on in this world that is His will. That's because it is Satan's world and he rules it by instilling his principles and ethics (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; Ephesians 2:2).

God does not accept these things, and neither should His children. He sent His prophets in the Old Testament to warn against these things and show what His will was for His people. He inspired people to write these things down so all would know how things should be – motivated by love, justice and kindness.

In fact, God so wanted change that He Himself came to earth to show and say that things must change. If everything had been OK He wouldn't have had to come. Jesus' whole life was against the status quo. Instead of changing, though, they planned to kill Him.

"Thy will be done." God does not accept the status quo and neither should we, in ourselves or in the world around us. We are to pray specifically and continually against it. But we are also to act against it in our lives and in the world around us. By our example, by our words, by our vote, by our involvement, by our serving others, by our getting involved, by our sharing what we have and by our sensitivity to the needs of others we are to do, as well as praying, God's will in every area of life. God will give you opportunities to do so today. Be alert to them. Make sure His will is done in every way possible this day.

BLOG 518: NEVERTHELESS, YOUR WILL BE DONE (Lord's Prayer 23)

It's a dark night in Gethsemane. While others sleep Jesus prays. No, wrestling would be a better word to use. Before the creation of the universe God the Son, the Second Person of the Trinity, volunteered to come to earth to pay for the sins of the world on the cross (Ephesians 1:4). Now is the time. In a few hours He will be separated from God the Father and God the Spirit. On Him will be dumped the shame and guilt for every sin every committed by mankind. Will He be able to endure such rejection and judgment? Will it be too much? As a man, Jesus shrank back from this commitment. He wrestled in prayer, but ultimately He prayed, "Nevertheless, Your will, not My will, be done" (Matthew 26:39-42; Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42). It wasn't the first time He had faced this and committed Himself to God's will no matter the cost (John 18:11; 6:38; 12:28).

No man was ever more committed to doing the will of God than Jesus going to the cross. But it wasn't easy, for doing God's will demanded a great price from Him. He was willing, but the price had to be faced. It was so difficult for Him to face what would happen and pray what He prayed that drops of blood literally came out of Him like sweat (Luke 22:44).

For us, too, there is a price to be paid for following God's will. First and foremost, it means our will cannot be done. We usually want what is best and easiest for us, and we want it right away. Seldom is that God's will. Then, too, following His will may cost friendships, popularity, finances or other things. We are thrilled by the stories of those who willing give their lives to follow God in missions or in countries where Christians are persecuted or killed. We may know some who have prayed "Your will be done" and as a result God led them down a difficult path that ultimately led to their growth and His glory, but which was far more difficult than anything they expected in life. That may be your testimony as well.

This is a hard commitment to make. Jesus Himself struggled with the enormity of it, but opted for God's perfect long-term will over His short-termed, more convenient will. There was no other way for salvation to be provided. God's was indeed the best, for Jesus and for all of us. His way for us is best, too.

Someone has said that there are no guarantees when we follow Jesus, when we let His will be done in our lives. That is not true. We aren't guaranteed an easy road, but we are guaranteed He will be with us each step of the way, He will never leave or forsake us, He will not give us more than we can bear, His power and presence through it all, and that all things will ultimately be used for good (Romans 8:28). Those are great guarantees. Use them this day as you seek to do His will in all things.

BLOG 519: PRAYER PRIORITIES (Lord's Prayer 24)

Suppose your prayers were recorded and analyzed. What patterns might be found? Would balance be found in your prayers between worship/praise, intercession for others and intercession for self? Or would there be a disproportionate amount of time spent in one area? In the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6) we see perfect balance. In fact, as we analyze it we see an important priority given to praying about God's concerns before praying for our own. There is nothing wrong in praying for our own needs, but this prayer shows us the importance of praying for God's needs first.

The first half of the prayer (Matthew 6:9-10) is talking to the Father about the Father and His concerns. The pronouns all point toward God: "Your" three times. Your name be made holy. Your Kingdom come. Your will be done. It's all about God and His desires, putting Him and His plan first.

The second half of the prayer (Matthew 6:11-13) is talking to the Father about the family and our concerns. Pronouns such as "us," "our" and "we" are used eight times. It is legitimate to pray for our needs, but not first and foremost. We can pray for provision (daily bread), pardon (forgive us) and protection (from temptation). These three cover anything and everything we'd need to pray for about ourselves. We pray for our daily needs in the present (daily bread), our forgiveness from sins in the past (forgive us) and to be with us against temptation in the future (lead us not into temptation).

Provision of daily needs takes care of our body, forgiveness of sin takes care of our soul, and protection from temptation cares for our spirit. Everything can be brought to God in prayer in the Lord's prayer. But it is important to keep the order correct.

Praying for God's concerns first isn't just a technical requirement. When we start of thinking of God's Holy name and how we can honor Him, the coming of His Kingdom and how we can advance it, and His perfect, all-encompassing will being done on earth and in our lives on earth as it is in heaven, our thoughts will be formed in such a way that most of the self-pitting, me-focused begging and complaining we call prayer will cease. Focusing on His power and love, His perfect plan, our desire to serve Him instead of having Him serve us, and the assurance of all that is to come will change completely how we pray about our concerns. We will leave encouraged, uplifted and motivated to serve Him instead of preoccupied with all our wants and difficulties. Try it and see if it doesn't work that way for you. Always pray for God's needs before your own!

BLOG 520: DAILY NECESSITIES (Lord's Prayer 25)

When is the last time you sat down to eat but had no food and no resources to get any food? When, if ever, have you prayed for God to provide you food for that day, that meal? To us in the USA that just doesn't happen, but for millions of believers in other parts of the world it is a daily occurrence. They are aware of their daily dependence on God for the provision of the most basic needs. God wants His children to ask for these things. "Give us today our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11).

"Bread," in the Greek, refers to common, ordinary bread. It's nothing fancy, just normal, basic nourishment. Bread was the staple of their diet. It wasn't limited to the food item we call 'bread' but

stood in a broader way for all our material needs. Jesus was telling His followers to pray for their basic necessities, including food. Martin Luther wrote that this includes things such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, yard, fields, cattle, money, possessions, a devout spouse, devout children, devout employees, devout and fearful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, discipline, honor, good friends, faithful neighbors and other things like these.

Clearly our material needs do not lie outside the realm of prayer. There is nothing unspiritual about praying for our physical needs. In doing so we admit our moment by moment 100% dependency on God for all we have. Jesus wants us to recognize our hand to mouth existence, our complete dependence on Him.

In the USA today it can be hard to appreciate that when there are so many resources to keep us from going without. We have employment, savings, insurance, government programs, friends and even strangers who are willing to help, etc. It's easy to forget that God is the one working behind these means to use them to provide for us. Instead of appreciating these things we tend to expect them, and even more and more of them. But we really are dependent on God for their daily provision. We are dependent on Him for every breath we take, for our jobs and health, for our economy, for weather to raise crops, for protection from disasters that would destroy our economy or food supply. We are just as dependent on God as the poorest believer in a poor third world country. At least they recognize their dependence, often we do not. Take time throughout this day to continually thank God for His gracious provision for all your needs.

BLOG 521: "GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY CAKE" Lord's Prayer 26)

"Give us today our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11) in the Lord's Prayer reminds us that we are dependent on God for all of our needs being met. If we believe He is a God who answers prayer then we must believe that what we have comes from Him. That also applies to what we don't have. What we do have is because of Him, and what we don't have is because of Him as well – there are things He chooses not to give us. Therefore we must be content with what He does give us, and what He doesn't give us. Implied in this prayer for our daily needs is trust in Him and contentment with what we have.

We must be content that He provides for us as we need it "daily" bread. He doesn't provide far in advance so we won't have to worry about what will happen. He expects us to trust Him no matter what to provide when needed. That is we are to trust Him to provide our needs. Too often we expect Him to provide for our wants as well. We must know the difference between our needs and our greed's. He tells us to pray for our daily bread, not our daily cake. When Jesus made a meal it was baked fish and barley bread: plain, basic, healthy, nourishing food. It wasn't chocolate eclairs He provided. There is nothing wrong with fancy food from time to time, but to expect God to provide for all our special wants all the time is wrong.

Contentment means we trust God to provide what we need and to provide it when we need it. If He isn't doing that then we are either demanding a 'want,' not a 'need,' or we are not waiting patiently until the day we actually need it but want it ahead of time.

Are you a content person? Would God say you are content? Are you satisfied with the basic necessities of life or do you demand more and more? Can you discern the difference between a want and a need?

Are you a patient person? Are you willing to let God provide in His way and in His time? Do you worry about the future, or do you trust His promise to meet all your needs (Philippians 4:19)?

You can't pray "give us today our daily bread" without believing He will give you what you need (nothing less, but nothing more, either) when you need it.

BLOG 522: PRAYER PRONOUNS (Lord's Prayer 27)

When you pray, what pronoun do you use most? Think for a moment. For most of us we probably use "I," "me," or "my" most often. Yet of the twelve pronouns in the Lord's Prayer, none of these are ever used, not even once. Three times we use "Your," the other nine it is "us," "our," or "we." This is important. If we want to pray as Jesus commanded we need to change the pronouns we use. I don't think Jesus is saying we can never pray for anything personal or private. After all, this is a public, a group prayer. However the significance remains: we are to pray for each other as we pray for ourselves.

Prayer isn't supposed to be me-focused, nor is it to be self-centered. Every time we pray we are reminded that we are part of a family. As we come to our Father with our thoughts and prayers, we are to remember our brothers and sisters who have the same needs as we have. We are to pray for their needs as well. We aren't to ask our Father to favor us over His other children. We are all in this together!

In the world today there is a mentality that says only the tough survive, look out for number one (myself), it's a dog-eat-dog world so eat before you are eaten, it's every man for Himself! That's not how it is in the family of God, though. Jesus doesn't say get and hang on to it, He says to give to others and then it will be given to us (Luke 6:38).

Are you as fervent in praying for the needs of others as you are for your own needs? Do you see your situation as more difficult than others or your needs as more important? Do you think of others and pray for their needs as well? When you read or hear about another in a difficulty, do you lift them to God in prayer? I follow the example of others and try to say a prayer for the people involved whenever I hear an ambulance. It's not much, but it's good to remember others.

When you include others in your prayers and pray for their needs, too, your patience, contentment, trust and faith will also grow. It's good to know we aren't alone in what we face, that others struggle with the same difficulties and face the same needs. Wouldn't it be nice to know people throughout the world were praying for you when they face similar situations? Join in with your brothers and sisters in Christ; always include them in your prayers. Use "us," "our," or "we," not "I," "me," or "my" when you pray.

BLOG 523: 'DEBTS' OR 'TRESPASSES' (Lord's Prayer 28)

The Lord's Prayer was used often in my childhood: church, home, even in school at the start of each day. Everyone knew it. However we all knew to look out for one tricky spot, one place where you could get tripped up if you weren't careful. That was when we would say, "forgive us our _____ as we forgive _____." The group could go one of two ways at that point: "debts" or "trespasses." I had to listen to the leader and take my cue there. Usually I just got quiet at that part and when those rough waters were navigated I would jump back in with "and lead us not into temptation...." I never understood why there were two different words used there, nor why everyone couldn't just agree to say the same thing. I chalked it up to one of those strange things in human behavior, like if Jesus descended into "hell" or "hades" in the Apostles' Creed. I just assumed my side had it right, although I wasn't always sure just what my side believed.

There is a simple explanation for the debts/trespasses conflict, though. Both Matthew and Luke record the Lord's prayer, but each uses a different word. Which is correct, well both, and

neither. When Jesus spoke these words He was using the spoken language of the day, Aramaic. The word He used was 'choba.' However when Matthew (6:12) and Luke (11:4) wrote they wrote in Greek so they used the Greek equivalent to 'choba.' But since Matthew was writing to Jews and Luke to Gentiles different Greek words conveyed Jesus' meaning to each. For a Jew, the primary responsibility in life was to obey God. When you disobeyed God you owed Him a debt for your disobedience. You were indebted to Him. So Jews thought in terms of sin being a debt.

Luke knew his readers wouldn't understand that concept. To them sin was transgression against God. It was a rebellious action, a breaking of a rule or principle. To Luke and his Gentile readers, sin was rebellion against God by breaking His rules, so he used the word "transgression" or sometimes translated simply "sins." To Matthew's Jewish readers and to Luke's Gentile readers they each understood what Jesus was saying in Aramaic by using 'choba' for they each view it through their own very different cultural lens.

For us it doesn't matter, either word speaks to our condition. We are in debt to God for our disobedience, and there is no way we can pay that debt (Ephesians 2:1-10). Only He can pay the debt for us, and that is what Jesus did on the cross. Also we are in sin for we break God's laws and principles time after time after time. Again, we need His forgiveness for we cannot 'undo' an act of rebellion. There is a penalty to pay.

When you pray today, think of your sins as a debt against God you cannot pay and thank Him paying that debt for you. Then think of them as acts of rebellion against God's rules and thank Him for forgiving you for that as well. 'Debts' or 'transgressions'? It doesn't matter which word, we are all guilty before God and dependent on His mercy for forgiveness.

BLOG 524: FORGIVE TO BE FORGIVEN (Lord's Prayer 29)

The Lord's Prayer is a concise series of short statements which cover everything and anything we could ever want to pray about. The Lord's Prayer says it all. It contains one short bullet point prayer after another, no frills or details, nothing extra added. Just a list of requests. That is true until we get to the part about asking for our sins to be forgiven, though. Then that nice pattern changes. See if you can pick up the change:

"Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors" (Matthew 6:12). Did you see it? There is a condition here. We would expect a period after the word "debts" but instead Jesus continues. In effect, He changes this from another in a list of requests to focusing on something the one praying has to do (or not do). It seems as if He is saying that the way we treat others is the way God will treat us! Why would God limit Himself to what we do or don't do on earth? Does this mean we must do this work of forgiveness of others in order to earn God's forgiveness of us?

We know forgiveness is by grace and not something we earn, but the principle is still true: unless we forgive others God won't forgive us. That means if we pray these words with unforgiveness in our hearts we are actually asking God not to forgive us! It's like saying, "God, since I haven't forgiven this person, please do not forgive me!" If we aren't going to forgive others then we better make sure we never sin and need God's forgiveness! After all, how can we ask God to give us something we refuse to give to others?

Does that mean God's forgiveness is conditional and we need to earn it by forgiving others? No, this is not a work to impress God; it is keeping from a sin that will come between us and God. This whole concept has nothing to do with salvation, that is already a settled matter. What this has to do with is daily fellowship. How can we be close to someone when there is an issue between us?

Jesus knew what He was saying would arouse the interest of those listening so, as soon as He was done with the prayer, He came right back to the issue of forgiveness. "For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins your Father will not forgive your sins" (Matthew 6:14-15). This is the only part of this prayer that He singles out for special commentary, making sure all understand that it means just what it says. He even told Peter he had to forgive "seventy times seven" times in a day (Matthew 18:21-22) and then went on to tell a story about a man who was forgiven a debt of about \$25 million dollars but wouldn't forgive someone who owed him \$5,000 (Matthew 18:23-26). As a result he was thrown into prison until he could pay back his own \$25 million debt.

The only condition of forgiveness is a repentant heart. We are never closer to God's grace than when we confess our sins to Him. We are never more like Jesus than when we forgive those who have sinned against us. We'll never have the true freedom God intended for us to have until we learn to forgive others, 100% unconditionally forever. If God is reminding you of someone you need to forgive take a few moments to listen to Him. Then forgive that person and pray for God's forgiveness of you.

BLOG 525: DOES GOD TEMPT US TO SIN? (Lord's Prayer 30)

What is the difference between temptation and testing? Can a test also be a temptation? Can a temptation also be a test? How can a test become an avenue for spiritual growth? How can a temptation to sin become an avenue for spiritual growth? Does God lead us into testing? Does God lead us into temptation?

"And lead us not into temptation" (Matthew 6:13a). Does this imply He does? Does it also mean He will keep us from temptation if we ask? Why would He deliberately lead His children into temptation? So what is the answer: Yes, No and Maybe. It all depends on how you define "lead" and "temptation." Theologians and scholars have debated these words since Jesus first said them.

The Greek word translated "temptation" has two basic meanings. It is a neutral term, but can mean something positive or something negative. It can refer to something that brings good results, and then it is translated "trial" or "testing." God can use a difficult situation to stretch our faith and cause us to grow closer to Him. Or it can refer to something seduces or lures someone to sin, and then it is translated "temptation." So it can refer to a difficult test or a solicitation to sin.

Sometimes it is used both ways in the same passage. James 1:12 says, "Consider it pure joy, my brothers when you face trials of many kinds." This is the same word Jesus uses in the Lord's Prayer. James goes on to tell them to rejoice when this happens because God uses it for good in life (James 1:2-12). God is saying that trials and difficulties are used to produce spiritual maturity in us.

However in James 1:13 the same word is used in a very different way. "When you are tempted to do evil no one should say 'God is tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone." This clearly is referring to solicitation to evil and stands that God does not entice or lure anyone to sin. God will not do that. Sometimes we may feel 'forced' by circumstances to sin, but that is our choice and never God's forcing us. We still have a choice as to how we will respond. God never, never, never sets us up to fail. He is holy and he is love.

So the answer to our question is clear – God in no way is responsible for our sin. The blame is all ours. When we pray "Lead us not into temptation" we are not implying that He would put us in a position where we have no choice but to sin. We cannot blame God in any way for our sin. It is ours alone.

Take a few moments to think about your sin. Do you somehow lessen your responsibility by putting blame on others or circumstances? That is implicating God for you are saying He allowed these things to pressure you into sin. Take full, total, complete responsibility for your own sin. Confess it. Remove it. Ask for His help in having victory over it.

BLOG 526: TRIALS AND TEMPTATIONS (Lord's Prayer 31)

In the last blog we saw that "lead us not into temptation" (Matthew 6:13) does not refer to the possibility of God can in any way be responsible for tempting us to sin. He does allow tests and trials, but these are for our growth and His glory. So we are not asking God to not do what He has promised He won't do (James 1:13), lead us into temptation of evil.

Then what does this petition refer to? The other meaning of the Greek word translated "temptation" is "testing" or "trials." That makes more sense. But when you think about it, praying this prayer means we are asking God to keep us from that which He clearly says is good for us (James 1:3). Why should we pray to have that which is good for us kept from us?

I think the answer to this is that we are praying, not to have God keep us from testing or to keep us from sin He would lead us into (for He never would do that), but that we are praying for Him to protect us from Satan's temptations. When God allows us to face a trial or test it is almost always used by Satan as a temptation. The very same event that can bring us growth as we draw closer to God can also bring us sin as we turn from Him. It is a 2-sided coin. There can't be an opportunity to trust God without an opportunity to NOT trust him as well. As long as the path continues on there is no choice, it is only when there is a fork in the road that we must make a decision as to which way to go. The same is true of our choices in life.

Think of Adam and Eve. God told them not to eat of the fruit as an opportunity to show their faith and trust in Him, but Satan used it as a way to get them to disobey and sin. The same is true of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness. It was a time of drawing closer to God and committing to the path God had for Him. But Satan used that to try to bring an alternate path into Jesus' life, an easier and more self-pleasing one.

That happens with us when we face issues in life such as sickness, unemployment, even success such as a nice raise. We can use these things to come closer to God and trust in Him or turn to our own means of dealing with them – anger, bitterness, greed, pride, etc.

How are you responding? Praying for God's help in the coming temptations you will face is what Jesus is referring to. We welcome that which will help us grow in faith and trust in God, which will be a good testimony to others and which will glorify Him. But we pray for help from that which would draw us to face things in our own power and turn to sin and evil instead of faith and trust. How are you responding to what you are dealing with in life? Are you using it as an opportunity to trust God, or has it become a stumbling block in your life? Pray for God to help you stay faithful whatever you face in life.

BLOG 527: "I FEEL YOUR PAIN!" (Lord's Prayer 32)

How do you respond when some says to you, "I feel your pain"? I know it's comforting to hear their empathy, and they mean well. Perhaps our pain does even touch them to some extent, but no one on earth can really feel the pain we feel. What about when someone says, "I know how you feel"? That may or may not be true, depending on what they have gone through in the past. But it's only if they have experienced the same thing to the same degree can they say they know how we

feel. While that is nice to hear for its sympathy value, it doesn't really lessen our pain. It is nice to know we aren't alone, but in many ways we still are.

Then along comes Jesus who says, "I know how you feel," and "I feel your pain." With Jesus that is entirely true! Hebrews 4:15 says He was "tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin." He knows our pain, He sees our weakness, and He understands what we are going through. Because He was a "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," He truly knows what we are going through.

This has enormous implications for our spiritual life. Because Christ was tempted and never gave in, we may be sure that He is never surprised by anything we say or do. We gave in too early so we never felt the full force of temptation. But Jesus let the waves of temptation rush over Him and stood like the Rock of Gibraltar. When we pray we don't have to worry that we will somehow shock Him. He's heard it all and seen it all. We can go ahead and be totally honest about our failures. He knows about it even before we tell him.

So when we pray, "lead us not into temptation/testing," He understands what we are talking about. In the previous blog we saw that this means that, when trials come to strengthen and mature our faith, but Satan tries to use them to get us to sin, we are to pray for God to help us through those temptations/trials. We can pray for His help in full assurance that He not only hears us but also totally understands and really does know what we are going through for He went through it Himself. Perhaps our circumstances differed from His in some ways, but loneliness, rejection, fear, pain (physical and emotional) and many others hit Him as they hit us. In fact He was hit harder because He was more sensitive to it since He was sinless and innocent. Also Satan tried all he could to get Jesus to sin. Satan himself doesn't even bother with us; he just lets his demons do the work.

When tempted to sin or about to bow to depression or discouragement by the stretching of your faith, ask God to be with you through it, to protect you from that which would overwhelm you, to do what is necessary to help you endure. He loves you and wants to help. He's been there and gone through it, so He understands and knows just how to help. Pray for His help now, and allow Him to provide it in any way He determines. Pray your problem and let Him supply His own solution!

BLOG 528: POWERLESS! (Lord's Prayer 33)

The world is all about power today – engines, computers, human bodies, even financial power. We all want to be enabled, enriched and empowered. We see that as the solution to all we face, the way to victory over life's difficulties and our safeguard against whatever may come. Should it surprise us, then, that God's way is totally opposite of the world's way?

We say that in order to have victory over temptations and trials we need to have more power, but God says the way to victory is recognizing that we are powerless. As long as we feel we have some ability left we will rely on it and not Him.

In 2 Chronicles 20 we read about a time the Ammonites and Moabites sent their vast armies against Jerusalem. The Jews were far outnumbered, and their weapons were quite inferior as well. Things looked hopeless for them. King Jehoshaphat called for a national fast and time of prayer. Everyone gathered and he prayed one of the greatest prayers in the Bible (II Chronicles 20:6-12). He begins by declaring God's greatness: "O Lord, God of our fathers, is you not the God who is in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. Power and might are in your hand, and no one can withstand you" (verse 6). Then he reminds God of the promises he made to take care of his people when they were in trouble. Then he tells God, "We're in big trouble now!" He freely admits, "we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us" (verse 12). And he concludes with this simple confession: "We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon you" (verse

12). God answered through a prophet who passed on His message to stand still and see the deliverance of the Lord.

The next day Jehoshaphat put the male singers at the head of the army and sent them out to do battle. They literally stood still and watched as the Lord sent confusion into the enemy ranks. The Moabites and Ammonites started killing each other by mistake. There was a great slaughter followed by the plundering of the supplies left behind by the enemy soldiers. The story ends with the army gathering for a praise celebration, giving thanks to God for the victory he provided. Jehoshaphat's prayer was the key to victory, not just that he prayed but what he prayed. When he prayed, "We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon you," he was really saying, "Lord, we're just a bunch of pathetic losers. And if you don't help us, we're sunk."

He's right! We're all pathetic losers in need of God's grace. The problem is that we don't realize our powerlessness and helplessness and therefore think we can handle things on our own instead. The fifth petition of the Lord's Prayer is meant for us when we recognize our total dependence on Him for everything. "Lead us not into temptation" (Matthew 6:13) expresses our need of God's help to make it through each day, for on our own we can never stand.

Are you trying to face and issue or fight a battle in your own strength? Commit the situation to the Lord. Do your best but make sure you have an attitude of dependence on Him and awareness that without His help you will fail. Agree with Paul who so aptly wrote, "when I am weak I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10).

BLOG 529: HELP!!! (Lord's Prayer 34)

Have you ever noticed that there seems to be a steady stream of well-known Christian leaders who fall from one sin or another? Seems like it's always been that way, as long as I can remember. Actually it started longer ago than that. Noah got drunk, Abraham lied about his wife, Moses murdered an Egyptian and David committed adultery then tried to cover it up with murder. Why does God allow such things to happen?

Of course there is no easy answer to that question. He does give us a free will. However I think one reason is that he wants the rest of us to learn from these people so we don't make the same mistakes ourselves. Life for the Christian is filled with "dangers, toils and snares" as John Newton put it in the hymn "Amazing Grace."

It should be no surprise, then, that Jesus teaches us to pray against this. "Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one" (Matthew 6:13). "Deliver" is a very strong word. It refers to rescuing or snatching someone from imminent danger. That's what Jesus wants us to pray for.

The imminent danger is from Satan and his forces. While some translations say, "from evil," the more correct translation is "from the evil one." We aren't praying to be delivered from an abstract idea like evil, but from a real, live personal force that is behind the evil. In the wilderness (Matthew 4) Jesus faced Satan himself, not just some vague principle of wrong-doing. Thus Jesus knows what He is talking about when He tells us to pray for Him to deliver us, snatch us or save us from Satan and his evil schemes against us.

Peter says Satan "prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8). Clearly we are unable to resist this lion that is much more cunning and powerful than us. This prayer is for those who recognize their weakness and inability to resist Satan and his forces on their own but who are dependent on Him and His strength for victory. It is a prayer of humility and faith. "O Lord, don't let me come to the place where I will give in to temptation. Protect me from the attack

of the enemy that would overwhelm me, deliver me from Satan and his forces by your greater power. I can't make it on your own; I need your help every moment of the day."

Do you pray that way every day? Pray it now, and repeat it throughout the day even when things seem to be going well. "O Lord, don't let me come to the place where I will give in to temptation. Protect me from the attack of the enemy that would overwhelm me, deliver me from Satan and his forces by your greater power. I can't make it on your own; I need your help every moment of the day."

BLOG 530: A LITTLE FEAR IS A HEALTHY THING (Lord's Prayer 35)

When we pray "deliver us from the evil one" (Matthew 6:13) we are recognizing we have an enemy who is seeking to destroy us and that on our own we can't stop him! This prayer is a warning against taking our own strength for granted. Is it not true that the soldier that goes into battle with a little fear (respect of the power of the enemy) can be more effective than one who presumes he is invincible?

Suppose we start the day with the attitude, "Go ahead, Lord. Let it come. I can handle whatever temptation comes my way today. I can overcome anything Satan throws at me." Such a person is defeated before they even begin. But recognizing we are too weak to face our enemy is a good thing when it causes us to lean on God's strength instead. Yes, a little fear is a healthy motivation when we're fighting a super-human enemy.

When we pray "lead me not into temptation" we are confessing our own weakness. And when we add "but deliver me from the evil one" we are making a confession of our profound confidence in God and His power.

At the last supper Jesus predicted Peter would deny Him (Luke 22:32) but Peter felt he was above that and could handle anything that came his way. We all know how miserably he failed when he denied Jesus 3 times that very night. However Jesus went on to Gethsemane where He prayed for the Father's strength to face what was to come (Matthew 26). He knew He could not withstand on His own. As a man who had voluntarily laid aside that part of His deity that would have made His life on earth easier, He faced Satan just as we do. He recognized His need of God's help to have victory.

Perhaps we are often defeated because we overestimate our own strength and underestimate the power of sin and our enemy. What challenges or temptations are you facing today? In what area(s) are you most often defeated? Could it be because you are taking your enemy too lightly and not depending enough on God's strength for victory? Ask Him now to fill you for this specific challenge and make sure you trust in Him for victory when these things come up. Stop, pray, and ask for His power because yours is not enough.

BLOG 531: WHY WOULD GOD ALLOW US TO FAIL? (Lord's Prayer 36)

Praying "deliver us from the evil one" (Matthew 6:13) supposes 1) the evil one can defeat us, 2) God's power can give us victory and 3) without His help we would fail. So why wouldn't God always be there to help us? Why make us pray for His help, as if saying that if we don't ask He won't help us? Peter didn't ask and was totally defeated by Satan when he denied Jesus 3 times. Why would God let that happen to people He loves and who love Him?

For one thing, it helps us learn we need God's help and to not presume upon it. Failure strips away our self-confidence. Never again would Peter boast about his courage. We see a new Peter

from here on. He is broken, humble, sensitive to God's leading and obedient to God's will. Jesus knew about Peter's coming fall, even predicted it, but He never prevented it.

God allows this to show us our sin and brokenness without Him. There's nothing like hitting bottom to show us that the only way we can look is up! Such an experience can leave us stronger, like a bone often is stronger after a break than before. When we recognize and turn from our pride we are a much better, stronger person. Jacob's limp reminded him to guard against sin. Peter did much more for Jesus after his fall than before it happened. Because of it he lost his pride, self-confidence, and rash impulsiveness. What he gains instead was humility, a new confidence in God and a determination to trust Jesus no matter what happened. The things he lost he didn't really need. The things he gained he couldn't have learned any other way.

When the Lord looks at us, He doesn't just see us now, He sees beyond our faults to the real loyalty underneath. If Jesus's handpicked number one man could deny Him, then none of us can claim to be beyond temptation. God is very patient with us. We need to learn to be patient with others.

Finally, all this helps us seek God's grace in a greater way. None of us really understand grace. God is saying that he loves us no matter if we deserve it or not. God allows us to fall so we will be stronger when we get up. He loves us enough to let us fall, and He is strong enough to take us back up again.

BLOG 532: YOURS IS THE KINGDOM (Lord's Prayer 37)

Some people today Leave the following words out when they pray the Lord's prayer: "Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen." The Catholic Church does not contain this phrase in their version of the Lord's prayer. Many modern translations added in the footnote. There are long, involve arguments on each side. For most of us are tradition has taught us to pray this at the conclusion of the prayer. I think he uses really said these words, so we will include them with the prayer.

These words are more than just a fancy way of saying the prayer is over. They had a lot to the prayer itself. For one thing, the point is back to God as the source of all our blessings. The "glory" belongs to God the father Whose name is seen as holy in the start of this prayer. The kingdom is established by the son, Jesus. This is the kingdom that was mentioned earlier when we prayed "Thy kingdom come". It is the Holy Spirit's power that enables us to pray "Your will be done." So we see the father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are all included this concluding phrase. All our blessings ultimately come from God. Everything we have comes from him. It all still belongs to him. It is on loan to us from God.

These words also add to the Lord's Prayer in that they teach us to keep on going in hard times. Indeed, His is the kingdom. It belongs to him. Other governments come and go, but his will last forever. Since it is His kingdom, he has the power to support to people or part of it. He who created the whole universe can help those whom He has created. Everything God does is for his glory. Whatever happens is to bring glory to him in one way or another. Even in suffering, he is glorified as we trust in Him and look for his coming deliverance. God is not limited by our circumstances. He can work through them for our good and His glory.

A final truth that these words add to the prayer is that they teach us to praise God always. The prayer begins with praise and ends with praise. The focus is on God in the very beginning to the very end. God deserves all our praise, now and forever more. We are to praise God not because he needs it but because He deserves it and because we need to do it.

Finally, this prayer closes with two very important words. “Forever” tells the duration of the requests in the prayer. These things are always true. Forever! The prayer closes with the word “Amen”. This focuses on the certainty of everything that has been prayed. They are totally and completely true. Amen means “so be it”. What a wonderful way to end such a special prayer. We affirm that what we have said is true. We state that we believe what we have just said.

I encourage you to use this prayer often. Remember these things we talked about. Indeed this prayer can cover every need and desire. Jesus gave it to us, now it is up to us to use it.

BLOG 533: ENTERING NEW TERRITORY – FOLLOW IN FAITH

Tomorrow we enter a new year. For me it'll be the first time in almost 50 years I'm not involved in full time Christian ministry. No one knows what challenges, opportunities, heartaches or losses wait next year. We are entering new territory, the same as the Jews under Joshua did when they entered the Promised Land (Joshua 3:1-17). The Jews just left Egypt and bondage, they have wandered in the wilderness for 40 years because of lack of faith to enter the land, and now they are finally moving ahead into unknown territory. “You have never been this way before,” Joshua tells them (Joshua 3:4).

However God didn't just allow them to stumble about on their own. He went with them, before them. His Presence was with them through the Ark of the Covenant which the priests carried in front. The people were responsible to follow, keeping their eyes on the Ark. That's how we are to enter the new year, keeping our eyes on Jesus, following Him and only Him no matter what the future holds. That's the only way to live without fear, discouragement or depression but with peace, joy and satisfaction.

Sounds simple – but it wasn't. You see, the priests were told to carry the Ark into the middle of the Jordan River, which was at flood stage at that time. It was humanly to walk through the Jordan, much less stand still in the middle. The water was too deep, fast and strong to take more than a couple steps in it. The priests carrying the ark and the people following them were powerless to cross, but God has said to do it. What are we to do in the coming year when we face impossible circumstances, and what God expects of us seems humanly impossible? We must obey and move ahead anyway, keeping our eyes on Jesus. When the priests did this the waters miraculously parted and they, and the people after them, walked across on dry ground! It was a miracle. God also provides what we need when He calls us to follow Him. He did for the Jews, too – but not until they committed to follow in faith. It wasn't until their feet hit the water that it opened. If they had waited for God to open it first they would still be standing there!

The message is clear – whatever the future holds keep your eyes on Jesus, obeying and following Him in faith. He will take care of the pathway when we follow Him. (Tomorrow's blog will continue this theme.) (December 31, 2016 Doylestown PA)

Joshua 3:1-5 Early in the morning Joshua and all the Israelites set out from Shittim and went to the Jordan, where they camped before crossing over. After three days the officers went throughout the camp, giving orders to the people: “When you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the Levitical priests carrying it, you are to move out from your positions and follow it. Then you will know which way to go, since you have never been this way before. But keep a distance of about two thousand cubits between you and the ark; do not go near it.” Joshua told the people, “Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do amazing things among you.”

What obstacles are you already facing as you ender 2017? What ones could you face in the next 12 months? Commit right now to keeping your eyes on Jesus and following Him in faith no matter what.

When is it hardest for you to follow Jesus? Why? What can you do to have greater victory during the coming year?

BLOG 534: ENTERING NEW TERRITORY – OBEY GOD’S WORD

In yesterday's blog we saw that the way to enter our unknown future is to learn from Joshua and the Jews entering the unknown Promised Land. They had to step out in faith despite the obstacles and keep their eyes on the Ark, following God's Presence into unknown areas (Joshua 3:1-17). There is one more lesson we learn from this passage: the importance of knowing and obeying God's Word. When God speaks His people must listen (Joshua 3:6-8).

God commanded the priests to go stand in the midst of the Jordan River, despite it being in flood stage. He told the people to follow them and continue through the dry riverbed until all had crossed. Then they were to build an altar to remind future generations of God's deliverance at that spot. They obeyed God's Word in every detail.

Today God's authority, revealed in His Word, the Bible, is rejected by most. The Supreme Court does not respect what God reveals about moral issues. Scientists reject what the Bible says about God as creator and sustainer. Materialism rules the day. Secularism has removed God and His Word from government, school and even our holidays. And this trend will get much worse in 2017. Satan is indeed the prince of the power of this world and it is his values, motives, goals and priorities that rule and reign. It's no surprise that those who follow God's Word are going against the flow and find difficulties on every side. Yet God's is right and true and we best follow and obey! Any who don't will regret it.

A tourist was driving down a strange road when he saw a sign in the middle of the road, "Road Closed, Do Not Enter." He checked his map and decided he wanted to go this way anyway for it seemed best to him, so he ignored the sign and went on. Several miles later he came to a bridge that had collapsed. He had to turn around and go back. When he approached the warning sign he saw someone had written on the back, "Welcome back stupid!"

Only as we base our lives on the truths of God's Word can we begin to navigate the obstacles life in 2017 will bring our way. There is no short cut, no other way around. We can only successfully travel through the unknown territory of the future by listening to God's Word and applying all of it to our lives. (January 1, 2017 Doylestown, PA)

Joshua 3:6-8 Joshua said to the priests, "Take up the ark of the covenant and pass on ahead of the people." So they took it up and went ahead of them. And the LORD said to Joshua, "Today I will begin to exalt you in the eyes of all Israel, so they may know that I am with you as I was with Moses. Tell the priests who carry the ark of the covenant: 'When you reach the edge of the Jordan's waters, go and stand in the river.'"

Do you start each day reading and meditating on God's Word? Commit to do so every day in 2017.

Are there any truths in the Bible you are not obeying and practicing in life? Confess that as sin and commit to fully obeying God's Word in 2017.

BLOG 535: MARIGOLD UPDATE –GROWING IN THE CRACKS

Talk about blooming where you are planted! Last month I wrote about our marigolds and how they have been striving to stay alive and reproduce seeds as long as possible. Recently we discovered a small marigold; less than 3 inches tall, growing in the crack at the bottom of our stairs. It is obvious to us every time we go in and out of the house, although it is too small for anyone else to notice. If I would have tried to grow a plant there it never would have succeeded but somehow God put a seed there and it has taken root and grown.

It seems to be saying that no matter where you are planted you can grow. Circumstances are never too difficult bloom! That little flower now only grows there, in December, but it is blooming as well. And not just one bloom but 2! We can find ourselves in some very tough conditions, but that doesn't mean we can't bloom there. In fact, because of the extreme obstacles my marigold faces, its blooms are all the more meaningful.

It also seems to say that no matter how small you are, how seemingly insignificant, you can still bloom and God will use you to encourage others. No matter where you are, someone will see you and be encouraged. That marigold certainly invigorates us as we see it.

So no matter how small and unimportant you think you are, and no matter how difficult the circumstances are in which you find yourself, remember to grow where you are planted. Someone will see you blooming and be encouraged. (January 3, 2017 Doylestown, PA)

Jeremiah 29:1-7 These are the words of the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the remaining elders among the exiles, and to the priests, the prophets, and all the people, whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. ...4 Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: 5 Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce. 6 Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. 7 But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

Are you blooming where you are planted, or are you allowing what you are facing to take your joy and peace? No matter what you think, someone will notice and be encouraged by you.

BLOG 536: RETIREMENT LESSON 1: SUPPORT PERSONNEL ARE IMPORTANT

I've been retired for 6 months now. It's been great having more time with Nancy and we have grown even closer, I never imagined we could be any closer than we were but we are. We have been gone more than we have been home, literally, visiting children and grandchildren. We've done lots of babysitting as well. I don't miss the stress of always seeming to have more to do than I had time to do it. But (isn't there always a 'but') I do really miss teaching and preaching and sharing God's Word. I haven't preached in 6 months.

I've been taken off the front lines and put in a supportive position. But that's OK. I don't have the energy to keep going as I once did. I do make forays to the front line from time to time. I led our World View Reunion in October, I do spiritual warfare counseling and I have our trip to India coming up. I have some preaching opportunities coming up in 2017 and that is good. I know I am right where God wants me to be.

I do miss front line ministry because there is so much to be done to further God's kingdom and defeat evil as well as help believers grow. I'm trying to adjust to an easier life when others are working so much harder to further God's Word in these difficult days. I know the role God has given

me now is important as well for no army succeeds without good supportive personnel behind the lines aiding them, filling in when necessary, and doing what they can to free the front line people up for the harder tasks doing whatever they can to help the cause. We who are not on the front lines but offer our support can share our wisdom and experience, can encourage and especially can pray. We have more time and resources to dedicate and use where needed.

I know most of you reading this have been in this supportive role most, if not all of your lives. I'm gaining a new appreciation for how important you are and all you do for the Kingdom. We all serve faithfully; whatever God has given us to do – in full time Christian ministry or supporting those who are in it. God doesn't look at the quantity of our work but the quality, our faithfulness to the task He has given us. I encourage you to continue to faithfully serve in the little ways God has given you, because in God's sight there is no such thing as 'little' service! (January 5, 2017 Doylestown, PA)

2 Chronicles 16:9 – “For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him.”

Proverbs 20:6 – “Many a man proclaims his own loyalty, But who can find a trustworthy (faithful) man?”

Do you undervalue your service or your personal worth to God? Rebuke these lies of the enemy and allow God to love you and give you His peace. Accept His love and worth of you.

Are faithful to what God has given you, or do you do less than you should because you think what you are doing isn't that important? If so, confess your sin and recommit yourself to faithful service.

BLOG 537: RETIREMENT LESSON 2: GRACE KEEPS GETTING GREATER

The longer I ministered for Jesus the more I realized that all I did for Him was by His grace and not because of anything I did or deserved. I thought I had learned that pretty well, but now when I'm retired and doing far less in the way we normally define “ministry” I'm learning it all over again. When I don't feel I'm pulling my weight in the battle against sin and evil I must rest in His unconditional love for me despite what I do or don't do for Him.

I'm now much more involved in Nancy's life as well as that of my children and grandchildren. That is no less an important ministry than pastoring a church. God has given us many grandchildren (17 as of when I write this) with numerous others still to come. Anything I can do to help them feel loved and secure will go a long way to helping them live for and serve the Lord long after I am gone. I know God used the unreserved love of my grandparents for me to build a base of security in life that still impacts me today. Contributing to the quality of Nancy's life, as well as my children and grandchildren, is my current ministry. It's one I gladly do. And in many ways I am the only one who can do it. Nancy has no other husband to fill that role, my children have no other father, and my grandchildren have only 2 grandfathers to accomplish this important work in their lives.

I don't have to be a pastor to be in the center of God's will and serving Him as He desires – and neither do you! You may have never had the privilege of pastoring as I had, but you do have people in your lives that you impact and influence every day. You are no less important to Him than someone who has pastored or is still pastoring today. There are no second class citizens in the Kingdom of God!

So be encouraged. Be faithful. Continue to do what God gives you to do. Don't compare with others and think your life is of lesser value. My life has changed, but my value to Him remains as high as it always was. When God no longer has need of us He will take us to heaven, and if you are reading this you're still on earth by His grace so continue to live in His grace, faithfully serving in any way He provides. (January 7, 2017 Doylestown, PA)

Hebrews 6:10 *God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them.*

John 12:26 *Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.*

Do you see your role in the lives of those God has put in your family as God-given and extremely important?

What more can you do to better fill those roles?

BLOG 538: LOCKED OUT

We've lived in our current home for over 35 years. We've raised 6 children of our own and had 12 others stay for various periods of time. My father lived with us for a while as well. It's a 3 bedroom, 1 ½ bath home. So we've really filled it up and storage has been at a premium. We have a small space under the back of our house for access to pipes but it has served us well for storage for various odds and ends over the years. To make sure it is secure we put a latch and lock on it. All we had at the time was an old padlock without a key. Even if we would have had a key it wouldn't close. But when we put it on the door as if it was closed and locked no one could tell the difference from the sidewalk. At first glance it seems our storage area is securely locked so why bother trying to get in? No one has tried, for if they would have tried they'd have found the lock didn't work at all!

Every time I open and close that lock I have to smile and shake my head – it reminds me so much of how Satan deceives us into thinking God's blessings and victories are locked away from us. He has us thinking we are weak, undeserving, not worthy or that God just isn't able to produce. It's no different in India than in the USA or anywhere else. We give Satan and sin more power than he has because believe we can't break the chains he has locked us in. However when we approach them through the blood of Jesus we find they have no power to hold us and we can easily open them and be free. (January 9, 2017 Doylestown, PA)

Revelation 12:11 *They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony;*

1 John 1:7 *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.*

Where are you being defeated in your Christian life? Where do you need victory but end up in defeat? Do you believe you will never be free and live in victory?

What does it seem is locked away from you, even though God promises it and others experience it? Do you think peace and joy will never be yours? Believe that God unconditionally loves you as much as everyone else and wants what is best for you. Trust Him to provide all you need. Cover your doubt and discouragement with the blood of Jesus as live faithfully for Him. He'll open all the doors He has for you in His time.

BLOG 539: AIRPLANE PASSENGERS – WE TAKE WHAT WE GET (India Update)

They say you can pick your friends but not your family. That may be true, but when you fly you can't even pick friends. They are chosen for you. You are thrown together with total strangers. You have no say about who is on the plane with you, or even who sits beside you. I've sat beside a well-known pro football player, a crying mother, medical researchers, very talkative people and those who wouldn't say hello. Ages vary from very young to very old, and I have no idea how many different

nationalities have been represented. Still, for the duration of the flight we share the same space and breathe the same air.

We experience the same events. We stand, sit and walk within inches of one another. There are unwritten rules of courtesy and cooperation that have to be followed to make such an experience bearable. After all, you all share a common goal and desire – to arrive at the same destination as quickly and safely as possible.

To me, this seems to be a microcosm of life. We are thrown together with those we didn't choose but with whom we must work and depend on, to reach our goals in life. We are all passengers – and God is the pilot directing the plane, or our lives, in a way we couldn't begin to understand or duplicate. We must trust His skill to get us safely to our objective. Often there's not much that can be done to make the trip better. There's a lot that can be done to make it worse, however. Avoiding that becomes a key goal.

So find your place, fasten your seat belt, and get ready for takeoff. Make friends with your fellow travelers. Trust your pilot; he's got your future in His hands! (January 10, 2017 Doylestown, PA)

Romans 12:18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

Is there someone you are having trouble getting along with? That can happen, and sometimes there is nothing we can do to improve things. But is there anything at all you can possibly do to help improve the relationship? You don't have to be best friends, just cease the hostilities. Keep the door open in case they want to move through it. Pray for that person now.

BLOG 540: RETIREMENT LESSON 3: THE VALUE OF A GOOD WIFE

The most outstanding part of retirement for me has been the enjoyment and joy I find in a good relationship with a loving, godly wife. We have always been close, and grew much closer in recent years, but in these 6 months of retirement our closeness, oneness, love, companionship and need for each other has grown multiple times. I don't know how that is possible, but God is doing it.

Each time we had another child our love increased and we had more than enough for the new child. He is doing the same thing in increasing our love for each other. I don't know how to describe it. Words fall so far short. If you have that kind of a relationship with a mate you know what I am talking about. If you have a mate but don't share that closeness with them, pray God would put it in your heart and their heart, and both of you would know how to bring that about (and come to our marriage retreat March 10-12 when we'll talk about that very thing!). That doesn't mean we don't have our 'times' of hurting and being hurt, on purpose or accidental, but they happen less often and don't last as long as they used to.

I can't imagine having to live without Nancy, and she says the same thing. But that is a very real possibility. Nancy's mother is a widow, and my father was a widower for almost 25 years. It's one of the main areas in which our faith is being stretched – how God will work out our upcoming final years: who will remain alone and for how long. It's one of the hardest things I've had to trust God for, but I am doing it. I wouldn't trade the fine relationship we now have for anything, though.

We both are glad that we have what we have. We never tire of being together, enjoy each other more and more, always find numerous things to talk about and share. We face many things in life, but knowing we face them together makes it all possible. We complement each other, balance each other, and never enjoy being apart, even for a short time. I know the closer we become the harder our eventual separation will be, but it certainly "better to have loved and lost than never loved at all"! Beside, maybe God will be merciful and take us both at the same (or nearly the same) time.

Better yet – maybe Jesus will come back and take us to heaven along with all of you who believe. How wonderful would that be!

PS If it isn't God's will for you to have a mate, don't feel left out for HE promises He will meet your unmet needs in a special way, directly or through friends – trust Him to do so and draw closer to Him.

Proverbs 31:10 An excellent wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels.

Proverbs 31:30 Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.

Titus 2:3-5 Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, 4 and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, 5 to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.

However things are going with you and your mate, there is room for growth. Daily ask God to give you His unconditional love for your mate, and that they would have the same for you.

What can you do TODAY to help improve your relationship with your mate? Do it! (If you don't know, learn your mate's love language and start speaking that to them.)

BLOG 541: WE ARE HERE

We and our luggage made it here safely and in one piece. We are tired, but in good shape. God is good! We've enjoyed reconnecting with Pastor Moses and his family. It's like we were never gone, we pick up right where we left off. This is my 10th trip to India. I met Pastor Moses on the first trip. I made a Snapfish book for him with pictures of both of us every ever since we've started – many good memories!

Despite facing so much oppression in coming, it's always good to be here. We are still hit by the abject poverty everywhere, the tremendous number of people, the very overcrowded roads and the slow or nonexistent service when needed (our hotel key still does not work, and most of the time their wifi doesn't work either – I am typing and sending this from Pastor Moses' home. After spending so much time here I can look beyond those things and see the real India.

Mark Twain once wrote: "India is the cradle of the human race, the birthplace of human speech, the mother of history, the grandmother of legend, and the great grandmother of tradition. Our most valuable and most instructive materials in the history of man are treasured up in India only."

India is about 1/3 the size of the United States, yet it is the second most populous country in the world, with a population of 1,166,079,217. India is the seventh largest country in the world, at 1.27 million square miles. It has 2.4% of the world land but 15% of the world population. 1 in 6 people alive live in India. 50% are under 25 years of age, 75% live in rural villages. India is the largest democracy in the world.

The population density in Delhi is 30 times that of New York City or Washington DC. Other large cities are 10 times as large as them.

250 million Indians are Dahlits and 600 million are OBC (Other Backward Casts). Together they comprise 20% of India's total population, 10% of the world population and twice the USA population.

Hindi and English are the official languages of India. The government also recognizes 17 other languages (Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Nepali, Manipuri, Konkani, Kannada, Kashmiri, Malayalam,

Marathi, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu, and Urdu). Apart from these languages, about 1,652 dialects are spoken in the country.

Alexander the Great of Macedon (356-323 B.C.) was one of the first important figures to bring India into contact with the West. After his death, a link between Europe and the East would not be restored until Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama (1460-1524) landed in Calicut, India, in 1498.

While India is a special country, we who live in the USA can thank God for the privilege of living here. It's only by His grace that we find ourselves in America. We certainly had nothing to do with it. We could have been born in India or in a time and place much worse than we have here. How often do you thank Him for that privilege? How faithful are you for praying for the USA? (January 12, 2017 Hyderabad, India)

Psalms 33:12 Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people chosen as his inheritance.

2 Chronicles 7:14 If then my people, upon whom my name has been pronounced, humble themselves and pray, and seek my face and turn from their evil ways, I will hear them from heaven and pardon their sins and heal their land.

Psalms 67:4-5 May the peoples praise you, God; may all the peoples praise you! May the nations be glad and rejoice; for you judge the peoples with fairness, you guide the nations upon the earth.

Have you been complaining about your life in the USA lately? Would you rather live somewhere else? Confess your complaining and thank Him for your life in the USA.

Where you see problems in this country, turn them into prayers to God to correct them so He can again be glorified through the USA.

BLOG 542: FOOD, FUN AND FELLOWSHIP (by Nancy)

We had bout the smoothest journey here so far and seemed to go faster than last several time.. All good since I hate sitting like a pretzel in the airplane for 10 1/2 hrs. AFTER sitting like a pretzel for 8 hrs. on the first flight. PTL !!!

Jerry spoke to about 100 Bible College students today and will again tomorrow (Saturday morning) .He did all apologetics today - proofs of why we believe what we believe and then application of why if matters. I took 10 pages of notes!!! All fresh material and really well presented. It seemed like he was 35 yrs. old again - lots of energy in his delivery and very expressive!!! Really good job!

Tonight we got moved into another hotel room because our door wouldn't lock, and there was not hot water and the internet wouldn't connect. So that is finally fixed and we are in another room... next to a wedding celebration hall... so we are listening to India's version of wedding music... We are hoping it isn't all night...sigh... Maybe I'd prefer cold showers and no internet and no lock?...

Moses planned sessions this time very wisely and we are not traveling so far each day (about 1 hr. 10min) That is really nice. Plus I packed an entire suitcase full of food so we don't have to go out after we return to our room at night. (around p.m.).

So far all is well.. please keep praying... God is answering! (January 13, 2017 Hyderabad, India)

Love Nancy

BLOG 543: LITTLE THINGS CAN BE BIG THINGS (and vice versa)

It seems like I spend too much time focusing on the larger difficulties we face in India. There are numerous little things that I really enjoy in India. For one thing, I really enjoy being in a warm climate, especially when it is winter at home. I like going outside wearing the same thing I have on inside. It's never too hot or too cold. I can wear sandals outside and go barefoot inside. In Pennsylvania it seems my feet are always cold in the winter, but never when I am here. That also means it's never cold after a shower. I hate freezing in the bathroom at home.

I like the simple but good foods available at the continental breakfasts in the hotels we use. I love having Nancy along (not a little thing, but something I definitely don't want to overlook when talking about being grateful).

Having a car we can use which is safe and affordable is a great blessing as well. I don't have to go to internet cafes anymore and I'm glad for that! And now bottled water is cheap (\$.25 for a liter) and readily available.

While these may sound like small things, they really aren't! They are big things that I just don't appreciate as much as I should because often I let the really small things become large and bothersome. Like hitting my little toe on a chair in the dark, I let small problems and difficulties take up too much space and priority in my thinking and block out all the really big things God continues to do to bless me. (January 14, 2017 Hyderabad, India)

Matthew 13:32 and this is smaller than all other seeds, but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that THE BIRDS OF THE AIR come and NEST IN ITS BRANCHES."

John 6:9 "There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are these for so many people?"

1 Corinthians 1:27 but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong

What do you spend more time thinking about: the little difficulties and changes you face, or the big blessings God has showered everywhere in your life?

Get a paper and pencil and make a list of the little things you are letting drain your joy and peace, and the big things He is doing for you which you seldom think of. Put the list somewhere where you'll see it often.

BLOG 544: INCONSISTENCIES

It's so very easy to see inconsistencies in others. We can clearly see them in Indian Christians. Fathers want their daughters to follow Jesus, but don't let them get baptized because that will make it harder for them to get a rich Hindu husband for them. Mothers want their sons to lead their family well but spoil and indulge them until they marry in their late 20s. Leading pastors in the areas where the conferences are held give me flower lies and shawls at the end while saying how they have been blessed by the great teaching. But they sit outside and talk to each other the whole time and don't attend any of the sessions.

Unfortunately they can see the inconsistency in Western Christians. They see our elegant, large churches and homes while many Christians worldwide, and in the USA, are starving. They see

our missionaries struggling and often living off our leftovers. They see our freedom of religion but also see us conforming and keeping a low profile.

None of these things are right, in India or the West. But what bothers me much more than these obvious inconsistencies are the ones we don't see, especially the ones I don't see in myself. I know they must be there, and others probably see them, but the fact that I don't is very sobering. God sees my inconsistencies clearly. But I don't. I pray He would show them to me so I can work towards removing them. The only thing worse than having inconsistencies in life is not knowing you have them and not doing anything about them! (January 15, 2017 Peddapalli, India)

Psalm 139:1, 23-24 O Lord, you have searched me and you know me. ... Search me, O God, and know my heart: test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

What are your inconsistencies in life? Where do your actions differ from your values and beliefs? Ask God to show you and commit to changing them.

BLOG 545: MARRIAGE IN INDIA

Today we talked about marriage and the family, something very practical and important. It hits them where they live for they often don't even know what the Bible says about husband wife relationships, much less how to put it into practice. I use it for the first morning of the first day while they are extra attentive and open. Let me explain some things about the family in India.

The family is the basic unit in society, so how the family goes so goes the culture and nature. India has been in darkness and poverty for thousands of years, and their low view of marriage, women and children has a lot to do with it. The rate of arranged marriages in India is 90% (55% of the marriages that occur in the world today are arranged marriages).

The divorce rate in India is just 1.1%. People in the United States are 5 times more likely to be married 3 or more times than people in India are to be divorced just once. That doesn't mean marriages are better, just that divorce isn't an option. It is more common for women who are unhappy with their marriage to poison themselves rather than seek a divorce.

In an arranged marriage, the man is usually 4.5 years older than the woman in the formed relationship. 14 million girls are married before the age of 18 every year. For many couples, they may meet each other for only 15 minutes before the marriage ceremony actually occurs.

Arranged marriages are viewed as a social and economic necessity so that both families can continue to economically thrive. Women in India who have an arranged marriage may have up to 8 children in a common relationship. 86% of Indian population demographic in US is still marrying someone they have met within their community.

Girls who give birth to their first child before the age of 15 are 5 times more likely to die during the delivery of the child than women who are in their 20s. There is an increased risk of HIV and AIDS transmission when young arranged marriages are enforced. Girls who are in an arranged or forced marriage before the age of 18 are more likely to describe their first sexual experience as a forced experience. Despite all of this, up to 85% of parents believe that their children will have a better life than they had themselves.

God clearly describes in His Word the importance of solid, godly families. The decline of many of the morals and values in the USA can be clearly linked to the decline of the family here as well. While we aren't anywhere near where India is, it certainly seems we are moving in the wrong direction. While you may not be able to do anything about the whole country, you can do your best to

make sure your family relationship is solid and godly. What can you do to strengthen your family and ties with relatives? You can improve the world by improving your own family and life. (January 16, 2017 Peddapalli, India)

Matthew 19:4-6 He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together let not man separate

Proverbs 18:22 He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the Lord

Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her."

Do you faithfully pray for your family members and relationships? Is there anyone you need to forgive? Who can you reach out to in order to help them in their life and growth?

Are you faithfully praying for the moral direction of the USA and its families? Spend some time praying for them now.

INDIA UPDATE: (BY NANCY) India is still a very mixed bag here. Some improvements are taking place such as all schools are now in English to help them be prepared for the business world. Cities have covered sewage now but the towns don't. The mosquitoes are mostly bad at night while you are trying to sleep, but not in the hotels in the city. Now we are staying with an American woman who was a MK (missionary kid) here. Her husband is Indian and they are retired helping here at the new church plants and school.

Food is a real challenge. I brought enough for us to eat well here but people are very insistent they prepare food and that we eat it. sigh... I really don't want to get sick. I'd rather be hungry. I really balancing act of being gracious and prudent. I am grateful for powdered milk, instant oatmeal and peanut butter. Bananas are another staple.

Ok... first conference today. People travel far (30-100 miles) to get here and starting times are always much delayed and Jerry has to revise his content to accommodate the delays. They still end on time. About 250 came today and the pastor told them not to invite any more people. There isn't room for them to sit or food for them to eat. About 40 are sleeping on the floor of the church over night because they came from too far to go home.

Mostly I am grateful for the power of the name of Jesus. I am thankful that we can confidently call on His name for provision and help. We are very aware that He is our only safety net here! Thanks for praying!

The world's biggest family - a man Zion Chana with 39 wives, 94 children and 33 grandchildren - resides in Mizoram, India. He is head of the world's biggest family – and says he is 'blessed' to have his 39 wives. Ziona Chana also has 94 children, 14-daughters-in-law



and 33 grandchildren. They live in a 100-room, four story house set amidst the hills of Baktwang village in the Indian state of Mizoram, where the wives sleep in giant communal dormitories.

BLOG 546: HEAD TRUTH OR HEART TRUTH

One of the joys of training pastors in India is seeing their enthusiasm to know more about Jesus. In a country where most have never heard the name of Jesus they stand out as those who have heard and want to follow Him. The stories of how many of them came to Jesus are amazing, actually miraculous. Jesus reached out to reveal Himself to them in a marvelous way. They gave up everything to follow.

The conference yesterday and today is a perfect example of that. Many traveled long distances and slept on the concrete church floor last night. They prayed late into the night and were up at 5 singing (we heard them). Unlike some other conferences these men and women arrived early and stayed late. Each day they wanted more sessions. Normally on the second day I will have 2 sessions, but they wanted 5 today so that is what we had! They took notes without being asked. Hopefully we blessed them as much as they blessed us. (By the way, I had the number wrong yesterday. About 150 came, not 250.)

These men and women remind me of the magi ('wise men') who left it all to travel thousands of miles in seeking Jesus. Few others had heard of Him, but their desire was to seek and serve Him. What a contrast to the Jews they found in Palestine who knew all about Jesus. They could even tell the magi where He was to be born. They knew many details about the Messiah but didn't travel even a short distance to seek Him.

There are many in our country, and other parts of the Western world, who know about Jesus and can tell you the Christmas and Easter stories, but make no effort to find Him and bow before Him, giving Him their possessions and their heart.

Knowing the truth is not same as following the truth. Only those who leave all to seek and find Him. Do you still seek to come closer to Him, to know, love and serve Him in a more intimate way? Does the truth you know stay in your head, or has it made its way to your heart? (January 17, 2017 Peddapalli India)

Matthew 2:1-2 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."

Jeremiah 29:13 You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

How is your desire to grow closer to God? You can tell how strong a relationship is by how much time you invest in it and often you feed it.

What can you do right now to build a closer connection with God?

BLOG 547: THE TIP OF THE ICE BERG

We are all aware that the part of an iceberg above water is only a small part of the whole. Most of it is underwater and unseen. Yet the tip wouldn't be there without the rest of it. We (Pastor Moses, Nancy and I) are the tip of this ministry that is seen, but we wouldn't be afloat if it weren't for the rest of you supporting us and holding us up! I can't express with words how grateful we are to each of you who pray and/or give to this ministry.

The unseen part of an iceberg is large and provides stability for the top because it spreads over a large distance. In the USA those who pray and give come from many different places and backgrounds. Some live in various other parts of the world, like Australia and China, Africa and various countries in Europe. Many in India pray for us as well. Pastor Moses' church prays long and often. So do the pastors in India who know us and have heard us. They lead their churches in prayer for us as well.

It is very humbling, yet also encouraging, knowing we have the love, prayers and financial support from so many. More than 60 different individuals or groups contributed to CTO last year. The vast majority gives small gifts regularly through the year, but they add up to provide for our needs.

Thanks so much for reading these blogs, praying for us and giving. I know beyond a shadow of a doubt we wouldn't be able to do this without you. And the reward and blessing God has for us to travel He also has for those who support us in prayer in finances. These are no tip of an iceberg without the rest holding it up! (January 18, 2017 Cheryala, India)

Galatians 6:2 Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

Colossians 4:3 And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ,

1 Thessalonians 5:25 Brothers, pray for us.

Are you faithful in praying for and financially supporting the church(es) and ministries God has put on your heart? If not, start doing so now.

Who has been praying for you and supporting you over the years? Thank them today.

INDIA UPDATE: (Nancy wrote this yesterday.) Yesterday & today went really well. The pastors were unusually attentive and responsive. They really reacted when Jerry did his new tricks... applause plus tons of laughter. During the break some came up to the front to say "how blessed they were and never heard such teaching!" What was totally unexpected was the "encore" he received after the Spiritual Warfare session at the very end.... They usually want to get straight home or go out to the tea & cookies to fellowship in the late afternoon, but these pastors wanted to stay and hear another session. Jerry did a short 30 min on Isaiah. Unbelievable! I never had so many people want to take my picture! For the first time ever in India I strangely felt safe. The people are always warm & welcoming, although there is a lot of staring. I think this is a direct tie to all the praying people are doing for us. Thank you. I am NOT fan of feeling unsafe.

BLOG 548: WE ARE PEOPLE OF EXTREMES

We are indeed people of extremes. We go from one extreme to the other, for often balance is just hard to find. For example, Jesus says "Without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5), yet often we act as if Jesus can't do anything without us. We either feel the task is too hard and we don't attempt it, or we rush headlong in on our own thinking we can accomplish it without His help. Trying to find the correct balance in the middle can be quite difficult. How frustrating it must be for God to see us not try doing what He wants to do through us, but instead rushing into other areas because we feel He needs us and can't do without us! We either rust out (from inactivity) or burn out (from trying to do everything in our own strength). Walking the fine line of faith in Jesus can be difficult.

I struggle with that myself and I see the same thing in the pastors in India. Some are defeated because they are afraid to really stand up for Jesus while others are in constant motion trying to do more than any one person can do. How do we find balance? How do I lead these pastors to realize

we need Jesus? It's not that He needs us to grow His church; we need Him to grow His church. We are responsible to do that which He wants us to do (nothing more, nothing less) in His strength.

There is much more to be done in India than I could do in many lifetimes, so I must be very sensitive to what God wants me to do. Just because there is a need doesn't mean He wants me to meet it. Yet when I know what He wants me to do I must bathe it in prayer and face it with an attitude of total dependence on Him, no matter how easy or hard it is for me to do. You must do the same. (January 19, 2017 Suyryapeta, India)

John 15:5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."

Philippians 4:13 I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

What is it God would have you to do but you feel unable to do so you don't do it?

What are you doing "for Him" but in your own strength so you are ineffective and burning out?

Pray and ask God what HE wants you to do, then when you feel you know commit it to Him in prayer and ask for His help before, during and after doing it.

INDIA UPDATE: We finished out second Bible conference, helped by the same local leaders who helped us with the first. It was excellent also. We make special friends quickly, even though we often can't say more than a few words to each other. But they are so open, loving and giving you can't help but open your heart to them. That always makes saying goodbye hard, though. This ministry was started by Canadian Baptists in the 1800's. They did a lot of good work in India then and much of it continues. We stayed in the mission house which those from Canada used in the 1930's. It was very, very crude and dusty. There was no running water, just buckets. Despite the bat which lives in the room where we slept, the mosquitoes still were biting all night long. They told us this morning they killed 3 snakes last night in the little house where we stayed. Pastor Moses, who grew up in a mud and straw hut, was complaining about the place! The last 4 days I had to use someone's cell phone as a hot spot to send these. We are now traveling 2 hours to another area for the next conference. We will stay in a hotel of undetermined sanitation and comfort. Hopefully there will be wifi (or you won't be reading this).

BLOG 549: WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW CAN HURT YOU (by Nancy)

There are a few things that can really freak me out: snakes, bats and malaria-carrying mosquitoes. Last night we slept in the guest quarters of a missionary school that was built in the 1930's. It has not been renovated (or even painted) since. While I wasn't expecting hot water or a flush toilet, or even a lock on the door, I was unaware of some unexpected 'guests' sharing my space. While I attempted to sleep I thought my biggest problem was the buzzing mosquitoes around my head. I was totally unaware that there was a bat in our ceiling and 3 snakes on our doorstep. I am so glad that I was only concerned about the malaria-carrying mosquitoes. Pastor Moses and our hostess informed us of the snakes and the bat the next morning. Moses' only company was frogs in his bathroom.

Tonight we are staying in a city Indian hotel. I'm still not expecting hot water, Internet or drinkable water, but I am happy to report there are no signs of bats or snakes. However I have already killed 2 mosquitoes and requested toilet paper from the front desk.

All in all, it is good that India has such gracious Christians that make this trip worthwhile.

The lesson is: what you don't know still can hurt you! But the good news is that God knows all about it anyway and He has us covered! We'll never know how much we didn't know that He took

care of for us. One day we may get a hint at how much, and that'll be one of the reasons it'll take all eternity for us to praise Him for it! (January 20, 2017 Suryapet, India)

Romans 8:35-39 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered. No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Spend some time thanking God for all the things He does for you which you don't even know about, all the bad He keeps from happening.

INDIA UPDATE: Tough time at the conference today. There is a good core of pastors who focus and want to learn, but many come for show, free food and to increase their status. They have no interest in listening and clearly show it. They all left after the free meal, though, so the afternoon was much better! Tomorrow we check out of this hotel and go to a place we like in the next time. We've been there many times and feel at home there. This is a strictly Indian hotel – didn't even know what toilet paper was and virtually no one speaks any English. But this is our last night here.

BLOG 550: BOOKS, BOOKS, BOOKS

One of the greatest joys I have in India is giving each pastor a set of 7 books after each conference. Very few have more than a Bible. We give them the only books they have and they treasure them. They expand on the topics covered in the conferences and go into them in much more detail. The conference sessions give them the basics and motivate them to apply what they are known, and then the books review and reinforce what they heard me say. They go into much more detail and, I think, create a very good basic library for every pastor. The books are:

What God Expects of Pastors

Spiritual Warfare

Marriage and Ministry

Bible Prophecy

Studying the Bible

Preaching and Teaching the Bible

Bible Overview (a large book on the background, content and culture of every book and main event in the Bible)

These books are distributed all year round and given to many men who can't attend the conferences. Those who have them pass them on to others who then give them to still others. They spread sound Biblical information on all aspects of pastoring to these men. The wives and church leaders read them as well. Many times I am told that a pastor is using one of them to teach his people.

In seminary I always wanted to write books, but it wasn't until I started coming to India that this became possible. It's a great joy for me and a special privilege to spread God's Word in this way. Long after I am able to come to India the books will continue to be spread and read. This wouldn't be possible without the finances you provide over and above the costs of our conferences. Thanks so much!!!!

I would like to write a book on Apologetics, "What Difference Does It Make?" which I am covering in conferences now. I would also like to write a book on Biblical Counseling and another on Discipling Believers so they will grow as a Christian.

Why don't we just use books that are already written? I tried to do that but copyrights limit use and I haven't found any focused on the needs and circumstances of pastors in India who have no theological training. (January 21, 2017 Vijayawada, India)

2 Timothy 4:13 When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments.

What books has God used in a special way to help you grow through the years? Thank God for them.

Is there anyone you know who would benefit from a book to help them in their current situation? Buy it and give or send it to them.

INDIA UPDATE: The pastor who organized the recent conference is also a Bible teacher at a Bible College. He said he is using my book on Bible Overview to teach his students. He couldn't say enough good things about it! It's a joy and privilege for me to give 7 books to each pastor or church leader who attends. We are driving to the next town as I write – 3 hours away. We will stay in a nice hotel there for 2 full weeks! We can wash, organize our things and get caught up on all kinds of stuff. Tomorrow we go to 2 churches: the church in Moses' home village (started by his mother years ago) and a new building which Pastor Barnabas oversees. Help for its construction was provided through our ministry and I published pictures about it a few weeks ago. It will be nice to see another church we have been involved with.

BLOG 551: CONFERENCES UPDATE

The internet is problematic despite currently being in a nice hotel (hot water, no snakes, not even mosquitoes! Our trip has been reflective of India itself... really wonderful and really bad. Today, Sunday, was supposed to be a less hectic, intense day. Traveling 1 1/2 hr. to Moses's village of origin to preach in a tiny village church and then another 30 min drive to his father-in-law's new church plant to preach, then back to the hotel in the afternoon.

Instead when we were ready to leave the first place we realized Jerry had locked the car keys in the trunk. I tried using a wire to pull up the handle thru the window but was unable. The newer Toyotas are really well sealed! So they called a local mechanic to come. He too came only equipped with wire!!!(I wonder if he grew up in Philly?) After about 45 min of trying, they decided to pop the hood to disable the battery to disable the electric locks, thinking that would allow it to open. I was very hesitant to think that would do anything but disable the car in general, but they messed with it anyway. Eventually, after 2 hours, the first man was able to pop the lock thru the window. We were so happy until we tried to drive away and the car would not stay running! Yes, something was not working under the hood (surprise?) After working on that for over an hour Moses called a taxi that drove Jerry & me - 1/12 hr. back to the hotel. Moses, as we speak, is still back with the car, hoping the "Toyota mechanic" will come with tools and fix the car. I am not too hopeful, plus it will be dark in the village at 6 pm...sigh So hopefully Moses will then get a taxi and come back to the city, hire a car and driver for tomorrows' conferences and then get another taxi back to the village to get the car or have it towed or????

When problems arise like this, there is no infrastructure to get thing done easily or fast. Jerry feels terrible about the misshape leaving the keys in the car accidentally. We ae praying Moses and the car problem is fixed quickly. We will just have to wait here at the hotel till Moses eventually comes back.

Jerry also lost his voice this morning and that was rough going at the village church, but when he was done I presented a children's presentation that went very well and captured the adults as well. (January 23, 2017 Vijayawada, India)

BLOG 552: INDIA A 'SPIRITUAL' COUNTRY

Ministering in India is much different than in the United States. The USA is a secular, materialistic society where God and spiritual things are peripheral at best. But India has a reputation for being a 'spiritual' country. Many travel there to find spirituality, to learn meditation, to practice Yoga or to attend a meditation retreat in an ashram. It's one of the most popular reasons for visiting India because India and Indians are very 'spiritual' people with a great variety of spiritual disciplines from which to pick and choose.

Every major world religion is represented in India. Additionally, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism all originated in India. In fact, India has the largest population of Hindus, Sikhs, Jains and Parsees of any country in the world.

About 80% of Indians are Hindu. Muslims are the largest minority in India and form approximately 13% of the country's population. In fact, India has the third largest population of Muslims in the world, after Indonesia and Pakistan.

India has more mosques (300,000 mosques) than any other nation in the world. And the third largest Muslim population in the world.

The Tirupati Balaji temple and the Kashi Vishwanath Temple both receive more visitors than the Vatican City and Mecca combined.

Cows can be found freely wandering the streets of India's cities. They are considered sacred and will often wear a *tilak*, a Hindu symbol of good fortune. Cows are considered one of humankind's seven mothers because they offer milk as does one's natural mother.

To avoid polluting the elements (fire, earth, water, air), followers of Zoroastrianism in India don't bury their dead, but instead leave bodies in buildings called "Towers of Silence" for the vultures to pick clean. After the bones dry, they are swept into a central well.

I thank God for my Christian heritage, for parents who took me to church and for growing up in a country where Jesus was recognized and Biblical principles were incorporated into daily life. The pastors we train and Christians we talk to in India are from Hindu, Muslim or animist backgrounds. They lack the exposure to Christian truths I had growing up. How different my life would have been had I been born into a Hindu or Muslim family! (January 23, 2017 Vijayawada, India)

1 Thessalonians 5:18 "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

1 Chronicles 16:34 "Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever!"

Philippians 4:6-7 "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

How would YOUR life have been different had you been raised in a Hindu or Moslem country?

Thank God for those who have been influential in teaching you about Jesus. Pray for them and if they are still alive thank them as well.

What can you do today to impact the life of someone you know for Jesus? Pray and ask God to tell you who and how. Patiently listen to Him and write down what He says.

BLOG 553: SHOWERS OF BLESSING

It is tradition in many Baptist churches in India to close with the song “Showers of Blessing.” It’s the one tune I recognize in their services and can sing along with. It’s interesting to think of blessings coming as rain, for we usually don’t like rain and pray for sunny weather. But it is the rain that brings refreshment, cleansing and growth. We need the rain to bring good results, but we don’t like it when it rains.

That’s true of the monsoons in India that brings great amounts of rain in August-September. Most of the people suffer greatly because of their exposure to the elements. Yet without the monsoons there would not be water or crops for the coming year and millions would die.

I’ve been thinking about the way I expect to receive God’s blessings. I want them to come in sunny weather, and when it rains in my life I feel anything but blessed. But I’m starting to realize that the greatest blessings I have received in life have come through times of rain, not sunny skies. God blesses me greatly in India, but it seems to always be in stormy conditions, sometimes in deluges of rain. Yet I am learning to look for the blessings: the privilege of teaching His magnificent truths to over a thousand hungry pastors (plus 500 wives), the humbling pleasure of praying for individuals and pronouncing God’s blessings on them, the joy of giving each one 7 books to greatly help them and others and the awesome fellowship we share with these fine people in Jesus’ name.

If there is a relationship between the amount of rain and the productivity of the crops, then there certainly is a relationship between the struggles and stretching us face and the blessings God bestows through it. Unfortunately often we only see the rain and don’t notice the crops that come from it. But remember: blessings come from showers. Ask god to send you showers of blessing, and look past the showers to see the blessings. And remember that all sunshine makes a desert. (January 24, 2017 Vijayawada, India)

Ezekiel 34:26-27 I will bless them and the places surrounding my hill. I will send down showers in season; there will be showers of blessing. The trees of the field will yield their fruit and the ground will yield its crops; the people will be secure in their land. They will know that I am the LORD.

What ‘showers’ are happening in your life now? What is your attitude to them? What blessings is God bringing about through them? (If you don’t see the blessings, ask God to show you, for one follows the other.)

INDIA UPDATE: This past conference went very well, despite my inability to talk with any volume at all. We expected 100, but 170 came. Most had come to at least one of the several conferences we have had over the years. They came on time and stayed after the free noon meal to attend the afternoon sessions – things that rarely happen at pastors’ conferences in India I am told! It does mean costs are above expectation as well. It costs \$2 a meal for the pastors, and our conferences have a reputation for having top-notch food. The travel money we give is \$1.50 a day per person (we haven’t increased it in 10 years). The seven books we give cost about \$15 to print. That means it costs about \$30 per couple – a tremendous value for the money. There are additional costs for facility rental, PA system, our travel and housing, etc. But it’s a great deal. We usually minister to 1,000 pastors and 500 wives so that cost alone comes to over \$25,000. That gives you a little idea about the costs for these conferences. You who give cover it all – and that gives you a share in the blessings and rewards God gives to all of us involved in this ministry.

BLOG 554: WHAT WE TEACH WITHOUT TEACHING

I'm realizing more and more that much of what I teach isn't that which comes from my notes or words. It is what I do. Truly more is caught than taught.

For one thing, before I say a word they are greatly encouraged that Americans would come so far at such expense just to spend time with them. They are not forgotten people! They know we care or we wouldn't have come. I can't imagine how that must help them in their circumstances here.

Then, too, somehow God makes it so we bond with them. We connect. We aren't high and mighty foreigners who come to straighten them out, we are one with them. We understand, we've been there and we care. In a country with a caste system this is rare. Even their own leading pastors seem distant and respected, but not personally involved. I'm told it's what I say about myself and my own struggles, direct eye contact I give and a softness and approachableness that comes from me. Clearly it is God bringing this to be in this insecure introvert! But I'm glad of it. I don't want to just leave content, I want to leave part of my heart. And it's because of this that the content is all the more impressionable to them.

Also, they notice how I communicate and often express how much they like the way I teach and learn from it. Teaching in India is lecture and rote memorization of notes. That's the way the British did it and it's the way they still do it today. But I interact, ask questions, add humor, use magic and illustrations, start with an introduction that gets their attention and develop one point after another without getting off subject and apply what I say directly to their needs. They notice these things and say they want to include them in their communication.

But this isn't just me. You teach without teaching as well. Who is watching your life? Whom do you influence, even if you don't think you do? What are people seeing when they watch your life? (January 25, 2017 Vijayawada, India)

1 Corinthians 11:1 Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.

Who has influenced you by their life? Pray for them and thank them in person or by letter.

Pray for those who watch you that you would be a godly influence on them and they would see Jesus in you.

INDIA UPDATE: It was a joy speaking to pastors and wives I've seen before. I first came here in 2009 when I lived in Pastor Barnabas' hut for a week. I drew water from his well to wash and ate bananas right off his tree. I've been here every trip since. The heart and core of our Indian workers, Pastor Moses' deputies, are in this area. These are men we've supported with \$25 a month since the start of that program. They do much to help with our ministry and the kingdom of God. We know each other well and work flawlessly together. I'll be speaking here for 3 days this year.

On a sadder note, one of these men, whom I've known since the start and have spoken in his church and held pastors' conferences there, has left his wife, whom I also know. He took one child and left the other with her. Of course there is no support and she has to work in the fields to get enough money for food. She is living with her family. She wants to try to reconcile but he won't try. He wants to be rid of her and get a new wife. Meanwhile he still is pastoring, despite other pastors telling him he is wrong. We have stopped supporting him when this first happened. Unfortunately this isn't a rare occurrence among pastors.

BLOG 555: WORKING WITHOUT A NET

When we talk with others who are doing ministries in India they say we are doing an excellent job and efficiently accomplishing an important work. But when they ask us about who is being trained to help us now and take our places in the future we have no answer. We know that is a major hole in our work, and we talk often about the importance of having others to help and eventually take over. We pray for someone to fill these roles but so far there is no one in the USA or India.

Should something happen to Pastor Moses I don't know who I could send money to and have things taken care of. Who would house and distribute the books, deposit and pass on the money, plan conferences, drive us around, take care of our housing, translate my lessons and follow up on everything? If something happened at a conference there is no one else we could converse with in English. He has no net.

Should something happen to me there would be no one to collect and send the money to India, keep the records and do the government reports, write the books, teach the lessons and all the other things I do. I have no net.

We have no backup plan, not because we don't want one, but because God has not put it on the hearts of those He wants to follow. I'd love to train someone and share the load of the work at home and the teaching here, and I've thought several times I may have found someone but nothing ever worked out.

If you know me you know I am very big on backup plans and covering all the bases, usually at least twice. I have backup plans for everything in India (and use several every year) but none for me.

So how do we function without a net, with no backup plan? This means God is our backup plan. The ones to help and take over these roles must be the very right ones. The 'qualifications' are many and varied. We aren't unique, and we aren't irreplaceable but until God gives us a backup plan then HE is our backup plan. And that's not a bad plan to have! (January 26, 2017 Vijayawada, India)

Romans 15:1 I plan to do so when I go to Spain. I hope to visit you while passing through and to have you assist me on my journey there, after I have enjoyed your company for a while.

Thank God for those who have assisted you in your journey through life. Ask Him to show you whom you can help and how you can help them.

Pray God would provide the proper men at the right time to assist us and carry on this work, and until then He will give us the wisdom, health and energy to do what He wants.

INDIA UPDATE: We've been very careful in what we eat here. We don't eat Indian food at all. When we stay in a better hotel we have a continental breakfast and eat peeled fruit and vegetables plus boiled vegetables and cold cereal. The other meals we eat what we brought. We have peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, packs of tuna and salmon (our main staple) on bread or sometimes instant oatmeal. Twice we've gotten modified hoagies from Subway where sanitation standards are high. Nancy has been fine, but a few days ago I had stomach problems for a couple days. That seems to be gone – hopefully I got that over with for the whole trip. We're halfway through our time here and the food is holding out well. We brought plenty!

BLOG 556: WHERE ARE ALL THE PEOPLE?

When Pastor Moses came to the USA in 2015 his first question was, "Where are all the people?" That question only makes sense if you've been to India. One of the first impressions is that there are people everywhere all the time. Cities, towns, villages, even in the country – day and night

is like Times Square on New Year's Eve or any large downtown at rush hour (but even more crowded). It seems no one stays home; everyone is always outside going somewhere. Many don't have homes, and for most that do they are tiny, dark and dirty. So everyone is outside doing something or going somewhere. With 1.2 billion people in a country 1/3 the size of the continental USA no wonders it is crowded.

The thoughts that are foremost in my mind when I see these masses is that every single one of them was created in a special, unique way by God. He knows every one by name – He even knows how many hairs are on each head. He loves them dearly. Jesus thought of each and every one on the cross and paid for every one of their sins. How their emptiness and suffering, their pain and hopelessness but hurt Him. Life is cheap here and death very common – and each one who dies without Jesus must break God's heart. Still He loves each one of them the same as He loves you and me.

What an awesome, wonderful, caring, patient, loving God we have! We can't even begin to imagine His loving heart for humanity! Yet He never forces anyone to come to Him. He allows each to make their free will choice. That's where we come in. He uses Christians to be light in the darkness, to point the way to Him. It's a great privilege but also a great responsibility. What we do in India doesn't begin to even scratch the surface of one small part of this country. But by training, encouraging and supporting India pastors we can help them reach out to the lost masses where they live. The conferences and books better enable them to reach those we cannot reach. It's encouraging to find out about other ministries in the USA doing similar things to what we do. It's an honor for me to be used by God to be one of those doing this special work, and for you to pray and support us. (January 27, 2017 Vijayawada India)

John 3:16-17 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."

Are you touched by the millions without Jesus, the ones entering a Christless eternity every second? What can you do to help? (Support ministries which reach unbelievers, pray, speak to those around you who don't know Jesus, etc.)

INDIA UPDATE: We concluded our 3-day Koduru conference today. I've come here the last 8 years, often staying for several days. I estimated I've shared about 85 lessons with them. We know each other well. While God has called us to share the basics with mostly new pastors every year, building year after year at one place adds variety, challenge, and blessing and helps me learn a lot about training pastors in India. It's always a joy coming and sad saying good-bye. We keep connected through prayer requests, pictures sent to us, and support we send to them.

BLOG 557: DAY OF REST: TO OBEY OR NOT

We've always had a day off during our years of ministry, but here in India Pastor Moses and I have never taken a day off. One day in 7 means 4 days off while here, and that means 2 less 2-day conferences, or 300+ pastors and wives that we don't reach. However God has convicted us of not taking a day off and we have started taking some days off this trip. We didn't have one for the first 2+ weeks, though, and that caught up with us. I think a lot of my throat and other issues could have been avoided had we had some time off. It's becoming more and more evident that if we are going to keep doing this for years to come, we have to set a slower pace while here. Quality means more than quantity.

The 6 conferences we have had so far have been excellent. God has clearly and deeply spoken to the men and women who have come. His blessings on all of us are beyond anything we

could have expected. The response of those who attend is overwhelmingly enthusiastic. And it isn't for me or for our program – it's for the wonderful Savior and majestic God we serve. He deserves, and gets, all the glory, honor and credit for it all. The pastors and wives leave better educated and very motivated to have godly lives, families and ministries. They better know God's Word and how to use it. Their understanding of the Bible as well as how to study it, develop sermons and use spiritual warfare is greatly increased.

Still, the toll on us is high. As we age it hits us harder each year. We shouldn't need so many medications to keep going. We have broken one of God's basic principles and, no matter how well we justified it in the past, it is clear it must change from here on if we are to pace ourselves and do our maximum best throughout. We want to finish strong in India as well as life. We may not be under the law to have to observe a 24-hour rest on Saturday, but God's principle of resting one day in seven still remains. As with all He says, there is a good reason behind it. (January 28, 2017 Vijayawada, India)

Exodus 20: 8-11 “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

How are you at taking a day a week off to rest? We try to be good stewards with our money and give a percent to God, what do we do the same with our time?

What do you need to do to comply with God's principle of resting one day a week?

INDIA UPDATE: Each conference ends with a time for the pastors to give a testimony as to what God has taught them during the conference. Of course I can't understand what they say but they speak long and eloquently/emotionally. Pastor Moses gives a short synopsis afterwards for it helps me know what God is using in their lives. Appreciating knowing how to have victory in spiritual warfare is always the most mentioned, closely followed by the teachings about husbands and wives in marriage. They say they never heard either of these and are very glad to have them. Yesterday at Koduru, where we go every year, some mentioned things from years ago that continue to form their lives and ministries. Last week one man said our teaching is like peeling a banana and presenting the good, nourishing food of the Word for them to taste and enjoy.

BLOG 558: A NATION OF CONTRASTS

India is a nation of cultural contrasts. Here are a few I (Nancy) observed:

Monkeys here are nasty, destructive, disease-carrying, vicious animals, YET I have seen 3 story high monuments honoring the Monkey god. (go figure?)

Shepherds herd their goats while they talk on cell phones

Cell towers are on mountain tops, adjacent to ancient holy Hindu temples

It is not permissible to have your upper arms or legs showing in clothes, but your abdomen is fine!

Half the year the monsoons flood the country and there is too much water. The other half it is drought.

Every woman is shaped differently, but one size sari fits all

All chickens are free range in India... along with the water buffalo & wild dogs.

Produce markets feature beautifully colored, crisp, fresh vegetables. Till they make it through an Indian kitchen they are indistinguishable.

Restaurants are assumed "veg". The exception is "non-veg"

There are lush green rice patties, but dry brown dirt everywhere else.

There are more billionaires in Mumbai than Texas and are located right next to slums.

Brown dirt is everywhere, but people are immaculate... I seriously don't know how their clothes get clean washing them in the muddy canals, but they always look clean!

Every car has a rear-view mirror but facing the driver so he can comb his hair. No one uses it for anything else.

Water buffalo are comically called "brake testers"

Drivers brake for speed bumps, not people

India gives new meaning to small business - one man only sells air for tires

Wild dogs are acrobatic- I saw one jump lifting all 4 legs together while getting out of the way of a crazed motorist.

2 lane roads function as 4 lane roads. Any lane is north or south, just depending on the direction the driver wants to use it for.

Any tree doubles as a bathroom

Pastor Moses drives for hours on end, with no GPS, very few road signs and no map... and every town looks like the last...VERY impressive!

Privacy is non-existent... I will leave it at that and say I am "over myself" now.

Clocks hang centrally in every church in clear view but the hands are always still. It is always 11:45

Cars are turning everywhere in every direction... but no one ever uses turn signal

Recently we drove inches between an unpredictable water buffalo and an old man teetering on a rickety bicycle. I couldn't look!

Waiting your turn in line is non-existent

Women are modest, but the idols are NOT! (January 29, 2017 Vijayawada, India)

BLOG 559: "THE GLORIFICATION OF THE WORM"

At the end of the 2-day conferences, several pastors or wives come to the front and state what they learned new or what they especially liked or were blessed by. All say they liked my tricks (you realize that is the real reason I got my doctorate!).

Many also are encouraged to hear for the first time the power and authority they have over demons or that the wife is a pastor's "number one sheep." They always honor us with words of appreciation and gratitude and are truly glad to receive the seven books.

As we sit smiling and receiving the untranslated Telugu gratitude we are humbled and feel awkwardly embarrassed by such praise. The events require a lot of prep from Pastor Moses and his huge network of pastors. They don't get much recognition but run around like worker bees fixing problems and making arrangements. Additionally, there are the USA prayer warriors covering our every move and plan. Those who pray have no idea of the spiritual battles they are fighting for us and providing protection coverage on every level.

Then there are the financial donators, without whom we couldn't do any of this. We thank you so much individually, but there is no public group recognition or praise session for you.

So we sit and smile as the pastors focus their blessings and gratitude on us and wish we could pass it on to you all. Thank you so much from the conference pastors, Pastor Moses, his amazing support team and us. Thanks from "The Worm" (January 27, 2017 Vijayawada, India)

INDIA UPDATE: (by Nancy) Everyone calls me "Madam" here. I feel ancient!...LOL....The bus boys (around 18yrs-24) are super sweet and smile so innocently and give direct eye contact. There seems to be a lot of innocence here, even among the adults. There isn't a lot of TV watching or movies and the dress is very modest in general. Boys & girls don't mingle until they are ready for marriage. Recently, in conversation with Pastor Moses, I was surprised at how naive he was about some things. In the USA, we are overtly exposed to sin, decadence and immorality. The breakdown of the family is pretty rampant in the USA also compared to India. Additionally, the gay agenda and LGBT issues are not evident here. Boys put their arms around boys and girls hold hands with other girls, but married/mixed couples show no evidence of public affection. I have not seen affection in the homes either. We have one pastor that has been married for 50 years that puts his arm around his wife occasionally. Women sit on one side and men on the other side of a room in public places. Women usually walk in back of the man, not alongside him.

BLOG 560: YEARLY POLICE VISIT

Each year the police call Pastor Moses to check on us and what we are doing. This year they came to the hotel in person to ask why Nancy and I are here, what we are doing, where we get our money, how long we are staying, where we are going, why we are staying so long, etc. They ask many questions. When foreigners sign into a hotel the hotel copies their passports and passes the information to the police who pass it on to intelligence. Then they check up on us. Apparently they don't check on the Chinese businessmen who are also in the hotel though.

Pastor Moses tells them we are Christians come to help the people by providing water wells, sewing machine schools, housing orphans, feeding lepers, building bathrooms, training pastors to have better families and in life values as well as how to preach better. He is honest and focuses on the social works that help their country. They know from our passport we have a tourist visa and Americans who get visas are told they can't speak in public places. They will be checking into the credentials of Moses' New Hope Foundation and my American Christian Training Organization.

Last week a Christian leader in Hyderabad, where Moses lives, was severely beaten up for giving out Gospel tracts. He is still in the hospital with brain injuries. No arrests have been made, or will be made, so pastors in Hyderabad are gathering today to petition the government to protect them and their rights. That's not uncommon throughout India. Last summer (July 29) a pastor was killed by a mob and nothing has been done. There are several deaths a year there that way.

Christians are very aware that they are in the minority and aren't protected by the government. They reach out and share their faith, but they are careful when and where they do it. There is a new law that says Christians can't share their faith within 1 Kilometer (2/3 of a mile) of a Hindu shrine. The problem is that there are shrines every few hundred feet! That is their excuse for letting this man be beaten.

It is extremely difficult for people to come to India to spread the gospel. The best way is to train local pastors who are here, know the language and the people, and have local contacts. That's another reason our method of training pastors is so important. (January 31, 2017 Vijayawada, India)

Matthew 10:11-16 *“Whatever town or village you enter, search for some worthy person there and stay at his house until you leave. As you enter the home, give it your greeting. If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you. If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town. I tell you the truth, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town. I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.*

Thank God for the freedom you have to follow and share your faith in the USA. Are taking full advantage of that great privilege which others would love to have?

INDIA UPDATE: We ended our latest conference today. It was a place we've never been and they had no idea what to expect. What we do is very, very different from other conferences they have. We teach solid truths, basics and more advanced, and we clearly apply it to their lives in ways they haven't had before. We start with a bit of a sticky subject for them, how husbands treat wives (and how wives respond) and don't hold anything back. But they see the truth of the Word and are convicted of the need in their families and are very grateful for it. One lady said I teach and preach at the same time. I teach God's Word and God's Spirit applies it to their hearts and lives. I like hearing that! Tomorrow we start our second last conference.

BLOG 561: THOUGHTS FROM THE FRONT LINES

Random thoughts in India...

God's is faithful in millions of ways we don't even see

Life on the front line keeps us dependent on you, our supporters, for prayer support.

Prayer does make a difference. Even though God is sovereign, it's true that somehow prayer empowers angels in their battles.

We appreciate when we hear from you. It means a lot to us to know you are thinking of us and praying for us. The Bible verses you send mean a lot, it's like they come directly from God for us (and they probably do!).

This is one of the hardest trips mentally and spiritually, not just physically. Perhaps it's us getting older, or perhaps the opposition is working harder. It's also one of the years when we've been blessed the most. There is always a direct relationship between what it costs us and what God gives us. We can't out-give God!

LITTLE THINGS I APPRECIATE IN INDIA

Nancy being here with me (OK, so it's not a little thing, but it tops my appreciation list!).

Being in the same very nice hotel room for the last 2 weeks.

Free, healthy breakfast every morning we are in the hotel.

Greeting everyone in person after the conference with a handshake and "Praise the Lord" while giving them 7 books and travel money.

Nice warm weather every day, never too hot or too cold.

The great men we see and work with year after year.

Safety in all our driving.

Meds to help our health.

A hot shower every day!!!

Wearing sandals every day (or going barefoot) instead of shoes.

Warm feet!!

Privilege of doing this every year.

God somehow getting me started in Christian 'magic' way back when. (February 1, 2017
Vijayawada, India)

1 Corinthians 1:8-9 He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.

BLOG 562: IT'S ALL RELATIVE

In the USA we never eat at Subway because there are so many better healthy choices. In India we only eat at Subway (3 times this year) because it is the best healthy choice. It's all relative.

In the USA we would never use a dirty bathroom that only had a hole in the middle of the floor and a bucket of water; in India we gladly use it because the next one may be a bush in a field. It's all relative. (Nancy doesn't care if it is an Indian hole or a western seat as long as there is a door with a lock – and no lizards or snakes come up the hole in the floor.)

We never drink bottled water in the USA – the idea sounds ridiculous water is free! Here we drink only bottled water and never anything else and we're very glad for it. It's all relative.

White faces are everywhere at home so we never pay attention to skin color, but here we never see a white face in 4 weeks. And if we do we stare! It's all relative.

We take our freedom for granted in the USA; here every small liberty is appreciated and not taken for granted. It's all relative.

In the USA we'd be in shock if the car we were riding in got within a foot of a car, person or animal. Here we all but touch each one dozens of times a day! It's all relative.

In the USA we think something is dirty if there is a smudge of dirt on it. Here it can be covered in layers of dirt but if it doesn't smell too much it is considered clean. It's all relative.

At home it's rare if a stranger makes eye contact and smiles. Here it's rare if they don't! It's all relative.

In the USA everyone is rushing everywhere to beat everyone else, here people will slow down and let others go first. It's all relative.

In USA churches the music is too loud if you can't talk. In Indian churches even if you put your mouth to another's ear and yell you can't be heard – and then they turn it a bit louder! It's all relative.

Seeing Jesus' name somewhere in public is so common it's hardly noticed in the USA. In India seeing Jesus' name in public is rare and brings great excitement and joy. It's all relative.

In the USA I never eat cold cereal but in India I have it every morning. It's the only non-spicy carb available.

RELATIVE TERMS IN INDIA: clean, quiet, fresh, quick, non-spicy, on time, short drive, one minute, safe driving (February 2, 2017 Vijayawada, India)

Matthew 6:31-34 So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

BLOG 563: WOMEN & CHILDREN IN INDIA

How a country treats its women and its children shows a lot about the character and quality of the country. In the USA we strive to honor and protect each and every person, but that isn't always the case in India. They have laws similar to ours, but the practical reality is often quite different.

We encourage wives to come to our conferences with their husbands, and more and more are doing so. That adds a very positive dynamic to the meetings. We emphasize the importance of husbands treating their wives as Christ treats them. That is unheard of among Moslems or Hindus. Women and children have better status among Christians, but clearly not nearly the equality they should have. The rest of Indian culture is very hard on women and children. 1.2 million children are sold into slavery and prostitution every year. 50 million are child laborers.

Every 6 hours a married woman is killed by her husband. Very very few ever are arrested and sentenced. The law and society looks the other way, considering it a family matter.

The number of births in India every year is more than the total population of Australia, and many other nations. Still, India has one of the world's highest rates of abortion. Time magazine reports that in 2012, the number of abortions in India could be as high as 7 million, with 2/3 of abortions taking place in unauthorized health facilities. Due to unsanitary conditions, a woman in India dies every two hours. Additionally, there are more men than women in India due to the high rate of abortions performed on female fetuses, a practice known as "gendercide."

In ancient and medieval India, *suttees*, in which a recently widowed woman would voluntarily let herself be burnt to death on her husband's funeral pyre, were common.

A widow is considered bad luck—otherwise, her husband wouldn't have died. Elderly women in the village might call a widow "the one who ate her husband." In some orthodox families, widows are not allowed near newlyweds or welcomed at social gatherings.

Many Indian wives will never say their husband's name aloud, as it is a sign of disrespect. When addressing him, the wife will use several indirect references, such as "ji" or "look here" or "hello," or even refer to him as the father of her child.

It is rare for a woman to stand up for her rights, but it is becoming more and more common. In 2004, 200 women took law in their own hands and came to the court armed with vegetable knives and chili powder and murdered on the court floor a serial rapist – Akku Yadav. Then every woman claimed responsibility for the murder.

As Christians we know God values women and children the same as men. In fact, they are special to Him because they are often vulnerable or helpless. Treating them in a godly way is part of being Christ like. (February 3, 2017 Hyderabad, India)

Psalms 127:3-5 Children are a heritage from the LORD, offspring a reward from him. Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are children born in one's youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them. They will not be put to shame when they contend with their opponents in court.

Matthew 18:10 *“See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven.*

James 1:27 *“Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.”*

1 Timothy 5:2 *Treat older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity.*

I know we all say we treat women and children as equals, but do we? Men, do you make jokes about women or look down on them as inferior in any way?

Men and women, do you show respect to children and their feelings, treating them the same as you would an important adult?

Ask God to show you any lack in your attitude to women or children. Confess it as sin and plan how to do better.

BLOG 564: NEW THINGS IN INDIA (by Nancy)

Lot of earth moving equipment in outlining areas

Widening of roads from 2 to 4 lanes, connecting large cities

More cars, more scooters, less bicycles

Public schools in the cities are now in English

Large concrete pipes line the roadside for drainage & sewage installation

Younger men wear western clothes like jeans; kurtas are mostly on older men, Muslims and wedding attire.

More gold jewelry stores (gold here is 22 karat!)

Rampant diabetes, most undiagnosed

Many are wearing face masks when outside in traffic

Basics of sanitation, food, safety and family are the priorities here

Pollution and smog seem to be worse than other years

Hindutva = philosophy that to be a true nationalistic Indian you must be Hindu and the aggressive suppression of Christian and Muslim activities and ministry

THINGS THAT ARE THE SAME IN INDIA (by Nancy)

Beautiful ladies in vibrant, colorful, flowing saris with matching scarves, bright white smiles, smooth perfect skin despite the pollution and dust, silky smooth black hair with no frizzes or stray hairs (thanks to coconut oil)

Village schools remain in native language Telugu

Terrible bathrooms, many without water, paper or lock

Christians pray fervently for hours

Head bob seems to have expanded meanings signifying “I understand”, “I hear you”, “yes” or “no” (with no commitment), or simply a greeting.

The need for preeminence among immature pastors

The continued assumption that all Americans are rich and have unlimited money to give away continually

Indian families are generally intact units, even in the slums

Generally most Indians (children & adults) maintain a high level of innocence. It is not a sensual culture

Public urination

No systematic removal of trash – it remains everywhere

Beauty is not about a woman's shape but is about the color of her fabric

Critical thinking skills and problem solving is weak and lacking, even in the young educated population

Wedding orchestras are 12 piece brass ensembles dressed in band costumes reminiscent of those from “The Music Man” – quite interesting to see the 12 of them pile into the back of an open pickup truck! (February 4, 2017 Hyderabad, India)

(PS: Now you know what Nancy does with her mind while listening to the same conference talk for the 8th time! – Jerry)

ALSO BY NANCY: ***When you are full of yourself, there is no room for Jesus***

When you are full of Jesus... you have plenty of room for others ... and no need for yourself

INDIA UPDATE: **FOR YOU STATISTIC LOVERS** (like me): Since we had a day off I worked on my recordkeeping for this trip to India. I need to know what I taught each group each year (and which magic I used) so I don't repeat things when we return. That can be quite a juggling act! By the end of our teaching time here (3 days) we'll have trained 900 pastors and 300 wives (2 day each, some for 3 days).

In the 10 years I've been coming to India I've trained 6,000 pastors and 1,750 wives (2+ days each), taught 28 seminary classes and 2 youth conferences and spoke at 175 church services. I've had a total of 145 conference days in India. I've been here 251 days (36 weeks) all total.

Even more amazing is my work with Pastor Moses. We totally know each other and work together very smoothly. Nancy comments on how well we do the sessions with me speaking and him translating so I counted up we have done 650 full teaching sessions together and 150 church services. That's 800 messages I have given which he has translated. He did a couple sessions my first year, more my second, and by my third it's just been us.

BLOG 565: PASTORS' CONFERENCES (by Nancy)

GOOD

They receive fresh content about God and His word
They are encouraged and see value in God's Word
They get a chance to fellowship with each other
They are very quick to find Bible references
They have an eagerness to sing
Life doesn't have to be modern to be good

BAD

Few pastors come with an expectation to take notes. They don't seem to know what to do with a pencil and paper.
There is an undertone of entitlement for any and all resources
They come late the first day and many show up only on the second day
They have an expectation the food shall be of a higher quality than they normally take, and non-veg

UGLY

Excruciatingly loud PA systems
One or two pastors at most conferences demand additional travel money or books even if they weren't there both days

Note: The pastors are used to 3 styles of conference communication: British style lecture monologue, Pentecostal emotionalism or denominational promotions and announcements. They have very low expectations when invited to a pastor's conference. Our conferences focus on application of content, presenting new content illustrated with stories, object lessons, magic tricks, and personal stories and interacting with the audience.

Sometimes the pastors on day one will excitedly call their pastor friends and encourage them to come on day 2 because of the different communication style. (February 5, 2017 Hyderabad, India)

INDIA UPDATE: God has placed the New Hope Orphanage on our hearts. I've been going there every year and the children remember me. Yesterday some even reminded me that I gave them finger puppets 5 or 6 years ago! It costs \$600 a month to house, feed and clothe the 20 children and the couple that takes care of them. Moses' church has been sharing the cost with another donor who is no longer helping them and it's too much for his church to continue alone. Supporting an orphanage is outside the scope of CTO. Our resources are for training pastors, and even there we need more than we have. But somehow we feel God wants this to keep going and we help in some way.

BLOG 566: PERSONAL CUSTOMS and DAILY LIVING

By the end of this trip I will have spent 36 weeks in India, almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of a year. One of the most interesting aspects is the exposure to how other cultures live. It amazes me how similar they are to us while at the same time being very, very different! The USA is a few hundred years old; India's civilization goes back 5,000 years!

Around the 17th century, India was one of the richest countries in the world. Today, most Indians earn 10% of Americans.

There are 2.36 million Indian millionaires, yet many Indians live on less than two dollars a day, including our pastors. An estimated 35% of India's population lives below the poverty line.

Only 3% of Indians pay income tax, in a population of 1.2 billion. One explanation for this is that agriculture is exempt and two-thirds of Indians live in rural areas. A large chunk of the economy is also informal, unorganized labor that is harder to collect taxes.

India experiences six seasons: summer, autumn, winter, spring, summer monsoon, and winter monsoon.

Rabies is common in India. Additionally, "Delhi Belly" or diarrhea is commonplace due to contaminated drinking water.

It is respectful to wear white, not black, to a funeral in India. Widows will often wear white in contrast to the colorful clothes of married or single women. Red is the color worn by brides.

Shakuntla Devi was given the title of the human calculator after she demonstrated the calculation of two 13 digit numbers: $7,686,369,774,870 \times 2,465,099,745,779$ which was picked at random. She answered correctly within 28 seconds.

India has a spa just for elephants. Elephants receive baths, massages and even food at the Punnathoor Cotta Elephant Yard Rejuvenation Centre in Kerala.

When I first went to India, I judged everything they did by how it compared to how things are done in the USA. Of course we do everything right, and if they do something different they must be wrong. It wasn't long before I learned that most of the time (unless sanitation or health are involved)

we are simply different, not better or worse/right /wrong or superior/inferior. After all, who can really say? India is many times larger than us and older than us, and we must respect their option to choose a way of life dissimilar to ours. It is our pride that makes us think we are right and best in all things. Everyone in the world seems to know we are that way, everyone but us Americans! (February 6, 2017 Hyderabad, India)

James 4: 6 But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: “God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.”

Proverbs 11:2 When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom.

Proverbs 16:5 The Lord detests all the proud of heart. Be sure of this: They will not go unpunished.

Proverbs 16:18 Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.

While in actuality no one thinks they are proud, in reality every human being struggles with pride in one form or another (think of pride as self-focus, positive or negative). Would those who know you think you have areas of pride in your life?

Pray and ask God to show you any self-focus you have in yourself, or any criticalness of others who are different than you?

BLOG 567: 2017 INDIA TRIP SUMMARY

So here we are, right where I never think we'll be but where we end up every year. We are done with the conferences. We are physically and emotionally drained but feeling wonderfully blessed. My main thoughts and feelings are of complete gratitude to God for His faithfulness. Paul said, “When I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Corinthians 12:10). It is a great privilege to have a front row seat to see all God is doing through these conferences. Despite all the opposition and oppression, God protects us and brings us through. He definitely is our shield and protection (Psalm 18:2; 28:7).

Last year was an excellent year as well, but in comparison, we had more conference days and better attendance this year. We averaged 4 teaching session a day compared to 2.5 last year.

I am also deeply moved by the faithfulness and sacrifices of all of you who read these blogs and pray for us. God has shown us in several ways that it is the prayers of His people who sustain us and enable the light to expand despite the darkness here. Truly we are in the middle of spiritual battles and the prayers of the saints really do empower God's angels and sway the battle in our favor.

I continue to see the great value in the books we distribute. They expand on the content of the session's material. Readers can refer to them and use them for sermons and church training. The books reach many more people than I can. They go into areas we don't visit. And if India's laws change, or my health, or any other reason keeps me from visiting India, the books will still be here spreading God's truth. It's truly a joy and pleasure to write and give out these books. They are asking I write one on leadership for next year, so I will need to do it soon to give them time to translate and print it. I also want to do books on apologetics and discipleship, and then counseling and a deeper book on spiritual warfare.

Yesterday Pastor Moses got a phone call from a schoolteacher whose father was a pastor and came to a conference we had 4 years ago. He recently died and when she went through his things she found the book on spiritual warfare and read it. She said she was greatly blessed and helped by it. She wanted 5 more books for teacher friends in her school. Pray God will use the thousands of books that have been distributed throughout this part of India.

Thanks again for your support, prayer and love. (February 7, 2017 Hyderabad, India)

2 Timothy 4:6-8 *For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 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.*

Revelation 8:3-4 *Another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all the saints, on the golden altar before the throne. The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of the saints, went up before God from the angel's hand.*

INDIA UPDATE: Tomorrow we finish up details of this trip, especially totaling the expenses so I know how much more money I need to transfer to Pastor Moses to cover our expenses. The Christian who was in a coma here in Hyderabad because he was beaten for giving out Bibles (he was a Gideon) has died. Another pastor was beaten last week. He pastors in the town of our first pastor's conference but wasn't at the conference. The pastors had a long, serious meeting after our conference. They were talking about how to respond in light of the persecution and the cutting off of foreign money, such as the case with Compassion International. They talked about how to be good witnesses yet be wise and careful in the current situation.

BLOG 568: SAFELY HOME

We made it home safely late last (Thursday) night. It's a long trip but everything went well. We came back to snow everywhere. It looks beautiful but we need to reacclimatize to cold weather. Thanks so much for your prayers and gifts.

The song going through my head this past month, and especially today, is "Great Is Thy Faithfulness." I'm pretty good at imagining all kinds of things that can go wrong, especially when traveling half way around the world, but I'm sure the actual list is much longer. Still, God had all those things under control and took care of all of them and we arrived safely home. We can home to news of a good friend who doesn't have much longer to live and I've been thinking about how God will bring him safely home as well. That's true for all of us. We all will have that great homecoming day one day – either one by one or all at once if He returns. Either way He has it all covered. He indeed is a faithful God! (February 10, 2017 Doylestown, PA)

***Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father,
There is no shadow of turning with Thee,
Thou changest not, Thy compassion's, they fail not,
As Thou hast been, Thou forever will be.***

***Great is Thy faithfulness!
Great is Thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see.
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided,
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!***

***Summer and winter and springtime and harvest,
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above
Join with all nature in manifold witness
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.***

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth

***Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide,
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!***

Read the words slowly and carefully and thank God for His faithfulness to you: past, present and future.

BLOG 569: ALL ARE CALLED

(The first of four blogs from a sermon I preached at Rock Point Church, Doylestown, PA, after returning from India in 2017.)

Every pastor's conference in India since 2011 has concluded with a session on Spiritual Warfare. That's been 83 times I taught it and led in prayer for deliverance. And each time I use the same passage – Mark 5 about the demonized man in the Gadarenes. It's a perfect example of how demons work and showcases Jesus' power over them. The story has an unusual twist at the end because, when the man wants to leave everything to travel with and learn from Jesus, he is told to stay where he is (Mark 5:18-20). I ask why Jesus wouldn't let him come with Him to help minister to others. The answer is that Jesus wanted him to minister right there, where he knew everyone and they knew him. I encourage them to stay faithful where God has put them.

The same is true for God's people wherever they live. Does He want everyone to be a missionary and share Jesus in a different culture and language? Clearly the answer is "No." God calls everyone to serve Him, but He doesn't call everyone to leave their home and go to another location to serve. That is only a small minority – a very important minority but nevertheless a small one.

In some way we are all called to leave the culture we grew up in to follow Him, for when we come to Him we become "strangers and pilgrims" passing through this world and it is no longer our home (1 Peter 1:1; 2:11). So in that way we are all in a 'foreign' culture, but most of us are called to stay and minister to the same culture in which we grew up. We are all called (Romans 8:28) and sent ("apostle" means "sent one"), but some are sent to their own neighborhood while others are sent to the other side of the world.

The church in Antioch was a strong, healthy church in the center of Christianity in its day. They had 5 good leaders. From these 5 God called Paul and Barnabas to leave and go to other places to minister. He called the other 3 to stay right there and keep ministering (Acts 13:1-3). All are called, some to stay and others to go. (February 13, 2017 Doylestown, PA)

1 Peter 1:1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God's elect, exiles scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia

1 Peter 2:11 Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles,

Hebrews 11:13 All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth.

Do you ever feel out of place in this world, like you don't really belong or fit in? Are you looking for something better and more meaningful and substantial? That's good! That's how a believer should feel in this world.

Are you aware that God has called you to go back into that world to share the hope we have in Him? Don't try to find a place for yourself in this world, encourage others to follow you to a better one!

INDIA UPDATE: Pastor Moses has been receiving many calls each day from pastors thanking him for the conferences and saying how they were blessed. More than one pastor admitted he has been neglecting his family for 20 or more year but now sees they are his first ministry and will change their priorities. Others talk about how learning about spiritual warfare has helped them have victory in their lives and church and how glad they are that they came. Still others appreciate learning how to study the Bible and develop sermons. Others are still reveling in the glory of God's plan of redemption as it was explained in the Bible overview. Moses loves receiving these phone calls and is blessed himself by hearing them.

BLOG 570: ALL ARE CALLED, SOME TO GO & OTHERS TO STAY

(The second of four blogs from a sermon I preached at Rock Point Church, Doylestown, PA, after returning from India in 2017.)

Some are called to go, and if God calls you to go then don't stay! Some go to unbelievers to take god's Word to them. Abraham was called out of Ur, Jonah called to go to Nineveh, 10 of Jesus' 12 disciples were sent to other parts of the world, and Paul was sent to start churches in other parts of the Roman Empire. Today God calls some to leave their home and go to another location within their culture, or even to another culture and language. Some are called to do so for the rest of their lives, others for a shorter time period.

Others are called to go minister to believers in other locations. Nehemiah was sent to Jerusalem, Titus and Timothy to help churches that had already been planted, and Paul went to many churches encouraging and training them. God has called me to go to India once a year to minister to the pastors and Christians there.

All are called, some to go but others to stay. If God calls you to stay then don't go! Some are called to stay and minister to unbelievers. There are several ways this is done. One is by sharing the gospel with those around them. In Acts 1:8-9 Jesus says we are all called, some to stay in Jerusalem to minister, others to move nearby to Judea and Samaria, and others to different cultures far away, "to the ends of the earth." The first calling is to those where we already are living. Peter was called to stay and minister in Jerusalem. He went locally to Cornelius (Acts 10). Philip went to the Samaritans, spoke to an Ethiopian who was visiting in the area, and finally settled nearby in Caesarea (Acts 8). (February 20, 2017 Doylestown, PA)

Acts 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Where has God called you to minister: at home (Jerusalem), in nearby areas (Judea) or those little further away (Samaria), or in other countries (ends of the earth)? Not being called to a foreign country doesn't mean you aren't called to minister where you are. What does God want YOU to do where He has called you?

BLOG 571: ALL ARE CALLED, ALL ARE QUALIFIED

(The third of four blogs from a sermon I preached at Rock Point Church, Doylestown, PA, after returning from India in 2017.)

Everyone is called. There is no believer who isn't qualified. The Gadarenes demonized man ran around naked hurting himself and others. He lived in a cave with decaying bodies. Yet when he came to Jesus he was called to minister to the people in that same area. Matthew, the despised tax

collector, was called to follow Jesus. The adulterous Samaritan woman at the well was called to tell everyone in her village about Jesus.

We, too, are responsible to share the gospel with those where we live. We have a better opportunity to do that than anyone who moved into the area as a missionary for we know them and they know us. We have neighbors, friends, work associates and people we already know – a ripe harvest field for each of us (Matthew 9:36-39). There are many foreigners who come to our country and community. We don't even have to send missionaries to speak to them – they have come to us! Yet often we don't take time to get to know them and minister to them. Many of us are called to share the gospel right where we are.

Many, too, are called to give money to help support those who move to other locations and need financial support. Most are called to give small gifts but some are called to give large quantities of money. Missionaries to other places, and many ministries near and far, need financial support to carry out their mission. Christian Training Organization, my non-profit to minister to India, could not function without the donations of God's people to make the books, conferences, financial support and yearly trips to India possible. Those called to give who faithfully do so will be blessed and rewarded as much as those who are called to go.

A third way many are called to stay and minister to unbelievers is by praying. Paul asked others to pray for him (Ephesians 6:19-20), and we definitely depend on your prayers for our India ministry, especially when we are in India. (February 27, 2017 Doylestown, PA)

Ephesians 6:19-20 Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

Are you faithful in praying for those who ask you to pray for them? Do you go out of your way to be alert to the needs of others? Do you keep a list of needs for which you pray regularly? Not all of us are gifted and called to long periods of prayer, but all are expected to pray daily for others.

BLOG 572: CALLED TO STAY

(The last of four blogs from a sermon I preached at Rock Point Church, Doylestown, PA, after returning from India in 2017.)

So everyone is called, some to go and others to stay. Some who stay are called to minister to unbelievers, others to believers. James the brother of Jesus was called to stay in Jerusalem and lead the early church. So was John, until later he was called to move to Ephesus to strengthen and mature the church there. Pastors are called to minister to local bodies of believers (Ephesians 4:11-13). The pastors we train in India are called to minister to believers in their villages and towns. Many who aren't pastors are also called to teach Bible studies, disciple new believers, help in their local church and serve the church in many various ways.

Some are especially called to serve the church through prayer for they are gifted to pray for long periods of time and a focus and intensity most others don't have. And we can't forget the importance of those called to help other believers (Galatians 6:2). Luke traveled with Paul to help him. The Good Samaritan helped when he saw a need (Luke 10:25-37). There are many ways people can help each other today. And there are ways they can help serve missionary groups and other ministries as well. Those who help proofread or illustrate my books, who transcribe my messages from India, who help with the web site or assist in so many ways are invaluable helpers.

In India Pastor Moses' ministry to help others is called New Hope Foundation. Through it he supports an orphanage for 20 children, holds numerous sewing schools to train women with a useful skill, feeds lepers, offers after school help for children, provides food and clothing for widows, oversees the drilling of water wells in needy areas and does many other things.

If you look around you can discover many ways you can help other believers. Verbally encouraging others is important as well and some are especially called to that special ministry (1 Thessalonians 4:18; 5:11, 14).

Yes, all are called, some to go and others to stay. If you are called to go then don't stay. If you are called to stay then don't go. Each role is equally important. Do you know where God has called you? If not, think about where you have a talent or skill that can be used. Where do you have a burden to serve? What do others affirm in you as being of value to the Body of Christ? Are you fulfilling your calling here? What can you do to start following your calling right now? (March 6, 2017 Doylestown, PA)

Galatians 6:2 Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

Who has helped carry your burdens when you were in need? Who can you help today?

How has God called you to serve, where you are or elsewhere? Are you to serve believers or unbelievers (or both)? What, specifically, has God called you to do?

BLOG 573: INDIA INVENTIONS

India may seem to some to be backwards in some ways but there are other ways in which they have led the world. These are some inventions that have come from India.

India invented the ruler, the value of pi, trigonometry, algebra and calculus. The decimal system was invented in India in 100 B.C. The concept of zero as a number is also attributed to India.

Buttons were invented in India.

Plastic surgery first occurred in India.

Shampoo was first used in India. The word 'shampoo' itself has been derived from the Sanskrit word champu, which means to massage.

India is the birthplace of chess. The original word for "chess" is the Sanskrit *chaturanga*, meaning "four members of an army"—which were mostly likely elephants, horses, chariots, and foot soldiers.

India gave the world martial arts and Yoga 5,000 years ago.

Chutes and Ladders, first called snakes and ladders, originated in India. Earlier known as Moksha Patamu, the game was initially invented as a moral lesson about karma to be taught to children. It was later commercialized and has become one of the most popular board games in the world.

Takshila is said to be the very first university in the world; it started around 700 BC.

Man can invent but only God can create. What man invents is only possible because man uses what God has already produced. God creates from nothing but man invents from what already exists. Man discovers what God has already made available. It is great to discover or invent something, but how much greater is it to bring everything into existence from totally nothing, with just a word! Read the verses below slowly, thinking about what it means to create something from

nothing, especially to the scale and complexity which God brought about. (March 12, 2017 Doylestown, PA)

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

John 1:3 All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

Colossians 1:16 For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--all things have been created through Him and for Him.

John 1:10 He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.

If God can create everything from nothing, and have it all look so beautiful and work together so wonderfully, is it too much for Him to care for you in your situation? Thank Him.

Trust Him to bring about the right results in your life at the perfect time. If He isn't doing all you want Him to do for you right now it is because He has something better in mind.

BLOG 574: RETIREMENT LESSON 4: ONE THING I DID RIGHT

If I had it to do all over again there are many things I would have done differently in life, lots of failures I could have tried to avoid and many mistakes I would correct. But there is one thing I would do again, something I don't regret. In fact, it's one of the best things I did in life. It's the fact that we made Jesus a central part of our lives as well as our children's lives. In our family, our home school and our church involvement, we always tried to keep Jesus lifted up as the One to follow.

Now when we visit our children (all grown, 4 married, 2 soon to be married) and see them passing on the faith to their children (17 grandchildren so far) as we passed it on to them, I am very pleased. Every single one is faithfully living for Jesus and putting Him first in their lives. I can't imagine how different our lives, and those of our children, would have been had we not tried to make Jesus the center of everything. Listening to my grandchildren pray and talk about Bible stories is extremely heart-warming. Words cannot describe how much joy it brings to us. It's humbling and gratifying to know God used us to start this in our family! There is nothing better we could have done for our children, no greater gift we could have given them. We knew it was crucial, yet only now do we realize the life-changing importance of it! It won't stop with our grandchildren but will be passed to their children and theirs as well. To think we had something to do with that is truly amazing. Clearly, it is by far one of the best things we have ever done! (March 20, 2017, Doylestown, PA)

3 John 4 I have no greater joy than to know that my children are walking in the truth.

Proverbs 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old he will not depart from it.

Deuteronomy 6:6-7 These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. 7 Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.

2 Timothy 3:14-15 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

If you have young children or grandchildren: are you doing all you can, by word, action and prayer, to make Jesus foremost in your live and theirs?

If you don't have young children or grandchildren: are you a good influence for Jesus on the children you come in contact with? Do you help, encourage and pray for the families you know?

BLOG 575: RETIREMENT LESSON 5: I LOVE THE CHURCH

In these 9 months that I've been retired we've been visiting a lot of churches. Some are where our children attend, others are located where we are traveling, and still others are those where friends attend. While pastoring we didn't visit many other churches, but I do remember comparing the ones we did visit with the church I pastored so I could glean good ideas to improve our worship service.

Now when we visit, though, it is different. I am encouraged by each ministry for its faithfulness in spreading the Word in their location. I appreciate the difficulties and obstacles the pastors and leaders face and feel compassion for them. Each one is different, but I have no desire to judge or criticize for I know they are doing their best to follow and serve God. Who am I to decide if they are doing right or not? I look at the pastors and people and am blessed to see those who love and serve God. They are my brothers and sisters. I have a new appreciation for them as they use their time and talents to worship and share Jesus in their communities. It's good to see God's people at worship in many different ways and places.

I feel the same way in India. I am proud to be part of this great group of believers called the Body of Christ whose lives have been changed by Him and are now dedicated to living for Him. Despite all our failures and struggles, God's people are still moving ahead to advance His kingdom on this earth. God's people are the best people anywhere. (March 27, 2017, Doylestown, PA)

Romans 12:4-5 For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

Ephesians 2:19-22 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

How do you view your own church, pastor and fellow church members? Do you see the good in what they are trying to do, or do you focus on their faults and failures?

Are you proud to be one of God's people, part of the Church of the Living God, or do you focus on its weaknesses and shortcomings?

Ask God to show you what you can do to encourage your own pastor, church leaders and local Christians in their own Christian walk.

BLOG 576: RETIREMENT LESSONS 6: UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

GOD LOVES ME FOR WHO I AM, NOT WHAT I DO. For whatever reason, I've always been one of those people who feels they need to earn love, to do something so others will like them, to pay my own way and not be indebted to anyone. I've always been insecure that way. Being a pastor can seem a great way to impress God and others, but through the years I saw the sin in that and have been growing away from it. Now that I am no longer functioning in the role of a pastor, I've had to make sure I know God loves me for who I am, not for what I do. It's a great, comforting, secure, peaceful feeling to believe and grow in that truth.

I LOVE GOD FOR WHO HE IS, NOT FOR WHAT HE DOES. If the above paragraph is true, then the reverse is true as well. Do I love God because of what He does for me or in spite of what happens in life? God has never answered all my prayers when or how I thought they should be answered. In fact, I have some major disappointments, times when God just didn't seem to be there when I needed Him most. I've had to decide if I will love and serve Him no matter what, even when things aren't as I would like. I'm certainly not perfect in that (or in anything for that matter), but I can say, to the best of my ability, I want to love Him and serve Him no matter what happens in life. I hope you can say the same. (April 3, 2017, Doylestown, PA)

Psalms 103:13-14 As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him; for He knows how we are formed, He remembers that we are dust.

Deuteronomy 6:5 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

Do you let God love you for who you are, or do you feel, somewhere deep inside, you aren't good enough and have to be better for Him to really love you? If so, confess your sin of believing that lie of Satan and ask God to help you freely accept His total, unconditional love for you.

Do you love and serve God even though there are things you don't understand or don't like about your life? Do you love Him more when everything is going well and less when it isn't? If you want Him to love you unconditionally, shouldn't you do the same to Him as well? Pray and tell Him you love Him and will serve Him no matter what!

BLOG 577: TAKING FROM JESUS, GIVING TO JESUS

Recently I came across this wonderful quote from a man who lived in Germany 600 years ago, yet what he writes about those who follow God are as true today as they were then. They are true in the USA, India and every place where Christians live. You'll have to read it several times to really get into the depths of it.

"There will always be many who love Christ's heavenly kingdom, but few who will bear his cross. Jesus has many who desire consolation, but few who care for adversity. He finds many to share his table, but few who will join him in fasting. Many are eager to be happy with him; few wish to suffer anything for him. Many will follow him as far as the breaking of bread, but few will remain to drink from his passion. Many are awed by his miracles; few accept the shame of his cross. Many love Christ as long as they encounter no hardship; many praise and bless him as long as they receive some comfort from him. But if Jesus hides himself and leaves them for a while, they either start complaining or become dejected. Those, on the contrary, who love him for his own sake and not for any comfort of their own, praise him both in trial and anguish of heart as well as in the bliss of consolation. Even if Jesus should never comfort them, they would continue to praise and thank him. What power there is in a pure love for Jesus – love that is free from all self-interest and self-love?"
Source: The Royal Road of the Cross by Thomas à Kempis (1380-1471, Germany) (April 10, 2017, Doylestown, PA)

Matthew 16:24-25 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it.

Read the above quote again, but make it your prayer and commitment to God to be one of the ones who follow no matter what.

BLOG 578: FIRSTS

When my children were little they were always competing to be first. Adults aren't much different, whatever the nationality. Indians are the same, racing with each other to outdo everyone else. Pastors want to be the first to have me come to their church, the first to pray or sing, the first to have their picture taken with us. We may not realize that the nation of India has many firsts to its credit.

The Indus Valley Civilization is the world's oldest developed civilization. Its early empire was larger than any other empire of its time, including Egypt and Mesopotamia. Thus India is the oldest, most advanced and longest continuous civilization. Varanasi is the oldest continuously inhabited city in the world today.

India was the first country to develop extraction and purifying techniques of sugar. Many visitors from abroad learnt the refining and cultivation of sugar from India. And they were the first to discover water on the moon

Diamonds were first mined in India. Initially, diamonds were only found in the alluvial deposits in Guntur and Krishna District of the Krishna River Delta. Until diamonds were found in Brazil during the 18th century, India led the world in diamond production.

The earliest cotton in the world was spun and woven in India. Roman emperors would wear delicate cotton from India that they would call "woven winds." Mogul emperors called the fabrics "morning dew" and "cloth of running water."

If being the first is important, then the honor of being the first of all firsts is really significant. Jesus was first of all creation. He was before creation and reigns as First over everyone and everything in the universe. Where He most wants to be first, though, is in your heart. Does He have first place in your life? Does everyone who knows you know He is first? (April 17, 2017, Doylestown, PA)

Revelation 22:13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.

Revelation 1:8 "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."

What can you do today to show that He is in first place in your life?

Where do you have the hardest time keeping Him first? Is there a sin, a fear, a distraction, even something good taken to excess, which comes before Him in any way? Confess it and make Him first over every area of your life right now.

BLOG 579: BIGGER IS BETTER

As in the USA, Christians in India often think that the bigger a church is the better it is. Pastors try to impress me with the size of their ministry. That is true of secular society in India as well – and in the rest of the world as well. It's natural to think that a country as populous as India would have many records for being the largest in the world and that is certainly the case.

India has the world's largest movie industry, based in the city of Mumbai (known as the "City of Dreams"). The B in "Bollywood" comes from Bombay, the former name for Mumbai. Almost all Bollywood movies are musicals. The term "Bollywood" refers to just a part of the larger Indian film industry, which includes other film companies operating in other languages.

India is the world's largest tea producer, and tea (chai) is its most popular beverage. It is also the world's largest producer of milk. It recently overtook the European Union with production reaching over 132.4m tons in 2014. India is the world's largest producer of dried beans, such as kidney beans and chickpeas. It also leads the world in banana exports; Brazil is second.

The Kumbh Mela (or Grand Pitcher Festival) is a huge Hindu religious festival that takes place in India every 12 years. Almost 100 million people attended, breaking the record for the world's biggest gathering. The gathering was so large it could be seen from space.

Today, India has the world's largest school in terms of students, the City Montessori School in Lucknow. It has more than 45 thousand students!

Indian Railways employs more than 1.3 million people. That's more than the population of many nations. It is the world's largest civilian employer. Its railroad is the second largest in the world and transports more than 23 million people each day. And the world's largest road network is also in India—over 1.9 million miles of roads cover the country.

India is second only to the USA when it comes to speaking English with around 125 million people speaking the language, which is only 10% of its population.

India leads the world with the most murders (32,719) per year, with Russia taking second at 28,904 murders per year.

India has the largest population of Hindus, Sikhs, Jains and Parsees. Because of religious reasons or personal choices or both, around 20-40% of Indians are vegetarians, making it the largest vegetarian-friendly country in the world.

With 150,000 post offices, India has the largest postal network in the world. However, it is not unusual for a letter to take two weeks to travel just 30 miles.

We are all impressed by what is the largest and greatest. However when it comes to true greatness, nothing surpasses Jesus. If only India would lead the world in worship of Jesus! He is the greatest, and true greatness only belongs to Him. (April 24, 2017, Doylestown, PA)

Luke 1:32 "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David;

John 1:15 John testified about Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'"

Jeremiah 10:6 There is none like You, O LORD; You are great, and great is Your name in might.

1 Chronicles 16:25 For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; He also is to be feared above all gods.

Think of some ways that Jesus' greatness impacts your life.

Does your life show His greatness to others around you? How can you show His greatness to someone today?

BLOG 580: CHANGED BY INDIA 1: CLOSER TO GOD

They say that traveling changes a person, that it expands their horizons and gives them a better perspective on life and people around them. That's what they say and I think they are right. I've been to India 10 times for about a month each time. God has used me to impact the lives of

pastors in India, and He has also used India to impact my life. For one thing, going to India has brought me closer to God.

I really don't like to travel nor do I like to speak in unknown places to unknown people. It's all too far out of my comfort zone. Too many things are out of my control and I have no backup plan to fix what goes wrong. There are no guarantees everything will be smooth and simple. In fact, I can be sure that won't happen.

I've always believed God can be trusted to take care of me, but fear has been a life-long enemy of mine and something I've battled since I was young. I have experienced God's care and provision over and over while in India. It is true that when God is all I have then God is all I need. I don't expect to avoid problems and difficulties but I do know beyond a doubt He won't give me more than I can handle with His help and that He will be there with me no matter what. I follow His guidance for I know there is no safer place to be than in the center of His will.

I remember some long, lonely nights of oppression and difficulty when I would lie on my back in bed and hug my Bible to my chest to bring me comfort and assurance so I could sleep. In times of outward misery we often find inside the sweetest fellowship with God. It seems the worse the times were, the more real God's presence and comfort were also. I wouldn't want to go through those times again, but neither would I give them up because of all they have taught me about trust and because of how much closer they have brought me to God. The darker the night the brighter His love and peace shine through it. God has used my whole India experience to draw me closer to Him. (May 1, 2017, Doylestown, PA)

2 Corinthians 12:9-10 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Is God allowing something painful in your life now, something out of your control that stretches your faith? Are you allowing it to bring you closer to Him or draw you further away from Him?

BLOG 581: CHANGED BY INDIA 2: CLOSER TO MY WIFE

In my last blog I wrote about how going to India has made me closer to God. That's the best thing that has happened from it. But it's not the only thing. It has also brought me closer to my wife Nancy. We've always been close, but something happened in my during the years I'd go to India without her. Being away from her for a month at a time made me realize just how important she was to me and how important a part of my life she had become. That say we don't appreciate something (or someone) as we should until we lose them. My loss was only temporary, but it was enough to know I need her around me at all times.

As God Himself said, "It is not good for the man to be alone" (Genesis 2:18). It certainly wasn't good for me to be alone. I'm deeply touched by the fact Nancy ha quit her full time job (her nursing career) so she can come with me every year. Sharing the experiences of India, the good and the bad, helps us bond even closer together. I never ever imagined one of the reasons God wanted me to go to India along was to improve my relationship with her, but He it did and it did! (May 8, 2017, Doylestown, PA)

Ruth 1:16-17 "Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me."

When do you appreciate your mate the most?

Suppose you were separated from them for a month, how would that impact you? If it wouldn't be a big loss then that should be a warning sign to show something is missing in your relationship.

What can you do to keep from taking them for granted?

BLOG 582: CHANGED BY INDIA 3: GOD'S SOVEREIGN HAND IN MY LIFE

As I move along in life and am able to look back over the years, I am amazed at how God, in His grace, wove so many things together to make me the person I am today. Clearly He had a plan from the start, something of which I was totally unaware. My involvement in India is a perfect example of this.

Humanly speaking, I was the worst choice God could make for someone to minister in India. I've never liked to travel or speak to strangers. I am fearful, shy and quiet. I have admired missionaries my whole life but never thought I would in any way do what they do. Yet that is what God has in mind from the beginning.

God gifted me to be able to communicate His truth to others and allowed me to go to schools where I could learn how to do so. He gave me a desire to minister to pastors and I've studied pastoring and ministry my whole life. He gave me art ability and a desire (and opportunity) to learn to communicate through Christian 'magic.' I had a knack for dramatizing the lives of Bible people and have developed that skill over the years. All these come together when I minister in India.

In addition I've always worked independently as a 'one man show.' I've had a great variety of experiences and types of ministry over the years. I've had to learn to do a little of everything, to be flexible and adapt to whatever changes occur in my circumstances.

God has given me a hearing in India by being an American that cares enough to come to talk to them. My doctor's degree from Dallas Theological Seminary carries a lot of weight there. My gray hair and years of experience as the pastor of a small church also resonates with them.

That's not all. I've always had a desire to write books but never a reason or opportunity until now. I've written 7 so far and want to write many more. In addition he has brought the perfect Indian pastor to partner with me. Pastor Moses is unique in India, yet God brought us together to spend so much time doing such strenuous, stressful, demanding work and to use thousands of dollars given by God's people. It takes a lot of mutual trust, respect, flexibility, cooperation and teamwork to have two men who are so opposite work so well together for so long. We have spoken at 650 conference sessions and 175 church services with never any conflict. Some have said we are like one heart and soul in two separate bodies. Truly it is a God thing!

All this continues to amaze me. That God has always had such a wonderful plan for me and has used everything in life for good (Romans 8:28) really deepens my faith and trust. And the best part is that it isn't over, His plans for me go on throughout all eternity! (May 15, 2017, Doylestown, PA)

Jeremiah 29:11 For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

Take a few minutes and make your own list of all God has done in your past to make you the person you now are. Thank Him for it. Realize He isn't done yet but has much more in store for you!

BLOG 583: THE LONG AND THE SHORT OF LIFE

What is both long and short at the same time? I suppose there could be a lot of things but for me right now the answer would definitely be LIFE. It seems like a very long time ago when I was young, or when my children were born. But in another way it seems like just yesterday.

I've had a very good, very full, very blessed life – thanks to God for that. Still it seems to have gone rather quickly. When I was young looking ahead it seemed like it would take forever to get to the age I am now – yet here I am! I don't feel as old now as I thought I would. Still the message is clear: time moves on, life is short, life is temporary. So enjoy it! I regret losing too much of life worrying about the future or trying to relive the past. Sure, I enjoy the memories I have. Fine memories are a treasure to cherish. But more important is to enjoy today, right now. Today is the future I thought would never come, but it has. And time won't stop, it will keep moving on.

I enjoy watching my sons and grandchildren as they start out in life, with it all stretching before them. Soon they will be in my position. I remember my grandparents talking about these same things when I was a child. My grandchildren will one day look at their grandchildren and think the same things. Such is life.

This shouldn't bring depression or sadness; it should be a reminder to enjoy the present moment, for that is all God gives us. The past is gone and the future isn't here yet.

What a marvelous plan of God this thing called 'time' is! We live it one moment at a time – just like we enjoy a meal one bite at a time or a walk one step at a time. Of course it's up to us if we enjoy it or not. We can look at what we don't have – or what we do have. I choose to look at all the riches God has given me and thank Him for them. I choose to enjoy them day by day for as many days as God gives me. I refuse to get so hung up missing the past or worrying about the future that I miss the wonder and enjoyment about today. (Doylestown, PA, Monday, June 8, 2009 and May 22, 2017)

Ecclesiastes 5:18-19 Then I realized that it is good and proper for a man to eat and drink, and to find satisfaction in his toilsome labor under the sun during the few days of life God has given him — for this is his lot.

Ecclesiastes 9:9-10 Enjoy life with your wife, whom you love, all the days of this meaningless life that God has given you under the sun— all your meaningless days. For this is your lot in life and in your toilsome labor under the sun.

1 Peter 1:24-25 For, "All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, 25 but the word of the Lord stands forever."

Ecclesiastes 3:1-2 There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven: a time to be born and a time to die,

What about you? Will you live today to the full? Will you see it as a wonderful gift from God? Remember, life is long, but it's really very short!

BLOG 584: THE GREATEST OF THESE IS LOVE

My grandparents played a very important role in my emotional development as a child. They showed unconditional love and acceptance to a little boy who often had trouble liking himself. They were proud of me and showed genuine joy when I was around, causing me to look at myself in a better way. Now, 70 years later, I still feel their love and acceptance. They have had a greater impact on me and who I have become than I can imagine.

Now I am a grandparent. Nancy and I have numerous grandchildren. My children are grown so I have less influence, but I can have a good impact on my grandchildren. I want to show them the

same unconditional love and acceptance, the same joy and pleasure that I experienced with my grandparents. That is a legacy I am committed to passing on.

My grandchildren have different love languages. I try to show love in a way that speaks to them individually. Some are more open emotionally. When correction is needed, I try to show love in my approach.

God loves us unconditionally. It's hard to really comprehend those words unless we experience them on a human level. We have a privileged opportunity to show our grandchildren unconditional love makes it easier for them to understand and respond to their Heavenly Father's love. Doing so is a responsibility as well as a joy. (Doylestown, PA, May 22, 2017)

1 Corinthians 13:4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5 It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

To whom can you show God's unconditional love today: mate, family member, neighbor, friend or stranger, someone you aren't getting along with?? Commit to doing so and follow through ASAP.

BLOG 585: CHILDREN ARE PEOPLE, TOO

I've always felt more comfortable with children than with adults. Adults can be scary. They can, intentionally or unintentionally, criticize, reject and cause many painful feelings. They often have expectations I don't feel I can meet. Children, however, accept me just as I am. They aren't put off by my failures or impressed by my accomplishments. They look me in the eye and give me a clean slate, accepting me for who I am. I find it easy to be myself around children, probably because there is still a lot of child in me!

I guess that's why I feel so comfortable with my grandchildren. Actually they are no different than me. I just have a little more life experience than they do. We share the same feelings and emotions, the same fears and doubts. And we can be open and vulnerable with each other and safely share those common experiences.

Sometimes I see adults treating children as "less" than themselves and that bothers me, for they are just as human as we are! Speaking down to them, ignoring them, or taking advantage of them is inexcusable. The Golden Rule has no age restrictions! God doesn't look down on us but treats us with respect and honor. We are to do that to others as well, including children. (Doylestown, PA, June 5, 2017)

Luke 18:15-17 And they were bringing even their babies to Him so that He would touch them, but when the disciples saw it, they began rebuking them. But Jesus called for them, saying, "Permit the children to come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. "Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it at all."

Luke 9:47-48 But Jesus, knowing what they were thinking in their heart, took a child and stood him by His side, and said to them, "Whoever receives this child in My name receives Me, and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me; for the one who is least among all of you, this is the one who is great."

How do you view children, or anyone that is different than you for that matter? Do you ever look down on people? Do you sometimes ignore children as less important than you? If so, confess that as sin. God doesn't look down on us so we can't think less of others.

Next time you are with a child listen to them. Let them do the talking and get to know them as a person

BLOG 586: LIFE IS A RACE FROM START TO FINISH

I've been spending a lot of time holding my most recent grandchild, Andrew. Andrew is 6 months old and a joy to hold. He snuggles close and falls asleep. His smell, the texture of his skin and the sounds he makes are delightful to experience. But he won't stay this way for long. Holding him as she begins his life prompts me to think about life – Andrew is just beginning and mine has been moving forward for almost 71 years.

He is at the starting line of life, having moved only a short distance on his journey through time. His whole childhood stretches out before him, like the opening stretch on a race around a track. Childhood is the beginning sprint, everything moving fast and changing quickly. There's lots of growth and development and the time goes very fast. Then he'll hit the first turn - his teenage years. Life isn't easy around the turn. There are bumps and confusion. It's a lot harder moving through those turbulent teenage years. By God's grace he'll come out of the turn in good position and balance to make his move down the long back straightway of his 20's, 30's, 40's and even his 50's. It takes consistent focus on the future goal to keep moving in a straight line. At first the back stretch seems like it will take forever to finish, but before he knows it he'll be in his 50's and heading into another time of transition and adaptation.

That last stretch doesn't have as much energy but there is more wisdom, so I run smarter not faster. I determine to pace myself to finish strong. Many fall apart in this stage of the race. I want to keep my eyes on the goal and finish strong. Soon I'll head into the last straightway, the final push to the end. I want my life to be profitable and focused. I want to set a good example for Andrew

Andrew & I can't communicate well now, but after he finishes his race I'll be waiting for him. Then we can share together how God faithfully helped us through our race. Yes, Andrew's life race is just beginning. Watching him come off the start line helps reaffirm my commitment to run strong and to keep my eyes on the goal of becoming more like Jesus each day. Hopefully with a minimum of stumbles and breaks in stride. God will help Andrew run his race just like He is helping me run mine. (June 12, 2017 Doylestown, PA)

Acts 20:24 However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me — the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace.

1 Corinthians 9:24 Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize.

2 Timothy 4:7-8 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

Hebrews 12:1-2 therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith

How is your race going? You only run it once and it'll be over before you know it. Keep your eyes on Jesus and keep moving ahead.

BLOG 587: ONCE A PARENT, ALWAYS A PARENT

It's been great visiting our married children, their mates and their children. We've done a lot traveling since retirement. The older ones are in their early to mid-thirties, married and raising children. The younger two are in their early twenties; 1 married recently and the other engaged. I vividly remember them young – how we'd play and laugh together. It was my responsibility to teach and raise them. That role is over and I'm trying to fulfill my current role as a parent. First, I have to define that role. It might seem I no longer have a role but that isn't true. When I looked to my own father I realize he still had an important function in my life and so I do with my grown children. Roles change, but there always is a responsibility for a parent to fulfill. There is no retirement from parenthood.

When my sons were young my role was apparent: train, discipline, teach and raise them to be godly men. Now it's a bit trickier to really pin down where I fit into their lives. I know a big part of it involves supporting and encouraging them, building them up and reassuring them they are doing a good job in life. Being a husband, father and young man can be quite a challenge for them. My goal isn't to point out where growth still needs to take place but to affirm them where they have grown and to help them keep moving in the right direction. Daily prayer for them is a must. Giving them my blessing verbally speaks to them, and God honors it as well.

There are truths I still can teach my sons, but I think they teach me as much about life, love, faithfulness and being Godly men as I teach them. They have taken the baton I passed on to them and carried it far beyond where I was at their age and stage in life. I watch them function as men, husbands and fathers and I am very proud of them and humbled that God entrusted me with such fine, special young men. They bless and encourage me as much as I bless and encourage them. As I seek to set a good example for them, they also set a fine example for me. I thank God for them.

I thank God for being their father and for all the lessons I have learned through fatherhood. Above all else, it has helped me understand and appreciate my heavenly Father and how He relates to me. (June 19, 2017 Doylestown, PA)

Psalm 89:26 He will call out to me, 'You are my Father, my God, the Rock my Savior.

Isaiah 9:6 And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Galatians 1:3-5 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, 4 who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, 5 to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Whom has God given you to influence and build into their lives? Thank God for them.

Do you still pray for them? What else can you do to help them?

BLOG 588: GIVING THE PRECIOUS GIFT OF TIME

As grandparents we are better able to afford gifts than when our children were growing up. The most precious gift we can give them is our time. When we visit our grandchildren we are intentional doing as much with them as we can. It's not a vacation to sit and do nothing; it's a time to get involved in their lives on their level. They need both quality and quantity time from us – even when we don't feel like it. We do take time to rest and pace ourselves, but whenever possible we do what they like: crafts, sports, reading or playing. I try to be intentional about it and bring crafts or books when I visit.

I took my own children on 'dates' when they are young. I've started doing that with my older grandchildren as well. It gives us private time to talk and get to know each other better. I get to talk with them about spiritual things and other topics that might be hard to cover in a room full of active people. This makes them feel special and important as well. I want to have good rapport established with each of them so that when they enter the turbulent teen years I can still build into their lives. When teens start withdrawing from their parents, grandparents can step in and provide an important influence in their lives. The foundation must be built when they are young by spending time with them. (June 26, 2017 Doylestown, PA)

2 Timothy 2:4-5 "As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy. I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well."

Proverbs 13:22 "A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children, but the sinner's wealth is laid up for the righteous."

Are you faithful in spending time with grandchildren, grandparents or whoever needs you?

Do you share your most precious possession, your time, with others or hoard it all for yourself? God always has time for you; do you have time for those who need it?

BLOG 589: TEAMWORK IN GRANDPARENTING

My wife and I raised 6 children, in addition to others who lived with us for anywhere from a few months to several years. We home schooled our children all the way through high school. I worked as a pastor and my wife as a nurse. Needless to say, it could get very hectic at times. The only way we could possibly do all that was by working together. Nancy and I had to work as a team. We had to share the load, switch roles from time to time, sacrifice and be willing to fit in wherever and whenever needed. Private time and personal pursuits were forsaken for the needs of the family.

God used this to stretch us and cause us to bond closer to Him and each other. Learning sacrifice is never easy, but if we are to become more like Jesus, it is an important lesson. It is one we are still learning for sacrifice and teamwork are still necessary, even with our children grown and gone.

Since our grandchildren live far from us, we spend more time traveling and visiting than at home (that's not an exaggeration – we counted the days during the last 2 years!). We come into our children's homes with the purpose of serving them and helping in any way we can. We babysit while they go on an evening date or for the week so they can get away alone together. We assist in any way we can, not taking over or getting in the way but being sensitive as to where we can make life easier and better for all of them.

We find our years of working together as a team "kick in" when we are with grandchildren. We share our roles taking care of the children the home, food, clothing, and such. We can switch roles or help each other as needed. To be honest, I think we work together very well, "like a well-oiled machine," because we have been doing this for so long. We do it to serve each other as well as serve our children and grandchildren. (July 3, 2017 Doylestown, PA)

Psalms 92:14-15 "They still bear fruit in old age; they are ever full of sap and green, to declare that the Lord is upright; he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him."

Psalms 2:11 Serve the LORD with fear and celebrate his rule with trembling.

3 John 8 We ought therefore to show hospitality to such people so that we may work together for the truth.

Whom has God given you to team up with in your service to others and to Him? Thank God for them and pray for them.

God Himself wants to team with us and help us through our daily journey. Have you learned to work together with Him in cooperation and trust? Thank Him for being willing to team up with you in life.

BLOG 590: LOOK AHEAD, NOT BACK

Whoever invented the rear view mirror made a great contribution to driving. Without it we'd be hard pressed to know just what is best and safest at the moment. Rear view mirrors serve an important function. But the function is limited. Can you imagine someone trying to get to a destination while only looking in the rear view mirror? They are good for an occasional glimpse now and then to make sure of your present position, but they aren't made for permanent viewing!

Yet some people seem to live life always looking in the rear mirror of life. They are always thinking of the past. Their thoughts, energy and focus go to that which has been instead of that which is present.

God gave us memories for an important reason. He could have made us so we have no memory of past events, but He knows we would find pleasure in them as well as learn from them. Learning from the past helps us avoid the same mistakes in the present, gives us a better perspective on what we face, and helps us make sure our focus is correct. Like a rear view mirror, it has an important place in life. But we can't move accurately through the present with our eyes on the past.

I miss the good times of when my children were young and in my home. I miss the laughter and fun, the challenges and blessings of raising children. My grandchildren live so far away I only see them a couple times a year. I miss being a part of their lives and it tempts me to look back to the past times with my children. But I must be careful to not spend too much time looking backward.

The present is what God has given me to live and I want to live it fully. I want to learn from the past and treasure its memories, but as more of my family life and ministry become part of my past, I still focus on each day and keep moving ahead. God has a perfect future planned for me, not just in heaven but in this life as well. I don't want to miss any of it by looking in the rear view mirror. (July 10, 2017 Doylestown, PA)

Philippians 3:12-14 Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. 13 Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Thank God for the good memories you have of the past, but don't let them rob you from the present. It is in this day that God is present and working in your life. Enjoy it to the fullest; you won't pass this way again.

BLOG 591: YOU CAN'T HIDE

John Wesley once said, "Your holiness makes you as conspicuous as the sun in the sky. You cannot hide your Christian character. Love cannot be hidden any more than can light. Least of all, it cannot be hidden when it shines forth in action. When you exercise yourself in a labor of love, in any kind of good work, you are observed. We may as well try to hide a city as to hide a Christian. It is the

purpose of God that every Christian should be in open view. We are to give light to all that are in the house.” (Source: Sermon, “Upon Our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount: Discourse IV”)

This is certainly true about the Christians in India. They bring light into the darkness around them. Dark and light can’t coexist. In fact, the darker the dark (and it is very dark in India), the brighter the light shines! Those who live for Jesus and reflect His glory are easy to spot. Some are attracted to the light and become lights themselves as they follow Jesus. But others hate the light because it points out their sins and failures. So they try to extinguish it. Like insects which scatter when the rock they are under is removed, so many who reject Jesus as the Light flee from any Gospel witness that comes to their area. Whether they are ignored, opposed or followed, Christians anywhere who live for Jesus will be noticed.

As the spiritual climate gets darker and darker and darker in the USA, the same will happen to us. When we let our lights shine some will be attracted and come to Jesus. Large numbers will flee, and others will oppose the light any way they can. It’s our duty to stand, to let our lights shine clearly no matter the response. It’s not a time to compromise or hide our beliefs. We have the privilege of living in a special time in history and, along with the Christians in India, let our lights shine brightly wherever we are and whatever we do. (July 17, 2017 Doylestown, PA)

Matthew 5:14-16 “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

John 1:4-5 In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

John 3:19-21 This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.

When is it hardest for you to let your light shine? What can you do to have your light shine even brighter to those around you?

BLOG 592: FINANCIAL UPDATE – Good News Bad News

I don’t often do a blog on the financial needs of our India ministry, but I feel it’s important to keep everyone updated at this time. We have about \$5,000 in our fund now but we still need another \$10,000 (maybe more, depending on prices in India in January). Giving for pastors in 2017 has been down from 2016, and in 2016 it was down from 2015. The good news is that giving for orphans, water wells and similar essentials is way up. Our need is for money for books, conferences and pastor training. India needs strong pastors and churches to spread the gospel and help people grow. Without that the social improvements won’t have eternal worth.

Despite sharply rising costs for everything in India, we have been able to bring down the costs of our conferences for the last several years. We have some measures in place to cut back even more in 2018. Still, to continue to provide books and train pastors as we have been doing, we need to grow our financial base. That’s why I’d like to ask you to make this a matter of specific, regular prayer.

I’d like to ask you to tell others about our work in India and the needs there. Encourage your church, Bible Study, Sunday School class or youth group to take us on as a regular mission need.

Talk to others who may be willing to pray and/or give for this work. I will gladly present the ministry to a group or individuals.

Also, we have invested in really improving our web site for our India ministries, and especially for Indian pastors who can access the internet. You can see it at India.ChristianTrainingOrganization.org or click on <http://www.christiantrainingonline.org/our-ministries/india/>. Refer others to this web site for more information about this India ministry. Click on "Giving" on the top bar and you can give through PayPal, or checks can be made out to CTO and mailed to me at 252 W. State St., Doylestown, PA 18901. All donations will receive a tax-deductible receipt at the end of 2017. (July 24, 2017 Doylestown, PA)

1 Corinthians 4:1-2 Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy.

Are faithful with your finances? Do you contribute to the ministries God leads you to support? Pray for them as well.

BLOG 593: IT'S AMAZING WHAT GOD CAN DO

Last year I wrote about the marigolds I planted at my home and how they struggled to survive and reproduce. This spring I planted seeds from last years' plants and they are mature marigolds now! (I could write another blog just about that.) We also had a dwarf daisy last year and I keep the seeds from it so I tried planting them in separate pots. Four times I planted seeds but none ever came up so I ignored the pots. Weeds started growing in them but without water only one plant in each pot survived. Since they worked so hard to grow without help I didn't pull them out. I was curious what would happen.

We were very surprised to return from a recent trip and find those plants were all pansies! All have purple flowers on them. Nancy LOVES purple pansies. We had some last year on our porch. How the seeds survived and ended up in the pots and growing I'll never know. After trying so hard to purposely plant dwarf daises and them never growing, these coming without any help from me are a real treat. Clearly God was working in this to bring this about.

I sit on my porch and look at those pansies and am glad I didn't pull up the ugly 'weeds' that were growing instead of daisies. I think of how glad I am that God didn't give up on me during my ugly beginning years but had the mercy to be patient with me and quietly keep working within me so that one day I could bloom for Him. I hope to bring Him as much joy and pleasure as those beautiful pansies bring me! (July 31, 2017)

Philippians 1:6 He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

Isaiah 35:1-2 The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom. Like the crocus, it will burst into bloom; it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy. The glory of Lebanon will be given to it, the splendor of Carmel and Sharon; they will see the glory of the Lord, the splendor of our God.

Spend some time right now thinking about all God has done in your life. Thank Him for His patience and mercy. Thank Him for not giving up on you but bringing you to this place where you can serve Him. Ask Him to help you bloom for Him!

BLOG 594: HUMILITY AND HOW I ATTAINED IT

I think humility is one of the most difficult Christian virtues to understand, much less produce in life. Every time I think I'm starting to get a small understanding of it something happens to show me I really don't grasp. I recently came across a statement by François Fénelon, written about 300 years ago, that has given me new insight into humility. Read it and see what you get out of it:

It is false humility to believe ourselves unworthy of God's goodness and to not dare to look to him with trust. True humility lies in seeing our own unworthiness and giving ourselves up to God, never doubting that he can work out the greatest results for and in us. If God's success depends on finding our foundations already laid, we might well fear that our sins had destroyed our chances. But God needs nothing that is in us. He can never find anything there except what he himself has given us.

I confuse my own insecurity and poor self-image with humility, when really it is just pride masquerading as humility, and not doing a very good job of it. The harder we try to be humble the less humble we really are! When can one ever say they are growing in humility or have attained a measure of humility? The moment we think we have it, it is gone in pride. So instead of thinking of myself as humble or not humble, the best thing I can do is not think about myself at all. I won't find humility by looking within myself, but only by keeping my eyes on Jesus. And that is also much easier said than done, isn't it? (August 7, 2017 Doylestown, PA)

James 4:10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

1 Corinthians 1:28-29 God 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.

What insights have you learned about humility?

Think of someone you know who is a truly humble Christian. What is it about them that shows humility? What inside of them causes this, for humility is an attitude shown by actions, not something we can produce by acting certain ways?

BLOG 595: WORKING FOR THE LORD, NOT FOR MEN

It's so easy for us to look at what we do for Jesus and compare it to what we see others doing. Then we think we aren't doing much and aren't important. We become discouraged and don't try to do our best any more. Or we look at people doing less than we are doing and take pride in ourselves because we conclude we are doing quite a lot for God. Both of these approaches are wrong. It's really hard to have a true perspective on what we accomplish for God, and viewing ourselves through the glasses of our fallen nature skew our perspective even more. So how are we to view our service to God?

Like craftsmen working on a great cathedral, we have each been given instructions about the particular stone we are to spend our lives carving, without knowing or being able to guess where it will take its place within the grand design. We are assured, by the words of Paul and by Jesus' resurrection as the launch of that new creation that the work we do is not in vain. That says it all. That is the mandate we need for every act of justice and mercy, every program of ecology, every effort to reflect God's wise stewardly image into his creation. (Source: N. T. Wright, Surprised by Scripture)

The workmen who built the great cathedrals of the past have always impressed me. I read of one man who spent much time carving a bird out of stone. It was to be located in a place where it couldn't be seen by anyone looking up from below. Yet the man did his very best because he knew that God above would see his work, and that is all that mattered to him.

Each one of us is carving parts of God's great plan. Only God sees how it will all fit together for His glory and purpose. All we can do now is faithfully serve in the way we are able, knowing that one day we will see how it all fits together. Then we will be glad we did our very best, and we will realize that comparing what we do with what others do is fruitless. We must faithfully do our best in whatever God gives us to do. Truly He sees all we do. (August 14, 2017 Doylestown, PA)

2 Corinthians 10:12 We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise.

Colossians 3:23 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters,

What gifts, talents and opportunities has God given you to serve Him?

Are you tempted to compare your service for God to that of others?

Are you able to be content with what He has given you and faithfully do your best at it?

BLOG 596: NO SECOND CLASS SAINTS!

We are very apt to regard the apostolic saints as if they were "saints" in a more especial manner than the other children of God. All are "saints" whom God has called by His grace, and sanctified by His Spirit; but we are apt to look upon the apostles as extraordinary beings, scarcely subject to the same weaknesses and temptations as ourselves. Yet in so doing we are forgetful of this truth, that the nearer a man lives to God the more intensely has he to mourn over his own evil heart; and the more his Master honors him in his service, the more also doth the evil of the flesh vex and tease him day by day. (Source: Charles Spurgeon, Morning and Evening, July 7)

I'd never quite thought of it this way until reading this quote, but it's very true. The more we grow spiritually the more sensitive we become to our sin and failures. Thus the more we grow the further from God we seem to be because we become more aware of just how far we fall short. Yet somehow we think it must be different for those Christians past and present whom we admire and look up to. But the truth of the matter is that they, like we, saw our own shortcomings more clearly as time goes on. They, like us, would realize all the more the great gap between where they were and where they wanted to be.

That should give us hope. If they felt as we do about the sin in their lives, then the same victory that they had is available to us as well. It is the same God Who called them that also calls us, the same Holy Spirit indwelling in us, the same Jesus in heaven interceding for us. In their day they never would have thought of themselves as anything special. They felt their failures as keenly as we feel ours.

Spurgeon concludes: *We have the same light that they had, the same grace is accessible to us, and why should we rest satisfied until we have equaled them in heavenly character? They lived with Jesus, they lived for Jesus, and therefore they grew like Jesus. Let us live by the same Spirit as they did, "looking unto Jesus," and our saintship will soon be apparent.*

I don't know about you, but it helps me to better face my own struggles knowing that my 'heroes' in the faith have gone through the same thing. It also reminds me that the same resources that were available to help them overcome are available to us as well! So let's follow their example and keep moving ahead for Jesus! (August 21, 2017 Doylestown, PA)

Romans 1:7 To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be his saints: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To God's saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus:

Philippians 1:2 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all God's saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons:

Thank God for all He has done and is doing to make you more like Jesus. Renew your commitment to keep your eyes on Him and live for Him.

BLOG 597: YOU'RE BEING WATCHED!

Philadelphia is only an hour away from where we live so we enjoy taking visitors to see Independence Hall and the Liberty Bell. I'm always struck by the faithfulness of the early patriots no matter how difficult things got for them. I was reminded of Thomas Paine's words on December 23, 1776. "These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands by it now deserves the love and thanks of man and woman." They are a fine example of faithfulness even these many years later.

When I think of the Christians in India and their faithfulness despite persecution and opposition I also am encouraged to persevere. Things continue to get worse for them but they keep their eyes on Jesus and steadfastly serve Him.

The truth of the matter, though, is that all of us are being watched – especially when we face hurt, loss, difficulties and problems. We think God should immediately remove them, but, like with Job, they are our opportunity to let others who are watching see our faith in operation. It's Jesus in our lives! And, yes, more people are watching you than you think, especially when life gets difficult. Instead of feeling sorry for ourselves at those times or wondering why God has allowed them to happen, we should see them as opportunities to let our lights shine so that other others are attracted to the Savior Who carries us through tough times. Always remember: you are being watched. What do people see in you? (August 28, 2017 Doylestown, PA)

1 Peter 4:16 if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.

Job 1:21 "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised."

Job 13:15 Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him; I will surely defend my ways to his face.

When you face life's problems and frustrations, do you see them as an opportunity to trust in Jesus so others can see the difference He makes in your life?

Who is an example of faithfulness to you? To whom can you be an example of faithfulness as well?

BLOG 598: SOMETHING ABOUT ME YOU'D NEVER GUESS

I have a strange practice which I'm sure you could never guess! Perhaps I shouldn't even be admitting it, but the truth is that I weigh myself every morning. I never miss a day! Let me tell you why. It's important because my family has a strong history of high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes and heart problems. An important part of the stewardship of my body is keeping my weight where it needs to be. That means I need to keep myself accountable every day. If I let down for a day or figure I won't weigh myself for a while then it's all the easier to eat the wrong things or too

much of the right things. I need to stay on top of it every single day; I need daily accountability – that's all that works for me.

The same is true spiritually. I need to keep on top of the sins I struggle with every day. I have to hold myself accountable daily, even hourly and minute by minute. If I let go for a bit and figure I'll catch up later things rapidly get out of control. It's amazing how quickly my sins, like my weight, can take off and get away from me. I need to stay on top of them every day as well if I am going to have victory over them. And that is even more important than my weight! (September 4, 2017 Doylestown, PA)

1 Corinthians 9:24-27 *Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. 25 Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. 26 Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; 27 but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.*

How are you doing with your stewardship of the body God has given you? Where can you improve?

How are you doing in your battle over the sins that seem to defeat you? What are you doing to stay on top of them every day? How can you improve?

BLOG 599: GOING DIFFERENT WAYS TOGETHER

We are babysitting our oldest sons 6 children as I wrote this. We are having a great time with them!!! It seems something unexpected always happens, though. Through a strange set of circumstances it became necessary for me to put the 20 month old twins in 2 umbrella strollers and push them a half mile on a windy, up-and-down hill path.

In case you didn't know, umbrella strollers are not easy to push with one hand, especially when another umbrella stroller is in the other hand. Those front wheels have a mind of their own and go any direction they want! I just couldn't get the both strollers to travel smoothly together! It was slow going and very frustrating.

As I was struggling with the strollers I couldn't help thinking of a parallel in my own life when I am trying to go two different ways at once. When I am trying to fulfill my own agenda while also serving Jesus I find the same conflict. Striving to please Jesus while also pleasing myself or those around me doesn't work. I can take either path through life, but I can't travel them both at the same time! Still it seems I keep trying to do so! You'd think I'd learn better by now!

Pushing 2 umbrella strollers isn't something I want to try again. Neither is living for myself while also trying to live for Jesus. I hope I never try to do either of those again! (September 11, 2017, Doylestown, PA)

Matthew 6:24 *"No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money."*

Proverbs 3:5-6 *Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding, in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.*

Can you identify with my stroller struggle? Does it ever seem to you like you are pulled in two directions – following God and doing what you or those around you want? When does that seem to happen?

What can you learn from my attempt pushing 2 umbrella strollers that can help you?

BLOG 600: SATAN IS REAL BUT GOD IS GREATER

(I have been in ministry for 50 years and in spiritual warfare ministry for almost 35 years. God has used both to teach me and make me more like Jesus. I'd like to share some of the lessons I have learned through studying, writing, teaching, counseling and praying spiritual warfare.)

When I started in the ministry nearly 50 years ago I never imagined I'd have a ministry in spiritual warfare. I didn't even know what spiritual warfare was until about 25 years ago. I knew some Christians who struggled with sin and didn't seem to have victory no matter how hard they tried or how much they trusted God. No amount of counseling helped. It seemed like something greater than them was controlling them. One of my own children was being influenced by something evil as well. God in his mercy brought some men into my life who taught me about spiritual warfare and deliverance from demonizing.

Paul says "we are not ignorant of Satan's devices" (2 Corinthians 2:5-11) but I was very ignorant. Since that time I have been ministering to those in need of spiritual warfare counseling. I have read many books and talked to lots of people. God has been teaching me and helping me learn how to help those who are attacked by Satan and his forces.

Being involved in this is very humbling but also very encouraging. Seeing God's power at work in such a real way is simply awesome. Having a front row seat as lives are changed and people who have been defeated begin to live in victory is wonderful to see. The internet opens up many doors to minister and daily I hear from people throughout the world. I counsel them through email and a web site. I thank God for the privilege! I have no idea why He chose me to be trained and gifted in this but I'm glad He did!

Satan really covers his trail in our 'sophisticated' culture where his workings are given psychological terms and explained away as chemical imbalances or some such thing. But in the New Testament when Jesus ran into people with the same symptoms He cast demons out of them and they were instantly healed. As our culture moves further and further from a Biblical foundation the powers of darkness are getting a stronger hold and becoming bolder in their actions. Still, most American Christians don't really take Satan and demons seriously until they run into their blatant work on a mission trip somewhere. The greatest impact this has had on me personally is to deepen my faith in God and to better appreciate the power of the cross. All hail the power of Jesus' name! (September 18, 2017 Doylestown, PA)

2 Corinthians 2:11 in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.

Ephesians 6:10-12 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

How aware are YOU of the enemy's schemes against you, your family and your ministry?

If Satan were to oppose you or your ministry, what kinds of things might he use to discourage and defeat you?

What can you do to have victory over this?

(For more information on the subject of spiritual warfare go to SW.ChristianTrainingOrganization.org or email me at jerry@schmoyer.net and I'll send you a free copy of my Spiritual Warfare Handbook).

BLOG 601: WHAT'S YOUR BACKUP PLAN?

My father always kept an extra car and house key in a magnetic box under his car in case he got locked out of his car or house. I've done that with every car I've owned. Many times it has saved us time and much difficulty. So recently when I realized I had left home without my house key I assumed I'd have no problem getting in because of my hidden key. I counted on it to rescue me – but it wasn't there! The box was gone so it couldn't help me when I needed it! I had total faith in my system, but faith in a faulty system does no good. Can you guess where I'm going with this?

How many people today put their faith in their church attendance, or their baptism, or their parents' faith or their good works? What about those who put faith in other religions or gods or idols or rituals? All will be let down when they turn to them for eternal life, for forgiveness or for peace and rest. Only faith in Jesus will see us through this life and into the next. If you are counting on anything else, if you have any other backup system to bail you out when you need it, it will fail. You'll turn to it but, just like my key, it won't be there. Jesus is the only one you can count on. He'll always be there; He'll never let you down. Can I get an "Amen!" to that? (September 25, 2017 Doylestown, PA)

Matthew 7:21-23 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?' 23 Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

John 14:6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Ephesians 2:8-9 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast.

Is there anything you turn to besides Jesus to help you get through your day? Are you depending on anyone or anything else to be there when all else fails? Do you have a 'backup plan' if it seems God isn't bailing you out quickly enough?

BLOG 602: SIN IS SERIOUS

(I have been in ministry for 50 years and in spiritual warfare ministry for almost 35 years. God has used both to teach me and make me more like Jesus. I'd like to share some of the lessons I have learned through studying, writing, teaching, counseling and praying spiritual warfare.)

While we are quick to state that sin is terrible and must be avoided, too often we as Christians have a very casual attitude to sin. We call it a 'weakness' or 'mistake.' We know we can confess it and be forgiven (1 John 1:9), so it doesn't seem so dangerous. Allowing some sin in our life and then confessing it when we get too guilty can become our pattern. We know we are safe in Jesus. We have our salvation and are assured of heaven when we die, so being holy doesn't always seem important to us. We know we shouldn't sin, but if we do we confess it and move on.

My involvement with spiritual warfare and demonizing, though, has shown me just how serious the matter of sin is. Sin, especially those which open a door for demons to work in a person's life, is nothing to be taken lightly. Involvement in the occult, worshipping or giving power to something other than God, doing anything that opens us to outside control (alcohol, drugs, ungodly emotional experiences, abuse, trauma, etc.) or sex outside marriage – any of these can open a person to demonic presence in their life. Sin in a family can affect others in that family, even several generations later. Often children who have been adopted struggle as they grow up because of

demonic work in them as a result of sin in the lives of their birth parents. Contact with objects or locations that have been claimed by demons can also open the person to their control.

That's why it is important to live a holy life and keep from sin. When we do sin we must sincerely confess the sin (recognize it is our fault and take the blame for it) and turn from it. Then we must fill that space with God's Spirit or the demons will return and bring more with them (Matthew 12:45; Luke 11:26).

In our world pornography has become a big problem and temptation. Involvement in pornography can open a person to demonic influence. Alcohol and drugs can do the same thing. So can greed, fear, anger or any number of sins.

Sin is deadly. Thank God for His victory over sin so it doesn't have control over us (1 Corinthians 15:57). (October 2, 2017 Doylestown, PA)

Romans 6:5-7, 9-11 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. 6 For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with,[a] that we should no longer be slaves to sin— 7 because anyone who has died has been set free from sin. 8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. 9 For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. 10 The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. ... 11 In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. 12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.

When are you most tempted to play around with sin? Which sin is hardest for you to resist? Do you sometimes have a casual attitude to your sin? What should you do to overcome that?

(For more information on the subject of spiritual warfare go to SW.ChristianTrainingOrganization.org or email me at jerry@schmoyer.net and I'll send you a free copy of my Spiritual Warfare Handbook).

BLOG 603: GOD IS GOOD TO US

There are many things I don't know about God, but one thing I do know for sure is that He has been very good to us. Nancy and I are both now retired after completing very fulfilling, satisfying careers. Nancy retired from nursing last week. I retired from pastoring last year. We have income to support ourselves. We have good health. We have a very special love and friendship that keeps growing every day. We have wonderful children who love God, each other and us! We have lots of wonderful grandchildren to visit and spend time with. We have friends everywhere. We have many and varied opportunities to continue ministering to individuals, groups and in India. And after all this we have heaven to look forward to where it just gets better yet! God has indeed been good to us.

I know God gets all the credit for this because when I look at the direction we each were going before we let God take over there is clearly no way we would have ended up here. We know our own individual weaknesses and strengths, and neither would have produced even a fraction of what we now have together. All we can say is "God is good – all the time!" Do you agree? (October 9, 2017 Doylestown, PA)

Matthew 7:11 "If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!"

Psalms 23:6 "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

Psalm 84:11 “For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favor and honor. No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly.”

Spend some time thinking of God’s goodness to you. Write a list of all He has done for you. Thank Him for each one.

BLOG 604: YES, SATAN IS REALLY REAL

(I have been in ministry for 50 years and in spiritual warfare ministry for almost 35 years. God has used both to teach me and make me more like Jesus. I’d like to share some of the lessons I have learned through studying, writing, teaching, counseling and praying spiritual warfare.)

In Bible College and seminary I learned all about Satan and demons. I believed everything I was taught. I had all the correct answers in my head. But nothing prepared me for the reality of facing demonic forces head on. Watching someone change from a quiet, gentle female to someone controlled by anger, hate, great strength, and speaking in a deep male voice gives a taste of Satan’s power. They seeing that personality leave (sometimes amidst screams) and the gentle woman reappear shows God’s power and victory. There is no other explanation.

In India we sometimes run into this as well. Evil is manifest in a person. It can be seen in their eyes, heard in their voice, and felt as the temperature around them gets colder. Without God’s protection we would be destroyed, but because of His power Satan’s forces cannot win.

Just as real is God’s angelic protection and provision around us. He has ways of revealing the reality of His angels and His protective power as well, and we rejoice in them.

I’ve never doubted Satan’s reality and power, but after being face to face with it I developed a new respect for it. But I have no fear, never any fear. Satan’s forces are much more powerful than me and would destroy me in a moment if they could. Clearly I am still here, so they haven’t been able to do that because God is my protection. Satan is real, but God is greater (1 John 4:4)! (October 16, 2017 Doylestown, PA)

Revelation 20: 1-3, 7-10 And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. 2 He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. 3 He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time. ... 7 When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison 8 and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog—and to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. 9 They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God’s people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. 10 And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

Do you fear Satan and demons? If you do you give them power over you. Confess your fear.

Do you take Satan and demons lightly, sometimes wondering if they really do exist and affect mankind? If so you give them the covering they covet so they can work against you without opposition.

Ask God to give you a healthy balance of respect without fear.

BLOG 605: OUR DREAM HOME

Some people today are homeless, but not us. In fact, we could say we have too many homes! We own our house in Doylestown, PA, and we love the house and life there. We also spend lots of time in the homes of our children and feel at home in each of them as well. Nancy's mother lives in Florida and we feel at home when we talk in the door there as well.

We feel very comfortable no matter where we are, but in each one something is missing. In Doylestown we are away from our children. When we are with one of our children we miss our own home and bed in addition to the children who live elsewhere. Florida is great, but it's not our home and none of our children are there.

Are we expecting too much? Just being particular? Or is this just what life is like on earth – nowhere here feels perfectly like home? I must admit that even if all our children and Nancy's mother lived in our neighborhood something would still be missing. God created this world in such a way there is no place that is totally "home." He built into our hearts a desire to look for something better – heaven! Only there will all our family and friends as well, truly be together – not just in the same neighborhood but together in every sense of the world. All our friends will join us as well.

The more we live our lives on this earth the more obvious it is that something essential is missing – there has to be more. I think that is true of everyone who is growing in Christ. God created a wonderful world for us and gives us many great blessings, but He doesn't let it meet all our needs or satisfy everything for an obvious reason: He has something better planned for us in heaven! I'm really looking forward to it! Are you? (October 23, 2017 Doylestown, PA)

John 4:2-3 My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

Philippians 1:21-23 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far;

Psalms 107:9 "For he satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul he fills with good things."

Are you satisfied with this world and the things it provides? What is missing for you? Don't complain about it or ask God to provide what you think you need, instead allow God to use it to turn your heart and thoughts to Him and your future home in heaven.

BLOG 606: HELPLESS WITHOUT HIM

(I have been in ministry for 50 years and in spiritual warfare ministry for almost 35 years. God has used both to teach me and make me more like Jesus. I'd like to share some of the lessons I have learned through studying, writing, teaching, counseling and praying spiritual warfare.)

When I was very young, in my early teens, I developed a strong interest in the paranormal. I read all I could find about this strange, unexplained phenomenon. I was enthralled, yet scared at the same time. I didn't understand what it was all about but wanted to. Now I do. Then I was helpless should anything like that happen to me, now I know I myself am still helpless but in Jesus I can and do have victory. I know it is only God's power and protection that has kept me from being destroyed long ago.

God has enabled me to be able to help others in their own spiritual warfare battles. Actually the only help I can give is to point them to Jesus and help train them in how to avail themselves of His power. I've seen a young lady who was abused early in life and as a result was suicidal and

depressed, unable to change, turn her whole life around and grow to healthy maturity through the presence of Jesus in her life. I've had victory over fear in my own life through His power. I couldn't overcome it on my own, but with His help I have grown in faith and victory over fear.

In India I teach on spiritual warfare in every pastor's conference. I emphasize the truth that our power and protection is "in Jesus' name." Demons don't have to listen to me or you, but they must listen to us in Jesus' name. We are helpless, but Jesus is not. All power is His, and He had promised to make it available to us when we minister in His name and will. (October 30, 2017 Doylestown, PA)

Luke 9:1-2 When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, 2 and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.

Luke 10:18-20 He replied, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. 19 I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. 20 However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

Do you ever feel helpless as you face sin and evil around you? What do you do when that happens?

Do you believe Jesus is with you and is greater than Satan's forces?

BLOG 607: MY NEWLY ADOPTED CHINESE GRANDSON

One of my sons and his wife recently went to China to adopt a 3-year old special needs boy. It was a very moving event for them and for us who followed their progress. I'd like to share two of their blogs with you because they really touched me about God's love for us.

By my daughter-in-law the day before meeting the 3 year old Chinese orphan they were adopting. "We are so looking forward to Monday when we will meet our son for the very first time, but as we wait with eager anticipation, I am also reminded that Monday brings many unknowns and scary things for our new little son. It has been heavy on my heart to pray for him Monday as he will lose everything he has ever known. His caretakers will change, he will be given new clothes, a different place to sleep, a new name, a new language and his whole world will turn upside down. We can see the end result, and it's good. We want to scoop him up and take him out of that orphanage because we know what awaits him at our home...a Mom and a Dad to call his own, loving brothers and sisters, his very own bed, clean clothes, a yard to play in, food whenever he is hungry, and the list goes on and on. But as I said WE can see the end picture, He only will understand that his world is changing and it will be scary and hard. It reminds me of how God sanctifies us, we are often asked or prompted by the Holy Spirit to do hard and scary things and we may want to cling to what we comfortably know, but God urges us to step out in faith and trust Him because He sees the big picture, which is much how this adoption journey began for us in Oct 2015...it was big and scary, but we felt the Lord leading us to pursue it, we had to step out in faith."

By my son the day they first met their newly adopted Chinese son in China: "Matthew 16:24 says you must deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Jesus. Today I couldn't help but think over and over again about our new little son, crying non-stop for an hour while staring at the door his nanny left from, he was losing everything he had, everyone he knew, everything familiar and safe, to go to a place he had never been before. It reminded me of how often I cling to the things of this world to tightly without giving God the room to replace our own fleeting pleasures and desires with what he has eternally planned for us. The love we have for this little guy was the driving force to taking him out of the orphanage, and into a home, a future, safety, and hearing the gospel. My wife told him at one

point during both of their tears "we can only go forward Aaron, there's no going back". Today was a good day to reflect on how much God loves us all and has such better plans than we could ever have for ourselves, what in your life is holding you back from moving forward? We are excited for everyone to meet Aaron, I'm sure you'll see from day one pictures he has quite the little personality!" (October 23, 2017 Doylestown, PA)

Ephesians 1:4-6 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 for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

Can you identify with this little boy whose whole life changed at one moment? He had no say in it, nor a guarantee of how it would turn out.

How does this apply to your relationship with God now? Is anything happening you don't understand or like? Are you able to trust Him with your future even though it is unclear to you at the present?

Can you think of times in the past when change was forced upon you but which God used for your benefit? Thank Him for those times.

BLOG 608: THE WORLD IS DECEIVED ABOUT SATAN

(I have been in ministry for 50 years and in spiritual warfare ministry for almost 35 years. God has used both to teach me and make me more like Jesus. I'd like to share some of the lessons I have learned through studying, writing, teaching, counseling and praying spiritual warfare.)

I'm a bit careful who I talk to about the spiritual warfare ministry in which I am involved. Most unbelievers, and even many Christians, think I am crazy and disbelieve what I say. I don't want God's truth mocked so I don't share it when there is that possibility. The world has its own explanation for evil, guilt, demon possession or oppression and the spiritual battles we face. Their reasons for it are often more unusual and hard to believe than the truth. But they do give man an option, a way of rejecting the reality of Satan and God and therefore denying any accountability they have to God. So they'll buy any philosophy, believe any explanation, take any mental health drug and blame any Christian they can. Haven't they noticed how often these philosophies, explanations and drugs keep changing? Drugs only mask the symptoms, and even then they are forever changing the drug and the amount used. Is this the best the world can do? Of course it is, for the only real solution is Jesus.

Only Jesus' truth sets us free (John 8:32). Only Jesus is always true (John 14:6). It is His reality that protects us from attack and gives us victory (Ephesians 6:14). Only God's Word gives us the certainty we need (2 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 4:12). Do you know the truth? Do you follow it? (November 13, 2017 Doylestown, PA)

Genesis 3:4-5 The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die! "For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

John 8:44 "You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

Revelation 12:9 The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.

What lies and deceptions does Satan use against you? Why does he use them? Do they work?

What can you do to have victory over them?

BLOG 609: THE DANGER IN THANKSGIVING

Thanksgiving is a wonderful time because it is very important to give thanks to God. However, Thanksgiving can also have a bad influence on us. During this time of the year we focus on our blessings, the good things in life, that what we approve of and like. We thank God for them. No problem so far. But when the focus is mainly on what I perceive as good and what I like, then the emphasis becomes on me and how I evaluate how God has treated me. I am far too short-sighted and too comfort-driven to be able to accurately discern what is really best for me long term. Like a little child, I only care about pleasure now. But like any good parent, God has a long range perspective. Suppose He always and only did what was easiest and most pleasurable for me at the moment?

Thanking Him for His blessings is fine, but what about thanking Him for that which we don't like or understand? Isn't He sovereign over that as well? Doesn't He have a good purpose in allowing pain as well as pleasure? Why is He only worthy of being thanked when we approve of His actions? Think of Joseph who spent years in slavery and in prison in Egypt. What about Paul with his painful thorn in the flesh? Or Abraham who prayed and prayed for a child but didn't have one until he was 100 years old? If they had seen God's purpose in them then they would have thanked Him for them as well. Just because we don't see God's plan doesn't mean He doesn't have one!

We, too, can be focused on our entitlement, expectations, indulgences and getting what we think we need and deserve. Then when anything comes into our lives that is less than perfect, we fail to thank Him for it. We must thank Him for everything He does, no matter if we see His purpose or not.

Yes, an emphasis on thanksgiving is wonderful. But it can also be short-sighted and self-centered. Do you want to do something different this Thanksgiving? Thank Him for that in your life for which you have been unable to thank Him! That's REAL thanksgiving! (November 20, 2017 Doylestown, PA)

Romans 8:28 we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Genesis 50:20 You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.

Make a list of things in your life now and in the past that you haven't been able to thank God for. Then thank Him for each and every one, one by one. Remember everything He does is for our good and His glory. Happy Thanksgiving!

BLOG 610: SEEING YOURSELF AS GOD SEES YOU

I've always wanted to have twins. We seemed to have a child every 15-18 months for the first 6 years of our marriage, but never had twins. I even told my wife that if she had twins she could take a year off from pregnancy but it never happened! However my oldest son recently had twin girls. Charis and Chloe are 20 months old as I write this and we are here babysitting them and their 4 older siblings (oldest is 7). I must admit I enjoy watching twins as much as I thought I would! There is something special to be able to see these sisters interact. It's like Wrigley's Doublemint Gum – double the pleasure and double the fun.

These girls look exactly alike. If it wasn't for their different color toe nail polish I wouldn't know who is who. However, God doesn't make any 2 people the same and that becomes obvious when you get to know these girls. Chloe will sit on my lap all day but Charis is always exploring and discovering. Charis eats anything and everything, and a lot of it. Chloe is more particular. Their reactions and responses are different as well. Already it's obvious they are totally different people. That's no surprise – God makes everyone different, we all know that.

So if we know that why do we try so hard to be like others instead of just being the unique, one-of-a-kind individual God created us to be? What causes us to feel inferior to others who differ from us, especially if it is God who made us to be different in the first place? There's nothing wrong with being fashionable, but often we are afraid to think for ourselves and just be the person we were made to be.

If we are all equal in God's sight, why would we think someone else is better than us? Different is just that – different but equal. Different has nothing to do with better or worse. God wants us to be the person He created us to be or He wouldn't have made us that way. We do Him and ourselves a great disservice when we, in effect, accuse Him of being unfair and unjust in the way He created us. If He likes me just as I am then I better learn to just be me and to like me as well! (November 27, 2017 Doylestown, PA)

Psalm 139:13-18 For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. How precious to me are your thoughts, God! How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand— when I awake, I am still with you.

Are you ever guilty of criticizing one of the greatest wonders in God's creation – yourself? Are you content to be yourself, or do you try to 'improve' yourself by hiding some of who you are and acting like someone else instead?

BLOG 611: DUMBING DOWN SIN

We live in a time where God's love is focused on almost to the exclusion of His holiness. Perhaps that is because we focus on our happiness more than His holiness. God's grace, mercy, love, patience and forgiveness are wonderful, very important topics and not to be underestimated. But perhaps sometimes we should be just as focused on His and our holiness, which means keeping from sin. We are well trained as to what to do after we sin, but maybe we should put more emphasis on keeping from sin in the first place.

Jonathan Edwards said, "Any sin is more or less heinous depending upon the honor and majesty of the one whom we had offended. Since God is of infinite honor, infinite majesty, and infinite holiness, the slightest sin is of infinite consequence. The slightest sin is nothing less than cosmic treason when we realize against whom we have sinned."

Instead of looking at sin as to how it affects us we should look at how it affects God. What does He think of my sin? Picture Jesus on the cross – that's what He thinks of it! If we would think of Jesus paying for that sin on the cross perhaps we wouldn't take it so lightly. I emphasize this to the pastors and wives who come to each conference, and while doing so I remind myself as well. I need it as much as they do! (December 4, 2017 Doylestown, PA)

1 Peter 14-16 *As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."*

Habakkuk 1:12 *Lord, are you not from everlasting? My God, my Holy One, you will never die. You, Lord, have appointed them to execute judgment; you, my Rock, have ordained them to punish. Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrongdoing.*

Do you sometimes take a light view to sin in yourself or others? Are there certain sins that you tend to overlook as not too bad? Is there any sin in your life you try to 'dumb down' so it doesn't seem offensive?

Pray and ask God to help you see sin from His eyes. Confess any sins that haven't been confessed and ask God to help you live a holy life.

BLOG 612: GOD SEEMS YOUNGER THAN US

I came across a quote recently that made me stop and think: "Because children have abounding vitality, because they are in spirit fierce and free, therefore they want things repeated and unchanged. They always say, "Do it again"; and the grown-up person does it again until he is nearly dead. Grown-up people are not strong enough to exult in monotony. But perhaps God is strong enough to exult in monotony. It is possible that God says every morning, "Do it again" to the sun; and every evening, "Do it again" to the moon. It may not be automatic necessity that makes all daisies alike; it may be that God makes every daisy separately, but has never got tired of making them. It may be that He has the eternal appetite of infancy; for we have sinned and grown old, and our Father is younger than we." Quoted from "Orthodoxy", by G. K. Chesterton

We seem to always want something newer, bigger and better. Often we aren't satisfied with the same simply joys of childhood. We need something greater to excite and entertain us. It's so easy to overlook a butterfly, a sunset or a little baby because we have become jaded by all the electronic and digital devices and programs that capture our attention.

When we are in India we live a much simpler, more basic life. Plain, basic magic tricks by an amateur such as me are highly entertaining. A free pen is greatly appreciated. A good meal is something to enjoy for a long time. Clean drinking water, a few hours of electricity each day, time to talk to a friend and a safe place to sleep at night – these are the things we come to appreciate. They are the same basics of life we often find monotonous in this country.

Perhaps we should be more like children and better appreciate the basics in life. If God doesn't tire of them, neither should we. (December 11, 2017 Doylestown, PA)

Job 12:7-12 *"But ask the animals, and they will teach you, or the birds in the sky, and they will tell you; or speak to the earth, and it will teach you, or let the fish in the sea inform you. Which of all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this? In his hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all mankind. Does not the ear test words as the tongue tastes food? Is not wisdom found among the aged? Does not long life bring understanding?"*

1 Corinthians 2:2 *For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.*

Can you find enjoyment seen in the same things that happen day after day, like God does?

Can you enjoy the simple things of life, or do you seem too distracted and busy to appreciate them?

What are some of the simple, basic things in life that still bring joy and pleasure? Thank God for them.

BLOG 613: EXPECTATIONS OF GOD

More planning goes into our time in India than into anything else we do. Travel, housing & food, conference locations and schedules, teaching lessons, new magic to use, blogs, finances, book distribution and much more takes a lot of organization and coordination. No matter how well we plan, we always have many changes and adjustments as we go along. We plan as well as we are able but don't expect things to always go as planned. Ministry in India is full of surprises and disappointments. We know that will happen and expect it.

"Accept surprises that upset your plans, shatter your dreams, give a completely different turn to your day and – who knows? – to your life. Leave the Father free Himself to weave the pattern of your days." Source: A Thousand Reasons for Living Dom Helder Camara

In India we are very aware of not being in control of things, but at home we often think our day should always progress just as we planned it. We pray "Your kingdom come, Your will be done," but we live "My kingdom come, my will be done." I need to spend less time trying to get God to do what I want and more time making sure I do what He wants, even if it isn't what I was expecting. Flexibility is the name of the game, not just in India, but anywhere and anytime throughout this life! (December 18, 2017 Doylestown, PA)

Philippians 4:12-13 I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

James 4:13-17 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." As it is, you boast in your arrogant schemes. All such boasting is evil. If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them.

How do you respond to interruptions and changes to your day? Would those who live with you and know you best say you are flexible?

What upsets you most when things don't go as planned? Why do they bother you so much? Why do you think God allows them to happen?

How should you respond next time something upsets your plans?

BLOG 614: ENEMY INVASION

Like many of you, I grew up seeing Jesus' coming to earth as a pleasant, quiet event one evening in Bethlehem. A gentle baby was born to a young couple one silent night. However, as I've studied the Bible and been involved in spiritual warfare, I now see it quite differently. To me, Christmas is God's invasion of enemy held territory. Ever since Adam and Eve sinned and gave ownership of the world's system to Satan, there has been a tremendous battle between God and Satan (Genesis 3:15).

This world is under Satan's control (2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 6:12; Matthew 4:8). If God had not intervened we would die in our sins and belong to Satan forever. But He did intervene – He

invaded enemy occupied territory. He landed behind enemy lines. And how did He do it? With millions of angels? With a trained army ready to do battle? No – He came as a helpless baby, born in a cave to a young Jewish couple. Satan didn't miss the significance of the event, either. That's why he counterattacked by having all the baby boys in Bethlehem killed. And so the battle continued Jesus' whole life, culminating on the cross where Jesus defeated all the powers of death and darkness, proclaiming "it is finished!" The resurrection sealed the victory for all eternity.

So this Christmas remember the baby, but don't miss the significance. God invaded this world in glory and power and it has never been the same! (December 25, 2017 Doylestown, PA)

2 Corinthians 4:4 The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Ephesians 6:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Look at Christ's coming from the angels' perspective, God invading enemy occupied territory as a baby. Praise Him as the angels must have done.

This blog is also being shared with those receiving my India mission updates while we are in India. If you would like to receive these blogs as well go to India.ChristianTrainingOrganization.org and add your email address to "India Blog" and click "Subscribe." Or email me at jerry@schmoyer.net and I'll add you to the list.

BLOG 615: CONQUERING A NEW LAND

Earlier generations of Americans had vast frontiers to explore and conquer. Their persistence and courage have made our country what it is today. We don't have the same frontiers, but we do have tests facing us. One of our challenge lies in navigating through 2018, a place no one has ever gone before. We face it one day at a time, one obstacle at a time.

We did the same thing 365 days ago when we entered 2017. How did you do in 2017? What were your greatest victories? Which were your worst defeats? What would you do differently if you could do 2017 over again? What can you learn from 2017 to make the challenge of 2018 more attainable?

Will 2018 be a good year for you? Of course it will, because God is in charge of it and uses all things for good (Romans 8:28). But that doesn't guarantee it will be an easy year. We know God will be glorified no matter what, but if we have victories or defeats is up to us. We can cut down on defeats and eliminate regrets if we learn from the past. We can't change what happened in 2017 but we do have 2018 ahead of us to do with as we choose. Let's live so that in 365 days, when we look back on 2018, we can see a year lived for the glory of Jesus! (January 1, 2018 Doylestown, PA)

Joshua 1:7-9 "Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. 8 Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. 9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go."

Thank God for your victories in 2017. Ask Him to help you learn from your experiences. Dedicate yourself, and 2018, to Him for His glory. Ask Him to help you as you begin to conquer this new land He has for you.

This blog is also being shared with those receiving my India mission updates while we are in India. If you would like to receive these blogs as well go to India.ChristianTrainingOrganization.org and add your email address to "India Blog" and click "Subscribe." Or email me at jerry@schmoyer.net and I'll add you to the list.

BLOG 616: STAND WITH US IN PRAYER (Prayer Blog)

In a few weeks Nancy and I will be going to India. Last year you received my special prayer emails and prayed for us daily, and I'd like you to do so again this year. If you aren't able or don't want to receive these prayer email just let me know. I don't want to send unneeded emails; we all seem to get so many anyway.

Every year God protects and blesses our ministry in India. That is because people pray regularly and faithfully. I am totally and completely convinced that without prayer this ministry would be nothing. What happens when we are in India is determined by prayer during this time before we even leave. Thanks so much for being willing to pray! God honors your prayers for us, and He blesses and rewards you the same as us for there is no difference, we are all doing our part in this ministry. Thanks!

I feel the main prayer emphasis this year should be to **PROTECT GOD'S TRUTH** as revealed in His Word. Hindus and Muslims violently oppose it. Nationalists hate it as being 'western.' Unbelievers think it is foolish. Satan and his demons do all they can to stop it for it brings light into their darkness. So pray daily that God's truth is protected and goes forth to accomplish what He wants it to accomplish. Specifically pray for:

The truth to be protected from attacks from without:

- safety, protection, good health, wisdom and guidance for Pastor Moses, Nancy and Jerry as we plan, teach and translate the truth
- God to direct our conference locations, housing, food, transportation and sessions
- safe, efficient housing, food and transportation for us and Pastor Moses
- financial costs be kept to a minimum, and God to lead those He would have donate to this ministry

The truth to be protected from attacks from within:

- each one God wants to attend will be there on time, alert and open to God's truth
 - God's Spirit to be clearly present in the teaching, worship, fellowship and encouragement each day
 - God reveal His truth to the hearts and minds of each one who comes so they can learn, remember and apply what is taught
 - no misunderstanding, jealousy, opposition or confusion among those who listen to the truth
 - a desire to read and understand the books they are given and then pass them on to others
- (December 13, 2017 Doylestown, PA)

"Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer." –Romans 12:12

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God." –Philippians 4:6

"Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful." –Colossians 4:2

"Pray continually" -1 Thessalonians 5:17

Please feel free to share with me anything God puts on your heart or shares with you as you think of us or pray for this ministry. Special Bible verses, promises, words of wisdom, etc., are much needed and taken very seriously. Thanks!

BLOG 617: GOD'S PRAYING ARMY (Prayer Blog)

(You are receiving this email because you expressed interest in praying daily for CTO's ministry in India. Its purpose is to help you better know how to pray for us and the ministry there. Please feel free to pass it on to anyone you wish.)

"No one is ever useless to God. No one who can pray is ever useless. There are many people to perform the needed activities, but too few to take the time for prayer." Source Anna Mow: "Two or Ninety Two"

God sets aside a special army of praying believers to go ahead of His servants and prepare the way for them. Then when they begin ministering He uses His army of payers to provide protection, guidance, resources and encouragement. In addition, He blesses and rewards those pray the same as those who go and serve. Thanks for being willing to be part of that army for our 2018 trip to India! (December 19, 2017 Doylestown, PA)

Jeremiah 29:12 'Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you.

James 5:16 The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.

Listed below are our major prayer needs. You can pray for anything else God puts on your heart as well. You don't have to pray for the whole list each day. Pray for a few daily needs as well as our major request each day please. Thanks!!

MAJOR

Broader base for income, prayer – more donor churches and people to support, pray
Plans for upcoming conferences: places, people coming, expenses, etc.

DAILY NEEDS

Wisdom & guidance for Jerry, Pastor Moses
Health & protection for Nancy, Jerry, Pastor Moses
No problems with the Indian government, local groups or individuals in India
The ones God wants to come will come and benefit
Those who attend will understand, remember and apply what they learn
All who receive books will read and apply them
Housing affordable, safe for Jerry, Nancy, Pastor Moses
Transportation within India safe, efficient, economical
Good health, nourishing food for Nancy, Jerry
Magic tricks will work well and be effective
Finances work out: expenses down, income/donations up
Pastor's wives who come blessed, protected

BLOG 618: THE BATTLE (Prayer Blog)

(You are receiving this email because you expressed interest in praying daily for CTO's ministry in India. Its purpose is to help you better know how to pray for us and the ministry there. Please feel free to pass it on to anyone you wish.)

A long time ago I heard it said that prayer is not preliminary to the battle, prayer ***IS*** the battle. Anyone who desires to faithfully and regularly pray with focus and intensity knows what a battle it can be! Our own flesh as well as our enemy work together to prevent or distract our prayer time.

It takes perseverance to overcome. Praying at the same time every day, first thing in the morning if possible, can help. Or, if you have little children, do it first thing when they nap or sleep for the night. Find a special, private location where you can focus and go there every day. Make sure your phone is turned off so you don't hear calls or texts. The world can wait while you are in God's presence! Bring your Bible and paper and pencil or pen. It's good to write things you think to pray for so you can see them answered. You can also jot down other things that come to mind, like something that needs to be done when you are finished praying.

Prayer is a battle, but it is a battle than can be won. It must be won. (December 26, 2017 Doylestown, PA)

Psalm 91:15 "He will call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honor him.

John 15:7 "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

BLOG 619: PRAYER IS FOR THIS LIFE ONLY (Prayer Blog)

(You are receiving this email because you expressed interest in praying daily for CTO's ministry in India. Its purpose is to help you better know how to pray for us and the ministry there. Please feel free to pass it on to anyone you wish.)

Mother Teresa, in "A Simple Path," wrote: "Dying is not the end, it is just the beginning. Death is a continuation of life. This is the meaning of eternal life; it is where our soul goes to God, to be in the presence of God, to see God, to speak to God, to continue loving him with greater love. We only surrender our body in death – our heart and our soul live forever. Yesterday is gone and tomorrow has not yet come; we must live each day as if it were our last so that when God calls us we are ready, and prepared, to die with a clean heart."

So what can you do today to serve God and advance His kingdom, no matter what else is going on in your life? **PRAY!** We can only pray in this life, you know. We won't be praying after we die. It's a privilege and responsibility for God's people this side of heaven. As long as you have life you and, and should, pray. You can touch lives on the other side of the world without leaving your home. Just pray. Pray some more. Keep on praying. (January 3, 2018 Doylestown, PA)

John 15:16 "You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.

John 16:23 "In that day you will not question Me about anything Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you.

PRAY FOR FINAL PREPARATIONS BEING MADE, we leave Jan 11

- for us as we pack and prepare to leave our home here and to minister there
- for Pastor Moses and the others helping in India as they prepare for the conferences, church services, Bible College sessions and other things we will be doing there
- for God to be working in the hearts of those we will be ministering to so they will fully benefit from what God has for them.

Below, and attached, is our daily prayer guide. You can share it with others to pray, but please don't post it on the internet or any place where the locations can be discovered by those who are not friendly to the gospel. I have another list without place names you can use for that. Just ask for it.

BLOG 620: JOIN THE BUCKET BRIGADE

We will be leaving for India in 3 days. We are looking forward to doing what God has for us to do there. I picture my role as that of someone passing a bucket of water to those who will pour it on a fire. For many years fires were fought by people forming a line from the water source to the fire and passing buckets down the line to those on the end who would dump the water on the fire. The role of each person in line was important. I see what we are doing as being part of that line.

Jesus passed the first bucket to His disciples when He commanded them to go into the world evangelizing and discipline others. They would then pass it on to others (2 Timothy 2:2). The bucket has been passed from person to person down through the centuries despite persecution and opposition. It was passed to me when I turned my life over to Jesus while watching Billy Graham on TV in 1956. My Bible college and seminary training started filling the bucket and I've been learning and growing ever since. I've passed what I knew on to others during my ministry in this country, and now I have the privilege of taking my bucket to India to pass the truth of God's Word on to pastors and others there.

The teaching sessions in pastor's conferences and messages in churches and Bible Colleges are opportunities to share what I have learned with others. We give out books that are vital in passing on Bible truth. Our web site is full of great information for those who can access it. We pray for them, encourage them and help in many other ways as well. Those we train take what they have learned and pour the water of God's Word on the fires of evil, doubt, fear and rebellion started by Satan and his forces.

It's a great joy and privilege for me to take this bucket to the other side of the world and pass on to them what I have learned in my life. You are part of that process for your prayers, giving; encouragement and support make it possible. I carry the bucket, but it is all of us working together to make it possible. Thanks for doing your part! (January 8, 2018 Doylestown, PA)

Matthew 28:18-20 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

2 Timothy 2:2 The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

Pray that we would faithfully carry the water of the Word to those in India who desperately need it to fight the fires of the enemy there. Prayer is the main way you can help now!

BLOG 621: HERE I AM, SEND ME! (ISA 6)

In my last blog I talked about how we are all part of the bucket brigade that is taking the truth of God's Word to the pastors in India so they can fight the fires of Satan and advance God's kingdom in that country. I am the one who has the privilege of passing the word on to them in conferences, sermons and books. Therefore I want to make sure I am ready to do the job God would have me do. God doesn't force any of us to get in line to pass on His Word, it is up to us. But there are qualifications to first be met.

In Isaiah 6:1-9 we have the account of Isaiah volunteering to carry God's message to the people of his day. The passage starts with an awesome picture of God's greatness and glory as His

throne in heaven is described (read Isaiah 6:1-4). We can't really serve God until we have a true picture of how great and powerful, how holy and majestic and how worthy of worship and service He is.

When Isaiah sees God's greatness in heaven, he realizes his own unworthiness to serve Him (Isaiah 6:5). He is convicted of his own sin and failure. We can only see ourselves clearly as we see ourselves in comparison to His greatness. That is necessary for us to recognize our need for cleansing. When Isaiah recognized his need for cleansing then God provided it for him (Isaiah 6:6-7). We cannot serve God until we are cleansed. We must be a clean vessel for Him to use, sanctified and set apart for His service.

Now Isaiah is ready to serve. He has met the qualifications of conviction and cleansing. Now he can consecrate himself to God's service, to carrying God message wherever He wants it. God asks for volunteers and Isaiah quickly surrenders to His will (Isaiah 6:8). God never forces us, he gives us opportunities to carry the bucket of the Word to others, but He never forces us to do so. When we make ourselves available He will use us, as He did Isaiah (Isaiah 6:9). Isaiah faithfully served God during the reign of 4 kings, for 50 years. He was one of Israel's greatest bucket-passers, but he suffered terribly. He was rejected, tortured and martyred by being sawn in half lengthwise with a wooden saw. Being a bucket-passer isn't always easy, but what better use can you make of your life than being part of having His Word go where it is needed? (January 9, 2018 Doylestown, PA)

Isaiah 6:1-9 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. 2 Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. 3 And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." 4 At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.

5 "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty." 6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. 7 With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for."

8 Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!" 9 He said, "Go and tell this people:

Where are you in those 4 steps of 1) conviction, 2) cleansing, 3) consecration and 4) commission? Are you available to be used by Him to spread His Word wherever He wants? Will you look for opportunities to do so in your daily life today? Ask Him to give you opportunities, and then make sure you take advantage of them when they come.

BLOG 622: YOUR PART IN THE BRIGADE

I've been blogging about our work in India being like taking part in a bucket brigade delivering water to put out a fire. I get the great privilege of handing the bucket (truth of the Word of God) to the pastors there so they can be equipped to put out the fires of Satan and evil. But I'm certainly not doing this by myself. In fact, I wouldn't be able to do this without the support and help of many others.

Every bucket brigade needs many helpers to repair buckets, supply the needs of those passing the buckets, provide nourishment and protection and help in any way they can. Without them

the line of passers would soon fall apart and be ineffective. That's where YOU come in! You help us do our part by doing your part: praying, giving, encouraging, etc.

I can't overemphasize the importance of prayer to our ministry – or to any ministry. Without prayer we will fail. With prayer we will accomplish what we God wants us to do. Pray for us individually, specifically and repeatedly. (If you would like to receive my email with specific needs which I send to those who are committed to praying daily, email me at jerry@schmoyer.net).

The money you have given is what makes this trip possible. The conferences, books and all we do can't be done without money. So thank you for helping with this! Please let others know about this ministry as well. The list of those who pray and support us is getting shorter so please talk to people, groups or churches about our ministry and needs. Thanks!

Not only do you help support us, but your prayers and giving helps support your own church and other ministries. Your love, compassion, patience and help to those around you also keep the water of the Word flowing where it is needed. There are many ways you can do this through your words or actions. There are plenty of fires around you that bring destruction and need to be extinguished. Only the Word of God can do that, so keep those buckets moving! (January 10, 2018 Doylestown, PA)

1 Corinthians 12:12-14 Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. 14 Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.

What fires in your own life is the enemy using to defeat you: Is there sin, discouragement, fear, unforgiveness, materialism, jealousy, self-pity, depression or any sin that you are struggling with? Spend time in the Word and let God use it to bring you freedom and victory.

BLOG 623: WHAT'S IN THE BUCKET?

We are all part of the bucket chain that takes the truth of God's Word and passes it to other people in this country and elsewhere (India specifically). I get the privilege of passing it to the pastors in India but that wouldn't be possible without your help and support. We've talked about all aspects of that. We haven't talked about what is in the bucket, though. We've said it is the water of the Word of God but let's look at that more carefully. If we don't deliver the right contents to the pastors in India it won't help them, no matter how efficient our bucket brigade works. It's all about the content of the bucket!

Buckets in a brigade must contain water. Empty or half empty buckets don't help, nor those filled with rocks, plants or other materials. It must be water. Those on the front lines in India need God's Word (Ephesians 5:25-27), not human reasoning or the latest philosophies. Delivering social solutions, liberal philosophies, worldly answers or empty promises won't help. These people need to know the facts of the Bible in their heads and how to apply them through their mouth, hands and feet. They need to be encouraged, motivated and equipped to apply the truths of God's Word to obstacles they face in life and ministry.

Water is a basic fundamental element necessary for physical life, just as the Word of God is absolutely necessary for spiritual life. Water is needed for plants, animals and people to grow larger and stronger. The Bible is necessary for spiritual development as well. Both water and God's Word bring cleansing and refreshing. Both quench thirst in a way nothing else can.

Our focus is not on the bucket, those who pass it nor those who offer support. It is on one thing, the contents of the bucket, the infallible, never-changing Word of God. That's what the pastors

and Christians in India need. That's what everyone everywhere needs. So do I. So do you!
(January 11, 2018 Doylestown, PA)

Matthew 4:4 Man shall not live on bread alone but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God."

1 Peter 2:2 "As newborn babes, long for the guileless milk of the word in order that by it you may grow unto salvation."

1 Timothy 4:6—"Being nourished with the words of the faith."

I assume you feed your physical thirst with a variety of thirst-quenchers and seldom go thirsty for long. Is the same true for you spiritually? Spend some time now drinking in the water of God's Word.

BLOG 624: BACK To LIFE! A True Story From India

This article was written by Leanna Cinquanta who ministers in northern India through her group TellAsia Ministries (www.tellasia.org). I got to know her in the early years when I spent time in the north as well. She even visited our church and home one time. I can attest to her integrity and honesty. I print her article here knowing it will bless you and encourage you to pray for God to continue to work in India. I am traveling to India at this time so this blog was written before leaving.)

"Suman was a new believer when she was married off. Her husband, Prakash, was a Hindu. He was not happy with her attending the local church on Sunday, or any other church activities. Suman was berated for her faith, and her in-laws urged Prakash to divorce her because of her faith in Jesus. They tortured her physically, emotionally, and spiritually so that she would stop believing in Jesus. They discouraged her and mocked her badly. Nevertheless, she kept her faith, and even became stronger in the Lord.

"One day, their four year old daughter (right, in father's arms) got ill and they rushed her to the hospital. Doctors suggested keeping her in observation for eight days. On the morning of day nine, she was declared dead. Prakash's eyes filled with tears and he was speechless with horror. Prakash and his relatives blamed Suman for the child's death. They said, "Because you left our traditional gods and goddesses they have put a curse on you. You are the cause of your daughter's death!" Despite the torture and mockery, Suman kept praying that God would do a miraculous work. She prayed and believed that God would raise her daughter from death!

"After four hours of constant prayer, the little girl came alive! The news spread throughout the whole hospital of the dead girl brought back to life! The whole family was there mourning for the deceased girl, and suddenly, amazed and joyful tears broke out in everyone's faces. Doctors were shocked and people who saw the whole scene were speechless. How great is our God! News spread rapidly of Suman and the God who answers prayer. Prakash and his relatives thanked and hugged her for what God had done through her prayers. Through this amazing miracle, many people became followers of Jesus.

"On Sunday Suman and Prakash with their two children went to church and gave witness to how God did a miraculous work in their lives. Today, their whole family believes in Jesus and there is peace and joy in their home." (January 12, 2018 Sent out while traveling to India)

John 11:25-26 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; 26 and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

Luke 7:11-17 11 Now it happened, the day after, *that* He went into a city called Nain; and many of His disciples went with Him, and a large crowd. 12 And when He came near the gate of the

city, behold, a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother; and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the city was with her. 13 When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep." 14 Then He came and touched the open coffin, and those who carried *him* stood still. And He said, "Young man, I say to you, arise." 15 So he who was dead sat up and began to speak. And He presented him to his mother. 16 Then fear came upon all, and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has risen up among us"; and, "God has visited His people."

BLOG 625: WATER OF THE WORD

(I wrote this before leaving for India. Currently we are arriving in India and settling in. I'll send a blog about our trip and arrival as soon as I can.)

My second trip to India, in 2007, was in the summer. How bad can the heat be, right? Well, it was BAD! I remember once being gone speaking in various villages. I was riding on the back of a motorcycle for the whole trip so couldn't take much water, but I seriously underestimated quickly I would become dehydrated in the scorching heat. I was seriously concerned for my health and thought of nothing but getting somewhere to get a drink of clean water. I'll never forget how good it tasted when I finally drank water again.

The Bible uses physical thirst as an example of how we are to thirst spiritually for God (Psalm 42:1-2; Matthew 5:6; John 4:13-14; Revelation 7:16-17). Some things quench thirst better than others. That is true spiritually as well. Nothing quenches the thirst of a dry soul like the truths in God's Word. The world offers all kinds of 'solutions' for man's needs, but none satisfy like Jesus (John 7:37-39). We learn about Him in the Bible, so as we take the Bible and its truths to the people in India their spiritual thirst is quenched as they partake of this "water of life" (John 4:10, 14).

Have you ever been thirsty? I mean REALLY thirsty, so much so that you are desperate for a drink of water? Come to Jesus as revealed in the living Word of God. Do you thirst for Him each day, knowing that only He can meet your inner needs of peace, joy, security and love? Do you drink from His Word each and every day, savoring its life-giving power? Take some time now to do so. (January 13, 2018 Hyderabad, India)

Psalm 42:1 As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?

John 4:13-14 Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, 14 but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

BLOG 626: PUT OUT THE FIRE OF DENIAL

In previous blogs we've talked about how our training pastors in India is like being part of a water brigade passing buckets to the end of the line so the water of God's Word can be poured on the fire to quench it. We've talked about each one of us being part of the brigade and the bucket containing the water of the Word of God. For the next 4 Mondays we'll have spiritual warfare blogs on just what the fire is and how the Word puts it out. This blog will be about the fire of denial.

Satan is a roaring lion seeking to destroy us (1 Peter 5:8). Satan is the ruler of this world (Ephesians 2:2) and opposes everything God does (Ephesian 6:10-17). He tries to keep the whole world in darkness (2 Corinthians 4:4). He and his demons try to accomplish this in various ways.

Sometimes he attacks directly, other times he deceives or distracts, but the tactic we want to look at today is when he tries to work under cover by convincing people he doesn't exist.

In the USA and the West, where everything is looked at 'scientifically,' the existence of supernatural forces is usually denied. Instead, everything is given scientific terms. The cause has something to do with chemical imbalances which can be treated with the right combination of drugs so that the symptoms are masked. In Jesus' day, when He faced the same symptoms, He cast out demons and the people were immediately and completely healed from the root cause as well as the symptoms.

Many Christians in this country deny the existence of Satan, if not with their words then by their actions. They take the ostrich approach and seem to think that if they ignore Satan he will ignore them! Denying or ignoring his existence does not make him go away!

What puts out the fire of denial? The water of the Word, of course. In the Bible, no one talked about Satan and demons more than Jesus. Read any of the Gospels and you can't deny the existence of Satan and his forces. Talk to someone who has been a missionary to a third world country and ask them if Satan is real. For more information on the subject of spiritual warfare go to SW.ChristianTrainingOrganization.org or email me at jerry@schmoyer.net and I'll send you a free copy of my Spiritual Warfare Handbook. (January 15, 2018 Vijayawada, India)

1 Peter 5:8 Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

Ephesians 6:10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

We are not to fear Satan, but neither are we to be uneducated about how he and his demons work against us (2 Corinthians 2:5-11). Do you think you have a balanced approach to spiritual warfare, not overly preoccupied with demons but not unaware of how they work against you, either? Pray and ask God to help you have a balanced perspective of this important aspect of our Christian lives.

BLOG 627: PASS THE PRAYER BUCKET (Prayer Blog)

(You are receiving this email because you expressed interest in praying daily for CTO's ministry in India. Its purpose is to help you better know how to pray for us and the ministry there. Please feel free to pass it on to anyone you wish.)

My India blog yesterday was about a bucket brigade that passes water to put out a fire. I equated those who go as important bucket passers. We pass the water of God's Word to those in the front lines so they can fight the fires Satan uses to defeat God's people.

You who pray regularly for us are support personnel. No bucket brigade can continue for long without those who support them and keep the water flowing. Buckets leak and need repairs, those who pass them need nourishment, wisdom and energy and all need protection from attack. Prayer is what provides these things, for prayer touches the hand of God and He alone can provide these things. He says He will do it in response to our prayers. (January 9, 2018 Doylestown, PA)

Matthew 7:8 "For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

James 1:5 *But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.*

BLOG 628: PRAYER & ANGELS (Prayer Blog)

(You are receiving this email because you expressed interest in praying daily for CTO's ministry in India. Its purpose is to help you better know how to pray for us and the ministry there. Please feel free to pass it on to anyone you wish.)

Prayer is important for many reasons. One we don't often think of is that prayer in some way enables angels to carry out their assignments against Satan and his demons. We know that when someone utters a curse against a believer that demons are empowered by that curse to try to carry it out. The same is true of angels, even more so. Our prayers DO make a difference! You may not be able to go to India to minister and to help us there, but your prayers aid and assist angels as they do what none of us can possibly do. Of course we don't pray to angels but to God. Still, God answers prayers through the work of His angels. And our prayers make a difference in their ability to assist and minister. So don't give up, don't grow weary. Your prayer DOES make a difference! (January 10, 2018 Doylestown, PA)

For more information on the subject of spiritual warfare go to SW.ChristianTrainingOrganization.org or email me at jerry@schmoyer.net and I'll send you a free copy of my Spiritual Warfare Handbook.

Matthew 7:7 *"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.*

Matthew 7:11 *"If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!"*

BLOG 629: NOT ABLE TO DO ANYTHING BUT PRAY? (Prayer Blog)

(You are receiving this email because you expressed interest in praying daily for CTO's ministry in India. Its purpose is to help you better know how to pray for us and the ministry there. Please feel free to pass it on to anyone you wish.)

"This is the true joy of life, the being used up for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; being a force of nature instead of a feverish, selfish little clod of ailments and grievances, complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy." (Source: Seeking Peace George Bernard Shaw) The first time I read this I had to go back and read it again, several times. "A feverish, selfish little clod of ailments and grievances, complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy..." Does that describe me? I must admit sometimes it comes way too close! The antidote, as stated, is having a mighty purpose in life that goes beyond meeting my own wants and needs.

But perhaps your age or health keeps you from some noble function? Or you have little children to care for? Or you must work way too many hours in order to make ends meet? Then what do you do? You PRAY! You can do that anywhere, anytime, even while doing other things. If you don't seem to be able to get in line and pass a bucket then pray for those who do! Pray for those on the end, fighting the flames of hell to rescue others from them. Pray for health, energy, perseverance, protection and needed resources.

You can't do anything but pray? Great! There's nothing better you can do than pray! (January 11, 2018 Doylestown, PA)

John 16:24 "Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full.

John 14:13-14 "Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.

TODAY'S PRAYER REQUEST:

1. Pray God would put on your heart the parts of this ministry He wants you to pray for. Write them down and pray for them. If you would like to share them with us I'd like to hear from you.
2. Keep praying that God accomplishes in my life and yours what He wants to accomplish during the next month.
3. Pray my throat and voice stay sound and healthy the whole time there. The last two years my throat got sore and my voice weak at the start. My daughter (Glory) and son (Tim) have provided information to help prevent it this time. I've followed their directions, but pray God keeps my voice strong.
4. Today we travel to India. We leave home today about 4:15 for the airport. The plane leaves at 9:10 PM from PHL. We fly to Heathrow airport in London and arrive 4:20 AM Friday Eastern Standard time. We have a 5 ½ hour layover there, and then fly 9+ hours to Hyderabad. We arrive there 7 PM Saturday Eastern Standard time which is 5 AM Saturday Indian time. Pray all goes well and safely with our travel. Pray God helps us rest and stay healthy (much coughing, etc., in airports and planes). Pray God would provide opportunities for us to say or do something to help or encourage other travelers.

I'll update you on the trip after we arrive, hopefully Saturday. If I can't it'll be early next week since we travel all Sunday afternoon.

BLOG 630: MOLDED INTO THE IMAGE OF JESUS

We are beginning our first day of conferences today. There are been lots of changes and 'bumps' in the road, but that is to be expected.

This is a great ministry for an energetic, ambitious, outgoing young man who loves to travel and meet new people. If you know me, you know that does not describe me! There is only one reason I do this: I know God wants me to do it. I am committed. It is the hardest, most draining and difficult thing I do.

He knows that I do not have the personality needed for this work, so why does He call me? He gives me the privilege of doing this special work because it is His tool to mature me and make me more like Jesus. A good stone carver has various tools for different processes as he forms a piece of marble into a beautiful statue, so God uses various circumstances in our lives to transform us into the image of Jesus. India is a major tool He uses in my life. Change and growth are painful. I am never more drained or out of my comfort zone then when I am in India. I am never more blessed then when I am In India. It is the hardest thing I do, but the most rewarding thing I do.

This is my 11th trip here to India. I've been thinking about how the current 'me' compares with the 'me' who first came here. I have far less confidence in my own abilities to execute the responsibilities than I did in the earlier years. Who am I to help these dedicated men amidst the challenges and circumstances they face in life and ministry? But I do have all the confidence in the world that God will help me communicate in writing and speaking. God gets all the credit for the wonderful things that happen through this ministry. What I have learned through the years has come by His hand, so even that, I cannot take credit.

God does the same thing in your life. Do you feel ill equipped for what you need to do? Is there something in your life that brings you pain, and God is not removing it? Are you discovering you have less confidence in yourself but more faith in God to take you through the difficulty? God is using it to make you more Christ-like, if you are committed to follow and obey no matter what happens. Then watch Him work in your life! Sculpting is a painful process for the stone, but it makes something of eternal worth.

That is the process. Are you in or out? (January 14, 2018 Vijayawada, India)

BLOG 631: TO ALL GOD'S TIN SOLDIERS (Prayer Blog)

Today is our first conference today. We are in Vijayawada. It's been a difficult start, but God is with us and will be doing great things in the days ahead. However, whoever is praying for me to have opportunities to learn patience and flexibility, please stop! Your prayers are being answered. The following is a blog I wrote on the plane coming here:

When I was a young boy one of my favorite past times was playing with my toy soldiers. They were made of tin and colorfully painted. I would spread them out on my bedroom floor and organize them for the upcoming battle. I would place some as scouts watching the enemy movements; others would be messengers who deliver communications or foot soldiers ready to fight. I would have infantry and artillery. Others I would hold in reserve to quickly move to wherever needed. Still others would watch the flanks or rear of the army. Then of course medical and food staff were also needed. It took a lot of careful planning. Each one had to carry out their assigned task for the army to be successful.

When I was older I went into the US Army and discovered they do the same thing. Now I am in God's army watching Him operate the same way with those who would be soldiers in His army.

Nancy and I may be the ones actually going to India, but He assigns each and every one of you who are committed to praying for us each day a special need or situation to pray for. He burdens you're for some specific request or desired outcome. Make sure you listen very carefully to what He assigns you, and please carry it out. Any army needs everyone carrying out their assigned duties for it to be victorious. That is especially true of God's army.

As major needs arise I will share them with you, but until then faithfully pray for the parts of this God wants you to pray for. We need each of your to have victory in this.

Here's a list to help give you ideas about the kinds of things for which you can pray. Ask God to show you where your prayer focus should be.

MAJOR

Broader base for income, prayer – more donor churches and people to support, pray
Plans for upcoming conferences: places, people coming, expenses, etc.

DAILY NEEDS

Wisdom & guidance for Jerry, Pastor Moses
Health & protection for Nancy, Jerry, Pastor Moses
No problems with the Indian government, local groups or individuals in India
The ones God wants to come will come and benefit
Those who attend will understand, remember and apply what they learn
All who receive books will read and apply them
Jerry's throat and voice to be strong and healthy
Housing affordable, safe for Jerry, Nancy, Pastor Moses
Transportation within India safe, efficient, economical

Good health, nourishing food for Nancy, Jerry
Magic tricks will work well and be effective
Finances work out: expenses down, income/down and donations up
Pastor's wives who come blessed, protected
Get over jet lag (sleepy all day, awake half the night)

Romans 12:4-6 For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, 5 so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. 6 We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us.

BLOG 632: YOU KNOW YOU'RE IN INDIA - 2

Hello friends.. it's Nancy this time...

.Sooo I **wasn't** going to rant about the driving and traffic situation, BUT it gives me so much material to work with I can't resist!. Here goes:

The center of the road is the coveted spot to drive in. Both north and southbound drivers adhere to that sentiment... simultaneously.

Passing is fine on either side of the car, going either direction, at any given time, at any speed. No turn signals required. Honking is optional.

There are no speed limits, but there are random, secret speed bumps that are monstrous and can take your car out in a heartbeat if you fail to slow down in time. Hence brake business is booming!

I have stopped fearing for my life while in the car. I wear blinders.

Only in India do we pray for safe travels that includes avoiding water buffalo (If you are new to this blog, last year we failed to cover that item and were broadsided by such on a 4 lane highway. Not taking any chances this year)

Here are a few from 2106 (if you missed them!)

Driving in India is best suited for those with serious thrill issues and a death wish.

You can identify the type of vehicle behind you by the sound of the horn. (Pastor Moses would be safer with a fog horn!)

Every car has a rear-view mirror but faces the driver so he can comb his hair. No one uses it for anything else

A green light means go, yellow means proceed with caution, red means go faster.

All Indian driving is off-road. (Next car we get for Moses will be from the monster truck competition collection.) (January 15, 2018 Vijayawada, India)

Keepin' it short and sweet

Pray for Jerry's voice. He lost it here on DAY ONE! (sigh)..

Yes, all you medical people, we are doin' it all.. Salt water gargle, high humidity (my room feels like a sauna from the shower... no worries it is only in the high 80's tonight outside. And 90's INSIDE!)

He is taking antihistamines, on voice rest since we left the conference, took a nap on the long ride home, spraying with an herbal throat spray, sucking on lozengers etc. Really? Day ONE?

I'll be in touch again....off to bed

BLOG 633: MUTE FOR A DAY (SO FAR)

It really is a clever plan worthy of admiration. Satan can't keep us from coming to India or having these conferences, so instead it ends up I'm here but can't talk. But, as Jim Hodges wrote me after reading the last blog, "God speaks loudest when we cannot." It isn't my voice saying words, but His Spirit teaching His truth to listening ears and applying it to open hearts that means everything.

The previous few years my voice got very weak during the first week or two in India. We attributed it to the terrible air pollution, dry air from air conditioning and me not being used to speaking so much. This year we planned and prepared ahead for all these things. We brought a multitude of meds and remedies. Yet here we are. After one short easy message the first day this started during our long drive Sunday afternoon. Yesterday what little came out were croaks and squeaks that were barely audible. Today nothing comes out. I communicate by nods and notes. Fortunately Nancy knows me and reads my mind well enough to speak for me in most things.

Today Nancy shared her testimony and pastor Moses' daughter Shekinah, translated. She is a Medical Doctor but is taking 2 weeks to travel with us. She's a real joy and delight. It's almost as good as having Grace with us! Anyway, Pastor Moses read my notes for Studying and Preaching the Bible and Nancy read my notes for Spiritual Warfare from Mark 5 and the Gadarenes. I'm so thankful for Pat Reese painstakingly typing out these lessons word for word from audio recordings of them! Without them I don't know what we would have done. It all turned out quite well thanks to your prayers.

FOR INTROVERTS ONLY (extroverts don't read this no matter how curious you are – you won't understand.) This is the first time in my life I don't have to respond to things said to me, make small talk, keep a conversation going, etc. etc. etc. I must honestly say that's been nice! Its things like that which slowly drain an introvert's battery during the day. I know extroverts recharge on it but some of us do not! There are a few things I would like to say but can't. However not having to say all the other things I should be saying is a tradeoff I'm good with at the moment. I guess it all depends on how long this goes on. I'm glad it's not sight or hearing I have lost though! OK, I know you extroverts have read this anyway (you couldn't resist when I said not to). That's all right; you already thought we were strange!

ON THE NEGATIVE SIDE I'd rather it didn't happen in India because all year long I look forward to teaching these pastors and really love that privilege and opportunity. India and speaking at World View camp is the highlight of my ministry year. My voice should improve quickly, but there may be convenient 'relapses' coming at strategic times in the future, if you know what I mean. (January 17, 2018 Vijayawada, India)

EVERYONE PLEASE PRAY for God's will to be done in this, quick healing for me if possible. Humanly speaking it seems to go better if I do the teaching. But pray that His truth be taken by His Spirit to the heads and hearts of His people.

Pray I'd have wisdom as to when to try to speak again.

I have been praying for years for another pastor to share this burden and work load with me, to take part in this ministry and eventually take it over. Please pray for this also and if God puts someone on your heart talk to them about this ministry and have them contact me.

I know God has things He is doing in all of us through this trip. I already shared that. Clearly this is one of them. Pray I learn all that He is teaching me and respond to all He wants to do in me.

BLOG 634: MUTE FOR HALF A DAY (and counting)

Besides Pastor Moses and myself we have a young, freshly trained Indian Doctor (Moses' daughter Shekinah) and a mature, experienced USA nurse (Nancy). Despite the constant care and almost continual 'treatment' I am receiving, I lost my voice. It is slowly returning today, but very weak and soft. I can quietly speak in a low tone. I can't hit the high notes like I used to. If you know how I used to sing at my best, then you can imagine what I sound like now!

Anyway, my nurse said to rest my voice all day but my doctor said to try a session to see how it goes. So I taught about studying the Bible and preaching sermon this morning. Moses then did the sermon on What Does God Expect of Pastors and Nancy did the one on Spiritual Warfare in Mark 5 like yesterday. Nancy doesn't want to teach but she reads my manuscripted notes and does great! I still do the magic but she does the talking for me. I got the best of both worlds today. I got to teach this morning, but was silent on voice rest the rest of the day.

Despite all this the conferences are going very well. It's God's truth and He takes what He wants and applies it to whom He wants. I miss being fully involved in the teaching, bonding with the people and connecting spiritually and emotionally with what is happening. I am tired, weak and feeling a bit "out of it" so these days pass in a bit of a cloud. I guess waking up at 3 AM every day despite using sleeping aids that worked other years contributes to that!

Tomorrow I'll try to do 3 sessions: role play Peter and teach lessons from his life, then do the Bible Overview, Old and New Testaments. It's the last day so we close a bit early to give out books, hear testimonies, etc. Pray I'll be able to do it (although I guess by the time you get this the day will be almost over). Saturday we have a day off to do whatever we want then Sunday we go to several churches but it's still easier than the conferences. Next week we have a conference every day but that is still easier than conference days. Then we begin our final week finally/already. (January 18, 2018 Vijayawada, India)

BLOG 635: UNMUTED

It seems God has unmuted me – at least enough to do the sessions today. My doctor and nurse tell me to be quiet and rest my voice all the other time so I gladly obey! I can talk, but weakly. I have no volume and what I can say is very low. So it seems I have the best of both worlds! It's interesting how things turn out sometimes. I do feel badly for Nancy, though. She is lonely with one-sided conversations and misses our interactions. I think I'll be talking with her tomorrow, our day off. (Comment by Nancy: "Yeah! We have off tomorrow, Saturday. My plan is to sleep IN and keep Jerry on voice rest.")

I dressed as Peter today, then did a double session on the Bible Overview, tracing the plan of salvation through the whole Bible. It was very, very well received – quite enthusiastically I must say. They listened attentively for hours of teaching and magic. We are facing one 'problem' at the conferences so far, though. Many more pastors are coming than expected. We had 200 at the last conference and 230 at this one, far more than expected. That really fills up the rooms and has some far in the back. It also means we run out of food and have to get more and make another meal for those who missed eating the first time. In addition, we run out of book so we have to transport more back to the area later. Of course the cost goes up for more books, food and travel money for more people. It already looks like we'll be well above budget this year. But if this is the worse problem we have we are in good shape! Despite everything else, we are reaching many more pastors than we expected. We seem to be developing quite a good reputation in this part of India.

To our amazement and joy we found another pastor and wife from our area that we know in our restaurant for breakfast this morning. I had helped him prepare for his first trip to India 4 years ago and he has been coming ever since. He teaches in a Bible college for a week. The Indian man who brings him also lives in our area of PA. He and Moses know each other from the past. In fact, his hotel room is next door to us. We're in room 209, he is in 208 and Moses is in 207! That definitely is a God thing!

Thanks for all the prayers and encouraging emails to do our best, whatever we can, and trust God to use it. Thanks! In closing I'd like to throw that back at you for you, too, need to do your best no matter how poorly it seems or what difficulties you face. God will use it anyway. And there is nothing you can say that is worse than not saying anything! (January 20, 2018 Vijayawada, India)

Isaiah 55:11 so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

BLOG 636: ARE WE THERE YET?

Today in the car, Moses's daughter was lamenting about her developing homeland, India. She went to medical school in the Ukraine for 4 years and got a taste of western culture and some common amenities. I have only been here 4 years now, but I told her about the amazing progress I have noticed:

- 1 - Major 4 lane highways with overpasses are in progress and each day we see construction at work.
- 2 - The sewers are covered in the cities (previous they were all open – ECK !)
- 3 - Very few mosquitoes, even in the “out houses” we use (they carry malaria)
- 4 - Fewer wild street dogs (they also carry diseases & rabies etc. and are definitely NOT friendly pets)
- 5 - Almost no random cows walking around in the cites (we did see 2 yesterday, so I couldn't say none)
- 6 – I saw/heard 2 ambulances today. Previously, they were non-existent, so maybe signs of increasing medical infrastructure.
- 7 – More children have access to education in English in the villages. Previously the schools taught in the native Telugu language and it did not prepare them for high school, let alone college or even a business job.
- 8 – No more women and children using roadsides for bathrooms. The men still do routinely (eck! again)

I am sure there is more progress but these are major improvements in an ancient culture in 4 short years. The next generations of Indians are going to be FABULOUS! They are smart; they are tired of the inefficiencies and old ways of government. The educated see honesty is necessary for getting work done. What a bright future. It just isn't here yet. (January 21, 2018 Vijayawada, India)

Love Nancy

BLOG 637: PUT OUT THE FIRE OF DECEPTION

Last Monday I talked about Satan's tactic of covering his actions by encouraging people to deny his existence. Our bucket brigade is taking the water of the Word to the pastors and Christians enabling them to quench the fire of demonic opposition. We bring the truth of Satan's power but also more importantly of Jesus' victory over him (1 John 4:4). We also bring God's truth against the deceptiveness Satan uses.

Satan allows himself to be portrayed as more of a superstition from the Middle Ages than a reality today. He is seen as a vague force in the past, not active today and someone we don't have to worry about. He is a little man in a red suit with a pitchfork. He is seen as a joke. Halloween plays right into this with all the darkness and death and evil portrayed in fun, harmless ways. Because of this, many are deceived into believing that he is weak.

Other people in places like India are deceived into believing that he is too powerful to overcome. There Satan manifests his evil power in any way he can so that he controls people by fear. Demonic displays are frequent and convincing. His reputation as a power that cannot be defeated is well established.

Only the water of the Word can quench the fires of deception, for it alone show the truth. It shows that Satan is powerful but not all-powerful (Ephesians 6:10-17) and that God is greater (1 John 4:4). It also show that he seeks to destroy us like a lion seeks to destroy his prey (1 Peter 5:8) but that he can't defeat believers and that God will ultimately prevail (Luke 10:17-19). Satan knows this; we need to know it as well. (January 22, 2018 Vijayawada, India)

Revelation 12:7-9 Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.

In what ways are you open to deception about Satan? Do you think he will leave you alone if you ignore him? Or do you fear him and what he might bring into your life? If either of these is trues, confess them as sin and read the verses I've referred to so you can see God's truth.

For more information on the subject of spiritual warfare go to SW.ChristianTrainingOrganization.org or email me at jerry@schmoyer.net and I'll send you a free copy of my Spiritual Warfare Handbook.

BLOG 638: THE BLESSING OF PURE WATER

Water in India is a big deal. They don't have enough, and most of what they have is unhealthy. Visitors to India, and those who live there as well, need to be very careful of what they drink. Pure, clean water is a precious commodity, not to be taken lightly as we do in this country.

Water was a big deal in the Bible as well – for the same reasons. It is mentioned 722 times in the Bible, from the very beginning (Genesis 1:2) to the very end (Revelation 22:17). Water in the Bible is used as a picture of God's Word, that which quenches the thirsty soul of man (Ephesians 5:26; Isaiah 55:10-11). This is what we, in the bucket brigade, carry to the pastors and Christians in India so they can spread it where it is needed.

Water is also used as a picture of purification and cleaning (Ezekiel 36:25; Hebrews 10:22; John 13:10). This comes from reading and applying the truths of God's Word (John 15:3). In addition, water brings deliverance and rescue. Moses was delivered by the waters of the Nile and Noah, by the flood. It is God's Word that tells us of His deliverance of us from sin and Satan.

Finally, water speaks of blessings from God. Clean water in India is a great blessing, both physical and spiritual water. Jesus' first miracle involved water (John 2:7-11), as did other miracles of healing (John 9:1-7; 5:1-15; Mark 4:35-41; Matthew 8:23-27). God miraculously brought water from a rock for the Jews (Exodus 17:5-6). Rain is a blessing and shows God's goodness (Job 5:10).

Water cleanses, it sustains, it blesses, it nourishes. So does the Word of God. What a privilege it is to bring clean drinking water to the people of India, but even more to bring the water of God's Word! Are you using it every day? Do you recommend it to your friends? Spend time in it today and every day. (January 23, 2018 Vijayawada, India)

Isaiah 55:10-11 As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

John 13: 10 Jesus answered, "Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you."

BLOG 639: A LIFE WITHOUT SATURDAYS OR SUNDAYS from Nancy

Hello all!

Another day in India. But today, Sunday, is kind of strange. Imagine a life with NO Saturday or Sunday.

Friday afternoon comes and there is no anticipation of a day off. No Friday night plans with fun friends. No relaxing. No Saturday night date night. No Sunday morning breakfast in bed or church. Sigh!

Nothing defines the week. Monday through Friday just rolls into the same school and work days on Saturday and Sunday. Everyday there is school and work. The students have many Hindu holidays, maybe 3-5 /month, otherwise, business as usual. Business, especially restaurants, are even MORE busy during the holidays. People tend to work 6-days/week. Young people LOVE to work for American companies because that gives them 2 days off /week, yes, Saturday and Sunday.

I can't IMAGINE what we would do without a day of rest in the states. Our Pastor here works on an Indian schedule of everyday is a workday. Sunday is the day to preach, visit the slums churches to preach, visit the leprosy colony to give out food. It is even MORE of a ministry day. No wonder the average life expectancy is 65 yrs.!

I am sooo glad God instituted a day off. The Ten Commandments calls it "Remembering the Sabbath Day and keep it Holy" (set apart from other days of work.) Fortunately Christians are NOT under the Jewish law, but the principles of honoring God one day of the week and resting is a real blessing. It is not a law but a gift.

We have required our Indian pastor to schedule a day off approximately every 6-7 days. In the early years he would schedule an arduous 6 hr. commute to the next town. (Driving here is both dangerous, scary and a rough ride. Hopefully, we have a real bathroom in those 6 hrs. (Think dehydration prior to all road trips). This year the "madam" (AKA - ME) wanted a REAL day off. I got it yesterday and it was a delight.

It is amazing how much more energetic, refreshed, rested, tolerant, and gracious you can be when you are rested! Even athletes know that their bodies cannot perform at their peak without down time. How much do our minds and emotions need rest?

I am thanking God today for a restful Saturday and His encouragement to keep this gift each week! Obviously, not ALL cultures enjoy this blessing.

Enjoy your next day off... be intentional. And schedule it! (January 23, 2018 Vijayawada, India)

love Nancy

Exodus 20: 8-11 *“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.*

How are you doing at keeping a day of rest? I think it's one of the most common sins among US Christians, along with gluttony and greed. (Jerry wrote that)

BLOG 640: GREAT EXPECTATIONS

Hello all..... it's ME (Nancy) !

Yesterday was a tad rough..... new place (well actually they all are new places except one). The issue is that pastors have low expectations of conferences from poor prior experiences. They tend to arrive late because of the low quality of conferences offered in the past. The 2nd day is always better, and more pastors come. After the first day, they talk to their friends and tell them how good it was, and more come the 2nd day and arrive on time.

Yesterday here were only 3 people there at starting time (10 am). One and a half hour later, at 11:30 am, 35 were there. We stopping singing (yes singing ALL THAT TIME) and Jerry started. By lunchtime there were 50.

They are not used to sitting and taking notes, etc. Yesterday there were many environmental distractions. Loud music outside, car noise etc., but somehow Jerry keeps plodding along and finishes strong. The younger pastors do the best with paying attention and focusing despite the distractions.

Today was entirely different. At 10 am there were 30 people, Jerry started speaking at 10:30 am and the number doubled to 65. At 11:00 am the number doubled again to 120. Till the last morning session started it capped at 135. Now the room was crowded.

Today they were attentive, focused, writing notes and engaged! It is common that some leave after lunch and don't return. Today almost all returned and on time! It was very obvious they were captivated by the presentation of Apostle Peter (Jerry dresses in costume and teaches in the 1st person, as if he were Peter). They were even answering the rhetorical questions aloud! It was evident that something had changed....their expectations!

I wondered how that is for us also. How our expectations of God, others and ourselves shape our lives. We create disappointment when others fail to meet our expectations. We discount God when we doubt His goodness and can't trust Him.

But mostly I am thinking of our own distorted expectations of ourselves. Some of us seem to hold a standard so high that we never enjoy life. We are always feeling like a failure, never good enough. Perfection is slow suicide, counterproductive and robs life of the joy – always striving and never attaining. Only God is perfect, hence the need for a Savior.

I suspect there are a reasonable number of us that have the opposite problem. We expect very little from ourselves. We are defeated before we start. We don't dream. We don't set goals. We don't aspire. We just plod in day-to-day existence always in survival mode. (January 24, 2018 Vijayawada, India)

Jesus said, ***“I have come to give life and life to the fullest” John 10:10*** and again ***Philippians 4:13 says, “I can do all things through Christ Who strengthens me.”***

Professor Howard Hendricks said, "Nothing is more common than unfilled potential." Where are you? Are you always striving with no rest in your heart? Or are you not seeking God's plan and purpose in your life?

Ask Him. Have great expectations. With His help, He will fill your life to the fullest.

BLOG 641: IT WORKS LIKE MAGIC

It's hard to describe the amazing impact my magic tricks have on the pastors here. They make an impact far beyond anything I could have expected. I'm known as the "American who does magic tricks." That is one of the draws that brings them, and how they distinguish my teaching from other conferences. Magic is not an end in itself, but a means to an end. It drives home my main point in a solid, impressive way and helps them remember it for years to come.

I use about 25 tricks in a 2-day conference. A trick has to be large enough to be seen by a big group but small enough to transport to India, it has to be culturally relevant, not use English words or culture and clearly reinforce and explain the point I am making. And, of course, it has to be easy enough to do correctly time after time. Planning which one to use with which talk is often a challenge. In a place without any way to use other kinds of visuals, magic tricks really makes a great difference. The tricks work well because the people here are trusting. They have existing presuppositions that are incorrect, so the end result surprises them.

We, too, have to be careful where we put our trust. We must make sure our presuppositions line up with God's Word. If not, we'll have surprising results as well – and not good ones, either. (January 25, 2018 Vijayawada, India)

Proverb 3:5-6 Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

What do you put your trust in when making choices and decisions? Do you ever make ones you regret? What caused you to make the wrong choice? What should you do differently next time?

BLOG 642: NANCY'S TURN

I have been teaching a full schedule at about 85% voice/volume. Much better, but Nancy says I sound like a TB Clinic patient when I wake up..LOL!

Now it's her turn to be sick. Yesterday it seems Delhi Belly arrived in her stomach. That is India's version of Montezuma's Revenge. So today she stayed back at the hotel with Shekinah and rested, drank Gatorade, ate bananas and took medicine. She is sleeping a lot!! On the positive side, there's nothing like India stomach problems to help one lose lots of weight fast!

I feel really badly for her. She helps and takes care of me and everyone else, now she gets sick. And I can't even be with her – not that I'm a great help to her but I do try.

We completed another conference today. It went very, very well. The men wanted us to have another session when it was all over (at the last conference we did add an extra session because they wanted more). We didn't have time today. They wanted us to come back very soon so Moses told them we didn't have money for food and travel. One man volunteered to pay for travel for the pastors who needed it! So I guess that means they are pleased with what we do! I hit them very hard on their need to be better husbands and Peter (I dress as Peter) really challenges them about their pride. Still they respond very positively. I guess they know the truth when they hear it.

We have a one-day conference tomorrow so we can have off Saturday when we travel to Hyderabad. It's be a LONG day with almost twice the sessions we usually have – 2 days in one. (January 26, 2018 Vijayawada, India)

BLOG 643: WHAT GOD EXPECTS (Conference Sessions 1)

The first session of every conference, including my first book, describes what God expects of pastors, thus the title “What God Expects of Pastors.” We may have expectations of others and ourselves but what really matters is what God expects of us. I think this is very important as to understand. He is the one we are to serve and please, not ourselves. And He alone knows what is most important.

God expects us to use the gifts He personally gives to us. We shouldn't try to be like someone else. He expects us to continue to grow spiritually. He expects pastor/ shepherds to protect His sheep from false teaching, harmful practices and equip them to have strong faith. God expects us to mediate the Word regularly so we continue to learn it and grow. He expects us to take what we have learned and teach it to others, so they grow as well. He doesn't expect a pastor to do everything himself but to train others also. He expects us to serve by doing what is best for them, not just what they want at the moment. The most important people we serve are our families. Our wives are our number “one sheep” then our children.

It's very important for all of us to know what God expects of us. That's why I start every conference with this session. The target we shoot for in life is to be and do what God has planned for us. If we don't know what we are shooting for, we will never hit the target! (January 27, 2018 Hyderabad, India)

1 Corinthians 12:27 Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

1 Corinthians 4:2 “Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.”

Make a list of what God expects of YOU. Be as specific as you can. Ask Him to help you in areas where you are weak.

(For free copies of this book go to India.ChristianTrainingOrganization.org and click on “Download Books.” To **listen to an audio recording, watch a video recording or read the manuscript** of the session click on “Conference Sessions.”)

BLOG 644: A GODLY MARRIAGE (Conference Sessions 2)

Marriage and family life in India is much different than in the west where we have a tradition of Bible values to influence us. The husband wife relationship in India is far from what God describes in the Bible. It's important to train pastors in God's truth concerning the family so they can live it and show others how to do the same. For this reason our second conferences session builds on the first when I teach that God expects pastors to put their wives and children before themselves and the church.

“Marriage and Ministry,” the book and the conference, explains what the Bible means when it says husbands are to have sacrificial love for their wives and wives are to have submissive trust for their husbands. I also talk about how they should work as a team in raising their children and ministering to their church. This subject gets more comments after the conference than any other for they are very glad to learn these things. They say they had no idea about this and will apply it to their own marriages and families. Yesterday one man said his marriage was “broken” (separation) but God

showed him he needed to forgive his wife, apologize to her and love her like Jesus loves him. We follow up by giving everyone a book going into more detail using Scripture references.

A man can't minister if his marriage and family are not following Biblical principles (1 Timothy 3:4-5; 1 Peter 3:7). In every country in the world marriages are attacked. Because a Christian marriage is a beautiful picture of Jesus and the church (Ephesians 5:25-33), it needs to be a good example of that in India as well as the USA. (January 28, 2018 Hyderabad, India)

Proverbs 18:22 He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the Lord.

Psalms 127:1 Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain.

How is your relationship with your mate and children? Does it reflect Jesus to the world around you? If you don't have a mate or children, think of those who do and pray for them.

(For a **free copy of this book** go to India.ChristianTrainingOrganization.org and click on "Download Books." To **listen to an audio recording, watch a video recording or read the manuscript** of the session click on "Conference Sessions.")

BLOG 645: VISIT AN INDIAN CHURCH SERVICE WITH US

I thought you might like to come visit an Indian church service with us. There are many variations but I'll describe Bethel Prayer Church in Hyderabad. We come here every year. I've preached at least 30 messages here. The people are very familiar and it feels like our second home church.

We walk down a very narrow, crowded alleyway canopied by nests of electrical wires and hanging laundry. We enter a small apartment building passing the open doorways of the first floor tenants. The tenants initially stare with their big brown eyes, but quickly smile when a cheery American grin appears. You can smell breakfast cooking in their kitchen just steps away. There is very little privacy in India. Life is lived in close quarters, with few open common areas. You can hear personal conversations easily.

Church is on the second floor and the roof is used for children, fellowship meals, sewing classes and special meetings. At 9 am, Nancy teaches Psalm 1 to about 10 college students that understand English. At 9:50 Pastor Moses and his wife pray. Five people are present. They start singing, accompanied by tambourines, loud drums and equally loud PA system. There are no noise ordinances or zoning laws. At 10:35, 40 people are present. Slowly, people trickle in and will continue right up to about 15 minutes before service is over. There are 75 women, 45 men and 15 children 3 hrs. later. It is a small room about 700 sq. ft. There is a continual shifting forward of women sitting on the floor mats to make more room for the late arrivals. The pastor's wife often prompts this. Somehow they all fit! Older men and women, aka Nancy, sit in the back on plastic patio chairs. The men are on the left and the women are always right (Pun intended). Spillover is allowed, if necessary. Children move about freely, but they don't seem to distract worshippers. The atmosphere is casual but orderly. Singing and praying is exuberant!

We all stand, read Psalm 143, pray, and sing again, ending with various people standing to pray aloud. Pastor Moses introduces the visitors, welcomes everyone, there is special music (a man or group of young girls) and at 11:05 I start speaking. The children go upstairs for a lesson. I spoke about "Is Jesus God?"— Matthew 16:13-18 with Pastor Moses translating. At the close (11:50) he gives an invitation and several hands go up and he spends 10 minutes explaining the gospel to them and summarizing my message.

Every Sunday they take the Lord's Supper. During the serving of the juice they sing "There Is A Fountain Filled With Blood" in Telugu. It's great to recognize a tune. Next is the offering. In the early

years, the offering included tins of rice. Now it is currency. Lastly, the elder reads a list of announcements.

They have a closing prayer, benediction and always close with singing "Showers of Blessing" in Telugu. They are done at 12:40.

It's very touching to sit in the front and watch everyone sitting on the floor, cross-legged, for almost 3 hours. Small children come equipped with a bag of chips. Mothers hold babies in their arms or they manage to sleep on the floor, despite the volume. I don't understand most of what is said, but the spirit of the people seems deeply intense and sincere. When church is over most of the people come to us to lay hands on them and pray for them. That is a great joy and awesome responsibility, one of my most rewarding times in India.

After talking, people drift away and we leave. They'll be back next Sunday and attend church Indian style! (January 28, 2018 Hyderabad, India)

Hebrews 10:25 Do not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Are you faithful in your church attendance? Do you fully participate in all that is said, sung and done during your worship service? It's a privilege we have in the USA that most of the world does not share!

BLOG 646: A PARTNERSHIP MADE IN HEAVEN (by Nancy)

Pastor Moses and Jerry are truly a God-appointed team. They are two very different men on every level. Jerry is 71 and Pastor Moses is 46. Jerry and I could be his parents. Jerry is an American born in a small city to a Christian family. Moses is an Indian born in a rice patty village to Hindu parents. Jerry is 100% introvert. Moses has a chunk of extrovert and is an outgoing people person. The circumstances in which they met, networked together and formed a common bond and vision, is totally God-orchestrated.

They synchronously function in tandem. They simultaneously adjust to unexpected changes. They sometimes even think the same things. Despite the huge cultural differences, God makes it work. It is truly the work of the same Holy Spirit in very different men on the opposite sides of the world. Except for me, no one works better with Jerry than Pastor Moses. Go figure?! (by Nancy Schmoyer)

ON THE LIGHTER SIDE:

You know it's time to come home when:

Your breath smells like tuna

You are down to 1 oatmeal pack

You daydream about your former Italy trip while Jerry is teaching

The restaurant cook greets you in the morning with, "2 scramble eggs Madam?" (I've been here too long!)

You don't flinch at the sight of wild pigs at your car door when you attempt to get out

You routinely reach for the water bucket on the bathroom floor instead of using the non-functioning flush handle

You consider your own homemade ice tea the treat of the day

You are counting the number of sleeping pills left in the suitcase

(January 29, 2018 Hyderabad, India)

STATS: Conferences 105, conference days 221, conference sessions 783, church sermons 178, pastors in attendance 6,500, wives in attendance 2,200.

Conquering the Indian Bathroom:

Maybe this is TMI or too much information... and it is only for the ladies!

Rule #1- Never go anywhere without toilet paper. I brought 2 rolls from home. I confiscate any random roll I find in my hotel or restaurant bathrooms. Once this trip I prayed, "Give us this day our daily toilet paper" Fortunately, God delivered in time!

Rule #2 - The toilet is going to be a hole in a closet - under good circumstances. If by chance it is an English toilet, don't assume it flushes - that's what the bucket on the floor is for (hopefully it has water in it).

Rule #3 - Stay dry and clean. It is of high priority to harness all the fabric of my Indian attire. I juggle my bathroom bag that includes toilet paper, hand wipes and plastic baggies for the soiled paper. Next item to juggle is swatting the mosquitoes. Lastly, I'm trying to keep everything dry and clean. No easy task.

Sometimes it is easier just not to drink.

Men truly have an advantage in India. (by Nancy Schmoyer)

Conquering the Indian Bathroom - Part II:

Do you notice my reoccurring theme? My semi-preoccupation with this ridiculous bathroom issue? The problem is that using facilities is a frequent, daily necessity. I truly would avoid it if at all possible.

Today, I was grateful for the rusty bathroom door lock. "Interrupting madam" by an unsuspecting Indian male would be a national tabloid scandal. So I was glad for the security... but this time ... too much security!

Upon attempting to exit the bathroom, I realized the door was very stuck, even after repeated attempts to jiggle it loose. Stuck in the outhouse! Really?? Oh, this can't be happening! Panic washed over my fragile emotions. Do I call out? (No, SCREAM OUT!) Do I patiently wait until someone knocks/attempts to enter? "Oh, God, please." Just then the Holy Spirit gently instructed me, "push the door closed tighter." I then tried sliding the lock. Instantly it easily opened.

Isn't it wonderful God is the God of details? He sees. He cares. He responds. I just needed to ask. (by Nancy Schmoyer)

Isaiah 41:10 Fear not for I am with you always (even in locked outhouses).

BLOG 647: PRIVACY

Privacy is an interesting concept. Currently, Americans have court cases deciding how much the government can intrude on our private life, conversations, emails, etc., to protect the nation's security in this terrorist's age.

Here it is totally the opposite. It is acceptable to peer over someone's shoulder and read personal emails. Asking your age or income is common. But discussing intimate topics is private and inappropriate. I was able to have a candid conversation about Indian sex education and wedding night issues in arranged marriages with Moses' MD daughter. She is the exception.

To protect our privacy we lock our suitcases each day in our room. I am not necessarily afraid of theft, just curious staff. The cleaning staff always "rearranges" my personal items left sitting out. They throw away any leftover, unused or saved food and water if I don't secure it away. Even my trashcan is a target of curious staff. I shred all notes, especially if there are any addresses or phone numbers. Everyone wants American contact information and to be Facebook friends.

Life here is lived outside with no privacy or personal space. Women prep and cook food outside. Children wash outside. People brush their teeth, clean clothes and even socialize outside. Men often toilet outside. Many sleep outside.

Business is conducted from small, single garage-size booths sharing walls along busy roadsides. Church is often an open air building as well. Again, close quarters.

Inside is for schools, sleeping and eating away from street dust and the continual stream of people, noise and activity. As the middle class grows, private housing is increasing and privacy is being established.

Americans are private. Life is inside. When visiting Pennsylvania, Pastor Moses asked, "Where are all the people?" I looked outside my front window and realized how quiet the street was compared to India's cities and communities of any size. All I could say was, "They are inside."

So each morning most everything gets packed up and locked. So far, so good. But I probably make the cleaning staff giggle when they see "Madam's" undergarments drying in the closet. (by Nancy Schmoyer) (January 30, 2018 Hyderabad, India)

Matthew 14:22-23 Immediately He made the disciples get into the boat and go ahead of Him to the other side, while He sent the crowds away. After He had sent the crowds away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray; and when it was evening, He was there alone.

Even Jesus needed privacy. Do you have private times of your own? Do you have private times with Jesus? We all need them.

BLOG 648: MAKING WATER – INDIA STYLE

As soon as we get back into our hotel room I start the 1 quart coffee pot and boil water. I continue to cool and boil until I have 6 liters, which is about 9 rounds. Waiting for it to cool enough to pour into flimsy plastic bottles takes most of the time. Mostly I only get 4 done before bedtime and start the process going at 6 or 7 AM until we need to leave.

Bottled water is available, but it is inconvenient to have conference men or Moses get it for us. A case takes up precious space in the trunk (full of Jerry's pastor's books).

We take fresh, safe water for granted in the USA. We even flush our toilets with good water. When I asked Jerry what he misses about home, he mentions fresh water on tap. (For me, it's definitely American bathrooms – see "Conquering the Indian Bathroom" Part I & II.)

In the past year, in collaboration with the Mark Brister Foundation, Pastor Moses' New Hope Foundation and our CTO, 34 fresh water wells were installed in villages that previously had none. (by Nancy Schmoyer) (February 1, 2018 Hyderabad, India)

Living Water of His Word is even more precious. Again, in the USA we take it for granted. All the unread Bibles lying around are analogous to flushing toilets with drinking water. Jesus says, ***"Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (John 4:13-14).***

"Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in Him" (Psalm 34:8).

If you take fresh, clean water for granted, take a moment to thank God for it. If you take having a Bible you can read any time you want for granted, thank God for that as well – and spent some time reading it. Read John 4 to start.

BLOG 649: INDIAN CULTURE (by Nancy)

1. Every day is prom day. Little girls to older ladies exit austere homes into trash-littered streets dressed in a colorful array of India's finest linen and silk dresses. Their hair is smooth with the scent of coconut oil, adorned with fresh flowers and jewelry. Breathtaking!
2. There are no trashcans in most homes or public receptacles because every space is a receptacle.
3. Fingernail polish is only worn on the left hand. They use their right hand to eat and apparently the polish will come off.
4. Hotel breakfast includes cooked vegetables (carrots and gran beans or corn). They are not served at other meals.
 - non spicy mashed potatoes are called "hash browns"
 - yesterday they had an American style cold macaroni salad. Tasty!
 - fruit milk shakes and pure fruit juices are on the table. Super yummy. Mango milkshakes are my favorite!
 - a variety of flat breads are made fresh daily with oil (my second favorite)
 - our hotel restaurant has one CD they play all day every day every year we've been here! It is an American smooth jazz artist. It has become "Our song" – "Before This Night Is Over."
 - chicken items always include the bones – caution required.
5. We passed a "D-Mart" (think Indian K-Mart).
6. Despite the abundance of tasty buffalo milk, cow's milk and goat's milk, cheese is not common. If you ask for cheese you get butter.
7. Restaurants servers, male and female, dress formally in black and white with ties and often suit jackets.
8. Like in the USA, hotels and Dunkin' Donuts are owned by Indians.
9. Life feels "civilized" when I slowly sip on a cup of tea, one of the few non-rushed moments of my day. It is a little oasis of British/American life to start the day. Here chai is offered late morning and midafternoon. Often it tastes more like bitter coffee; however the sweet chai is creamy with high fat buffalo milk and sugar – great for the afternoon sugar pick-me-up with a hit of caffeine. (by Nancy Schmoyer) (February 2, 2018 Hyderabad, India)

BLOG 650: SHEKINAH... A NEW FRIEND FOR LIFE AND ETERNITY

Who would have thought a 27 yr. old unmarried, Indian gal, trained in a Ukrainian Medical School could "hang out" so delightfully with the 62 yr. old American "madam"? What a joy and so FUN!

Besides talkin' shop (medical stuff), we talked about politics, culture, married life, raising children, India Christian pastors, fashion, young men, and Bollywood (Indian version of Hollywood). We shared funny stories, shopped for clothes and drank lassi (yogurt milk shake). What was my contribution to her life? I introduced her to Mylanta for her reflux and gastritis. Indian food is disastrous for her. She was symptom free while in the Ukraine and loves their food. Her mother makes non-spicy Indian food like she makes for us. The 2 weeks of traveling with us was tough on her food options. It's not just Schmoyers that struggle with the food!

Shekinah translated for my lessons. Her English vocabulary is excellent. She is spunky, confident, assertive but not aggressive. She enjoys her feminine nature and embraces it joyfully, different than many American females. I admire her for that. Her mother does her clothing shopping for her, at her request. She always looks professional yet totally feminine in her tall, slender, dark frame. She grieves, as I do, the trend of young Indian girls transitioning to Western faded jeans and T-shirts. I never realized how drab and uninteresting Western clothes are compared to salvars. Salvars are knee-length dresses covering comfy color contrasting leggings. I am not a fan of the baggy PJ pants of older Indian style. But the leggings are stretchy, lightweight and inexpensive – less than \$2 a pair. Indian women look feminine yet not sensual – quite a feat!

I am so grateful that God coordinated her school study break while we were here. She voluntarily joined us on the arduous trek for 2 weeks away from her home. She said she wanted to hear Jerry teach and spend time in the Word. She had no idea what a blessing she would be to me. Thanks Shekinah. (by Nancy Schmoyer) (February 3, 2018 Hyderabad, India)

Proverbs 27:17 As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another

BLOG 651: REPUBLIC DAY

January 26th was Republic Day in India commemorating their constitution.

Schools had special ceremonies. Girls wore little flags in their ponytails. Adults wore tiny flag pins. Politicians had speeches, and some businesses were closed but restaurants were crowded. India's colors of green, white and orange decorated the streets and highways.

In the capital, New Delhi, Prime Minister Modi and 10 Asia alliance dignitaries watched the national parade pass by. We had 4 hours to wait for our hotel room so we decided to watch the parade on TV. It was delightfully impressive, as it was intended to be.

There were a variety of unique military bands. They marched with rigid precision in an exaggerated style. Some played the usual marching band music. Others played in distinctive Indian style. But to my utter surprise one of the units played Scottish bagpipes in full Scottish array. Apparently it is one of the oldest traditional units.

Next came the massive military machinery – tanks, radar system units and mobile computer stations. There was a display of aerial acrobatics overhead. There was an obvious presence of female officers on many of the floats. The military was encouraging opportunity for women. The motorcycle brigade displayed acrobatic stunts while in motion.

Lastly the floats, or tabloids, streamed by. Some represented the diverse cultures of India. Only Africa has more diversity of cultures than India. These floats were colorful, complete with musicians, dancers, and bright traditional costumes with all ages, both male and female. Think Rose Bowl parade. The Asian cultures are integrated into India life by Nepal and China on their northern borders. Consequently some of the floats were distinctively Chinese looking.

Two hours later the parade sadly came to an end. The coat-wearing crowd dissipated. Down jackets and earmuffs are common at 65 degrees. I felt a deep sense of pride and hope as this emerging nation and its culture moves forward. It continues to suffer through the labor pains of transitioning into a position of world power and influence. In just 2 years India is projected to be the most populace country in the world, surpassing China. The average age will be 27 years old with 65% under 35 and 41% under 25.

With these numbers in mind, I used some of my time with the youth Sunday School class to discuss this phenomenon. Unfortunately statistics also show only 14% of young people are registered to

vote. I exhorted them to change that statistic, get involved and make their voice heard. Shaping the future of India is a privilege and opportunity that is golden. They are a transitional generation. God bless India! (by Nancy Schmoyer) (February 4, 2018 Hyderabad, India)

Psalm 33:12 Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people he chose for his inheritance.

BLOG 652: PUT OUT THE FIRE OF DISTRACTION

We are part of God's bucket brigade to pass the water of the Word to those on the front lines in India. They and we here as well, must put out the fires Satan starts in his attempts to destroy God's work. He tries to get people to deny his existence. He also tries to deceive us into thinking he is weaker than he really is (denial) or stronger than he is (deception). Another trick he uses is distraction.

We may be well educated about what Satan and demons can and cannot do. We aren't fooled by him and understand spiritual warfare. For us, then, he uses distractions. He works to get us busy so we focus on other things. We are involved in earning a living and caring for our family. We have obligations and responsibilities. Pastors and church leaders become especially busy. It's not bad things we are doing; they are all good, worthy activities. But they keep us so busy we neglect time in the Word, we rush our prayers, we don't have time for godly fellowship and mutual encouragement. Our time connecting with God becomes less and less each day. Satan is just as pleased when we are distracted as when we deny him or are deceived by him. We are just as vulnerable to defeat, too.

We need the water of the Word to counter the fire of distraction as well. First, we must recognize when this happens to us. We often equate busy-ness with holiness, but they are far different. God's Word tells us to have godly priorities (Luke 12:29-31; Matthew 6:33, 19). We are to put God and our relationship with Him first (Deuteronomy 6:5; Matthew 6:24; 22:37-38). What is most important is what we do for eternity, not what we do in this life for we will leave all this (Matthew 6:19; Luke 10:38-42). Don't get so busy doing what is good that you miss what is best!

Luke 12:29-31 "And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried. For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them. Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you. "

Matthew 6:33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

How are your priorities in life? What would God say about your priorities? Where can you make improvement? Write down some plans right now about how to improve your priorities.

BLOG 653: PUT OUT THE FIRE OF DIRECT ATTACK

For the last 3 Mondays we've been looking at ways Satan works: denial, deception and distraction. These are the fires that must be put out with the water of God's Word. The fourth and final way he works is by direct attack. Satan and demons use oppression and fear to overpower and control people. This may be less common in the west, but even here it is growing more and more.

Satan attacks like a roaring lion (1 Peter 5:8). He attacks individual believers, churches and people groups. He especially attacks pastors and their families for they are the ones on the front of the bucket brigade pouring the water of the Word on Satan's fires. He uses persecution, rejection and personal criticism to stop the work of those advancing God's kingdom.

The water of the Word shows us how to have victory against these attacks by Satan and his demons. God has given us His authority to command them in Jesus' name to be gone (Matthew 28:18-20; Luke 9:1; 10:17-19; John 14:12). This right is like the badge a policeman has signifying a higher authority is giving him power to apply the might of the one behind the authority. But a policeman also has a weapon to subdue those who don't respond to his badge. Likewise we have power from God to have victory as well (Acts 1:8; Luke 10:17). Thus we have power and authority over Satan and his forces (Luke 9:1). When sin has been confessed and the access demons claim to work against a person are removed, then we can command them in Jesus' name to be gone (Acts 16:16-18). Make sure you know how to use your authority and power in Jesus' name. For more information on the subject of spiritual warfare go to SW.ChristianTrainingOrganization.org or email me at jerry@schmoyer.net and I'll send you a free copy of my Spiritual Warfare Handbook.

Luke 9:1 When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all and to cure diseases,

Luke 10:17-19 The seventy-two returned with joy and said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name." He replied, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you.

Do you know how to use your power and authority for victory in spiritual warfare? Memorize some of the verses I referred to and use them. Quoting God's Word, like Jesus did, is the best way to have victory (Ephesians 6:17).

BLOG 654: NOW WHAT?

One of the most outstanding lessons I've gotten from the last trip to India is that God answers prayer. Many thanks to all of you who prayed for us – it makes all the difference in the world. Please keep praying for us and the pastors in India.

Often we don't know exactly how to pray so we pray for physical protection and resources. Jesus showed us how to pray for ourselves when He gave us the Lord's Prayer, and He showed us how to pray for others when Paul recorded his prayer for the Colossians (1:9-14). He was in prison writing to and praying for people he never met.

He has one request, and it's different than what we usually pray about for ourselves or others. "We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of His will" (Colossians 1:9). His greatest desire for them is that they are controlled by the knowledge of God's will so they can follow and serve Him. What better request could we ask for ourselves or others, including the pastors in India? This happens as God's Holy Spirit gives wisdom and understanding (Colossians 1:9b).

The reason Paul asks they be able to live a life worthy of the Lord and pleasing to Him is fourfold. First, so they can bear spiritual fruit that pleases God (Colossians 1:10a). Second, in order to grow in the knowledge of God (Colossians 1:10b). Next, to be able to endure trials with joy (Colossians 1:11). And finally, to be able to give thanks to God (Colossians 1:12).

Why Paul wants them to live a life like this which pleases the Lord is because He has brought us from darkness to light (Colossians 1:13) and has redeemed and forgiven us (Colossians 1:14).

Pray these verses. Pray for these things for yourself, for us and for the pastors and Christians in India. Thanks! (February 12, 2018 Doylestown, PA)

James 5:16 The prayer of a righteous man (or woman) is powerful and effective.

Open your Bible to Colossians 1:9-14 and pray these verses for yourself, us and the pastors in India.

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USA versus India: Blog 562: It's All Relative (Matthew 6:31-34)
USA: Blog 463: Where is America Headed? (Matthew 5:12; John 15:18-20; 2 Corinthians 12:10; 2 Timothy 3:12; 1 Peter 4:12)
Used by God: Blog 595: Working for the Lord, Not for Men (2 Corinthians 10:12; Colossians 3:23)

Victory over sin: Blog 598: Something About Me You'd Never Guess (1 Corinthians 9:24-27)

Violence in world: Blog 463: Where is America Headed? (Matthew 5:12; John 15:18-20; 2 Corinthians 12:10)

Violence, why so much? Blog 464: Why So Much Violence? (Matthew 24:6-12; Psalm 11:5; Isaiah 60:18; Habakkuk 1:2-3; Psalm 7:9)

Water in India: Blog 648: Making Water, India Style (John 4:13-14; Psalm 354:8)

Water wells: Blog 436: Physical Water Leads to Living Water (Ephesians 4:28)

Water, physical & spiritual: Blog 436: Physical Water Leads to Living Water (Ephesians 4:28)

Water, physical & spiritual: Blog 638: The Blessing of Pure Water (Isaiah 55:10-11; John 13:10)

Wife, Appreciate: Blog 581: Closer to My Wife (Ruth 1:16-17)

Wife, value of: Blog 540: Value of a Good Wife (Proverbs 31:10, 30; Titus 2:3-5)

Wife: Blog 457: A Good Wife is Worth More Than Rubies (Proverbs 31:10-12, 30-31; 1 Peter 3:7)

Witness by lives: Blog 597: You're Being Watched! (1 Peter 4:16; Job 1:21; 13:15)

Witness: Blog 353: Marigold Update – Growing in the Cracks (Jeremiah 29:1-7)

Witnessing: Blog 474: A Lesson from My Marigolds (2 Corinthians 2:14; 2 Timothy 4:2; John 1:41)

Wives in India: Blog 563: Women & Children in India (Psalm 127:3-5; Matthew 18:10; James 1:27)

Woman, value of: Blog 540: Value of a Good Wife (Proverbs 31:10, 30; Titus 2:3-5)

Women in India: Blog 563: Women & Children in India (Psalm 127:3-5; Matthew 18:10; James 1:27)

Word of God, importance of: Blog 471: The Bible Gets Better All the Time (2 Timothy 3:16; Psalms 119:9-11; Hebrews 4:12)

Work & play: Blog 468: Pace Yourself in Life (Hebrews 12:1; Luke 5:16; Ecclesiastes 3:1-2)

Works don't bring salvation: Blog 601: What's Your Backup Plan? (Matthew 7:21-23; John 14:6; Ephesians 2:8-9)

World Going Crazy: Blog 462: Stop the World, I Want to Get Off (Matthew 24:6; Hebrews 12:1-2; Psalm 16:8)

World, don't live for: Blog 598: Something About Me You'd Never Guess (1 Corinthians 9:24-27)

Worship of God: Blog 459: Intimacy With God (Philippians 3:10; Deuteronomy 6:4-5)

Worship, what it is: Blog 476: I'm Finally Learning What Worship Really Is (Psalm 100)

Worth of a person: Blog 460: We Can't Evaluate Our Worth by the Use of Our Gifts (1 Corinthians 15:10; Romans 15:17)

Writing books: Blog 550: Books, Books, Books (2 Timothy 4:13)

Year, facing new: Blog 615: Conquering a New Land (Joshua 1:7-9)