

# **INDIA BLOGS - 4**

## **Lessons Learned in India**

**2018 - 2021**



**Rev. Dr. Jerry Schmoyer**

**Christian Training Organization**

[Jerry@ChristianTrainingOrganization.org](mailto:Jerry@ChristianTrainingOrganization.org)

[ChristianTrainingOnline.org](http://ChristianTrainingOnline.org)

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# **INDIA BLOGS – FEBRUARY 2018 – JANUARY 2021**

## **Blog 660: COMMENTS FROM PASTORS**

A couple weeks ago I gave you my evaluation of our time in India. Since then, I have received many emails from pastors. I'll give you portions of some of them. I won't edit them but will leave them as I received them.

"To day is lent days has been beginning. impotent thing was I will be conducted the pastors meeting on Friday. I will teach some of the chapters from the book of what god has expects of pastors Pray for this meeting it will glory to God pray for the needs."

"I Beloved that our lord God had chosen you to spread the gospel all over the world. Beloved brother I gain more spiritual knowledge through your books. The spiritual books were more valuable than the gold. I have been studying which you wrote the valuable books. I think this knowledge had come to you from the above."

"I trusted that it was my duty which knowledge has taken from your books that knowledge will share to other pastors. If it is God will I will be conducted pastors fellowship to spread the knowledge all villages. So many posters are interesting to hear the knowledge. I am requesting you please pray for this meeting. I beloved that god had put more spiritual knowledge in your books. I was surprised when I was reading your books God had kept a lot of spiritual knowledge in your mind."

"Dear sir. Every morning first thing I do is read the Bible. Then I study your books. Thank you so very much for them. They are very valuable to me."

"Plz Convey my heartfelt love with Auntie Nancy. She is such a great support to you who partners and journeys with You in ministry I think from last 35 + years. I Love her and I wish my wife to be like such a good support. I am Praying for your health (Voice ) and for upcoming conferences and fir all your family ,which is in US."

"Your spiritual books have given me a lot of spiritual knowledge after I studied one book I had given the message of baptism in my church.so many people understand the baptism and took baptism i beloved that God had done wonder full thinks through your valuable spiritual books. I will follow your guidelines." (February 19, 2018 Doylestown, PA)

***Jeremiah 3:15 Then I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will lead you with knowledge and understanding.***

***1 Timothy 3:1 Here is a trustworthy saying. Whoever aspires to be a pastor desires a noble task.***

***Ephesians 4:11-12 So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up***

*Thank God for your pastor and church leaders. Tell them you appreciate them in person, by phone or mail/email. Pray for them, and for the pastors in India.*

## **Blog 661: NO PRACTICE RUNS IN LIFE**

While watching the 2018 Winter Olympics recently I saw a downhill skiing competition where the women didn't have any practice runs. Their first time on the course was the Olympic competition. I thought about how much that is like life. We don't get practice tries at life. It just unfolds before us.

We have to navigate each turn and bump as we face them for the first time, just like those skiers. They must stay alert and looking ahead. If they get off course they must quickly get back on. Mistakes can't be redone or changed; they just keep on skiing. They gain confidence as they go but cannot let up, even when they are approaching the finish line and getting tired. That's when this American skier lost her concentration and a medal. We can't let up, either. Sometimes later in life we try to coast a bit as fatigue sets in but we must keep going strong.

The American skier who went first was a favorite but several small errors kept her from medaling. Those who came later had a distinct advantage because they could watch and learn from her and others who went before them. They knew what to watch for, where some of the difficult parts were and what to do about them. It is good for us to learn from those who have gone before us in life as well so we don't make their same mistakes. Still, it is our race to run and we only get one shot at life. How are you doing in your race? (February 26, 2018 Doylestown, PA)

***2 Timothy 4:7-8 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.***

***Matthew 25:23 His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant!'***

*How has your Christian life been going? Are you staying on course, looking ahead for dangers and learning from those who have gone before you?*

*And if you are getting closer to the end of your race, don't let down your guard. Don't get weary or discouraged. Your race will be over soon enough, and when it is over it is OVER! You only get one shot at life – make it count for eternity.*

## **Blog 662: MY DEBT TO BILLY GRAHAM**

**Billy Graham** was on TV for the first time in 1957 during his New York City crusade. My parents turned it on and I watched. I was 11 years old but remember it like it was yesterday. My life totally changed that day as I listened to him speak and gave my heart to Jesus. I had been trying to be good enough to connect with God but it wasn't happening. God used Billy Graham to change my life as well as many others. Has Billy Graham been instrumental in your salvation? If so I'd really like to hear from you.

**Howard G. Hendricks** was instrumental in my spiritual growth. He taught over 13,000 students during his 60 years of teaching at Dallas Theological Seminary. I was one of them. He was my main prof for both my ThM and DMin degrees. For 7 years I sat in his classrooms. Here are some of his most famous quotes:

*"The Bible was written not to satisfy your curiosity but to help you conform to Christ's image. Not to make you a smarter sinner but to make you like the Savior. Not to fill your head with a collection of biblical facts but to transform your life."*

*"You are either in the Word and the Word is conforming you to the image of Jesus Christ, or you are in the world and the world is squeezing you into its mold."*

*"You are free to make choices. You are not free to escape the consequences."*

*"The measure of you as a leader is not what you do, but what others do because of what you do."*

*"My great concern for you in life is not that you will fail, but that you will succeed in doing the wrong things."*

*"When God measures a man he puts the tape around the heart, not the head."*

*"God is not looking for more stars; He's looking for more servants."*

*"It's a sin to bore people with the Bible."*

*"You teach what you know, but you reproduce what you are."*

*"You can impress from a distance, but you can only impact up close."*

*"You never graduate from the school of discipleship."*

*"Your strengths develop your confidence; your weaknesses develop your faith."*

*"If you're just like someone else, we don't need you."*

*"How big is your God? The size of your God determines the size of everything."*

*"You cannot impart what you do not possess."*

*"God moves into our lives by divine design, to periodically disturb our equilibrium. That's how he develops us."*

*"Every disciple needs three types of relationships in his life. He needs a 'Paul' who can mentor him and challenge him. He needs a 'Barnabas' who can come along side and encourage him. And he needs a 'Timothy,' someone that he can pour his life into." (March 5, 2018 Doylestown, PA)*

**Matthew 5:13-16** *"You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men."*

**Proverbs 1:8-9** *Hear, my son, your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching;*

*Who has God used to bring you to Himself and then to grow in Him? Think of them this day. Thank God for them. Thank them if they are still alive. And remember God is using you to impact others as you faithfully live for Him.*

### **Blog 663: BIBLE OVERVIEW (Conference Sessions 3)**

My personal very favorite session to teach to the pastors in India is the "Bible Overview." It is so important that I give it 2 sessions, one for the Old Testament and one for the New Testament. I love teaching this more than anything, anywhere, any time in my ministry! It touches me deeply every time I have the privilege of explaining these wonderful truths about Jesus and His work of redemption for us!

The book "Bible Overview" is four times as large as the other books. It divides history into 27 segments so God's plan for man from eternity past to eternity future can be easily followed and understood. Each time period is clearly taught and explained. There is much background information as well, making this an excellent book to understand the flow of the Bible as well as details about all of it. Outlines and summaries of each Bible book and all the main Bible people are included. Background and culture are also covered. It is a culmination of my life-time study and teaching of the Bible.

In the conference sessions I use visuals to teach the flow of God's plan of redemption through these 27 time periods. I draw a simple picture of each and I teach it and hang it on a rope in front so they can see the flow grow and remember what they learn. Each one has paper and pencil to draw their own overview so they can remember it and teach it to their people. In effect I am telling lots of

short stories which all go together making the one story about Jesus. Story-telling is an excellent way to communicate in India and this is the best story ever!

It is thrilling beyond words to be able to share God's love and plan for us in this way. God revealed the importance of innocent blood being shed to pay for sin. That theme is traced through the whole Bible. The focus on Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection is the highlight of all history. I use Christian 'magic' to emphasize the main points. What a great honor it is to share this in every conference! Every one of us are deeply touched by God's grace and power. It turns into a great time of worship and praise for our wonderful Redeemer! It's a small taste of what we'll be doing for all eternity in heaven!!! (March 12, 2018 Doylestown, PA)

***1 Corinthians 10:11-12 These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the culmination of the ages has come. So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!***

***2 Timothy 3:16-17 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God[a] may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.***

*Take time to think through the Bible, especially the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Spend time meditating on what He has done and why He did it. Praise and thank Him.*

(For a **free copy of this book** go to [India.ChristianTrainingOrganization.org](http://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 664: GENTLE JESUS, MEEK AND MILD?**

Living for Jesus in India is very different than in the USA. Christianity is rejected and Christians are often seen as enemies of the state. To say you follow Jesus brings conflict among friends and in families. People react, sometimes violently. This shouldn't surprise anyone, for that is exactly what Jesus Himself experienced.

Dorothy Sayers "I believe it to be a great mistake to present Christianity as something charming and popular with no offense in it...We cannot blink at the fact that gentle Jesus meek and mild was so stiff in his opinions and so inflammatory in his language that he was thrown out of church, stoned, hunted from place to place, and finally gibbeted as a firebrand and a public danger. Whatever his peace was, it was not the peace of an amiable indifference." Source: "Seeking Peace"

Claiming to be a follower of Jesus is bringing more of an outspoken reaction here than it used to. Christians have gone from admired to ignored to criticized. Us, and our views about life and morals, are attracting more and more negative attention. We are being attacked more than ever, and it will just keep getting worse. We say we want to be like Jesus. Well, this is the response He received. His beliefs stirred things up and brought conflict and opposition as well. We shouldn't fear it happening or try to avoid it. Jesus didn't. Neither should we. (March 19, 2018 Doylestown, PA)

***Luke 14:26 "If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple.***

***Luke 6:27-31 "But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you.***

*Are you surprised when your beliefs are not popular with others? Do you think God should make it so others agree with Christians? Are you disappointed when He doesn't do that?*

*Are you willing to stand for your faith no matter what others may say or how they may react?*

### **Blog 665: PILGRIMS HELPING PILGRIMS**

I enjoy using Charles Spurgeon's book "Morning and Evening" in my devotions. His insights are enlightening and encouraging. For example, today he was commenting on Psalm 84:5-7. It speaks about pilgrims digging wells for their own nourishment as they travel through barren areas. Those wells then become blessings to other pilgrims who later travel the same desolate paths. That is what Spurgeon's writings are for me. These truths nourished and sustained him and now I come by on my journey and they help me as well.

I sometimes receive comments about how my blogs and writings help others and that God uses them in their lives. I guess it's the same thing as with Spurgeon. I, too, dig wells as I seek to tap into God's sustenance to carry me through this barren world. For me, putting thoughts into words is an important way of understanding God as I navigate through life. But then those words, in the form of blogs or articles, are found by others as they progress through life and God uses them to nourish them as well.

Spurgeon pointed out that each generation benefits from the wells of the previous generation, while also leaving new wells for those who still follow. I never really thought of it that way, but I like the analogy. God provides for our needs through those who have faithfully followed God and recorded their findings. And He uses our experiences to nourish and encourage those coming alone behind us. We are not alone. We are part of a long line of pilgrims traveling through this foreign land heading to our eternal Home. We draw encouragement and spiritual nutrition from those we follow and pass it on to those following us. I like that thought. I like it a lot!

I thank God for the privilege of being involved in some small way with the many new water wells being provided by Christians in India country so the people can have fresh, clean water. I am even more thankful, though, to be putting down spiritual wells to help the pastors and Christians in India as they strive to live for Jesus. Thanks for your part in making that possible! (March 26, 2018 Doylestown, PA)

***Palm 84:5-7 Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them. Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also fills the pools. They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appears before God. (KJV)***

***John 4:11-14 "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? 12 Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?" 13 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."***

*Think of those whose writings and messages have helped you through your wilderness journey. Thank God for them.*

*Pray that God would use your life, your words and your example to encourage and guide others now or in the future.*

## **Blog 666: DEALING WITH PAIN**

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a German pastor and theologian when the Nazis took over Germany. He worked against the Nazi regime in any way he could. He was arrested, imprisoned and eventually hung. His writings have been a source of encouragement to many undergoing trials. In "The Martyred Christian" he wrote the following:

*The poet Stifter once said, "Pain is a holy angel, who shows treasures to people which would otherwise remain forever hidden; through him people have become greater than through all the joys of the world." It must be so and I tell myself this in my present situation over and over again. The pain of suffering and of longing, which can often be felt even physically, must be there, and we cannot and need not talk it away. But it needs to be overcome every time, and thus there is an even holier angel than the one of pain; that is, the one of joy in God.*

What would life be like without pain? If there is no pain there would be nothing to warn us of illness, injury or infection. Without knowing about and caring for these things death would come. Emotional pain also motivates us to take positive action. Guilt, fear, remorse, loneliness, insecurity, etc., are there to motivate us to do what is necessary to remove them. A child that grows up but faces no difficulties or challenges will be immature and spoiled and unable to cope with real life. Even Jesus learned obedience by the things He suffered (Hebrews 5:8-9). What are you learning from your unwanted pain? (April 2, 2018 Doylestown, PA)

**James 1:2-3** *"Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance"*

**2 Corinthians 12:9** *'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.' Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.'*

*Ask God to show you the things He wants you to learn from what you are facing in life. Write them down!*

*Thank Him that one day there will be no more pain or suffering forever! Until then trust God that He has a good reason for it.*

## **Blog 667: LIFE WITH NO BACKSPACE**

On Black Friday I got myself a small Bluetooth keyboard for my tablet. When I tried using it I found the backspace key didn't work. It was only one key out of many, so I tried to use the keyboard without it. That didn't work very well, though. There was no way to erase a mistake or correct an error. They just stayed there. Unless I was perfect in all I typed, the errors remained. I ended up returning the keyboard.

But it made me think as I was returning it: suppose there was no "Backspace" key in life? What if there wasn't a way to delete a mistake and do it correctly next time? That's the way life is for those who aren't Christians. They live life without a backspace. They don't have a God who will remove their errors and sins and help them redo them correctly. Their life is full of past mistakes, hurts, sins and shame. Those things just stay there forever. How sad that is!

Thinking of life this way made me really appreciative for the free forgiveness we have in Jesus. He is always ready and waiting to forgive and cleanse, to restore and give us another chance. That is always available to all God's children. It's just as easy and effective as hitting your backspace key (assuming it works!). (April 9, 2018 Doylestown, PA)

**1 John 1:9** *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

**Psalms 103:1-5, 8-12** *Praise the Lord, my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name.*

**2** *Praise the Lord, my soul, and forget not all his benefits—*

**3** *who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases,*

**4** *who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion,*

**5** *who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.*

**8** *The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love.*

**9** *He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever;*

**10** *he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities.*

**11** *For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him;*

**12** *as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.*

*Think of all the times you have used God's backspace/erase key in your life. What if it wouldn't have worked? Thank Him that it always is effective. Use it now if there is anything that needs to be confessed and removed.*

### **Blog 668: LET GOD DRY THE DISHES**

Growing up I had a sister, Judy, who was 4 years younger than me. She died of cancer at the age of 33 but I have many fond memories of her. One is of us washing and drying the dishes. I always had to wash and she had to dry, but when it came time to dry it seems she always had to go to the bathroom and didn't come back until the dishes air dried and just had to be put away. Like any normal big brother, I'd get a glass of water and pour it over the dishes so she wouldn't get out of her job. She wasn't thrilled when I did that.

I enjoy washing dishes now. I can see quick, positive results, and I like having my hands in hot water. What I don't like doing is drying the dishes I wash. After all, God set up this wonderful principle of nature called evaporation and will dry the dishes for me if I am just patient for a few minutes. Perhaps God just wants to teach me patience. But sometimes I wonder if I am being lazy and waiting for God to do for me what I should be doing for myself – I do have a habit of doing that, you know.

How do YOU know when God wants you to wait patiently for Him to act in His own time and way, or when He wants you to act right away and use your time to accomplish something? How do you know the difference between patiently trusting God and being lazy and putting something off? How do you know when your actions are done to please God, or when you are taking things into your own hands because God isn't acting fast enough? (April 16, 2018 Doylestown, PA)

**Colossians 3:23** *Whatever you do, do it enthusiastically, as something done for the Lord and not for men.*

**Proverbs 6:9-11** *How long will you lie there, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, and poverty will come upon you like a robber, and want like an armed man.*

*Ask God to show you if you are lazy and putting off some things you should be doing. Ask Him to show you if you are too quick to act on your own and lacking in patience and trust in Him. Write down what He shows you.*

## **Blog 669: PARENTHOOD NEVER ENDS**

Since our children have grown and started families of their own we've talked to lots of other grandparents. Frankly, I'm surprised by how many feel glad to be over their child-raising responsibilities and have minimal contact with their grown children and grandchildren. Their attitude seems to be, "I raised my children, now you raise yours." Not to judge, but that doesn't seem natural to me.

We really enjoy being with our children and grandchildren. In fact, we wish we could be with them even more than we are. They are a source of joy and blessing to us and we don't tire of watching them. I don't think God gets tired of watching His children either. Hopefully we can be a source of joy and blessing to Him. If we as humans just keep on loving our children, I'm sure our Heavenly Father does as well.

After all, we are made in the image of God and His Father heart of love never gets tired of doing whatever He can for His children. Shouldn't we as parents reflect that towards our children? I mean, what if God got to the point where He says He's done with us, He's done all He can, now it's time for us to go off on our own? What if He got tired of giving and sacrificing and giving more and sacrificing more? Where would we be then? He stays faithful to us and patient with us until the end. I'M VERY GLAD He does, aren't you? (April 23, 2018 Doylestown, PA)

***2 Timothy 2:13 If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.***

***1 Corinthians 1:9 God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.***

*Thank God for His faithfulness to you, not in general but by listing as many specific times and events as you can in your life where He faithfully and patiently stood by you no matter what. Think where you'd be if He gave up on you, even for a short time. Thank Him for not getting weary of you but continuing to sacrifice for you over and over again.*

## **blog 670: JUST PASSIN' THROUGH**

My growth as a Christian started when I was in the army in 1965, at the start of the Viet Nam war. I learned a song that has stuck with me: "This world is not my home, I'm just a passing through. My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue. The angels beckon me from heaven's open door and I can't feel at home in this world anymore." The chorus went: "Oh Lord, you know I have no friend like You. If heaven's not my home then Lord what will I do. The angels beckon me from heaven's open door and I can't feel at home in this world anymore." (Mary Reeves Davis © Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC).

It was easy for me to feel I wasn't at home when I was in the army in Texas being trained for Viet Nam. That whole concept has stayed with me. Now, 53 years later, I still feel like a pilgrim with no real home, spiritually and physically. For the last 3 years Nancy and I have spent more time away from home than at home (I actually counted the days and it's true). We love being at our children's homes and we love being at our Doylestown home. Our children live spread out across the USA. We enjoy whomever we are with, but we always miss the others. And our own home is special to us.

Sometimes it feels like we are travelers here with no permanent place to settle down and have it all. I think God wants us to feel that way because we won't find what we are looking for in this world, no matter where we live. We were created for heaven and won't find our fulfillment until we are in God's presence for all eternity. Truly, this world is not our home. Thank God for that!!! (April 30, 2018 Doylestown, PA)

**Hebrews 11:13** *All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.*

**1 Peter 2:11** *Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.*

*Do you get frustrated because this life and this world doesn't meet all your deep needs? Don't be. For the child of God this earthly existence will never be 'home.' Thank Him for your eternal home where you will truly and forever feel right at home! Spend some time thinking and reading about heaven, your real home.*

### **Blog 671: WHY PERSECUTION?**

Why does persecution keep happening in India and other places? What causes a civilized person who loves others and is loved by them to seek to cruelly harm another human being? I see two reasons. The first is that the kingdom of darkness is at war with God's kingdom of light. Jesus, the Light of the world, is the believer's number one enemy and opposition (John 7:7). When we identify with Jesus and show Him by our lives then we become objects of hate (John 15:20-21). Since Satan's forces can't directly attack Jesus, they attack His children, those whom He loves and who help advance His kingdom. We see that often in the Bible: Saul tries to kill David, God's anointed; Job is falsely accused and attacked, and many more.

But what about persecution against groups that aren't necessarily Christian? What causes the hate in those cases? It could be greed, or jealousy or just lack of peace leading to looking for someone on whom to vent rage. There doesn't have to be a good explanation, except that man's hearts are evil (Genesis 6:5; Jeremiah 17:9; James 4:1-2). For as clean and neat as we look on the outside, we are full of evil and greed and lust and selfishness and pride on the inside. It's called a sin nature (Galatians 5:17-21; Ephesians 2:3)

What's the cure? A new heart by regeneration (Romans 8:5-9). Only Jesus can change a heart and take the evil and hate out. Government laws can't do it. Guilt or fear can slow it but not remove it. Self control can cover it, but it is still there. Only Jesus can change a heart. (May 7, 2018 Doylestown, PA)

**Jeremiah 17:9** *The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?*

**John 15: 20-21** *Remember what I told you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. 21 They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the one who sent me.*

*Change starts with you right where you are. Look for opportunities today to show love to all you meet, no matter their race, age or social status. Ask God to convict you if you look down on anyone else. And ask Him to help you be faithful if others are less than kind to you for any reason.*

### **Blog 672: 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.

It is our responsibility to provide access to clean, living water to those who don't have it. That is our physical duty (by providing water wells) and our spiritual duty (by sharing God's Word with them as well). Pray we would do both of these to the best of our abilities. And you, too, are responsible to share with those around you. Physical water isn't needed where you live, but spiritual water is. What are you doing to share it with those in need? When plans do you have today that include taking God's truth to those who need it? Don't let a day go by that you don't take His Word to someone else. (May 14, 2018 Doylestown, PA)

***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 673: I LOVE TO TELL THE STORY**

This past Resurrection Season we attended 5 church services in 4 days, had the Lord's Supper 3 different times, saw several dramas and presentations, enjoyed great music and preaching – and didn't do a single thing at any of those services! We walked in, sat down, and enjoyed it all, then walked out. After so many years of doing almost everything ourselves that is quite different for us. It is great to focus on worship and being fed!

But for me something was missing. I'd be lying if I didn't say I missed the awesome privilege of proclaiming this good news. I have had the privilege of doing so many times and places in the past. It's such an awesome message to share! The story never gets old. In fact, it seems fresher and more significant every time I hear it. Getting closer to the time I'll actually be with Jesus makes it more real as well. It's such a simple story, but it's still the best story ever! What a privilege when I get to tell it in detail every day in India!

No wonder Satan and his demons hate hearing it! No wonder they run from it, try to silence it and want to distract us from thinking about it. It is all about our victory in Jesus and their defeat! It's

really sad to hear some water the story down and compromise it. But they can't change the reality of it!!!

One community service we went to was attended by people from various denominations and church traditions. Despite all the differences in beliefs we all shared the one hope and glorious assurance that comes from again hearing and celebrating the resurrection story. It was great to worship together and affirm that which brings us together – Jesus' death and resurrection. Just thinking about it all makes me want to share it again and again. Once a preacher, always a preacher I guess... (May 21, 2018 Doylestown, PA)

***John 11:25: Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me will live, even though they die; and those who live and believe in me will never die. Do you believe this?"***

***Matthew 28:5-6 The angel spoke to the women. "You must not be afraid," he said. "I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has been raised, just as he said. Come here and see the place where he was lying.***

***John 3:16-17 For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not die but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to be its judge, but to be its savior.***

*Do you still love to hear and tell the old, old story of Jesus and His love? Does it get fresher and sweeter for you each time you hear it? Just imagine how it will be in heaven, with the Lamb on the throne and eternal worship all because of Him!*

## **Blog 674: OF MUSTARD SEEDS AND LEAVEN**

Yesterday in church I heard a simple sermon that impacted me in a big way. It was about mustard seeds and leaven (Luke 13:18-21). Evidently Jesus' followers were wondering why it was taking so long for Jesus to be proclaimed King and everyone follow Him. Instead, there was growing rejection and opposition. So Jesus used these two simple parables to teach that His rulership of the earth, His "Kingdom," starts very small and grows slowly. As it grows, though, it improves all it touches and will eventually cover the whole earth. They are just two simple parables that I'm sure you are as familiar with as I am, but they teach an important lesson.

However yesterday I applied it to my life in a way I never had before. I've been a Christian for 61 years, ever since I saw Billy Graham on TV from Madison Square Gardens in May, 1957. Sometimes I get very impatient with myself, even a bit discouraged, that I haven't come any further than I have in my own spiritual growth over that time. I should be WAY beyond where I am now! Things I should have had victory over decades ago still seem to defeat me. In fact, sometimes I think I am moving in the wrong direction in some areas of my spiritual life. Do you know what I'm talking about? I don't think I'm all alone in this! But Jesus' words about the mustard and seed and leaven reassure me His is working in me, continually and progressively. God works slowly but He does good work! I find that very reassuring, for I am running out of time to get it all together spiritually. Yet I am reassured that is how He works.

When I look at the USA in the last 61 years it seems even worse. The movement is definitely in the wrong direction. So, is the church a failure? Is God's Kingdom not growing here? Of course, it is - Jesus says it is (Matthew 16:15-20). The growth is hidden, inside, like a seed and leaven. God is working slowly but surely to build His church here and He will prevail. That's encouraging and reassuring for me!

I'm encouraged to patiently keep trusting and growing in my own spiritual life, no matter how slow it seems (Philippians 1:6). I'm encouraged to patiently keep building into others and do all I can to help His Kingdom grow in this country and India. I'm especially encouraged to know God will take the spiritual seeds, which we sow into our grandchildren and bring them along through their whole lifetime. I'm encouraged to keep ministering to pastors in India, even though we only touch one person in 130,000. I'm encouraged because I'm reminded God doesn't work the way I expect (thank God) but in His own slow but steady way. I hope that encourages you as well! (May 28, 2018 Doylestown, PA)

***Luke 13: 18 -21 Then Jesus asked, "What is the kingdom of God like? What shall I compare it to? 19 It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his garden. It grew and became a tree, and the birds perched in its branches." 20 Again he asked, "What shall I compare the kingdom of God to? 21 It is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds of flour until it worked all through the dough."***

***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.***

*Think about God's faithfulness to you through the years, His patient working in your life to bring you to the place where you now are. Do you think He will stop now? He will not!*

*Perhaps you've given up on someone because you don't see much spiritual growth in their life. Continue to pray for them. Persevere in patience.*

### **Blog 675: WHAT GOD IS TEACHING ME NOW**

I may be retired from pastoring, but I'm not retired from ministry (just ask Nancy!). And I'm not retired from growing in the Lord. God has still been working in my life. You know, He wants to do that if we'll let Him. For one thing, my self-identity has changed. I used to see myself as a runner and a pastor. Now I am neither. I am now a jogger, not a runner. Ask anyone who runs and they'll tell you the difference. I am still a pastor by calling and gifting, but not a pastor by function. That's fine. I know He removed me from full time pastoring of a church. He took away my energy and desire to do it. A big difference for me, though, is that now I come to Him as "just me." I find myself approaching God a bit differently.

Long ago I learned that my German workaholicism and perfectionism was a sin. But it was still special to be serving God, working with Him, knowing He was guiding me, working through me and using me for His glory. I still serve and minister as opportunity allows. Mainly my focus is serving and ministering to my wife, children and grandchildren. That's great and I wouldn't change it. But letting God love me just for me, not adding in anything I am doing to earn or deserve love, is still a bit difficult for this insecure introvert. I know He loves me on the group plan, but to think of Him loving me individually just for me still is hard to comprehend. Some of you can identify.

Loving and worshipping God just for Who and what He is can be freeing and exciting. But it is different doing it more as a spectator than front-lines participant. I know we are all in God's army and have our own battles to fight every day, but I also know I am no longer on the front lines. I make occasional trips there from time to time, but I don't live and minister there like I once did. I'm no less important to God, nor is what I do less important. However, in a world that needs so much help and seeing so much needing to be done for the Kingdom of God, doing less than I used to takes an adjustment.

It's hard to imagine I'll never have to work for a salary one day for the rest of my life. "Work by the sweat of your brow" still resonates within me. Yet I know each year that I'll be able to do ("produce") less and less. Replacing "doing" with learning to let God love me just for me alone is

stretching, to say the least. Learning to love, worship and serve by my new way of daily life is a challenge I look forward to. I hope this makes sense to you. If you understand what I'm talking about, please pray for me to be all God wants me to be, right now, as a blood-bought child of the King! (June 4, 2018 Doylestown, PA)

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

*If you can identify with me, think about how God is teaching you to accept His love unconditionally as well. Are you letting Him freely love you even though you don't do as much for Him as you'd like?*

*If all this introvert self-analysis stuff seems confusing to you, that's OK. Just think about what God is doing in your life now and thank Him for that.*

### **Blog 676: SEEKING GOD**

For whatever strange reason I've been thinking a lot lately about the phrase "seeking God." It was something simple I could easily explain, but the more I now think about what it REALLY means the more I realize there is a whole lot more to it than I had thought. Basically, "seek" refers to a desire to achieve, an attempt to attain. When it applies to God it speaks of seeking closeness, a connection, an intimacy with God. He should be the first and main Person and relationship we seek (Matthew 6:33).

Sometimes we may fear to fully connect with God because we aren't sure what we will find and what it will cost us. We need to seek Him for Who and what He is, not because of what we want Him to do for us. When we seek Him out of selfish motives, we are really just seeking our own comfort and ease, not God Himself. We want others to desire to come close to us because of a love for us, not simply so we will do something for them. God is the same. When we seek God just for what we want Him to do for us we won't really find Him. He may provide the help we ask, but we won't be connected to God Himself, and that is far better than just trying to use Him like magic Jeanie to meet our every desire and grant our every wish. Perceived need or temporary curiosity won't meet our deepest inner needs (Deuteronomy 4:29). Only when we want and need Him because of Who and what He is will we ever have our inner need for love and significance met (1 Chronicles 22:19). He is more than ready and willing to fill our deepest inner longings with Himself if only we would desire Him before and above everything else (Psalm 14:2). It doesn't matter who we are, what we do or have done, where we live or what we think we have to offer Him. The only thing that matters is that we want a deeper, richer relationship with Him and to more fully know and relate to Him (Psalm 63:1; Hebrews 11:6). Is that the deepest desire of your heart?

***Matthew 6:33 "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well"***

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

***Psalms 63:1 "You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you, in a dry and parched land where there is no water"***

*Do you set your mind's attention and heart's affection God? Do you do it for selfish reasons and gain, or out of a true desire to draw closer to Him?*

### **Blog 677: SCHMOYER PROVERBS**

Nancy and I have been collecting favorite short sayings of ours for some time. We have some favorites that seem to summarize a lot of truth in a few words. They've helped us and we hope they can help you as well.

When the circumstances of life don't line up with the character of God, you have to go with the character of God. Dr. Mark Bailey May, 2006

You're only young once but you can be immature forever.

When all you have is Jesus, you realize that Jesus is all you need.

She might be wrong, but she's never in doubt.

Even a blind squirrel finds an accord now and then.

Better to be silent and thought a fool than to open your mouth and remove all doubt.

Never do anything once you don't want to do the rest of your life.

The flesh is never satisfied.

Let your mind explain reality to your emotions.

You can only spend money once.

Don't spend money you don't have.

You only need to make one good decision at a time.

Forgiveness is the key to a good marriage.

Everyone should be poor at least once in their life so they learn how to use money wisely the rest of their life.

Humility is meekness under provocation

True strength is gentleness under control

Delayed gratification is the key to patience and maturity.

Pray the problem, not the solution.

Sometimes the best thing you can do is to not make things worse.

The job isn't done until the tools are put away.

I'm sure you have some of your own as well. I'd love to hear them so please share them with me!  
(June 18, 2018 Doylestown, PA)

***Proverbs 1:7 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.***

*What are some of your favorite Proverbs in the Bible? Why are they special to you?*

### **Blog 678: GOD'S WAITING ROOM FOR HEAVEN**

We've been spending time with my 90-year-old mother-in-law in Florida. The senior retirement neighborhood she lives in has been described as "God's waiting room" because it is where people come to spend their last years until God calls them home. No one knows when the time will be, who will be next or who will be here a long time. But they know their next move is into eternity.

When I first heard this mentioned it surprised me. What a way to see life! But it didn't take long to realize they were being realistic. By accepting things as they are these people can better adjust and enjoy the time they have here.

So I've been thinking as I go places here (we are in Florida as I write this). It's almost like the whole state of Florida is a waiting room for God's call. In fact, many places around the USA, and the world, are the same. In effect, isn't the whole earth just one big waiting room for when God calls us into His presence (for heavenly bliss or eternal separation)? And aren't we all, no matter our age, waiting to be ushered into the presence of the King of the Universe? After all, God can call the name of anyone, any age, at any time.

So think about that for a minute. You, whatever your age and wherever you live, are in God's waiting room called "life on earth." One day each and every one of us will be called, but we don't know the order in which He will call us. Are you ready if tomorrow is the day you are called home? Are you spending your time waiting wisely for His call or return? Or are you just passing time trying to get the most temporary pleasure you can until it's your turn? (June 25, 2018 Doylestown, PA)

***Ecclesiastes 3:1-2 There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens: a time to be born and a time to die,***

***Philippians 1: 22 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! 23 I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; 24 but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.***

*Today think about your day and time as if you were in a literal waiting room waiting for God to call your name and escort you into eternity. Does that excite you? Or scare you? If you aren't overjoyed*

### **blog 679: THIS FAR AND NO FURTHER**

Job tells us that God sets the boundaries for the oceans (Job 38:10-11; Proverb 8:29; Psalm 104:9; Jeremiah 5:22). I've been thinking about that verse as I've been sitting right by the ocean edge of high tide all day, watching the waves come in and go out. We come to the beach early and stay late, and we know how high the tide will go because we've been here before. It's always the same. There's almost something magical about those few feet where the ocean meets the sand as the waves ebb and flow. People walk up and down it, children play in it and thousands of people sit and watch it come and go.

There's something about the ocean that shows the greatness of God's power (Job It is powerful and large, yet peaceful and soothing. Sure, sometimes storms cause it to overflow its borders and cause flooding and destruction, but then it always retreats to where it was before the storm. God set the boundaries and the oceans of the world stay in them (Job 38:10-11; Proverb 8:29; Psalm 104:9; Jeremiah 5:22).

There are many forces that seek to attack and destroy us today. If it weren't for God reigning them in and putting limits on them, we would be destroyed. Our sinful nature, Satan and demons, the opposition and hatred of the world - any and all would overflow their boundaries and overwhelm us if God didn't set limits for them (1 Corinthians 10:13). They also ebb and flow, like the tide. Sometimes it seems they overflow their banks and will destroy us, but we survive and before long they are back to where they have always been.

Watching the ocean reminds me of God's great power, which He keeps under control. Even the oceans obey Him and His limits. So must our enemies of the world, the flesh and Satan. Trust Him. EVERYTHING is under His control and obeys His Word. Everything in nature that is. His

desire for us it to obey Him like the rest of His creation does. Do you? (July 2, 2018 Doylestown, PA)

***Job 38:10-11 And I placed boundaries on it and set a bolt and doors, And I said, 'Thus far you shall come, but no farther; And here shall your proud waves stop'?***

***Proverbs 8:29 When He set for the sea its boundary So that the water would not transgress His command, When He marked out the foundations of the earth;***

***Psalms 104:9 You set a boundary that they may not pass over, So that they will not return to cover the earth.***

***Jeremiah 5:22 'Do you not fear Me?' declares the LORD 'Do you not tremble in My presence? For I have placed the sand as a boundary for the sea, An eternal decree, so it cannot cross over it. Though the waves toss, yet they cannot prevail; Though they roar, yet they cannot cross over it.***

*Take some time and think of all that God has protected you from and all He has delivered you from. Thank Him for these. Reaffirm your trust in Him for future trials as well.*

### **Blog 680: NO DEAD ENDS**

When we visit our daughter in Virginia, two of her sons, ages 3 and 5, want me to go on long hikes with them in the woods behind their home. They love to walk and explore for hours, and so do I. From time to time the terrain gets pretty rough to walk on. Fortunately, there are some paths we can follow. The last time I was there we followed a path that looked like it was going to end in a thicket of brush and trees. The oldest grandson was concerned we were walking into a dead end. I told him to just wait until we got closer, then he could see where the path went next. Sometimes when we look ahead, we can't see the whole path, but as we travel along it unfolds step by step before us.

Immediately I thought about how much that is like life. It may seem the path we are traveling or the issue we are struggling with now will lead us to a dead end and we'll have nowhere to go, but God continually opens the way and shows the next step, step after step. There are no dead ends for those who follow Him.

It's like driving down a country road at night. Your headlights only illuminate a short distance in front of you, but as you travel that distance, they then show the next section to drive and then the part of road you will be traveling after that. Bit by bit they take you to town. The headlights don't shine the whole way there at first, but show the portion of road you need to travel next. That's how God guides us in life. We'd like to see the whole way illuminated before us but God says to just travel the portion He has revealed, then He will show the next part of the way.

You may be facing some issues or decisions in life and you aren't sure what the ultimate outcome will be. Just keep following the Lord step by step. He'll show you enough path as you need at the moment. Trust Him to show the next portion when you need it. Follow Him wherever He leads. He's never let His people down yet, and you won't be the first! (July 9, 2018 Doylestown, PA)

***Psalms 23:2-3 "He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake."***

***Proverbs 3:6 "In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths."***

***Psalms 17:6 "My steps have held fast to your paths; my feet have not slipped."***

*Where or how are you following God into the unknown at this time in life? Pray you would faithfully follow and trust Him each step of the way.*

### **Blog 681: SUPERHEROES: GOOD OR BAD?**

I may be all wrong about this. Decide for yourself if I am or not. Here's what I've been thinking. The world system around us is influenced, even controlled by Satan, correct? (2 Corinthians 4:4; 1 John 5:19) That means the world's view of values, priorities, motives, etc, is anti-God and pro-Satan, correct again? And we can't deny that superheroes have had a large impact on our culture during the last few decades and their popularity is continually increasing, right?

Now, my question is *why*? If Satan controls all that impacts us, would something like the attractiveness of superheroes be just an innocent coincidence he allows to prosper because it's fun for us? Or is it, too, somehow part of his plan? And if so, how?

Superheroes give us hope that there will be a power greater than us to rescue us when in need. The world no longer sees that deliverer as Jesus for He has been rejected and set aside. Instead people fanaticize about superheroes who come save the day. They know it is only imaginary, but they have filled a spiritual void with something 'supernatural.' So what's Satan's plan in this?

I certainly don't have access to his strategies, but here's what I think. We agree Jesus is coming back soon, right? Believers will be raptured and the world will be in turmoil and confusion, correct? It'll be the perfect opening for Satan to insert himself as god and ruler of this world, and we know he will do just that through the Antichrist. The Antichrist – who, by the way, will come doing supernatural 'miracles' to impress all (2 Thessalonians 2:9; Matthew 24:24; Revelation 16:14; 19:20; 13:13). Clearly, the Antichrist will be a superhero, a real, live, actual superhero just when the world needs someone to rescue them and bring stability everywhere (Revelation 13:8, 15).

So why will the western countries, where the Antichrist will rule, be so ready and willing to follow the Antichrist? Could it be because of the openness to superheroes that almost seem real on a movie, TV or computer screen? Satan already does supernatural acts through pagan priests in Third World countries and people live in fear of them. They are terrified of those with these powers. But Satan wants to be admired and respected, to be seen as a savior and deliverer (same as Jesus, but instead of Jesus, thus "Anti-Christ"). He doesn't want our fear but our admiration, and there's nothing we (especially the young) admire more than a superhero.

So that's what I'm thinking. Pretty subtle, isn't it? We know Satan is the great deceiver (John 8:44; Genesis 3:1-4; 2 Corinthians 11:3-14; 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10). So it could be, right? Do you agree or disagree?

If you agree, does that mean we shouldn't watch a creative superhero movie? I don't think that is wrong. But I do think that, as Christians, we should be careful how much we allow our children and youth to focus on superheroes. They can easily take the place of Jesus in their heart, and we want to make sure Jesus is their main hero and no one else! He shouldn't, and He won't, share His glory with anyone else. Make sure He is your first (and only) superhero! (July 16, 2018 Doylestown, PA)

***2 Samuel 223:8-39 These are the names of David's mighty warriors: Josheb-Basshebeth, a Tahkemonite, was chief of the Three; he raised his spear against eight hundred men, whom he killed in one encounter.***

*What about you? Are you more impressed by stories of "superheroes" than about God? Do your children or grandchildren glorify them more than Jesus? Nothing should take glory away from God.*

## **Blog 682: LOOKING FOR A CITY ...**

I remember once crossing a body of rough water on a ferry boat. Some of the people were getting seasick so it was suggested they look ahead and keep their eyes on the horizon where we were headed. Evidently this helps gain a sense of perspective. It worked well for them. It works for us spiritually as well.

God, the maker of the horizon (Job 26:10), knows that when we become confused and even sickened by the things we see around us in this world, that we can regain perspective by focusing on the distant but steady point of our destiny.

In times of trials, pain or persecution we can persevere by remembering what is to come for those who love and live for the Lord (Hebrews 11:10, 14, 16). We remember God's promise ***"Here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come" (Hebrews 13:14).*** We may be strangers and pilgrims on this earth (Hebrews 11:13) but we are heading to a homeland of pure joy and total bliss. We won't find it looking at the hurts and disappointments in this life, but by keeping our gaze straight ahead to where we are headed.

If you are getting a little sick and tired of this life and world keep your eyes on the horizon, on your destination. Keeping your eyes on heaven will keep everything in this life in perspective. Besides, you'll be there before you know it! (July 23, 2018 Doylestown, PA)

***Hebrews 11:8-10 By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. 9 By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. 10 For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.***

***Revelation 21:1-5 Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. 2 I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 4 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." 5 He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!"***

*Are you discouraged, disappointed or defeated by things going on in life? Take your eyes off them and think about the heavenly city in which you will one day dwell. Focus on it, not this earthly existence. Let God reset your perspective to the reality of the future He has for us.*

## **Blog 683: EMPTYING JARS**

The more jars we empty and give to Him to fill, the more He fills. Remember the story of the woman who gave her last food to Elisha, thinking she and her son would die of starvation? Elisha told her to get all the empty jars she could gather and set them before the Lord who promised to fill all of them (2 Kings 4:4-7). She poured what little oil she had left into one of the jars and it filled it completely. She kept pouring and every jar she had was filled. When the last was filled the oil stopped flowing. I don't know how many jars she had, but no matter how many there were she probably wished there were more.

The application seems obvious: the emptier jars we give to God the more He fills. If we don't give Him many, then not many are filled. If we give Him a lot He fills them all. I know He's filled all the empty spaces in my life which I've given Him. But He doesn't fill the ones I keep full of self, sin or

just busy activities. I'm still emptying 'self' out of areas of life He doesn't completely control. It's not that He doesn't want to occupy all of me 100% - He does. It's me that keeps getting in the way. When will I learn to not try to meet my own needs or provide for my own necessities, but to let Him always and only fill and use all of me.

I need His help to recognize areas that need emptying of self and filling with Him. I often need to go back and refill old areas of life which I keep taking back and trying to fill myself. Whatever need, whatever desire, whatever dream or situation I have, He can fill it much better than I can. So why do I keep trying? It looks like this business of emptying one's self is a lifelong process! (July 30, 2018 Doylestown, PA)

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

***Mark 8:34-35 Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 35 For whoever wants to save their life[a] will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it.***

*How are you doing with the process of emptying yourself so Jesus can fill you? Why does something so simple often seem so hard to do? Where do you find the most difficulty? What can you do to allow Him to fill up all your empty spaces?*

### **Blog 684: WHEN THE PATH GETS ROUGH...**

One of the first Bible verses I memorized was ***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.*** I've always liked that promise and refer to it many times. Recently, however, I received some new insight into the word "straight." It doesn't mean "smooth," "downhill" or "easy and simple." It would be great if it did – but that's not how God directs us. It is referring to God's promise to keep us moving toward Christ-likeness – His life goal for us. He keeps us going straight in that direction when we follow Him. That should be our personal life goal in life as well. Unfortunately, the path to becoming more like Jesus is not easy, smooth or downhill, is it? Jesus' road through this world was certainly not that way, and ours won't be either if we follow Him.

Maybe that's why it often seems our prayers aren't answered. Perhaps we pray too much for straight, easy, smooth paths to travel in our Christian life. Instead we should let Him choose the path and then we pray for strength, faithfulness and courage to walk it. I'm sure we'd see more answer to prayer, as well as more Christ-likeness in our lives, if we did so! (Aug 6, 2018 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.***

***James 1:2-4 Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.***

*Are you willing to trust God for the paths He takes you on through life? Are you facing something in life now which is difficult? Are you trusting God to help you through it or focusing your energies on praying that He remove it? Choose to draw near to God and let Him help you move ahead step by step.*

## **Blog 685: PRAISE GOD FOR ANOTHER WRINKLE!**

I recently read a blog by Max Lucado that helped me look at death in a bit of a different way. He focuses on aging as a blessing instead of a curse. We know it entered with the curse when man sinned, but it really shows God's grace for it allows us to be reunited with Him instead of living forever on this earth separated from Him.

Max Lucado likened our bodies to a bulb planted in a garden which weakens and crumbles. We are glad to have this happen because from the dead bulb comes something beautiful and wondrous. If it didn't go through the aging and dying process it would just remain a plain, unproductive bulb taking up space somewhere. It was created to die so new life could pour forth from it. It wasn't created to just remain a plain bulb forever.

What if those in heaven saw our bodies like we see a bulb planted in the earth? What if they could see us, would they become excited with anticipation as we weaken and crumble physically, knowing that the time of our death is near? Do they rejoice because this process produces our release to be what we were ultimately created to be? So, each new wrinkle or pain, the medical tests that come back less than perfect, the growing limitations we feel – these are good signs to rejoice for that means our time of blossoming forth is getting near. These bodies are weak and getting weaker. In fact, they begin to decay the minute we are born. God has a reason for that.

It's God's plan. It's why He created the aging process. He wanted to bring us home in a more beautiful state, something to last for all eternity. But wanted to make sure that while we are still on this earth we remember we are heading in that direction. Every wrinkle or ache and pain means we are one step closer to that last step when Jesus will change these weak bodies into eternal bodies. No more pain, or sickness, or tears. Only joy and bless. And of that there will be NO end! (Aug 13, 2018 Doylestown, PA)

***Philippians 3:21 who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.***

***1 Corinthians 15:36-54 What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. 37 When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. 38 But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body. ... he body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; 43 it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; 44 it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. ... For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. 54 When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality,***

*How do you feel about getting older? Would you rather live on this life forever separated from God? Does death scare you? Remember what is on the other side – your eternal resurrection body. Each new wrinkle brings you that much closer to finally possessing it!*

## **Blog 686: HE'S THINKING ABOUT ME???**

Do you know God thinks about you – a lot! With everything else going on, He still thinks about us. He thinks about us often. ***“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you,” says the Lord, “thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.”*** (Jeremiah 29:11)

Sometimes we feel that if God thinks about us at all, it is only in disappointment at our sin and failure. But God doesn't say, “I know the negative thought I have about you.” He doesn't even say, “I

know the single thought I once had about you long ago.” To know that the Almighty Creator of the Universe ever had even one thought about me would be outstanding!

But what He says is that He knows the thoughts He has about me and about you. Not a single thought but many thoughts. Not a negative thought but “thoughts of peace and not of evil.” He thinks about us all the time, and the things He thinks are all good! Most of my thoughts about me are not good, but God’s thoughts are. So God thinks better of me than I think of myself. That shouldn’t be surprising. But when I remember He knows all about me, inside and out, every thought and action, yet still has good thoughts for me, that is quite comforting and encouraging.

God thinks about us so He can give us “a future and a hope.” I think about my children – a lot. I think about what I can do to help them, encourage them, make their life better and give them a good future and hope now. That’s what our heavenly Father does with us, too. It shouldn’t be too hard to understand, but is truly amazing, and very humbling, to know He is thinking about us! (Aug 20, 2018 Doylestown, PA)

***Psalm 139:16-17. “Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them. How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them!”***

***Matthew 10:29-31 “Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father’s will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.”***

*How does it make you feel to think that God thinks about you more than you think about Him? Suppose if every time you thought of God, you remembered that He was already thinking of you. How would that impact you? Sit quietly for a few minutes and think about God thinking good thoughts about you and your future!*

### **Blog 687: MY SIMPLE FORMULA FOR JOY – part 1**

Do you have joy in your life? Do you ever wonder if you should be experiencing more joy than you usually have? Suppose I told you I could give you a quick, simple, surefire formula to having more joy, would you believe me? Read on and see.

God promises all of us His Spirit at the moment of salvation (1 Corinthians 12:13). One of the many benefits He brings is the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). Included in this is joy, listed second after love. God provides all believers with joy from the moment of salvation on. If so, why don’t we experience more joy in our lives? I think part of the reason is that we don’t understand what joy is so we look for the wrong thing. The other reason I will explain in the next blog.

Too often we equate joy with happiness. Happiness is dependent on external circumstances. It is a temporary emotion. If real joy came from our environment, the USA should be the most joyful place on earth, for our standard of living is superior to anyone anytime. Yet the rise in depression, alcoholism and drug addiction, divorce and suicide show many are far from happy.

Joy, on the other hand, is a constant, internal state or condition that comes from God. If we are looking for happiness, we will be disappointed because God never promised that we would be happy. In fact, the Bible promises just the opposite – times of difficulties to stretch our faith and help us grow spiritually (James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 4:12-13). Joy is an inner peaceful assurance that results from trusting that God is in control of all that is happening. It is having contentment in your spirit despite your circumstances because you know you are in the center of God’s will.

So the first part of my formula for joy is to not be expecting life to be all happiness and pleasurable outer circumstances. Instead, look for the quiet inner state of joy that comes from God, despite what is happening around you. We'll look at the second part of this formula in the next blog. (August 27, 2018 Doylestown, PA)

***James 1:2-4: Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.***

***“Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.” 1 Peter 4:12-13***

*Are you guilty of expecting God to give you pleasure now? Are you disappointed when outer circumstances stretch your faith? Ask God to help you look within, to your faith in Him, as your source of joy.*

## **Blog 688: MY SIMPLY FORMULA FOR JOY – part 2**

In the last blog I talked about all believers having joy because God's Spirit brings it to us. I said that one reason we don't always experience true joy is that we don't really understand what it is. Joy is an inner peaceful assurance that comes when you trust that God is in control of all that is happening. Happiness is a shallow, emotional response to a pleasing environment and is very temporary. Experiencing joy comes from knowing what it is.

The second element is to eliminate that which shuts off our joy. Joy is always there because God's Holy Spirit is always within us, but we don't experience it when we allow other things to block it. Some of these joy-suckers include unconfessed sin (Psalm 51:12; 66:18), self-centeredness or pride, anger, fear, etc. These things grieve (Ephesians 4:30) or quench (1 Thessalonians 5:19) God's Spirit, which keeps Him from freely flowing through us. Thus, the fruit of His Spirit, including joy, aren't experienced in our lives. It's like taking a hose and bending it so a kink forms, slowing or stopping the flow of water. Any sin or disobedience will do that.

Now back to my simple formula for joy. First, understand it is a deep inner contentment, not external happiness, so you know what to look for. Second, make sure there is no sin or disobedience in your life. If there is anything between you and God His Spirit won't smoothly flow and you'll shut down the evidence of the fruit of the Spirit in your life. This is easy to understand, but not always so simple to do. Don't pray for more joy, all of it is already yours. Pray to see if there is anything in the way, anything keeping you from full, total connection to Him. (September 3, 2018 Doylestown, PA)

***Nehemiah 8:10 The joy of the Lord is your strength.***

***Psalms 51:12 Return to me the joy of my salvation.***

*Read and pray Psalm 139:23-24 : “Search me, 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.”*

## **Blog 689: THIS OLD DOG IS LEARNING NEW TRICKS**

Who says old dogs can't learn new tricks? I've been gaining a deeper understanding of Romans 8:28 lately. I wish I understood it this clearly years ago! Here's what I'm discovering.

Paul says that God brings good out of all situations. He does not say that all things are good, or that God changes bad things to become good, but that despite how evil something may be, God will use it for His glory and our good. He uses it to build good spiritual qualities into us.

A key to understanding this verse is found in the word “good.” God uses whatever happens, that which we see as good or bad, to bring about something ‘good’ in our lives. That does NOT refer to health, finances, prosperity, popularity or any such thing. The ‘good’ contributes to us becoming more like Jesus. The next verse, Romans 8:29, says God’s plan for us is to be “conformed to the image of His Son.” God promises He does not withhold anything “good” for us (Psalm 84:11). That means whatever happens is for our ultimate “good” (becoming more like Jesus). If something we think is good does not happen that is because God knows that, in the long run, it is not really “good” for us. So He withholds it.

God never promises that as Christians we’ll have less pain, or that God will turn the bad thing into something pleasurable for us. He does promise that, if we trust God through whatever happens in life, He will use it to help mold us into the image of Jesus. “Bad” things are allowed to cure us of the things that can really destroy us. Remember, Jesus did not suffer so we do not suffer, He suffered so that when we suffer we will become more like Him.

Do you understand what I’m saying? Thank God we are never too old to learn new things! (September 10, 2018 Doylestown, PA)

***Romans 8:28-30 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. 29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. 30 And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.***

***John Newton: Everything is necessary that He sends, nothing can be necessary that He withholds.”***

*Ask God to help you have a proper attitude and response to the negative things in your life. Don’t expect Him to give some tangible, visible benefit to make up for them. Instead, use them as opportunities to trust Him more so you become more like Him!*

### **Blog 690: 70 x 7 AND COUNTING ...**

I know I’ve written about this in the past, but it’s so important I want to cover it again. In my marriage and spiritual warfare counseling, as well as in my own life, I keep coming back to the importance of forgiveness. I can’t overemphasize the damage unforgiveness can give to a marriage or one’s own spiritual life (Matthew 6:14-15). I think it is the one of the biggest problems Christians and churches face.

Unforgiveness comes from hurt. We feel hurt so we want to hurt back by being angry at someone. Anger is a sign of hurt within. When you feel anger, you need to ask yourself what they did to hurt you and give up your right to hurt them back. Feel the pain, don’t turn it into anger. Take the pain to Jesus for comfort and healing (Isaiah 51:12). Release your pain to God in prayer. This must be done over and over. Every time you feel the pain you must turn it over to Jesus again. Rely on God’s power to help you forgive. It is not a quick emotional change but a gradual giving over of the hurt and revenge to God. Remember how God forgives you and use that as your pattern in forgiving others (Colossians 3:13; Ephesians 4:32).

Forgive others as quickly as you expect God to forgive you. Don’t wait until you feel like forgiving. It is a matter of obedience, not emotion. Give up all expectations of revenge. God will be

as merciful to them as He is to you. Forgive them even if they don't apologize. Forgiveness is not dependent on whether the offender repents. Remember that forgiving doesn't mean you endorse, forget or make light of the offense. Forgiveness doesn't excuse their behavior. It prevents it from destroying your heart. You forgive them not to excuse or free them but to free yourself so you can let go and move on with life.

Max Lucado said that forgiveness is unlocking the door to set someone free and realizing you were the prisoner. C. S. Lewis said: "To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you." (September 17, 2018 Doylestown, PA)

***Matthew 6:14-15 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.***

***Colossians 3:13 Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.***

***Luke 6:37 Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.***

*Pause and sit quietly for a few moments. Ask God to show you if there is anyone you haven't forgiven, or need to forgive again. First, feel the pain they have caused you and take it to Jesus. Then make a free will choice to release them from any negative emotion or feelings of revenge you have against them. Ask God to help you forgive them as He forgives you.*

### **Blog 691: BUT GOD...**

Where would you be without God? Now don't just give some quick, simple answer but think deeply about that for a moment. What would your life, your dreams and your hopes be now if God had not intervened in your life?

The phrase "but God" is short and simple, but very significant. God sent a flood to destroy mankind, "but God remembered Noah" (Genesis 8:1). Jacob's life seemed out of control, "but God was with him" (Genesis 31:5). Joseph's life was turned upside down and went from bad to worse, "but God intended it for good" (Genesis 50:20). Saul tried to kill David, "but God" protected him (1 Samuel 23:14). The list goes on and on. "But God..." "But God..." "But God..."

The most relevant "But God" for us is in Ephesians 2:4 where Paul says we were dead in our sins, blindly following Satan, without hope and deserving of eternal condemnation. "But God" entered that picture and brought a 180 degree turn in our lives. He made us alive in Christ by His grace. He raised us with Christ and seated us in the heavens with Jesus. What a dramatic change! What a glorious rescue despite impossible circumstances! Read and meditate on the whole passage below: (September 24, 2018 Doylestown, PA)

***Ephesians 2:1-10 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, <sup>2</sup>in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. <sup>3</sup>All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh <sup>4</sup>and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. <sup>4</sup>**BUT** because of his great love for us, **GOD**, who is rich in mercy, <sup>5</sup>made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. <sup>6</sup>And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup>in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ***

**Jesus.<sup>8</sup> For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—<sup>9</sup> not by works, so that no one can boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.**

Finish this sentence: "Before God came into my life I was \_\_\_\_\_ but God \_\_\_\_\_ . (List as many things as you can that He has done in your life.)

Now go face your day with its trials and frustrations. Burdens always seem lighter when we remember how it could have been except for "but God."

### **Blog 692: EARLY IN THE MORNING**

I've always believed time should be spent with God first thing in the day, or as close to it as possible. The Jews gave the best of their produce; we should give the best of our time. It should be our first priority, not just something else to cross off our "to do" list.

The first person at the tomb of the risen Lord was Mary Magdalene, who came first thing in the morning, as soon as there was enough light to find her way there (Matthew 28:1). Clearly, He was her first priority. She didn't put off seeking Him. It took courage and boldness to go out at night. And when she found the tomb empty and she was unable to minister to His dead body, she didn't leave, she remained. She faithfully persevered, even though she thought He was dead. How many Christians today don't stand by Jesus, even knowing He is alive?

Also, Mary was weeping. Such was her devotion and love for Her Savior. She wanted Jesus, only Jesus. Even the angels there didn't interest her. She just wanted Jesus, and she wanted Him with her whole being. The best part is she found Him – rather He found her! Whenever we seek Jesus early, totally, sincerely and completely we can be assured He will be with us. (October 1, 2018 Doylestown, PA)

**Matthew 6:3 But seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.**

**Psalms 119:147 I rise before dawn and cry for help; I wait for Your words.**

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

*Do you seek Jesus as earnestly and sincerely as Mary did? If not, that may be why you don't feel as connected to Him as you would like. Seek Him now as Mary sought Him then.*

### **Blog 693: THE MAN FROM DOTHAN**

In the story of Joseph, we find a small role played by a "man from Dothan" (Genesis 37:17). He doesn't do anything spectacular; he just points Joseph where to go to find the ones he is looking for – his brothers. When he got to them, he was thrown in a pit, and then sold into slavery in Egypt. He ended up in prison but eventually rose to the second highest position in Egypt from which he was able to save his whole family from starvation. In Egypt the family of Jacob grew into the large nation of Israel. Eventually God sends Moses to deliver them and form them into the people He would use to give the world His book and His Son.

The man from Dothan didn't play a big role, but it was important. He pointed the way and from there everything else developed. We may think we don't have a big role to play in God's program,

but if we faithfully point others to Jesus who knows how much good will come from it. Many people are seeking, not knowing where to find what they are looking for. Point them to Jesus and let Him take it from there. Be alert for those who are seeking and then have the courage to point the way. God will take care of the rest from there. (October 8, 2018 Doylestown, PA)

***John 3:15-16 The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Messiah. John answered them all, "I baptize you with water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.***

***John 4:28-29 Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?"***

*Ask God to give you opportunities to point people in the direction of Jesus today. It could be talking about Jesus, giving a word of encouragement, sharing a short testimony or praise or whatever God puts in your heart to share. Always be ready to point others to Jesus in any way possible.*

### **Blog 694: SPIRITUAL WARFARE – GADARENES (MARK 5) (Conference Sessions 7)**

God has been preparing and training me for a ministry in spiritual warfare since I was a young man. It's nothing I ever expected or thought I would be involved in, but 30 years ago I found myself immersed in it. Since then I've been learning and serving in any way I can. It's become a large part of my ministry (<https://www.christiantrainingonline.org/our-ministries/spiritual-warfare/>). In my early years I developed a "Spiritual Warfare Handbook" which I used to educate those wanting to know more about this subject. I have updated and improved it several times over the years. It's still my basic tool in helping others understand spiritual warfare and find freedom from Satan and his forces. It's also been printed in book form for the pastors in India. We have given thousands of books to pastors and Christians there. I have added a book that goes deeper in the subject while tracing the theme of spiritual warfare from Genesis to Revelation called "Spiritual Warfare in the Bible."

I teach about spiritual warfare at each and every conference in India, both for new pastors and for those conferences which are for returning pastors. It is always the last session of the conference, for that is the best attended, and I want them to have it fresh in their minds when they leave. I use the passage in Mark 5:1-20 about the demonized men in Gadarenes. After teaching the basics I apply it to them by closing in a prayer for deliverance and freedom. I do this as a group to teach them how to pray for themselves and for others, and because it gives me an opportunity to pray for them to have victory over the demons that work against them. Demonic work is very prevalent and open in India. This session is always a very moving time as we sense God's presence, power and freedom.

There are many, many comments afterwards about how they appreciate this lesson and book. Satan and demons are very real and open in their manifestations in India, but many Christians do not know they have this power and authority in Jesus. They are very glad to understand these truths. Reports often come back about how this has helped them in their lives, ministries and churches. I know Satan would stop these conferences for many reasons, but especially because of our teaching on this subject, but God's is greater and His Word brings victory! Spiritual warfare isn't just an important tool for pastors in India, it is crucial for all God's people to understand it and be able to use it when necessary. (October 15, 2018 Doylestown, PA)

***2 Corinthians 2:5-11 For we are not ignorant of Satan's devices.***

***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.”***

*Are you educated enough in spiritual warfare to know when you are being attacked, and what to do about to have victory? Do you have security in Jesus and not fear of demons? Learn more about spiritual warfare if need be. (see my web site [ChristianTrainingOrganization.org](http://ChristianTrainingOrganization.org), click on “Spiritual Warfare”)*

### **Blog 695: WHAT AM I WORTH? (Lies we believe 1)**

Time was when we could take what we are told as truth. Integrity and honesty were on the top of the list of character traits. Not anymore. Now power and wealth seem to be what everyone is after. It doesn't matter how it is attained. Telling the truth just gets in the way. We need to be very careful about everything we hear or we will be deceived. The most dangerous lies are the ones that hide inside truth so they aren't noticed so easily. The closer to the truth they are the more deadly they become. The same is true of spiritual lies.

Human history starts with a story of Eve believing lies from Satan, the “father of lies” (John 8:44). She listened to what he was saying and, because she wasn't well versed in the truth, she believed what Satan said (Genesis 3:3). She distorted God's truth by adding to what God said (“nor shall you touch the fruit”). That was the weak link Satan needed to get her to believe his lie. He told her that God was withholding something good from her. The truth is that God never withholds anything good (Psalm 84:11). If He doesn't give us something, He knows it isn't ‘good’ for us.

Once a lie is believed then it is acted on. Beliefs lead to actions (Proverbs 23:7). And actions have consequences. Eve encouraged Adam to disobey and eat, and the consequence was sin entering the world (Romans 5:12). Satan has been lying to us ever since.

One of the most common lies that we believe is that we lack worth, we are inferior and failures. Believing this lie takes away our joy and peace, and it leads to trying to earn approval and acceptance from God and others. We think we haven't been successful in life, we aren't smart, or our appearance is lacking. That's because we compare ourselves to others using an imaginary standard of perfection. What really matters, though, is what God thinks of us, what He thinks we are worth.

The value of something is determined by what price will be paid for it. That is true of jewelry, homes, clothing and everything we purchase. It is also true of our souls. What price was God willing to pay for us? Hebrews 12:2 says Jesus endured the cross, disregarding its shame, because of the joy awaiting Him (Hebrews 12:2). Sometimes we think that joy was heaven, but He already had been in heaven and left it to attain this joy. He could have returned to heaven any time without having to go to the cross. The joy He gained through the cross was having US with Him in heaven! That shows how much we are worth to Him. It dishonors Him when we think we are without worth. It is a lie of Satan to defeat us and take glory from God. Don't let it work with you! (October 22, 2018 Doylestown, PA)

***John 8:44 “The devil ... was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”***

***Psalms 139: 13-14 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.***

***Hebrews 12:2 because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame.***

*Do you still believe the lie that you aren't worth much, that something is lacking in you? Spend time thinking about the price Jesus paid for you. He thought of you on the cross. If you would have been the only sinner, He still would have done it just for you. His love gives us unimaginable worth. Thank Him for it.*

### **Blog 696: I'M ENTITLED! (Lies we believe 2)**

Today in the USA we very aware of our rights. They are guaranteed us by the US Constitution. Advertisers promise we have the right to be happy, understood, loved, successful, healthy and prosperous. We expect all our needs to be met: food, medical help, possessions, mate and children, etc. If something is lacking, we are quickly aware of it and complain to God or others (or both). But are we right to believe this, or is it another lie of Satan to deceive and defeat us?

Jonah felt he had a right to hate the Ninevites because of their cruelty to his people, possibly his very own family. He felt he was entitled to choose to whom he wanted to minister. He was angry when God wanted to spare the Ninevites and to use him to bring that about. He felt his rights had been violated and asked God to take his life (Jonah 4:1). God asked him what justification he had to be angry because God didn't do everything he wanted (Jonah 4:4). God could often ask us the same question. Who are we to demand of Him, to question Him, to accuse Him of being unfair to us or of making life too hard on us? As Christians, we want to claim our rights from God. We want all we feel we are entitled to from Him.

But suppose God gave us what we were entitled to, what we deserved and what was rightfully ours? Where would we be right now? Yes, in hell for all eternity. We can be glad God doesn't give us we warrant! Instead of trying to claim our rights we need to yield our rights.

When we feel God owes us something, or is withholding something good, we are believing a lie from Satan. It's the very same lie he used with Eve (Genesis 3:1-5). God's purpose is to make us like Jesus and to be glorified through us, not to give us heaven on earth. Heaven will come later, now is the time to grow and serve Him. Thinking He is withholding something we have a right to just makes us question and doubt Him. We aren't thankful, don't worship, don't trust Him and turn from Him to meet our own needs. And that is exactly what Satan wants to happen! (October 29, 2018 Doylestown, PA)

***Galatians 2:20 "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.***

***Philippians 4:11-13 I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. 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.***

***Philippians 4:19 And my God will meet all your needs (not wants) according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.***

*How content are you with your lot in life? Do you hold back from God because you think He is holding back from you? What lies about this do you believe (and act on)?*

### **Blog 697: I NEED MORE TIME (Lies we believe 3)**

Despite all our labor-saving devices and means of instant communication today, we seem to be busier than ever. We look forward to the kids being grown, then gone and then to retirement – thinking at each of these junctures we won't have so much to do. Still, we seem to be busier than before. We spend our time doing good things and then don't have enough time for the best things. Our relationships with God and others suffer because we lack quality and quantity time to invest in them. Then we live with guilt because we don't have time to pray and read the Bible or to spend with family and loved ones. Books are written, seminars held and many claim to have the cure – but nothing changes. Is this the way life is to be, or are we being somehow deceived (lied to) about what we need to do?

I think we are. The lie is that we don't have enough time to do everything. But the truth is that we have enough time to do everything God wants us to do. The tricky part is separating what God wants us to do from all the other 'stuff' we want to do. That may seem impossible to do, but Jesus did it. He made an amazing statement recorded in John 17:4 "I have finished the work which You gave me to do." When is the last time you said you were done with everything that needed to be done? When do you end up with extra time at the end of the day and a feeling of completion with everything checked off your list?

Well, you say, He was Jesus so He could do that. But remember He went through everything as a person like us, not as God ("kenosis" Philippians 2:7). His key to success is seen in what He said: "I have finished the work which YOU gave me to do." Everything wasn't done. The New Testament still had to be written, churches started, leaders trained, theology developed, etc., etc., etc. There was more to be done, much more – but God didn't give that to Jesus to do. God gave Jesus 7 24-hour days in a week and expected Him to accomplish all that NEEDED to be done in that time. He expects the same with us as well. And that includes stewardship of our bodies, relaxation, time with God and investing in relationships, to say nothing of taking one day off a week to rest! So either God is giving us more to do than He is giving us time to do it, or we are adding to the things God wants us to do. That is wrong because it takes time from what He does want us to do. We end up doing them instead of, not in addition to, what God wants, even if we neglect our health and relationships to do so. The solution is to not try to squeeze more into a day, but to be sensitive to what God wants us to do. Martin Luther once said, "I have so much to do that I shall spend the first three hours in prayer." Oh, that we would say that today! (November 5, 2018 Doylestown, PA)

***Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens: a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build, a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance, a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing, a time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away, a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak, a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace.***

*Do you believe the lie that you need more time in a day? You need more money, but you prioritize to pay what comes first so you can live within the amount of money you have (at least I hope you do!). Can you do the same with your time? What good things can you cut out in your life so you have time for the best things? Do you skimp on your time with God and family in order to do more things on your list? Pray and ask God for wisdom about your priorities.*

**Blog 698: GOD IS LIKE MY FATHER (Lies we believe 4)**

God gave us parents so that, among other things, we would learn to receive love and protection from a powerful authority figure who we would, in turn, love and trust. At least that was the plan. I don't have to tell you how often parents fall far short of that. In fact, many times the impact parents have on their children in exemplifying God is more negative than positive. When a child grows up with a parent, especially a father, who is harsh, cruel, distant, manipulative, unfair or self-centered, the child naturally attributes those same traits to God. We believe the lie that God is just like my father. Similar lies include: "God is never there for me," "God expects too much from me," "God is disappointed with me," and many others. This gives us a wrong picture of God and undermines, or prevents, a close personal relationship with him. I've had to work through some of those lies in my life and I'm sure you have had to as well.

The truth, though, is that God is not like any human parent. He is far above any person, not even close enough to be compared. Only as we get to know God as He really is will we grow in love and trust in our relationship with Him. God is totally and only good (Psalm 136:1). He loves us and wants us to have His best (Romans 9:32-39). There is nothing we can do to earn or deserve His love. There is nothing we can do to have Him love us any more, nor is there anything we can do to have Him love us any less!

We are complete and accepted in Him (Ephesians 1:4-6). Others show conditional love and acceptance, but with God we already have all His blessing now and forever. He truly cares about us, or He wouldn't have left heaven to come to earth to pay for sins on the cross! He will never reject or condemn us (Romans 8:1). He will meet all our needs (Philippians 4:19). He will never leave us or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). He guarantees us eternal life with Him – forever (1 John 2:25).

God promises to protect, provide, teach, guide and sustain us. He promises to be our best friend, companion and servant. As His children, He wants us to honor and respect Him (Exodus 20:12), follow His counsel (Proverbs 1:8), obey Him (Ephesians 6:1; Colossians 3:20) and serve Him in any way we can while on this earth.

If you struggle with seeing God as He really is because of a poor relationship with your parents, think about how your parents have wounded you and how you carry that over to God. Ask God to help you forgive them and take your pain to Him. Talk to a mature Christian about these things. Look for a good role model of a godly man and get to know him. Use what you see in him as a foundation to change how you see God. Remember God is your Father, your Heavenly Father, not your earthly father (or mother). (November 12, 2018 Doylestown, PA)

***Psalm 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.***

***How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! –1 John 3:1***

*What hurts and disappointments from your own parents influence the way you see God? Ask Him to show you and then to reveal His truth to you. Ask Him to help you see Him as your eternal, loving Heavenly Father.*

### **Blog 699: TRUTHS THAT SET US FREE (Lies we believe 5)**

Every area of bondage in our lives can be traced back to a lie we believe. When we exchange God's truth for a lie, we find ourselves in slavery to it (Romans 1:21-25). The lie becomes our master (2 Peter 2:19) and we serve it. We only have freedom when we ask God to show us the lies we

believe (Psalm 139:23) and replace them with His truth (John 8:31-32). Only as we know His truth will we be truly free. There are hundreds of lies we could talk about, but it is better to learn His truth. Counterfeiters are trained by studying real money for when they know it in detail, they can tell anything that varies from it. When we know God's truth we can discern lies and deceptions of the enemy. Listed below are basic truths about God. I have adapted them from "Lies Women Believe and the Truth that Sets Them Free" by Nancy DeMoss. (November 19, 2018 Doylestown, PA)

### **THE TRUTH ABOUT GOD:**

God is good in all He does (Psalm 136:1)

God loves us and wants the best for us (Romans 8:32-39)

God is enough to provide for all our needs (Psalm 23:1)

God can be trusted to keep His promises (Romans 8:1; 1 John 1:9; 2:25; Philippians 4:19; Hebrews 13:5)

God doesn't make any mistakes, ever (Isaiah 46:10)

God's grace is sufficient no matter what (2 Corinthians 12:9)

### **THE TRUTH ABOUT JESUS**

Jesus totally accepts and fully completes us, unconditionally (Ephesians 1:4-6)

Jesus' blood is sufficient to cover all sin (1 John 1:7; Psalm 103:12; Micah 7:19; Isaiah 44:22; Jeremiah 31:34)

Jesus' work on the cross conquers all sin (Romans 6:6-7)

### **THE TRUTH ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT**

The Holy Spirit enables us to do anything God commands us to do (Philippians 2:13) including loving those who hurt us, rejoicing in difficulties, etc

### **THE TRUTH ABOUT THE BIBLE**

God's Word is sufficient to lead, teach and heal anyone (Psalm 119:105)

### **THE TRUTH ABOUT MYSELF**

There is no higher, holier career calling than being married or a parent. (Titus 2:4-5)

Personal holiness is more important than temporal happiness (1 Peter 1:16)

I am personally responsible for my behavior, responses and choices (James 4:17)

I will reap what I sow (Galatians 6:7-8)

I find true joy when I relinquish control to God or the authority, He has placed over me (Matthew 16:25; Ephesians 5:21)

I don't have to feel guilty about my past when I confess my sin (1 Corinthians 6:9-11)

God is more concerned about changing me and glorifying Himself than about solving my problems (Romans 8:29)

I can't grow in Christ-likeness without suffering (1 Peter 5:10)

My suffering will only be in this life (2 Corinthians 4:17-18)

It's not about me, it's all about Him (Colossians 1:16-18)

***John 8:32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."***

***John 14:6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.***

*Think of some areas where you struggle. Which of these truths apply to them? What lies are you believing that allow these to be problem areas?*

### **Blog 700: TRADING IN THIS OL' BODY**

What do you do when your car is in the shop more than it is on the road? When it doesn't perform anywhere near expectations and needs continual maintenance for one thing or another? What you do is get a new car, right? But what do you do when it's your body that is underperforming and requiring continual maintenance? We can't just get a new body, can we? At least not in this life.

Despite a lifetime of healthy living and eating, along with daily exercise, I find I spend more and more time going to doctors, having tests down, taking medications and doing various physical therapy regimens. It's a good thing I'm retired – my body is demanding more and more time to keep it going! And yet it seems I'm getting far less out of it than I used to in the past. I don't know what I expected it to be like after 72 years of use, but it definitely showing signs of wear and tear. And I know that will just continue to get worse until one day it gives out completely. I'll break down by the side of the road somewhere. My body will be put away like a broken-down car, but my soul/spirit will be in heaven with Jesus – and a new resurrection body designed to last forever with no maintenance!

God's promises of a new resurrection eternal body are becoming more precious to me. The more this bodies wear out the more I look forward to my new body which will stay perfect forever. Bring it one! (November 26, 2018 Doylestown, PA)

***2 Corinthians 5:1-5 For we know that when this earthly tent we live in is taken down (that is, when we die and leave this earthly body), we will have a house in heaven, an eternal body made for us by God himself and not by human hands. We grow weary in our present bodies, and we long to put on our heavenly bodies like new clothing. For we will put on heavenly bodies; we will not be spirits without bodies. While we live in these earthly bodies, we groan and sigh, but it's not that we want to die and get rid of these bodies that clothe us. Rather, we want to put on our new bodies so that these dying bodies will be swallowed up by life. God himself has prepared us for this, and as a guarantee he has given us his Holy Spirit.***

*Each time you see or feel an evidence of aging in your body, think of your new eternal body and thank God for it!*

## **Blog 701: NOTICING OTHERS**

I must admit it: sometimes I get so involved in myself and what I am doing that I don't notice what is happening in the lives of others around me. After all, I have my own issues and challenges. Who doesn't? Does God expect me to always be alert to the needs of others around me when mine are so demanding?

To answer that question, think of Joseph. He was betrayed by his brothers and sold into slavery. As a slave, he was falsely accused of the crime of attempted rape. As a result of those false charges, he went from a slave to a prisoner. Could life get any worse? Through it all, he continued to trust God and serve Him, even though it must have been very hard to do in that dirty, smelly, slimy pit known as an Egyptian prison. One day, some special inmates arrived: Pharaoh's butler and baker. They had made Pharaoh mad and had been thrown in the prison for some lengthy "time out." One day, Joseph—who had been made the #1 trustee—noticed that something was wrong with these two men. Their faces were sad. He asked them what was the matter (Genesis 40:6-7) and that was the beginning of his eventual release and elevation to the number two spot in all Egypt. It changed the entire course, not just of his life, but of the whole nation of Israel. It's impact is still felt today.

The part that strikes me was that, despite all that had gone wrong in his life, he didn't sit around in self-pity and bitterness. He served God and he served others. He didn't focus on Himself

but on others. He noticed others – really paid attention to them. And God blessed and delivered Him through it.

So I want to try to be more aware of others around me, in my home as well when around strangers outside. An encouraging comment, a small act of helpfulness, even a smile or casual greeting, can go a long way to encourage others in a time of need. Is my situation worse than Joseph's? If he could notice and reach out to others so can I. And so can you. (December 3, 2018 Doylestown, PA)

***Genesis 40:5-7 While they were in prison, Pharaoh's cup-bearer and baker each had a dream one night, and each dream had its own meaning. When Joseph saw them the next morning, he noticed that they both looked upset. "Why do you look so worried today?" he asked them.***

*Try to be more alert to the people around you today. Start with your own home, then friends and even include people you don't know. Spread the love of Jesus wherever you go.*

*And remember, God is always watching and noticing you and willing to bring comfort to you whenever you need it (Isaiah 51:12). Just let Him.*

### **Blog 702: THE MAGI SHOULD HAVE KNOWN**

It can be discouraging to see so many people celebrating the upcoming "Winter Holiday" but missing the meaning and significance of it. People should know better. They've all heard about Jesus and "Christmas." They should know what the season is about but it seems they don't.

It reminds me of another group of people who should have known about Jesus because they, too, had been told. The Magi (also known as the "Wise Men") were from the priestly tribe in Persia, one thousand miles away from where Jesus was born. They were highly educated and extremely skilled leaders of their country. They were the ones who looked for, trained and installed the kings who ruled over Persia. Thus, they were king-makers, and they spent many months preparing and traveling to see and worship their real King, Jesus.

They should have known, and did, because Daniel had taught them when he was in Persia many years earlier. The knowledge of the coming king passed through generations of Magi until it was time for His birth. They knew the time was near (Daniel 9:24-27) so when they saw the prophesied star (Numbers 24:17) they started their trip. They gave up much time and money to travel to see the Messiah King. They should have known because Daniel had told them, and they did. They humbled themselves to leave the country where they ruled to go to a baby in a poor village born to transient parents.

It's sad to see so many today who don't want to sacrifice any time or make any effort to seek and find the King of Kings. Everyone is so distracted and busy, especially at this time of the year. I want to make sure I'm not one of those so occupied at this time of the year that I don't worship the new-born King. I can recognize those "out there" who don't acknowledge the significance of the season, but I don't want to be guilty of it myself. If the Magi can do all that for their King, so can I. And so can you. Like the Magi, we need to keep our priorities straight. (December 10, 2018 Doylestown, PA)

***Matthew 2:1-2, 11 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi[a] from the east came to Jerusalem 2 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." ... 1 On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.***

*What can you do to make sure the busyness of the season doesn't distract from the time and attention which is due Jesus? How can you keep the reason for the season foremost in your mind and heart?*

### **Blog 703: HEROD SHOULD HAVE KNOWN**

Imagine going to a birthday party, a really big impressive gathering, and not even knowing whose birth was being celebrated? Suppose most of the people there didn't know, or care, either? What if the person himself hadn't even been invited? That's often the way Christmas seems to be here and now. It's Jesus' birthday, but often He is isn't invited to the party.

There is no excuse for not knowing what is being celebrated at this time of the year. If anyone wants to find out it's easy to get the answer. In Jesus' day Herod didn't know what was being celebrated when the Magi came to town. So he asked the religious rulers who knew what the Bible said and they told him. They even knew where He was to be born - Bethlehem. It's pretty clear he believed them for he responded by trying to kill the baby they told him about. He knew, in his mind, that the long-awaited Jewish king was born, but he was more interested in protecting his own kingship than acknowledging this new King, even if He was God!

There are many today as well who know, at least in their heads, that Jesus is God come to earth and that's what Christmas is all about. But they, like Herod, are more concerned about staying on the throne in their own kingdom. "My kingdom come; my will be done" is their prayer. It's all about them. Jesus is fine and good as long as He is making life better for them. If He threatens to challenge their control of their own lives, they do whatever they can to "kill" Him, just like Herod did.

Unfortunately, that can also be true of us who love and serve the Lord. We can become more concerned about what Jesus can do for us than what we can do for Jesus. We know better, but the spirit of Herod lives on today. I don't want it to live on in me. Make sure it doesn't in you! (December 17, 2018 Doylestown, PA)

***Matthew 2:3-5, 16 When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. 4 When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. 5 "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, ... 16 When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi.***

*Ask God to show you if you are more interested in building your kingdom than His. Try to focus your thoughts and prayers on Him this day and not on yourself or your needs.*

### **Blog 704: THE RELIGIOUS RULERS IN ISRAEL SHOULD HAVE KNOWN**

If anyone should have known Jesus was the Messiah it's the religious rulers of Israel. They knew He would come as a man (Deuteronomy 18:15) but be God Himself (Isaiah 9:6). He is to come from the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10) and be a descendant of David (Isaiah 9:7). They even knew the approximate time (Daniel 9:24-27) and the very place He would be born (Micah 5:2). They knew and they believed. They were able to tell Herod exactly where to look. But they never bothered to take the five-mile trip to see for themselves.

They were familiar with everything about the Messiah. They had studied it and taught it their whole lives. But when it really happened, they didn't bother to personally greet the Messiah. There are many in the USA, and many Christians in churches, who have heard the story of Jesus' birth over

and over and know it well. But they don't bother developing a personal relationship with Him. They are familiar Jesus and His claims on their lives, but they live as if He never came. In their pride they are unwilling to humble themselves and turn to Him. He is a nice, familiar story – but that's all.

We can get drawn into the “familiarity breeds contempt” trap as well. We know the story so well and so long that it has lost its special significance. The awe is gone. Spontaneous worship over the fact that God Himself left heaven to come to earth to redeem us is missing. We know the story. We believe the story. But do we still feel the full impact of the importance of it? Does it thrill us and fill us with joy and worship? It should. It must. We don't want to be like the religious rulers, do we? Make sure the story comes alive for you this season! (December 24, 2018 Doylestown, PA)

***Matthew 2:4-6 When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. 5 “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written: 6 “But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.”***

*What can you do to make sure the reason for the season stays foremost this season? Make a list of things and then give them top priority in your mind and heart.*

### **Blog 705: UNIQUE BLESSINGS OF SINGLENES**

For the last 20 years I've been leading an annual marriage retreat. One main truth keeps coming reoccurring. God did not create marriage to make us happy but to make us holy (for more information on this see Sacred Marriage by Gary L. Thomas). Joining two people with selfish natures and expecting them to sacrifice, yield and put the other first doesn't happen naturally. Sometimes, married people think singles have an easier life because they don't have to mesh their life with another imperfect person. But God uses singleness to make them more like Jesus. Also, His purpose for all of us is to be more like Christ. His tools are different but His goal is the same.

My limited experience with singleness came as a young adult in the Army and again later in life when alone in India. I was lonely, but I learned God's grace was sufficient. I depended on Him in a deeper way and it brought me closer to Him.

Our culture elevates marriage over singleness and that often adds an extra burden to singles. They can feel marginalized. Even in church they can feel less important. God's perfect will for some is to be single and for others it is to be married (Matthew 19:9-12; 1 Corinthians 7:7, 25-28). Neither is more spiritual. The advantage to singleness is being able to totally focus on God and serve Him (1 Corinthians 7:32-35). A disadvantage is that it can create sexual temptation (1 Corinthians 6:18). God used single people greatly in the Bible. God will use a yielded heart regardless of their marriage status. If you are single, thank God and serve Him faithfully with your life. Ask Him to help you live a holy life and use you in any way He wants. Don't think of yourself as lacking. Stay focused on God's plan for your life.

Marriage matters, but it will not last forever (Mark 12:25). One day we will take part in the Marriage Feast of the Lamb as the Bride of Christ (Revelation 7:17; 19:7). That is a marriage that will last for all eternity. (December 31, 2018 Doylestown, PA)

***1 Corinthians 7:7 I wish that all of you were as I am (unmarried). But each of you has your own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that.***

***1 Corinthians 7: 25 With regard to the question about people who have never married, I have no command from the Lord, but I give my opinion as one shown mercy by the Lord to be trustworthy. 26 Because of the impending crisis I think it best for you to remain as you***

**are. 27 The one bound to a wife should not seek divorce. The one released from a wife should not seek marriage. 28 But if you marry, you have not sinned. And if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. But those who marry will face difficult circumstances, and I am trying to spare you such problems.**

*IF YOU ARE SINGLE: Do you ever believe the lie of the enemy that there is something missing because you don't have a mate? Rebuke that as a lie from Satan and confess it as sin. Thank God for making you who you are and recommit to serving Him in all you do.*

*IF YOU ARE MARRIED: Do you sometimes treat those who are single differently? Think of someone you know who is single. What can you do to reach out to them and include them in your life?*

### **Blog 706: IS THE CHURCH FAILING SINGLES?**

*(After last week's blog about "The Unique Blessing of Singleness" I received this email. I am sharing it with you with the writer's permission.)*

Hello Reverend Schmoyer. As a very-recently former single person (who believes that part of her longing to be married was because there wasn't enough sensed connection within the church), I want so say "thank you" so much for this message; it is much, much needed. For some time I also was trying to communicate to any who would listen that there was a deep, deep need in the church for people who were not married to somehow become "equal to" those who were. "Equal to"?! Why would I say that? Because having been in church for decades as a single woman, as well as being a regular listener to Christian radio (another "culprit"), time and again I did in fact feel relegated to a sort of "inferior" (less significant or even "unfortunate") status. Why? Because so many of the messages by both, either directly or indirectly, seemed to state, "If you are married, you have been blessed by God...God has a special role for the family ("Focus on the Family")...Having problems with your marriage/family/children/ grandchildren/stepchildren? We have a conference, book, special group to help you so that you can be healthy contributors in the church again...AND, if you are single, could you help out the married people so they can be successful in their marriage (babysit, date night, etc., etc.) and maybe we can provide a special group for you to talk about your singleness and even help prepare you for a mate (because surely God intends for you to have a partner and your status is really only temporary...)."

Add to these very disheartening and deflating-to-a-single-person messages are the myriad of celebrations churches tend to have that do in fact elevate and glorify marriage: the wedding and baby announcements from the pulpits, the baby dedications, the church-sponsored wedding and bridal showers, kids' graduations, "family nights"...quite honestly all "worldly" (though wonderful) events; but when regularly advertised and celebrated from the pulpit and throughout the church, likewise send the same message of "being married and having children is so important here (and being single is...well...)." And in the absence of the same types of announcements and celebrations that are offered to single people, these messages can end up feeling more like penetrating darts to the heart even though the single people hearing these do want to "rejoice with those who rejoice" and to not be envious.

There are also the "sub groups" of those who are single which could benefit from encouragement from the church: single parents with children, for example, being adopted by families that could help fill in the lack left by the absent parent. Another "group" rarely considered by and who could be uplifted within the church are those single individuals with no children, who may often feel a "double whammy" lack in the shadow of the elevation of married people with children. What about married couples who are unable to have children? What can we do to encourage them? I am not just

speaking about my own feelings regarding this matter, or from some theoretical position. I have actually read other blogs and articles in which single people admit that, due to the sense of being on the periphery in the church, they have left.

Am I suggesting that being a part of the Body (Church) means being made to feel special or important? No. In fact, we should not be lifting up anyone or anything other than Jesus Christ. But when one status (married with children) does in fact seem to be elevated in churches in terms of being blessed and useful...then so should the other status (not married/ "single") be somehow communicated to be just as blessed and just as useful in God's sight.

Reverend Schmoyer: your message is right on target; I only hope that one day it becomes a regular and integrated part of the church. Until then, I think that many single people will continue to feel relegated to a periphery and even experience a sting in their singleness instead of seeing it as a unique blessing. Thank you so very much! With love, Terri (January 7, 2019 Doylestown, PA)

***"Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep." (Romans 12:15)***

***"For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 3:11)***

***"And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself." (John 12:32)***

*SINGLE PEOPLE: Do you ever feel envious over celebrations in the church for those who are married/married with children? Do you deep down inside not truly want to "rejoice with those who rejoice"? This is a wonderful opportunity to lay down your life (and feelings) with the Lord's help and fully participate in the celebration.*

*MARRIED PEOPLE: Instead of going along with the traditional church invitation for single people to come and help you with things since reportedly they supposedly have less time and obligations (reportedly), have you considered reaching out to single people and see what types of needs they*

## **Blog 707: HIGHLY FAVORED**

A recent sermon I heard put a new twist on a familiar passage. I'd like to share it with you. The message was about Mary. Luke 1:30 says *"the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God.'"* "Found favor" literally means "highly favored" and "greatly blessed." What a privilege to be used by God in such a special way! The same word is used for us in 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.* So we are just as richly blessed and highly favored as Mary – what a wonderful privilege!!!

But wait a minute. There's more to this than first meets the eye. Think of what Mary went through in life. She was criticized and rejected for being pregnant before she was married. She didn't have a decent place to give birth, and then they had to flee to a foreign country to save their lives. Her family was full of discord as her other children thought Jesus was crazy. Later, as a widow, she watched her Son rejected and cruelly tortured and murdered. Is that what it means to be highly favored? Yes, in fact it does. If we follow Jesus, then we will experience what He experienced (John 15:18-21). No one was more highly favored by God than Jesus, but He was not highly favored by His fellow man or by life in general. Neither will we be. If you became a Christian to have a cushy, easy life, you are mistaken. If you follow Jesus to have all your needs and wants instantly met, you will be greatly disappointed.

The great blessings we receive because we are highly favored will come to us in the next life, not this one. They ARE coming, but not yet. We will experience them in heaven. Does this world look like heaven? (January 14, 2019 Doylestown, PA)

***John 15:18-21 “If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. 19 If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. 20 Remember what I told you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. 21 They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the one who sent me.***

*Are you surprised, even disappointed, by the difficulties you face in life? Turn your eyes to Jesus and faithfully serve Him, as Mary did. You ARE highly favored. The blessings are coming. Remember that you are not living your best life now, but one day you will be!*

### **Blog 708: UNSUNG HEROES ARE FAITHFUL IN LITTLE THINGS**

Tomorrow we fly to India. Just Nancy and I get on the plane, but we aren't going alone. Each of you who read this, pray or give to this ministry is going with us. It takes a whole TEAM to make this happen and we couldn't do it alone! Never. Each one who helps is part of this trip and ministry. Each one who has part by supporting Christian Training Organization ©2019 in any way contributes. And each one will also be rewarded and blessed by God. Nancy and I go, but we all share the workload as well as the reward God promises to all who serve Him.

Maybe you don't realize how important your role is. You are “unsung heroes”, working behind the scenes to faithfully serve God. The church is full of these kinds of people. It's not just a pastor who makes a church go. The church has to be cleaned, children taught, diapers changed, checks written, bulletins folded and many other things done that most never know about. But God does, and He greatly appreciates those in servant roles. We certainly know and appreciate all each one of you do. We couldn't do it without you.

The quarterback may get the accolades, but without the linemen protecting him he couldn't do anything. The public sees the news reporter on TV, but without the cameramen, editors and news writers, the news wouldn't be seen. Even Batman needed Robin.

One of my favorite Bible people is Joseph, a man who certainly worked behind the scenes. He doesn't get much space in the Christmas story. He doesn't even say a recorded word. But without his support of Mary and Jesus what would have happened? We know of Stephen and Phillip, what about the other five deacons of the early church who worked just as hard and faithfully? We don't know a thing about them. But God does, and He blesses and rewards all of them.

When we go tomorrow your prayers will carry us and open the doors of ministry, your financial gifts will pay the bills so the work can be done and your love and encouragement will lift up our hearts and enable us to move ahead. So thanks for everything! Thanks for your faithfulness to God and the pastors in India. You bring joy to our hearts. We love you and thank you. You bring joy to God's heart as well and He loves and thanks you now and will keep doing so for all eternity! (January 20, 2019 Doylestown, PA)

***Matthew 25:21 “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!’***

**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.*

**1 Samuel 16:23** *The LORD rewards everyone for their righteousness and faithfulness.*

**Luke 6:23** *“Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven.*

*Is there something you should be doing for Jesus but you're not doing it? Some behind-the-scenes work He wants you to do? Is there someone you should encourage or pray for? Some act of service for your church or another person? If God puts anything in your mind, commit to do it, starting today. And don't forget to pray regularly for us.*

### **Blog 709: UNSUNG HEROES PERSEVERE (Ananias)**

We all know about the apostle Paul and the great things God did through him. What a special man he was! But Paul didn't work and minister alone. He had many unsung heroes around him, helping him and making what he did possible. Most aren't even mentioned in the Bible, but a few are. One such is a man named Ananias (Acts 9:1-20). He isn't someone we know much about but he had a key role in Paul's life.

When Paul was on his way to Damascus to kill Christians, Jesus met him on the road. Paul was converted and his whole life changed. The experience left him blind so his companions led him into Damascus and a very uncertain future. But God told Ananias to go to Paul, pray for his sight to be restored, baptize him and introduce him to the Christians in that town. Can you imagine how Ananias felt, being sent to the very one who had come to murder him and his friends? But what a key role he played in Paul's future. He was used by God to get Paul started. I'm sure he didn't know what a great honor and privilege he had. It was difficult and dangerous. He had no idea how the meeting with Paul would turn out. That's often how it is when we serve God in behind-the-scenes ways, too.

Mordecai Ham had no idea how God would use a little boy who came forward in one of his rural crusades, but Billy Graham has been the spiritual father of thousands (including me). It seemed small at the time, but God used Mordecai's faithfulness in a great way. A poor London shoe repair man who had to say a few words to a very small congregation when a now storm kept the pastor away had no way of knowing that young Charles Surgeon gave his life to Jesus that morning. But Spurgeon went on to become one of the most effective and influential pastors in the history of the church. John Wesley gave his heart to Jesus listening to an unsuspecting layman read aloud from Martin Luther's commentary on Romans. Jonathan Edwards, who led the Great Awakening in the USA, came to Christ reading about John Wesley's conversion. The list can go on and on.

Included in that list are acts of service you have done for Jesus, which have brought results far beyond your imagination. Who knows how God uses a book we give out (which you pray and pay for) to influence a pastor and his whole life and ministry, as well as those he shares the book with. Who knows how God uses a conference session to impact a man and his spiritual work then and for generations to come? Who knows? I don't and you don't, but God does. He sees, remembers, blesses and rewards. So, don't get discouraged because you don't see all the fruit you'd like to see from your ministry. Faithfully persevere. God uses it for His Kingdom and glory. Don't quit. Don't give up. We need you. The Kingdom of God needs you. Jesus needs you! (January 21, 2019 Doylestown, PA)

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

***James 1:12 Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.***

***2 Thessalonians 3:13 And as for you, brothers and sisters, never tire of doing what is good.***

*Think about those who have done “little” things for you – they may have seemed little to the person doing them but they have meant a lot to you. Pray for those people. Thank them today. And look for little things you can do or say to help someone else this very day.*

### **Blog 710: UNSUNG HEROES STAY HUMBLE**

*(I wrote this before leaving for India knowing I wouldn't be able to do so while traveling.)*

We all know someone whom we consider to be an unsung hero. They are special people because they are willing to serve without recognition or credit. One thing they all have in common is a godly humility. Pride is the great enemy of God's people. We all seem to want to be noticed, to be thanked, to be recognized and to be special and important. So if we aren't a pastor or leader at church, we think we aren't doing much for Jesus. We tend to value those in-front Christians as superior to others. We sell short the importance of what we do. Maybe we don't even bother doing it any more because no one sees or knows.

If it weren't for hundreds of people willing to give and pray and help in any way they can, Nancy and I wouldn't be in the air heading to India as you read this. There are many in India who also work behind the scenes to make this happen. I'll be telling you more about them in future blogs. But it takes humility to be willing to serve unnoticed. We see some in India, like anywhere else, who want to be in the front and be recognized. But we also see hundreds of people in India help set up chairs, carry books, prepare and serve food, provide housing or transportation, give a word of encouragement or pray for others. They are all unsung heroes.

We all know someone whom we consider to be an unsung hero. But do others see that in you? Are you known for humbly and faithfully working behind the scenes to serve Jesus in any small way you can? You should be. God needs you and so do others. (January 22, 2019 Dopylestown, PA)

***James 4:6 God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.***

***1 Corinthians 3:5-9 5 What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. 6 I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. 7 So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. 8 The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor. 9 For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building.***

*Ask God to show you where you get too much 'self' in your serve. Are you easily offended? Do you compare what you do with what others do? Do you feel you don't get the recognition you deserve? Do you think what you do for Jesus in your daily life isn't as important as what others do? Confess any of these sins God convicts you of and commit to serving Him and not yourself.*

### **Blog 711: “THIS WILL NOT END IN DEATH”**

*(I wrote this before leaving for India knowing I wouldn't be able to do so while traveling.)*

We know God is sovereign. We talk and sing about it. But sometimes we don't apply that when we face difficult situations. When Jesus delayed going to help Lazarus, He knew what would

happen before it happened. He knew what the ultimate result of the sickness was. It was as if God has said, "Sickness, you can go this far but no further." Even though Lazarus experienced death, Jesus reversed that and brought him back to life.

The God of providence has limited the time, manner, intensity, repetition and effects of all our sicknesses; each throb is decreed, each sleepless hour predestinated, each relapse ordained, each depression of spirit foreknown and each sanctifying result eternally purposed. Nothing great or small escapes the ordaining hand of Him who numbers the hairs of our head. He knows our limits. He clearly understands what He is trying to accomplish in our lives. He never over estimates or under estimates what it will take to help us grow to become more like Jesus.

Sickness, or anything we face, is for a reason. It's never bad luck or something that just happened. The sovereign God of the universe plans and uses it all. It's never out of His control, never too much, never too little, but always just right. He never cuts deeper than needed, never heats the fire hotter than necessary or keeps us in it a moment too long. Never. (January 23, 2019 Hyderabad, India)

**John 11:4** *"When he heard this, Jesus said, "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it."*

**Psalms 147:5** *"Great is our Lord and mighty in power; his understanding has no limit"*

**Isaiah 46:10** *"I make known the end from the beginning..."*

*Are you going through any trying circumstances right now? Do you ever wonder if God knows or cares? Find hope in the fact that God is in sovereign control of what you are going through. He has set limits to it so it accomplishes what He wants but no more. Thank Him for that and reaffirm your trust in Him.*

## **Blog 712: HONOR THE TEMPLE**

*(I wrote this before leaving for India knowing I would be very busy with many things as we arrive and get ready for our ministry in India.)*

Every time news programs report a story about vandalism at a church, we cringe. It's hard for us to bear the thought of anyone spray-painting graffiti on sanctuary walls or damaging the stained-glass windows, let alone setting fire to a place of worship. It's a desecration! The church is a sacred place.

Unfortunately, many Christians don't feel as strongly about harming the temple of the Holy Spirit – our own bodies. That is true in India as well as the USA. We put junk into our stomachs, our veins and our lungs. We wear ourselves down under a weight of stress and pressure. We feed our bodies food that undermines our health and increases our weight. We don't get adequate rest or exercise. We push seven days a week and don't take a day off as God commands. We are ever so careful to keep our mind and soul/spirit pure and healthy, but often don't apply that to our bodies. No wonder so many of our shared prayer requests are about health and body issues!

Yet God has designed our bodies in a unique way, exactly what He wants for each of us, the same as He has with our mind and personality. These bodies will be resurrected and fine-tuned to house our spirit for all eternity. We cannot reach our full potential in this life if we neglect the proper care of our bodies. What good are education talent, and gifts if we're too tired or sick to complete tasks well? Our quality of life goes down, and so does its quantity. Poor health that could have been prevented keeps far too many Christians from serving God as long as He would have wanted.

We see that in India. It's sad to see pastors and Christians who could have enjoyed better health and longer service struggle with poor health because they haven't taken care of themselves. This is true in the United States as well.

We need to show honor and respect to the buildings in which we worship, but we need to show even more honor and respect to the temple in which God dwells – our bodies. (January 24, 2019 Hyderabad, India)

***1 Corinthians 6:19-20 Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; 20 you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.***

*How would God rate you as a steward of the body He has given you? Where would He say improvement is needed? Perhaps there is even something you need to confess as sin in this?*

### **Blog 713: SNARES AND TRAPS**

We are here, and we hit the ground running! We, and our luggage, made it here as planned. Pastor Moses' car broke down on the way to the airport. It needed a new battery and he took care of that yesterday. We had our first conference today. It went all right. It takes a bit to get in the swing of things, especially with jet lag, but so far voice and health are doing fine.

The meeting with the people from Lifeway went very well yesterday. It was a very encouraging time of sharing, fellowship and planning. It seems they want to use my books to provide a mini-library for pastors throughout India. They are great promoters with many resources. They want to make videos of me teaching the conference sessions and feature them live and on the Internet. We'll see how they develop it all. It's exciting and also very humbling. Who would have thought? Thanks so much for praying, and keep praying for this as you think of it.

God has protected and provided for us in many ways already. Psalm 91:3 says **“Surely He will save you from the fowler's snare.”** Think about that word “FROM.” It could be taken in two ways: Before we get caught in Satan's traps, He delivers us. He prevents us from being ensnared. It could also mean that when we are entrapped, He releases us and frees us from the trap. I think the verse means both. He helps us avoid the traps of the enemy and when we don't avoid them, when they are sprung on us unawares, He frees us from the traps. Whatever happens He covers us. The Psalmist says He will “surely” do it – it's a sure thing! Sounds good to me?

I can see the snares of the enemy He has delivered us from, things like car problems, health difficulties, etc. What I can't see are the things He prevented, the traps that never materialized, the attacks that were beaten back by His angels before we ever knew about them. I need to thank Him and praise Him for those things as well as the ones I recognize. I think sometimes He allows us to find ourselves in terrible situations so we can appreciate His deliverance. It is much better to stay aware that He is preventing more than we can ever imagine. Suppose He let Satan have his way with us, I can't imagine what that would be like. Fortunately, I don't have to, and neither do you. What snares set for you might He be thwarting at this very minute? (January 25, 2019 Hyderabad, India)

***Psalm 91:3-4 Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence. 4 He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.***

*What has God delivered you from in your life? Thank Him for every one.*

*What has He prevented from happening that you aren't even aware of? What would Satan have done to you had God not prevented it? Thank God for this as well. And every time you feel God isn't near or helping you, remember all the snares He is continually saving you from.*

## **Blog 714: HIT THE GROUND RUNNING**

### **FROM NANCY:**

Conference #1 DONE !!!!! All went well. Seems like this year the conferences will be smaller (50-75 pastors) because of the venues and it makes logistics more manageable. Really, we prefer it that way. Teaching and interaction go much smoother. It seems to weed out the less mature leaders who try to get attention in a big crowd. That is distracting.

Today the church and many of the pastors came from Mennonite backgrounds including several pastors that were just in training when Moses was teaching early in his ministry. Now those men are pastors! There is an increasing number of pastors with Internet access now also. That opens up so many more resources for them but can be difficult to find reliable Bible materials. CTO's site comes up in English but there is a tab to make the entire site into Telugu, Hindi or Spanish. (Thanks, Eva !).

It is a pleasant 72 degrees here and soft Caribbean -like breezes blow through the open windows in the churches, but not at our hotel. The pollution & street dust is a problem, plus there is AC. After the drive home we immediately unpack and get dinner ready and repack for the morning. then to bed! We are still recovering from jet lag and time zone changes. We BOTH fall asleep on the drive home! Tonight's dinner? - canned chicken with honey mustard on a whole wheat tortilla with cut raw carrots. A nice change from PBJ and tuna.

love Nancy

### **FROM JERRY:**

It felt great to be with Indian pastors again! Yesterday I talked about what God expects of them as pastors and followed that up with a session on Christian marriage. There is a great need for this in India and I always get many positive comments about it afterwards. I also did sessions on the Bible Overview – tracing the plan of redemption through the Bible. Today I started dressed as Elijah and talked about overcoming discouragement and depression. Nancy shared her testimony while I got changed. Then I had sessions on how to study the Bible and how to prepare sermons. I concluded, as always, with one on spiritual warfare. There was a very encouraging response from everyone there.

On a personal note, I, too, am getting caught up on rest. I slept an hour in the car on the way home yesterday, then took an hour nap when I got into the room. I slept 11 hours last night and would still be sleeping if I hadn't set the alarm! I took a long nap today and am looking forward to going to bed early tonight! You could say we don't have much of a social life here!

Thanks for praying!!! Jerry (January 26, 2019 Hyderabad, India)

Someone sent me this verse right before we came to India and it's stuck in my head since. It's a challenge with a great promise for all of us. In case you need it at this time in life, here it is.

***Deuteronomy 31:6 Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you."***

## **Blog 715: BATTLING PRIDE**

Ever since I was young, I have been uncomfortable receiving compliments. On the one hand I love them, need them and remember them for years. Verbal affirmation is definitely my love language. But at the same time I feel undeserving because I battled with feeling inferior to others. It's a Charlie Brown kind of pride. It's just as self-centered and God-denying as overt feeling-better-than-others pride. I do have a very selfish, self-centered side that I continually battle.

At the training conferences here in India I receive praise and affirmation. They see the American who comes and has all the answers. That is very uncomfortable. I love training pastors and do my very best, but I am totally aware that my mind, gifts, talents, training and opportunities are all from God and nothing I can take credit for.

Humanly speaking I can take credit for obeying and serving Him. But just think about it. I can serve the God of the universe who loves me and died for me or do something different. The choice seems very obvious, doesn't it? I, with Paul, can say "woe to me if I don't preach the Gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:16). God puts a strong desire in me to minister. So, I do it.

As a pastor I learned to graciously take compliments with a simple "Thank you." Yet I do not want to steal any of God's glory and take it as mine! I think often of Howard Hendricks's description of a pastor being complimented after a sermon as the "glorification of the worm." How fitting!

1 Timothy 1:12: "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that He considered me trustworthy, appointing me to His service." That pretty well sums it up for me. Instead of looking at me and thinking about where I fit in, I must keep my focus on Jesus for He alone gets the credit for everything good He does in and through me. I am deeply humbled and moved that He chose me to serve Him and gives me these wonderful opportunities to see Him work through me. I don't know if I'll ever get it right in my head, but if I keep my eyes on Him, I'll move in the right direction. (January 27, 2019 Hyderabad, India)

***1 Timothy 1:12 I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me trustworthy, appointing me to his service.***

*What about you? Have you learned to see yourself as God sees you? I'd like to hear from you. Send me an email about how this works for you.*

## **Blog 716: UNSUNG HEROES PARTNER WITH A CHURCH**

Everyone needs a body of believers behind them, helping them grow and live for Jesus. Those who travel to other cultures need a home church to pray and give and support them. We have been blessed to have Rockpoint Church in Doylestown (formerly Main Street Baptist Church) fill that role in our lives. Without their love, help, prayer and support we wouldn't have been able to serve God as we have the last 38 years. I hope you have a church body that you are part of which provides for your spiritual needs as well.

Paul also needed, and had, such a home church. He started many churches and stayed in touch with them. Some did OK on their own, others seemed to be a continual source of problems for him. But one stands out because it gave back to Paul in many various ways. It was the church at Philippi.

Paul thought of them often (Philippians 1:3). He prayed regularly for them (1:4) and they prayed for him (1:19). He considered them partners in ministry (1:5-6). He did not consider himself better or more important than they were. He knew he couldn't properly minister without their help.

He needed them and they needed him – that's the way a partnership works! We thank God for all of you who partner with us as well.

The church at Philippi provided financial support for Paul (4:1, 14-19). They sacrificially gathered and sent money to help Paul be able to continue to minister. Paul not only appreciated the finances, but even more the love and concern that prompted it. We thank God for you who help support this ministry financially, but the love and concern shown by your giving means even more to us. Philippi also provided close fellowship, encouragement and friendship for Paul (4:1). We need that as well and you provide that much more than you think – every one of you who reads or cares or prays or gives.

God's great promise, "And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus" (4:19), is given to them because of their sacrificial giving. They didn't keep enough money for themselves in order to make sure Paul had what he needed. Therefore, God promised them that, because they are putting Paul's needs first, He Himself will meet their needs! We can apply this principle to whatever need we have, but it is given specifically concerning financial giving to support God's people and work.

The church at Philippi is a great example for all of us today. I thank God for the home church He provided for us. We've seen many good, loving, faithful churches in India. It is great to see God's people on the other side of the world helping and supporting each other as well. Do you have a church that supports you in prayer, teaching and whatever you need? Are you doing your part to support and help others through your church or individually? (January 28, 2019 Hyderabad, India)

***Philippians 1:3-6 I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, 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.***

***Philippians 4:14-19 Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. ... I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.***

*Why not take some time today to read the book of Philippians? Think of them as Pau's home church, who made much of his ministry possible. Think of what you can learn from them to help you make your church more like the church in Philippi. Thank God for your church and pray for it daily.*

## **Blog 717: IMPROVING YOUR SERVE**

We see many fine examples of servanthood among the Christians in India. To be honest, we do see a few self-centered, proud people as well, but the majority are humble servants of Jesus and us. They go out of their way to serve and make our time there easier. The best part is, they do the most menial tasks for us with joy and a smile.

As Christians we are all challenged to be a servant. Well, the truth is that we ARE servants already. God has declared us servants of Him (Isaiah 41:9). So the question is not if we choose to be a servant or not. The only question is what kind of a servant we are. You are a servant, but are you a good or bad servant?

What traits make a good servant? Faithfulness, perseverance, immediate and total obedience, putting personal needs second and anticipating any and every desire of the master defines a good servant. Does that describe your Christian life? It should.

Unfortunately, as Christians we often focus more on how to get God to serve us instead of how we can serve Him. How can we get God to answer our prayers? What can we do to receive more blessing and have a smoother life? How can we have more joy and peace? But that isn't what it's all about. We pray "YOUR kingdom come, YOUR will be done," not "MY kingdom come, MY will be done."

What, or whom do you serve? What is of the utmost importance in your life? What comes first in your thoughts and actions? If it anything other than God it's an idol. And we all know what God thinks of idols! (January 29, 2019 Hyderabad, India)

***Isaiah 41:9 I have called you back from the ends of the earth, saying, 'You are my servant.' For I have chosen you and will not throw you away.***

***1 John 5:21 Dear children, keep yourselves from idols.***

*If God gave you an employer evaluation as to your effectiveness as a loyal servant, what would He say? What areas need work? Ask God to help you be a better servant today. Ask Him to help you get your eyes off yourself and onto Him – and to keep them there.*

### **Blog 718: FLEXIBILITY**

Activities and events in the USA are organized, scheduled, and carried out in a systematic way. So, when we come to India, we assume the same is true. It doesn't take long to realize that isn't the case at all. In fact, confusion, last-minute changes, delays, cancellations and interruptions can be counted on. This is true of our daily life, our travel and our conferences. You wouldn't believe the things that happen!

Yesterday we arrived 2 hours late (traffic) for yesterday's conference, but there were only 6 people there. We still waited another hour to start. Picture a large, empty concrete room with a concrete mixer constantly grinding in one corner (making concrete for upstairs construction). 30 children yelled and played in another corner. The smoke and dust were so thick we could barely see the other end of the room. Eventually 25 people arrived, but they talked on their phones or to each other and walked around during the sessions. They weren't responsive during the sessions. And the toilets were virtually unusable. It all made us less than excited for today.

We arrived on time and started an hour later today. The children were there but no construction. The smoke and dust were present but today 125 people came! Evidently the ones who were here went home and told others who came! They were still a bit unruly (in the USA we'd call it rude) but that is just the way it is this area so we adjusted. We had an overwhelmingly positive response at the end.

It's not like we haven't had experience at adjusting to these things. We meet the people where they are and do our best to minister to them in any way we can. It takes patience and flexibility, a combination of uncomplaining waiting but always being ready to move ahead when possible. It can be a tricky balance to maintain.

God wants us to patiently wait for Him, but stay ready for action. "Stand still" He commands. We aren't to sit or lay down, but to stand. We aren't to run ahead on our own. Or to quit. Or try to find our own way. We are to stand, but stand still. We are to be upright, ready for action, anticipating coming directions and patiently awaiting God's guidance. Soon He will say, like He did to Moses, "Go forward."

What a hard balance that is to maintain! We either rush ahead full speed almost as if we can handle life ourselves, or we quit and stop trying. It must be so frustrating to God. As parents we can

understand the exasperation of dealing with children who always go from one extreme to the other. Our Heavenly Father feels the same thing. I hope I'm not the cause. I hope you aren't, either. (January 30, 2019 Kurnool, India)

***Exodus 14:13 Moses answered the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again.***

***I Samuel 12:16 "Now then, stand still and see this great thing the Lord is about to do before your eyes!***

***Psalms 27:14 "Wait on the Lord."***

***Psalms 46:10 Be still, and know that I am God.***

*Do you find yourself impatiently rushing ahead of God? Or are you more characterized by dragging your feet? What can you do to avoid these extremes but just stand still and wait for His guidance?*

### **Blog 719: Nancy's Notes**

From Nancy:

We have been here 1 week now and I'm still trying to get in a pattern. Mostly the pattern is getting up, eat quickly-drive 2-3 hours- then sit and listen to Jerry for 6-8 hrs.-drive back, make dinner then lunches for the next day, shower, sleep... repeat... So far so good...a tad exhausting, but doing' ok.

So, India is all about form but not function. For example, our nice attractive room. nice to look at, but the hot water doesn't work nor does the Internet. (Jerry has a Hot Spot on his phone) The "toy-el-let" paper is scarce and is an American request... each and every day. Many things are like that here. India has everything the West has, but it doesn't work. LO!!

It makes me think of American life and American's relationship with God. It looks nice on the outside, but doesn't work on the inside. "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you: - James 4:8. Our relationship to God is definitely NOT a "fake it till you make it" option. He wants to reveal Himself and be real in your life and WORK in your life... and "function" as only He can do for you and In you.

I have to trust his closeness and provision every step of the way here. All of life is on a shoe string and totally unpredictable. (today I have to skirt around a wild pig, wild dog and a goat to get in to a lady's house.) Once I was in her "English" bathroom, the flush didn't work nor the running sink water. But that is ok because there wasn't any soap or towel to dry. Fortunately, I carry ALL that in my purse. I am getting into a pattern after all!

Off to bed now.

When God is your only option, God is all you need. His grace is sufficient, for His power is made perfect in our weakness" !2 Corinthians. 12:9

### **Blog 720: 'MORE' GRACE?**

In India we must totally rely on God's grace. We are totally out of our element, our comfort zone, and if anything, good is to happen it must be God's doing. That is clear. So, we continually pray for His grace. But we have to be careful how we pray for grace!

What about you? Do you ever pray and ask God for grace? What about asking for more grace (as if what God is giving isn't enough)? "God, let your grace be sufficient for me" is what we sometimes request. If God would speak aloud, I think He might say, "How dare you ask for that which already is?" He cannot make His grace any more sufficient than it is already is. He declares, "My grace IS sufficient." He doesn't say it "may be" or "shall be" sufficient but that is always is.

Now think about that. Sufficient grace is always available no matter what we face or what we need. It is guaranteed, 100% sure. We don't have to wait for it or hope it is enough. There's no need to ask for it, or ask for more or it. It is there. We just need to avail ourselves of it. Do you? (January 31, Kurnool, India)

***2 Corinthians 12:9 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.***

He giveth more grace when the burdens grow greater,  
He sendeth more strength when the labors increase;  
To added affliction He addeth His mercies,  
To multiplied trials His multiplied peace.  
When we have exhausted our store of endurance,  
When our strength has failed ere the day is half done,  
When we reach the end of our hoarded resources  
Our Father's full giving is only begun.  
His love has no limit, His grace has no measure,  
His power no boundary known unto men;  
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus  
He giveth and giveth and giveth again.  
--Annie Johnson Flint

### **Blog 721: ARE WE HAVING FUN YET?**

After one of my first trips to India someone asked me, "Did you have fun?" The question so took me back I am still thinking about it! We seem think everything has to be "fun." If it is fun, do it, but if it isn't fun, don't do it! That just doesn't work in real life for the responsible, committed Christian. The Bible puts "fun" way down the list of priorities for us. In heaven God will make up for all that and we'll have unlimited "fun" – by any definition you have of fun. But this life is not heaven!

So, do I have "fun" in India? I am often extremely uncomfortable and stretched to my limits physically, emotionally and spiritually but I also have times of deep joy and great satisfaction. The blessings are too deep and too numerous for me to put in words. The honor and privilege I feel goes way beyond what anyone would call mere 'fun.'

Do I have "fun" in India? No, not in the way the person asking the questions means it. But I get overwhelming pleasure and indescribable blessing that make 'fun' seem like nothing. And I think that is what we all will have in heaven. Will heaven be "fun"? It'll be so far beyond fun we can't imagine it.

Is it "fun" to be a Christian? Or is it something far greater and deeper and wider than "fun" can ever be? I hope it is to you. (February 2, 2019 Kurnool, India)

***Proverbs 21:17 Whoever loves pleasure will become poor; whoever loves wine and olive oil will never be rich.***

***Ecclesiastes 8:15 So I commend the enjoyment of life, because there is nothing better for a person under the sun than to eat and drink and be glad. Then joy will accompany them in their toil all the days of the life God has given them under the sun. ("under the sun" refers to life without God)***

*Do you make an idol of "fun"? Do you evaluate everything by if it is pleasurable or not for you?*

## **Blog 722: HEROES THAT ENCOURAGE**

We can't talk about unsung heroes of the Bible, and especially of Paul's life, without mentioning Barnabas. Actually, his name was Joseph but his nickname became "Son of Encouragement" because of how he encouraged others (Acts 4:36). He was well-to-do but sold his land and gave the money to support the poor Christians in Jerusalem (Acts 4:32-37).

Barnabas was willing to work behind the scenes, in secret. He didn't crave the limelight, just looked for ways to serve Jesus and others. It is Barnabas who brought the newly converted Paul to Jerusalem and introduced him to those he had been trying to kill (Acts 9:26-27). Without Barnabas' help Paul wouldn't have been welcomed in the Christian church. Then a little later when the church at Antioch was exploding with new believers, Barnabas went to a lot of effort to find Paul and bring him to Antioch to help teach (Acts 11:25-26). Barnabas mentored Paul while they both taught new Christians.

God chose Paul to accompany Barnabas on the First Missionary Journey. It was a time of learning and training for Paul, but before long his greater skills and gifts placed him in leadership. Barnabas was willing to take second place. The good of the ministry came before his personal ego and pride. Barnabas also stepped into John Mark's life after his failure with Paul and mentored him for several years. Mark, as you know, was used greatly by God for the rest of his life.

Nancy and I are greatly encouraged by all of you who love us, support us and stand behind us. Words can't express how much that means to us! And you need to know that your encouragement and support of us passes right on to the pastors and Christians in India. They are extremely heartened by what we do for them, and that we care enough to come do it. Knowing they are not alone, that God hasn't forgotten them, that Christians on the other side of the world care enough to sacrifice for them means more to them than any of us can imagine. I always pass on greetings from the Christians in America. I remind them we are praying for them and that their faithfulness is a good example for us. They are glad to hear those words for they, like all of us, need encouragement.

We are all unsung heroes when we bring encouragement to others. The church needs more who will build up instead of breakdown, who will give instead of take and who will make those they meet feel better instead of worse. We all need more verbal support in our lives. Remember that anyone can be an encourager! It doesn't take money, education, skill or talent. It just takes a heart that cares and a mouth that is willing to say so to others. Does your heart care? Is your heart willing? (February 3, 2019 Kurnool, India)

***1 Thessalonians 5:11 Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.***

***Ephesians 4:29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.***

***Hebrews 10:24-25 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, 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.***

*Whom do you know who encourages you? Pray for them, and thank them in person.*

*Are there people who would say that you encourage them? Think about whom you can encourage today and how you can do it. Ask God to put people in your path who need encouragement and to make you aware of them so you can share encouragement.*

### **Blog 723: STAGES OF CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE**

I'm still thinking about a short blog my daughter sent me. It is based on Paul and Silas' visit to Philippi (Acts 16). They were faithfully serving God but were arrested, beaten and chained in prison (v.16-24). God watched it happen and didn't stop it. They remained in prison with no explanation as to why (v.25). Despite this, they prayed and praised God (v.25). Then, in His timing, God delivered them from prison (v.26). Immediately they continued to faithfully serve Him (v.27-34).

It seems we are in one of 3 stages: 1) afflicted while God remains silent 2) suffering the consequences He didn't prevent, 3) delivered from circumstances to serve until stage 1 comes again. Which stage are you in? In all of them we are to stay faithful. When suffering gets worse and He doesn't free us, that's when we raise our hearts in song & prayer (v.25). Worship is still the best antidote to whatever trials we face. Worship is still the best antidote to whatever trials we face. In life we can't control our circumstances but we can control our responses.

The other prisoners were watching. Others watch us as we go through painful, unfair situations in life. What do they see in you?

Above all, remember – for every stage 1 and 2, there will always be a stage 3. We will be delivered from it, if not in this life, than the next. So be encouraged and keep worshipping! (February 4, 2019 Kurnool, India)

***Acts 16:25 About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them.***

### **Blog 724: ANYONE HAVE A NEED?**

Do you remember the childhood song “Zacchaeus was a wee little man; a wee little man was he...”? As a child I could identify with someone seemingly of short stature (in fact I still can!). As a child, too, the message was clear that Jesus noticed and cared about everyone, no matter whom they are. Zacchaeus was a notorious sinner in their eyes because he was a tax collector. Perhaps he was in the tree because no one wanted him standing near them. Whatever the case, Jesus noticed and cared.

People were everywhere. They were loud and demanding His attention. He was on His way to Jerusalem to pay for the sins of the world, a great weight and distraction in itself. Yet He noticed and took the time to meet the needs of a lonely, rejected person who needed Him. He changed His plans and went to Zacchaeus' home, showing him great acceptance and honor.

There are people all around us, in India and in the USA, “hanging in trees” – needy, empty, lonely, hurting and without hope. Are we too preoccupied with our own busy life and personal needs to notice and reach out as Jesus did? We can't meet the needs of everyone, especially in India where need is so obvious and great, but when Jesus points out someone we can help, do we inconvenience ourselves to reach out and try to bring Jesus into their lives?

In each conference I teach the Bible Overview – the plan of redemption through the Old and New Testaments. I draw 20+ separate sketches, one for each period in Bible history. Nancy hangs them on a rope we string across the front. A few days ago, she was doing this but didn't have a chair in the front so stood while I talked. The room was crowded, but a young pastor in the very back made his way forward through everyone, found an empty chair, and took it to Nancy while I was talking. It would have been so easy for him to ignore the need, especially from the back. I was really impressed so stopped the teaching to thank him. That's what Jesus would have done!

Is there someone with a need you know but have been putting off reaching out to? Make plans today to do what you can for them in Jesus' name. (February 5, 2019 Kurnool, India)

***Luke 19:1-6 Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. 2 A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. 3 He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short, he could not see over the crowd. 4 So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. 5 When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." 6 So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.***

*Thank God for those who have reached out to you in times of need. Ask Him to help you notice those you can help or encourage in your life today.*

### **Blog 725: NANCY'S AMUSING MUSINGS:**

Today we were greeted at the conference by the pastor's 15-year-old son who has Downs Syndrome. He ecstatically greeted us and hurriedly motioned us toward his house. He wanted to show us his Samaritan's Purse Christmas shoebox. He painstakingly removed each item (some still unopened) and handed them one by one to me to carefully examine. When Pastor Moses attempted to put his hand in the shoe box he was quickly reprimanded by the young man. Every item in the box was of great value and totally cherished by the boy. He celebrated the moment by opening one of the toys – a simple puzzle. I helped him put the 10 pieces together. What a joy this treasure box is to this boy! Your boxes DO matter. Thank you to those who generously assemble these annual Christmas boxes (picture below)

**"You Know You Are in India When:"** Back by popular demand, I have the 2019 version

You update your life insurance before getting into the car.

You carry Imodium pills in your purse.

You drink Mylanta with your meals.

You have a quart size hand sanitizer.

You cover your head with a scarf every time someone prays (custom).

Everyone wants to take your "photo".

You carry bottled water – always and only.

Everything is expressed in the present tense: "we do" can mean past, present or future.

You ask for the "American" answer, not the Indian answer.

10 minutes really means 30-60 minutes.

You see motorcycles for sale at a TV/electronics store.

Women can show their midriffs but not their upper arms.

More coming I'm sure.. there's just too much material here! (February 5, 2019 Kurnool, India)

### **Blog 726: GOD'S MEMORY, NOT OURS**

Sometimes it's easy to forget God's promises. When we face opposition and disruptions in India or our carefully made plans fall apart at the last minute, we can wonder where God is. Sometimes we have last-minute major changes in our schedule, or someone (me) gets sick, or some immature pastors make a fuss about some unimportant slight they feel. The pastors here face real persecution for themselves and their loved ones. It has been getting worse, not better, over the years and shows no sign of ending soon. That's when we must remember God's promises.

We can forget God's promises, but He never forgets them! Isn't it great to know God remembers His covenant and promises? If it depended on our memory we'd be in deep trouble. What if God was only true to His promises if we remembered them? The truth is, even if we forget, He remembers and keeps them. Even if we forget, He does not.

My looking to Jesus brings me joy and peace, but it is God's looking to Jesus which secures my salvation and that of all his elect, since it is impossible for our God to look at Christ, our Savior who bled and died for us, and then to be angry with us for sins already paid for by Him. No, it is not left with us even to be saved by remembering the covenant. It is not of man, neither by man, but of the Lord alone.

We should remember the covenant, and we shall do it, through divine grace; but the hinge of our safety does not hang there—it is God's remembering us, not our remembering him; and hence the covenant is an everlasting. (February 7, 2019 Kurnool, India)

***Genesis 9:15 "And I will remember my covenant."***

***Psalms 105:8 He has remembered His covenant forever, The word which He commanded to a thousand generations,***

***Deuteronomy 4:31 "For the LORD your God is a compassionate God; He will not fail you nor destroy you nor forget the covenant with your fathers which He swore to them."***

*How's your memory? Do you remember God's faithfulness to you in the past? Do you remember His promises to you? Do you always remember that what really matters is that He always remembers you?*

### **Blog 727: A SPECIAL BLESSING**

I was truly happy, blessed and feeling the maximum amount of JOY possible!

We were at the conference. I sat in the back. Usually there is a small amount of monitoring of who enters the room from the street. For example, children, wild dogs looking for food, homeless or "the curious". Remember, privacy is non-existent in India.

Today 4 Hindu men wearing dhotis came into the conference room and sat down in the back. (See a picture of dhotis below) Sometimes dhotis are indicative of poor people, shepherds or lower cast. I have seen a few pastors wear them but not too often. These men came at the start of the last session. Interestingly enough they stayed for the entire session. Afterwards they all went up to Jerry and asked for prayer. Jerry took the time to pray individually for them, shook their hands and bowed in respect. Our late lunch followed.

Lunch tickets are given to pastors as they arrive or else the entire town will show up to eat. The 4 Hindu men sat in the room talking as the pastors ate joyfully & heartily. Then it happened. God spoke directly to my heart and quoted His own words to me, "If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it?" James 2:16. I immediately squirmed through the lunch line and got 4 paper plates from the attendant. He was counting how many plates were issued. I had no lunch tickets, but the American women can get away with it. I handed the empty plates to the 4 men and motioned to the server to fill their plates. Again, I didn't get push back from staff. The 4 men looked at me in disbelief, amazement and sweet gratitude. Me? I too was in disbelief, amazement and full of gratitude that God Himself would speak so directly to me, using His own Word. That might be the biggest blessing of this trip. I don't know how God can top that! The men smiled at me as they left the room well fed! (See picture below) Nancy Schmoyer

### **Cultural Tidbits: #3 Music**

Drums are the main instrument. The deep wood sounds resonate from over laid taut skin materials. They are not the metallic as is common in the US.

They use complex syncopated rhythms that seem like Latin meets Arabic. The rhythms seem unrelated to the melodies.

If available, digital keyboards are set to accordion or high-pitched organ settings. Piano setting is never used. The keyboard musician plays background filler for the voices.... Interesting.

Church members have the words memorized to all the songs. Sometimes the leader will have song book. A sound check goes on during the entire first session.(sigh) (February 8, 2019 Kurnool, India)

### **Blog 728: WHEN NO ONE UNDERSTANDS**

Being a Christian anywhere is hard. India is no exception. In fact, it can be harder than most places because of the lack of religious tolerance and the increasing persecution of Christians. Families do not understand why someone would follow Jesus. Castes reject the new believer. Employers turn their backs. Following God's call often means others won't understand. In fact, sometimes God's call on our lives isn't understood other Christians.

That certainly is what happened to Mary and Joseph. They were ordinary people from an obscure Galilean town. Yet God's will for them was something that brought rejection and persecution because no one understood. Difficulties and struggles when we follow God's will for our lives. That doesn't mean we are going in the wrong direction. They do not mean God isn't near or behind us. Sometimes God calls us to do things that don't make sense even to us. I see that in my life sometimes. I see it in the lives of others, in the USA and in India. God would never lead us contrary to His written Word, so as long as that isn't happening, who are we to judge what God has others do?

Sometimes God's leading in my life doesn't make sense – like spending a month in India at age 72. I can't imagine how hard it was for Mary, a pregnant unmarried virgin, and Joseph, the man who to marry her anyway. God didn't explain to everyone that they were just following Him. They took the brunt of public opinion but they were following His perfect plan. I'm sure they didn't understand all that God was doing but they obeyed.

I don't always understand His leading in my life and I have given up expecting Him to explain it all to me. I don't expect Him to explain how He works in others' lives, either. I have enough to handle in making sure I am following God without trying to decide if others in India or the USA are or not. And so do you! (February 9, 2019 Kurnool, India)

**Luke 1:30-31, 35** *But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. 31 You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. ... 35 The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.*

**Psalms 139:2** *You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar.*

*Do you know a Christian whose life and direction seems quite different than yours? Are you tempted to evaluate them and pass judgment? As long as there is nothing in their life that contradicts Scripture, don't oppose them just because God leads them differently than you. In fact, encourage them.*

*Is God leading you or working in your life in a way others don't understand? If there is nothing that is contrary to His Word then follow obediently and faithfully?*

### **Blog 729: CULTURAL TIDBITS FROM NANCY**

This trip is a contrast between “over the top” joyful AND “Why am I HERE? – Get me home now! They put mothballs over all the drains. They say it is to keep the bugs and snakes from coming out of the drain. So far ,so good.

12 yrs of visits to India & the “head bob” still confuses me.

Time is still VERY fluid, so is honesty

You can never have too much hand sanitizer.

Telugu language is interspersed with English words such as college, education, studies, classes, TV, cell phone, computer, auto to name a few. The more modern the object, the more likely it is to have an English word. Many medical words are the same also.

The newspaper here reported that young marrieds feel children are too expensive and are opting to “parent pets”... um sounds familiar?

### **Monkeys**

At a conference this week the church had sliding glass windows. It was raining so they closed them. That was good because during the session a HUGE monkey perched outside the window trying to get in! I suppose he didn't have an umbrella.

Last night I had our window shade pulled down. I heard this horrid shrieking & something banging on the window. It sounded like a scene from Hitcock's movie, the Birds. I was too afraid to look. Today I realized what it was... fighting monkeys. The bars on our windows are to keep monkeys OUT not keep people IN .... Ohh India! (pictures below)

In winter the skies are hazy with a thick morning fog while we are DRIVING ! Who doesn't like a challenge? Some use their headlights, many don't. Indians are serious thrill seekers!

The temperatures are a pleasant 67 in the morning and rise to low 90's by 4pm. The air is dry, so think -Texas! Quite pleasant. (February 10, 2019 Kurnool, India)

### **Blog 730: IMPERFECT CHRISTIANS**

Sometimes we in the USA tend to idolize Christians in countries who face persecution. We can be inclined to make ‘saints’ of them and put them on a higher spiritual plain than us. But that is wrong. In India we see the extremes – the very best and the very worst of Christian actions. And often we see them both in the same person! Each conference, pastors who love and serve Jesus

(and sometimes wives) admit how negligent they have been to their wives and families over the years. Several pastors we have known for years have deserted their families to live with other women, all the while keeping pastoring their church. Their families end up homeless and destitute.

No one is perfect. We all mess up. Each one of us. Unfortunately, it is much easier to see the failures and mistakes in others than in our self. The good news, though, is that God doesn't stop working with us when we fail. Neither is His plan thwarted by our failures. Think of Sampson, Jonah, David, Peter – the list can go on and on. Zachariah had the awesome privilege of being the father of John the Baptist at an advanced age. He even got a message directly from Gabriel in God's temple. Yet he ruined it all by his unbelief. He didn't respond in faith and obedience but in doubt and questioning. Do you ever doubt God's promises? Do you ever question what He is doing in your life or in someone else's life? Zechariah did and suffered the consequences. He wasn't able to verbally pass on the good news of a son to his wife or the even better news of the coming of the Messiah to others. The Bible says he was righteous and blameless before God, but even he struggled in his faith. Sometimes we do as well.

But his disbelief didn't negate God's promise to him. God kept His promise and gave him a son anyway! Aren't you glad God's keeping His promises doesn't depend on our faith? God's Word is true if we believe it or not! Disbelieving is our loss, but doesn't lessen the effectiveness of His promises. God's plan continued. It wasn't thwarted by Zechariah's doubt. Isn't it comforting to know that God's plan is never upset by our distrust and disobedience? Our joy, blessing and peace are affected but never His plan. We can never frustrate that, no matter what we do. Thank God for that! Amen? Amen! (February 11, 2019 Kurnool, India)

***Luke 1:13, 18-20 But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John.***

***2 Timothy 2:13 if we are faithless he remains faithful, for he cannot disown himself.***

*Do you know any imperfect Christians? (that's a trick question) Is God's promise or His plan thwarted by them? Pray and thank Him for His faithfulness despite our failure. Thank Him that His promises and plans for us remain unchanged no matter what we do.*

## **Blog 731: HERO WIVES**

I think I might have mentioned somewhere that I am glad Nancy is here? Have you got that idea from me over the years? I certainly hope so! But there's more good that comes from her being here than just helping me in a million ways. She has a great impact on the pastors and wives as well. She is so opposite of them. They are quiet and dark, she is warm and white, even with blond hair. She wins their hearts immediately. The women and children are drawn to her and feel welcome and accepted by her. The men are impressed with her godly example of a Christian wife. Seeing us travel and minister together communicates more than words could ever do. She shares her testimony each conference and talks about how we met. That gives them a glimpse of her heart. She's been called an "angel" and to me she really is. I thank God for a sacrificial, godly, loving wife to share life and ministry with. God is good!!!

Pastor Moses wife and the wife of the local pastor helping at each conference are also unsung heroes, keeping the family and church together while their husbands are traveling with us and making everything happen here. Pastor's wives in India carry a heavy load. They work hard at their husband's ministry and don't get paid. They have to make the family exist on a very meager income. And often they don't get much time or attention from their very busy husbands. Pray for them every time you pray for the pastors of India!!! (February 12, 2019 Kurnool, India)

**Proverbs 31:10 A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies.**

*Thank God for the godly women in your life, past and present.*

### **Cultural Tidbits #5 – Getting gas for the car**

Moses pulls the car up to the filling tanks. There is about 4-5 feet between our car and the motorcycle that was there ahead of us. Immediately 2 more motorcycles cram in front of our car in “line”. This is repeated again as he slowly creeps toward the pump. Most children do not have kindergarten here. Taking turns and waiting in line is learned in kindergarten.

### **Blog 732: THE NESTING PHENOMENON**

There is rubble everywhere – chunks of concrete left over from construction and piles of natural debris. This is all in the midst of trash. India doesn't have systematic trash collection. In addition, there are an increasing number of products in paper and plastic packaging cluttering the streets.

Despite this, women meticulously sweep the front of their houses. Interestingly, this entrance area is just packed dirt. This reminds me of a phenomenon called nesting that occurs in the last few months of pregnancy. An expectant mother painstakingly cleans, decorates, beautifies and supplies a nursery as perfectly as possible. She, like the Indian housewife, can't make the entire world perfect, but she can make her little spot a welcoming oasis.

### **WHAT'S NEW IN INDIA**

Every year Nancy looks for changes in India. Here are a few:

For security reasons, we asking pastors not to place any conference photos on Facebook or social media.

Large, modern high-tech windmills are planted among ancient stone formations from the time of Noah's flood.

Random trash barrels

Credit cards, however most retailers don't have functioning machines

The majority of schools are now in English

A large solar panel is in the middle of a country field. Next to it is a one man pup tent. The man living in it is paid to protect the solar panel. Many vacant lots use this same kind of “security” system to prevent the homeless from homesteading on their land. (February 12, 2019 Kurnool, India)

### **Blog 733: WHEN GOD'S TIMING SEEMS WRONG**

Sometimes the timing is all wrong. Being pregnant before marriage is all wrong. Serving God faithfully until old age and suffering the rejection of others because of childlessness is all wrong. Mary and Joseph were expecting before they were married. Zechariah and Elizabeth found themselves expecting when they were very, very old. In each case it seemed God's timing was off. One baby was seemed too early, another too late. That often seems to be the case with us as well. But the truth is that God is never early and He is never late. He is always right on time. Yet to us, in our limited perspective, we are quick to judge Him early or late. Especially late. Whenever His timing isn't the same as ours, we pronounce Him late. But could the sovereign God of the universe ever be too 'early' or too 'late'?

For Mary and Joseph, and for Zechariah and Elizabeth, God was right on time with His perfect will for them. Notice His will was totally dissimilar for each of them, but perfect for each one. God's

will for us is different than for those around us, so don't ever compare or complain. For Mary and Joseph a baby too early stretched their faith and showed God's glory. And for Zechariah and Elizabeth a baby too late also stretched their faith and brought glory to God.

God didn't lead me to India until I was 60 years old – way too late it seems. I've had two bouts of stomach problems this trip, but both have been OK. In my 30's I had much better energy and health. I could have done a lot more, gone more often, stayed longer and kept ministering in India for additional 30 years. What was God thinking, waiting until I was 60? He has never told me, but now I can easily see some of the reasons. Yet if I see what He is doing or not doesn't matter, He sees all and knowing it is His will is enough. His will is always perfect.

We won't always understand what God is doing. In fact, we may seldom understand. But we know His timing is always perfect. Too early is never too early – it is His perfect timing. Too late is never too late – it is His perfect timing. What seems like bad timing to us is actually perfect timing because it is God's timing. Nothing could be more perfect than that. (February 14, 2019 Kurnool, India)

***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.***

*Do you ever think God's timing is off in your life or in someone else's life? When you look at your past, do you see a time you thought God was too early or too late?*

*Take some time to pray now and thank Him for His always perfect timing, no matter what you think.*

#### **Cultural Tidbits #6**

The bigger the church, the more pomp & circumstance- AKA wasted time. We had to delete an entire teaching session because of this and serving chai tea at one church.

Jerry is not the most important person at the conferences. The COOK is ! At most conferences, the meal is the tail that wags the dog !

#### **Blog 734: HIGH COST OF COMMITMENT**

There is a price to pay for everyone who wants to follow Jesus. The world rejected Him and will reject us as well (John 15:18-25). Each one who follows Jesus must count the cost (Luke 14:25-34). Faithful pastors and believers in India are a wonderful example to me for they face persecution and rejection far beyond what I face in the USA. I feel badly they can't have it easier like we do here, but when I see how these difficulties stretch and mature their faith I wonder if maybe we should have it harder like them!

Ruth is an example of a woman willing to give up all for her God. Both Orpah and Ruth said they would return with their mother-in-law Naomi when she left the girls' country to return to Israel. They knew that meant leaving the life, the idols and the gods they grew up with. At first both were willing to do so to be with Naomi's God and people. But as they moved further from their past, the cost of the decision they were making became clearer. Orpah changed her mind and went back to her past. Ruth alone was willing to give it all up for a new life and a new God. She knew it would be a high cost for she wouldn't be well accepted at first and her chance for a family of her own seemed very slim. But she went out of love for Naomi and the God of the Jews.

It was hard for Ruth when she made her commitment. It cost her everything, but look what she gained. She became one of God's chosen people, married and became the great-grandmother of King David (Ruth 4:17-22) and ancestor of Jesus, even having her name mentioned in His genealogy (Matthew 1:5-6). (February 15, 2019 Kurnool, India)

### ***Ruth 1:14 “Your God will be my God”***

***Luke 14:25-27 Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: 26 “If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple. 27 And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple***

*Are you guilty of expecting Jesus to make life easier for you because you are a Christian? If so, take some time to have a nice, long talk with God right now.*

### **Cultural Tidbits 7**

I have 3 means of communication. One is a friendly smile. The second is a thumbs up. Both are very effective.

The middle class continues to grow and education is spreading. How can I tell? People are now trying to figure out Jerry's tricks. They no longer think he is a witch doctor.

Good - Mosquito infested open sewers are now mostly covered.

Bad - The cement slabs that cover them are very precariously placed. So don't walk on them!

Public outside toileting is significantly less.

### **Blog 735: A LESSON FROM MARY**

**Luke 2:19 But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.** This is an interesting verse about Mary. It describes 3 responses to the truth about Jesus. First, she **“treasured up all these thing.”** She kept them in her MEMORY. Then she **“pondered them.”** She thought about them with her MIND. And she had them **“in her heart.”** She had deep love and AFFECTION for the things she was discovering about her baby Jesus.

We, too, need to REMEMBER all God has done for us in the past. Keep a journal, write a poem, make a list – do something to remember His faithfulness. We'll be far less likely to doubt His goodness in the present if we remember it in the past.

THINK about what you now about Him and His Word. Mull it over, ponder it, meditate on it. Fill your thoughts with God-thoughts, not thoughts of self or your troubles. And respond in LOVE from your heart. Tell Him of your love. Sing it. Pray it. Breathe it. Live it. Be saturated with His power and majesty, and your whole outlook will be different. Learn a lesson from Mary. (February 16, 2019 Kurnool, India)

*How do you remember all God has done for you, or do you forget a lot of it? Do you spend time meditating on Jesus and the Bible, or is your mind too filled with other things? When is the last time you told Him you love Him? Do so now – you can't do it too often!*

### **Cultural Tidbit 8**

men's fashions - traditional to contemporary

Native dhotis - white long waisted wrap around cotton skirts. They wear long sleeved button down shirts

Accessorize with a printed linen towel thrown over a shoulder

traditional leisure suit - perfectly pressed pastel short-sleeved linen shirt and matching pants.

Modern - solid black pants and solid white long sleeved shirt

Contemporary - printed or plaid colored long sleeved shirt and jeans. Accessorized with a backpack

Only celebrities, politicians and Nancy wear sunglasses.

Men have thick hair their entire life - thanks to Clairol

### **Blog 736: ACTION ACTIVATES PROMISES**

Wouldn't it be nice if God delivered us BEFORE our trials even started? We'd appreciate it a lot if He'd open the waters BEFORE we had to step in (Joshua 3:13). But the truth of the matter is He wants us to trust Him, to stretch our faith, to step out in faith with only His promises to lean on. That's not easy. All Christians are called to do this at one time or another. In India it's easy to see because pastors and Christians put their safety on the line when they become known as Christians. All they have is God's promise to not leave them (Joshua 1:9; Isaiah 41:10) or give them more than they can handle with His strength (1 Corinthians 10:13). But that is enough.

For all his failings and lack of faith, Zechariah is still a good example of trusting God's promises and seeing them come about. If you remember the story in Luke 1, he was struck dumb by Gabriel because he doubted God's promise of a son. He didn't know when God would restore him and could have withdrawn from God, but he didn't. Many other priests were far more disobedient than he was but never had any negative consequences. That could have become an issue to him but it wasn't. When it was time to name newborn son, the assumption was that he would be named after Zechariah or a close male relative. Zechariah insisted on obeying God and naming him John, even though doing so was unheard of in their culture. Still, he wrote that the name would be John. God has promised He would remove Zechariah's dumbness but He didn't do it until AFTER Zechariah obeyed (Luke 1:60-64).

Sometimes we sit back and wait for God's promises to kick in and open the way so we can easily move ahead. But God's way is to get our feet wet (Joshua 3:13), to obey God first (Luke 1:60-64), THEN we will see God's promises come about. So, if it seems like God isn't keeping His promises to you, first of all make sure you aren't selfishly misapplying them. God never promises an easy, smooth life – in fact He promises just the opposite (Luke 6:26; John 16:33). Then make sure you are moving ahead in faith, not sitting back waiting for God to act before you do so. Trust the promise and act on it even before you see its fulfillment. (February 17, 2019 Hyderabad, India)

***Hebrews 10:23 Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful.***

*What promises of God do you lean on most? Which promises do you need to remember for what you are facing now in life?*

*Are you stepping out in faith, or sitting back waiting for God to take care of things before you act?*

### **CULTURAL TIDBITS 9**

Life is lived outside. As we drive I see people eating breakfast, sharing, brushing their teeth, getting a haircut, old men socializing, teens on cell phones, children digging in the dirt, women washing clothes in a bucket and stray dogs lapping up leftovers.

Inside the hut is for sleeping. Homes are not a reflection of personal style or individual beauty, only function. Hopefully it is enough of a home to shelter you and your few belongings during the monsoons. There are motorcycles parked outside many huts, right next to the family water buffalo.

This is one place I don't trust the 5-second rule (when food falls on the floor)

### **Blog 737: A TRIBUTE TO OUR UNSUNG HEROES**

We have had SO many help us in so many ways that we can't even list them all. Thank God for all the unsung heroes in our lives, in the USA and India (and several other countries as well). This blog is for you.

Aaron and Hur held up Moses' hands so he could pray for victory. Jason risked his life when he opened his home for the church to meet (Acts 17:5-10). Nympha opened her home as well (Colossians 4:15). So did Rhoda (Acts 12:13-15). Epaphras was a prayer warrior, interceding behind the scenes for others (Colossians 1:7; 4:12; Philemon 23). All these and many more are unsung heroes. We know they did something helpful, but we don't know much about them and they get little credit in Scripture. Yet God noticed and blessed them and their work. He will do the same for us who faithfully serve behind the scenes as well. Even if no one else knows or cares, He does and that is what matters.

Tychius was such a man. He helped Paul, doing things Paul wasn't able to do himself. His work was behind the scenes, supportive, not for show or recognition. He was a godly man (Ephesians 6:21; Colossians 4:7). He took Paul's message to various churches and encouraged them (Ephesians 6:22; Colossians 4:8). He was instrumental in helping Onesimus find reconciliation with the master he stole from and ran away from (Colossians 4:9)

Tychius worked in secret, not in the limelight. He served others by serving Paul, doing what Paul was unable to do because he was in prison. He is an unsung hero. Paul greatly appreciated his service, for five times he writes about him in his letters. Evidently Tychius was content to help Paul. He wasn't trying to start his own ministry but worked doing what Paul was needed in his ministry. He served a prisoner – a dangerous undertaking at best.

Jesus Himself tells us to not do our acts of service to be seen by others but only out of devotion to God. We are to do them for Him and no one else (Matthew 6:1-2). When we give financially it is to be done quietly, not to be seen or noticed (Matthew 6:3-4). Our prayers should be private, not in a way to draw attention to ourselves (Matthew 6:6). The same is true of our fasting (Matthew 6:18).

It takes a great burden off of us when we don't care who notices but just focus on helping, praying, encouraging, thanking and serving in any way we can. God can, and does, use a person who doesn't care who gets the credit. Are you one He can use? (February 18, 2019 Hyderabad, India)

***Matthew 6:1-18 “Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. 3 But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4 so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. 6 But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. 18 only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.***

*Spend some time checking your motives for what you do for the Lord. If anything is to be noticed or recognized, confess that as sin and ask God to forgive you and help you do it for Him alone.*

### **Blog 738: THANKS TO GOD'S WONDERFUL PEOPLE!**

We can't express enough how much your prayers, gifts and emails have mean to us. You are our lifeline and we are forever grateful for your faithfulness and support.

### **PRAYER REQUESTS:**

- Continue to keep Pastor Moses and the pastors in India in your daily prayers
- Pray for wisdom and guidance in writing video scripts and other things for LifeWay's new pastoral development program
- Pray for God to send someone to help me teach in India
- Pray for help with ideas for fundraising, and for churches or groups within a church to be willing to partner with CTO.

### **CULTURAL TIDBITS – RUSH HOUR** (written by Nancy when in India)

In the states we try to avoid traveling during rush hour. Here we avoid traveling when the shepherds are returning their herds back to their pens. The shepherds use the same roads and highways the cars use. Today we drove through the middle of a herd of water buffalo. Surprisingly, I've never seen road kill. If you hit it, you've just bought it!

In the towns, wild pigs are rather safe. Most people don't know who they belong to until you accidentally hit one. Then it suddenly has multiple owners.

P.S. Animals don't respond to car horns.

### **Blog 739: EMAILS FROM PASTORS IN INDIA 1**

*(Blow are some of the emails I recently received from the pastors in India. Pray for these men.)*

Praise the Lord Sir. In the name of Jesus Christ I studied your books good messages for spiritual growth, And these books are useful for pastors and believers

Thank you. My name is M. Johnvictor

Praise the Lord sir. How are you? I'm Pastor Joseph. I am fine here. Last Sunday I spoke about Jesus' love in church. I learned much from you about His love in Bible Overview session. This topic very change believers in heart. I am very happy now. Ok thank you. Sir

Dear Rev. Dr. Jerry Schmoyer,

Greetings to you in the precious name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,

Indeed, it is a great joy for me to attend your pastors conference on 15th Feb - 2019,

It has been a great blessing for me to hear from you regarding what God expects from us, The redemption plan of God, Marriage life, and Spiritual warfare. According to 1 John 4:4 greater is he that is in us is the greater than that in this world, and there is power in the name of Jesus, According Mark 5:1-13 no matter how many demons possessed the man, a person can turn to Jesus. Those words touched my heart really,

We are so much thankful to you, for your love and blessings, it is not the receiver that is blessed but it is giver that is blessed. I am sure that your reward will be more in Heaven, continue to pray for me and my family, we do pray for you, and CTO, thanking you.

Yours in His Grace, Bro. Bhagavath. J (Evangelist),

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Sir, I am pastor mark. I am working as a pastor in my house Church. It is in Telangana state, India. We need PA system , and bike for the Gods ministry. I have 3 children they are studying in 7th, 10 th , 12<sup>th</sup>. Please pray for my children studies. And my ministry. (March 4, 2019 Doylestown, PA)

### **CULTURAL TIDBITS by Nancy 11**

Rules of the road – you can pass any time going any direction in any lane. Other than that there are no rules.

Fifteen students crowd into an auto-rickshaw that seats 5.

“Schemes” is the word given to all financial and insurance plans and policies (pretty true)

The newspaper reported that the “dole” was late this month referring to public welfare (“to dole out..”)

### **Blog 740: EMAILS FROM PASTORS IN INDIA 2**

*(Blow are some more of the emails I recently received from the pastors in India. Pray for these men.)*

Praise the Lord

But steadfast love surrounds him who trusts in the LORD. Psalm 32 :10

Many thanks for kind reply and your prayers for us. Many greetings to you in the precious and powerful name of our Lord and Savior of Jesus Christ who is our hope. I have been praying for you and your hard work for your ministry for the extension of the kingdom of God. I have begun the God service called Jesus Saves Ministries by the Grace of God John 4:42. Please I request you to pray for this vision. Once again I thank you for your books were written by God's grace and spiritual knowledge. Please pray for my family and my children.

Thanking you Sir Your in His Grace Bro. P.David B.Th

Greetings to you in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Thank you sir and madam for your prayers. I am also praying for you every day in my personal prayers. Thank you sir for your teaching method it is very helpful for me and my ministry. I read your books daily. I prepared messages also for Sunday worship.

I have three children. I am working Gods ministry on my own, newly started. There are three families coming. I request you sir and madam, please pray for my ministry and monthly support needs.

Thanking you sir, Yours in Christ. Pastor Mark .

Thank you for providing books it's very useful. Good message yesterday and today. Thank you for spending time with us to Glorify. Sam Grebel

Praise the Lord..

My name is bro. David Kumar. I am from India. In Andra Pradesh state.. In Guntur District. Praise the Lord. Your help will never be forgotten. Thanks Pray for my ministry... Praise the Lord... Kalivela Sateesh (March 11, 2019 Doylestown, PA)

### **CULTURAL TIDBITS by Nancy 12**

People call me (Nancy) “Madam.” I’m not too sure I like that. It makes me feel like the queen of England and just as old. Also, a “madam” in the USA is associated with a less than honorable reputation. Yeah, not loving that title!

Sign on a reception hall - “Medium Function Hall.” Does that indicate the size, the cost or the quality, or all of the above.

### **Blog 741: WHEN JESUS IS SILENT**

Matthew 15:21-28 tells the story of a Syrophenician woman who asked Jesus to heal her daughter from demon possession. Jesus was silent (Matthew 15:23). Do you ever feel that Jesus ignores your prayers? We know He doesn't always answer "yes," but a "no" or "later" would be nice to hear instead of just silence. The text doesn't tell us why He didn't respond. It does tell us she persevered, though.

Finally, Jesus told her He came to minister to Jews, not Gentiles (Matthew 15:24). She humbled herself, knelt and pleaded for her daughter. Jesus said He shouldn't take the Jew's bread and give it to "dogs" (Matthew 15:26). She wasn't to be denied. She didn't complain or try to force Him, she just appealed to His mercy. She agreed but added even the dogs get to eat crumbs that fall from the table (Matthew 15:27). She knew even crumbs from Jesus could deliver her daughter from the powers tormenting her. Jesus was so impressed by her faith that He answered her prayer and healed her daughter (Matthew 15:28).

We will never know why He was silent, at least not this side of heaven. But we do know the woman persevered in her prayer even when she felt Jesus ignored her. It seems clear that's why this event is recorded in the Bible. The focus is on her persistence and determination. Perhaps that's why Jesus ignored her at first. Could it be He sometimes ignores us to test us? Maybe He wants us to continue to pray as an example to others. I'm sure we appreciate the answer better when we have more 'skin' involved in the answer!

She persevered but didn't push. She was polite, not demanding. She didn't criticize Jesus or insist He do what she wanted. She humbly kept asking for mercy. Persevere but don't push. I think that's a good lesson for me to learn. What about you? (March 18, 2019 Doylestown, PA)

***Luke 18:1 Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.***

***1 Kings 18:42-44 But Elijah climbed to the top of Mount Carmel and bowed low to the ground and prayed with his face between his knees. Then he said to his servant, "Go and look out toward the sea." The servant went and looked, then returned to Elijah and said, "I didn't see anything." Seven times Elijah told him to go and look. 44 Finally the seventh time, his servant told him, "I saw a little cloud about the size of a man's hand rising from the sea."***

*How do you respond when it seems Jesus ignores your prayers? Do you persevere, or do you push? Are there prayers you should keep praying, ones you have given up on when God wants you to keep praying?*

## **Blog 742: I'LL DO IT LATER**

I've been enjoying my 2 ½ years of retirement and the easier pace of life. It matches my lower energy level. While there are lots of things to do, they don't demand my immediate attention. I can pace myself now. I can't do all I once did, although I think I should. I overcommit. I don't like doing nothing. I'm not good at that. I'm trying to find a slower pace. I can procrastinate, but I don't want to do that spiritually.

Recently I saw Proverbs 24:33-34 in a new light. "A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest..." We memorized that verse years ago, but the word "little" struck me this morning. It doesn't have to be gross procrastination – a little will do the job. I thought how this applied spiritually. Am I putting off anything I should be doing for God? Is there someone I should reach out to in love or support? Am I delaying forgiving someone? Do I postpone praying about issues? Is there a relationship I should mend or put more time into? Maybe there's a check I should write for someone or something I keep putting off? Or it could be an area of weakness (sin) in my life

I need to address seriously? Am I putting any of these things off, even small things, even in a small way? Is there anything you should be doing you aren't? (March 25, 2019 Doylestown, PA)

**Proverbs 24:33, 34 A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest— and poverty will come on you like a thief and scarcity like an armed man.**

*Sit quietly and ask God to show you anything He wants you to do. Write down everything that comes to mind and commit to a time to do it. (And don't put off praying for me and the ministry in India!)*

### **Blog 743: I GIVE YOU MY WORD**

"I give you my word". It means I need to do what I say I will do. I need to follow through with actions when I tell God I will do something in prayer or worship. I want to trust and obey Him, but when my faith is tested, I don't always follow through!

The Jews left Egypt in faith, trusting God would bring them into the Promised Land. But when their faith was tested, they failed. They were afraid of the giants. They didn't go into the land because of their fear, not the actual giants. They said they had trust in God, but didn't produce when the circumstances inspired fear.

Why are there giants in life? If we don't face and overcome our giants, we won't grow our faith or becomes mature. If we handle it all ourselves our faith in our own self-sufficiency, but when facing insurmountable problems, we tend to trust in God's help. Our desires need to produce actions. Our giants are tailor-made by God to help us grow in areas where we are weakest.

How we respond to gigantic problems impact generations that follow. David faced Goliath because Joshua's generation failed to completely obey God's instructions. We can only imagine how these descendants of the giants tormented the nation of Israel for 400 years. God used young David to finish the job! God loves to show off by transforming the worst of our weaknesses into our greatest strengths. He wants to do that with each of us. (April 1, 2019 Doylestown, PA)

**James 2: 17-18 In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds.**

**James 1:22 "But be doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves."**

*Is your faith as strong as you think it is? How do you respond when things don't go your way? What does your faith look like when 'giants' come against you?*

### **Blog 744: REWARDS ARE COMING!**

Even though we intellectually know, we wonder what will happen when we face God. What will He think of us? How will He feel about our failures and broken promises? The truth is we have nothing to fear. It's not the Father who will 'judge' us. "The Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son" (John 5:22). Standing before Jesus doesn't sound scary at all. We have already experienced His grace and mercy, His forgiveness and unconditional love (Psalm 103:10-12).

Christ is an impartial judge. He is not influenced by what others think or say, but rather, He determines what is right and good based on His honorable, just standard. We'll be stripped of our worthless works--in other words, the actions and words we used for selfish ambition or vain conceit. All that will remain are the worthwhile things we thought, said, and did to honor God (1 Corinthians 3:11-15).

Reward is all we will experience when we get to heaven, never judgment for sin (Romans 8:1). He wants to share His blessings so He will reward us for our acts of faithful service and devotion (1 Corinthians 3:10-13; 2 Corinthians 5:10). Jesus is eager to share His heavenly treasures with us.

This should give us peace and confidence as we maneuver through this life. If we remain faithful, we will be rewarded. Not only do we have free salvation but we receive blessings and rewards on top of it. Is that grace or what? (April 8, 2019 Doylestown, PA)

***Revelation 22:12 "Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done."***

***Philippians 3:14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.***

***2 Timothy 4:8 in the future there is laid up 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 loved His appearing.***

*Promises of rewards are much greater motivators than fear of punishment. When you struggle in your Christian life, think of the rewards and blessings God has in store for those who faithfully strive to live for Him.*

### **Blog 745: GOOD GUILT**

When I became a Christian, I discovered couldn't sin and enjoy. That hasn't changed. Sin feels worse and worse all the time. Guilt and shame seem stronger. Like the warning light on the dashboard, or pain in your body. It tells us we need to repent (change of direction) and confess our sin. I hate feeling disconnected from God, empty, no peace or joy. It really makes me feel disappointed in myself when I fail. I expect more of myself at this point in my Christian life!

Recently I realized something. It was God reassuring me. I feel miserable because God's Spirit inside me convicts me. I wouldn't respond that way if it weren't for God Himself showing His displeasure at my sin. Without His Spirit I'd keep on sinning. There is nothing in me that desires righteousness apart from His Spirit in me. So what's so good about feeling miserable about sin? It means God hasn't left me or turned His back on me. He hasn't given up on me or removed His presence from me. I hurt Him, but He still loves me and wants me back. Can you imagine that?

If I weren't a child of His I'd be hard and insensitive to sin. I'm so glad I'm not! I'm so glad the Holy Spirit is still clearly working in me. I'm so glad God doesn't give up even if I give up on myself.

So, my message to you, since you probably experience the same thing, is to confess and return to God ASAP. Don't beat yourself up after you are cleansed and restored. Don't think God is disgusted with you and doesn't want anything to do with you anymore. Clearly He does. The conviction of sin proves it. Don't give up on yourself – He doesn't give up on you. Ever! (April 15, 2019 Doylestown, PA)

***Romans 11:2 God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew.***

***2 Corinthians 7:9-10 yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us. Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.***

*Is there any sin in your life right now that you should confess?*

*Are you willing to accept God's forgiveness when you confess instead of continuing to beat yourself up?*

*Thank God for convicting you of sin because it means He loves you and wants what is best for you.*

### **Blog 746: GOD HAD PLANS FOR ME (Lessons Learned From India)**

*(I have been going to India yearly since 2006. By God's grace we are making an impact on some of the pastors and churches there. I've written many blogs about what God is doing there. However, these blogs will be about the impact India has on me. I pray God uses me to impact them as much as they have impacted me.)*

When I first went to India, I felt totally unqualified to minister there. I felt I had nothing to offer Indian pastors. I discovered God was preparing me my entire life. It is an amazing and humbling discovery.

I've always loved to teach God's Word. God trained and graciously gifted me for this work. In India I train pastors and love doing it. Also, I've always had a burden to mentor other pastors but had limited opportunity in the USA. In India there is enormous opportunity. As a long-time pastor of a small church I understand their struggle to build a church.

Electricity is unreliable in India, so no one uses PowerPoint or other visuals to teach. I decided to use the Christian 'magic' I use with children at home with the pastors in India. I can't tell you how successful it has been. It has become a "calling card" for me. Magic tricks illustrate key points and help them to remember. It is a great source of entertainment for them also. God knew this when He first gave me a desire to use tricks in ministry decades ago.

Twelve years ago, I went back for a doctorate to keep fresh and growing in the later years of my ministry. It has been extremely helpful in India. Higher education is greatly respected in India. It helps me gain trust and credibility quickly. There are many unbiblical teachings and teachers, so this helps validate my teaching.

There is more I could write about: a church that was behind me and willing to give me the freedom to spend a lot of time ministering to others, a wife who was very supportive and even travels with me, a life-long dream to write books that finally came true, training in spiritual warfare, good health, financial provision and a group of loyal, faithful prayer supporters.

Clearly God had His hand on me from the start. He planned and brought all this together. He groomed me for ministering here and in India. He had plans long before I ever imagined them. The good news is He's not done. As long as He keeps me alive; He has plans for me and is working all things in my life for His glory.

My productivity has dropped since I've gotten older, but God still uses me. That's humbling and encouraging. The good news - He does the same in your life! Take some time to think and you'll find He's been working in you to bring you to this very blessed point as well. (April 22, 2019 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.***

***Romans 8: 28-30 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. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.***

*Where do you see God's hand working in your life over the years? What has He brought into your life to make you the person you are today? Thank Him for that, and trust Him for your future. If you are still alive, He isn't done with you yet!*

### **Blog 747: A WHOLE BODY MINISTRY (Lessons Learned From India)**

*Mostly, my blogs are about what God is doing in India. However, these blogs are about what God is doing in me)*

I've always known the church works as a body with each part working with the other parts. This is especially true for the India ministry. "I couldn't have done it without you" is spot-on. We are totally dependent on God and others to make this happen. We depend on others to take care of my computer and the web site. I depend on people to proofread my books, transcript my talks and help manage the tax and legal work of the non-profit. Friends make finger puppets for the children; others transport us to the airport or give accurate medical and dietary advice. Transferring money into India is tricky but God provided trustworthy, experienced believers to help. The list goes on and on.

We are MOST appreciative of people who give and pray for this ministry. It is humbling to see. A nightmare would happen without your prayer support. It is the key factor to any successful work. It's the engine that powers the entire ministry. We are more appreciative of your prayers than we can ever say. Without prayer support we wouldn't go.

On the other side of the world there is another group of people -faithful Indians believers also working to make this possible. They pray fervently and regularly for us. They translate the materials, print, store and then deliver the books hundreds of miles to remote villages. They organize, set up and oversee each conference location. They provide food and transportation. We need translators, drivers and a small army of volunteers to make each conference successful. Literally throughout the world we have believers that love, encourage and support us in dozens of ways. Our hearts overflow with gratitude and thankfulness.

Yes, it's great to be part of the Body of Christ. Thanks to each of you for all you do and have done for this ministry. We can't reward you for what you do, but God will reward you and bless you for your faithfulness just as He does us. (April 29, 2019 Doylestown, PA)

***1 Corinthians 12:12-31 Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it. 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***

***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.***

*Who has God put into your life to help and bless you? Think of the many people who do big and small things to help you through life. Where would you be without them? Thank God for them, and thank them next time you see them.*

### **Blog 748: I AM CLOSER TO MY WIFE (Lessons Learned From India)**

*Mostly, my blogs are about what God is doing in India. However, these blogs are about what God is doing in me)*

My trips to India have drawn Nancy & I closer. Being away from her for a month when I needed her most, helped me really appreciate her and the love we share. It deepened my desire and commitment to enjoy every moment with her at home.

God blessed that desire in us and gave us a oneness we never imagined. I don't have words to express it. I feel I could not love her more, but then I DO! My love is more "heart consuming" than anything I could imagine. I don't know how to contain it! It definitely is a God thing and we thank Him for it.

In the past, we missed some time together but now God has given us both quality and quantity time that more than makes up for the lost time. I am so glad she accompanies me to India now. I couldn't go without her. God knows that – in fact He is the one who showed her that!

She supports me in every part of the ministry. She is my dietician as we try to eat from a suitcase stuffed with American foods to prevent us from getting sick. When I do get sick she is my nurse (she is a RN– God knew what He was doing when He picked her for me). She is my friend, my traveling companion, my second pair of eyes and ears as we navigate airports and daily life in India. Sharing the experience brings us closer as well. It adds to the wonderful treasure of 'history' we share. And, yes, she is my personal extrovert; a wonderful asset as we meet new people all day, every day (you introverts will know what I am talking about).

I never imagined this would result from my trips to India; it is a totally unexpected benefit. But I thank Him for it! (May 6, 2019 Doylestown, PA)

***Genesis 2:18 The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."***

***Proverbs 31:10 A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies.***

***Proverbs 18:22 He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the Lord.***

*If you are widowed or single, God has put people in your life to walk with you through your journey on earth. Think of some of them and thank God for them.*

*If you are married, how is your relationship? Is it all you ever thought it could be ? If not, do what we did: ask God to give you the love for your mate He wants you to have. Work on your marriage. (I have lots of helpful articles at <https://www.christiantrainingonline.org/our-ministries/family/articles-books/> or you can write me for prayer or advice).*

### **Blog 749: WE ARE EXAMPLES TO OTHERS (Lessons Learned From India)**

*Mostly, my blogs are about what God is doing in India. However, these blogs are about what God is doing in me)*

As I stumbled along trying to minister to the pastors in India, something totally unexpected happened. Going to India each year sets an example to others to reach out and serve in whatever way God leads them - if I can do it, they can do it!

I don't intentionally think about setting an example. I prefer to go through life unnoticed and not draw attention. We are all noticed, good or bad. Your life WILL touch others. I'd like nothing better than to see more Christians leave their comfort zone to reach out in obedience and service.

*Call to Courage*, by Brene Brown, encourages people to stay in the arena of life and chose courage over comfort. This is a conscious choice when everything in us wants normalcy, peace and predictability. Ever since the Garden of Eden we are in pursuit of security. Stepping out into an

adventurous and potentially dangerous unknown, as the will of God, requires a trust and history of provision from the Father. But you are never safer than being in the center of God's will for your life.

Now I am more attentive and aware of setting a good example. I want to positively influence my neighbors, friends, grandchildren and those I meet. It's a great way to let Jesus' light shine. Anyone can do it. If I can, so can you! You ARE an example to others, it's just a matter of what kind of example. (May 13, 2019 Doylestown, PA)

***Matthew 5:14-15 "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. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.***

*Who has been a good example to you in your life? Thank them for it.*

*Who do you come in contact with in life? Do you reflect Jesus' love to them? Would they be surprised to know you are a Christian? Ask God to help you remember others notice.*

### **Blog 750: LOOSEN UP! (Lessons Learned From India)**

*Mostly, my blogs are about what God is doing in India. However, these blogs are about what God is doing in me)*

The first few years in India I evaluated everything against our American standards. Government, sanitation, transportation, diet, family – everything was compared and usually found lacking, from my perspective. It's natural to grow up in American culture and church life and assume there is a "right and only way". I felt if India could be more American, they would be better off.

Unfortunately, many missionaries and ministries go to other countries and try to duplicate the western church. That fails because of the focus on externals and form. My approach is to separate what is Biblical from what is cultural. That means separating Bible truths and principles (absolutes) from common practices (non-absolutes). This helps me be more flexible in my evaluation of Indian ways. I still feel we have much to offer them in sanitation, transportation, freedom and in caring for each other. Their ways are appropriate for the resources and information they currently have access to. All government authorities need a commitment to the people's needs rather than their own selfish desires. This seems universally true.

I focus on teaching the pastors the basics of God's Word – what He expects of pastors, churches, marriages and in spiritual growth. I teach the WHAT- the content. It is up to them to apply the HOW in the local Indian culture. This allows them to apply the truths of the Bible to how they do worship, partake of the Lord's Supper, baptize, handle church membership, settle differences, evangelize, plant churches and much more.

The gospel is strong enough to apply to any culture anywhere at any time. It changes lives, gives hope, removes fear, reunites, heals, cleanses and empowers. As a result, I am now more flexible in how I evaluate 'different' practices in the India and the USA as long as they don't contradict the Bible. God is bigger than 21<sup>st</sup> Century Western culture and church – much bigger. (May 20, 2019 Doylestown, PA)

***Matthew 16:18 I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.***

***Revelation 7:9 After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands;***

*Are you critical or judgmental of others who do church differently than you? Are you critical of your own church or pastor because they do things otherwise than what you think is right? Unless you have Scriptural proof that they are out of line, confess your sin of judging and pray for God's blessing on them and you.*

### **Blog 751: SPIRITUAL WARFARE HERE AND THERE (Lessons Learned From India)**

*Mostly, my blogs are about what God is doing in India. However, these blogs are about what God is doing in me)*

Early in my ministry God exposed me to spiritual warfare and brought someone into my life to teach and mentor me. It's been part of my ministry ever since. I have grown in knowledge and experience.

In many ways it is easier to teach and train Christians in spiritual warfare in India than here. In the USA a large portion of my material explains the necessity for spiritual warfare. In India that is not needed. Demonic powers manifest overtly, often and quite in-your-face. Christians are hungry for the truth of God's victory over Satan. I am very appreciative for this spiritual tool. I have seen God's victory over Satan and his forces many times. He protects us as we go in His name. God's power 'works' in the darkest of Satan's strongholds.

It is thrilling to see Indian believers discover and experience power in Jesus. Sometimes evil forces have been tormenting and defeating them for generations. I close every conference with a lesson on spiritual warfare and an intercessory prayer. It is truly a useful tool in India it. God has used me to teach them but I have learned much about spiritual warfare while in India.

| <b>AMERICA</b>                                               | <b>INDIA</b>                            |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| IGNORANT, SKEPTICAL of demonic activity                      | AWARE, CONVINCED of demonic activity    |
| View the demonic as a sources of oppression as a LAST RESORT | Demonic source ALWAYS CONSIDERED        |
| USA founded in LIGHT, turning to DARKNESS                    | In past DARKNESS, now LIGHT coming      |
| SUBTLE, HIDDEN work of Satan                                 | OPEN, OBVIOUS work of Satan             |
| CAMOUFLAGED activities, GRAY to hide it                      | OVERT EVIL evident, DARK clearly shown  |
| Christians UNTRAINED, FEARFUL of demons                      | Christians UNTRAINED, FEARFUL of demons |
| Demons, Satan GROWING STRONGER                               | Demons, Satan slowly LOSING GROUND      |

Satan's power in the US is slowly growing as we turn further from Jesus, while in India, his power is slowly fading as thousands are coming to salvation. I thank God for the privilege of taking what He has shown me and transplant it into India. May God continue to bless and use His Word as it brings deliverance to His people. (May 27, 2019 Doylestown, PA)

(Much information about spiritual warfare, including 2 free books, is on my web site, <https://www.christiantrainingonline.org/our-ministries/spiritual-warfare/> I also have a spiritual warfare weekly blog you can sign up for on line or by emailing me. If you have any questions or need prayer or help please email me and I will gladly do whatever I can to help you.)

***Proverbs 14:34 Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people.***

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

*Where do you see sin increasing in this country and righteousness fading? What must happen for those things to be changed? Pray specifically for each one you think of. Then pray and ask God what YOU can do to make a difference in those areas.*

### **Blog 752: MY FAITH IS GROWING (Lessons Learned From India).**

*Mostly, my blogs are about what God is doing in India. However, these blogs are about what God is doing in me.*

God orchestrated many wonderful opportunities in my life over the years. He allowed me to serve in India and brought me back safely. That is a great blessing. I am blessed beyond measure and drained beyond description. I love it and hate it at the same time! Here's why.

I am 100% introvert. I am not good at meeting new people, talking to groups, handling change and traveling. I struggled with fear as young boy. India gives me ample opportunities to face my fears. I am totally out of my comfort zone in India. My faith is stretched to the max! In addition there is the spiritual warfare issue and facing an enemy who wishes I were dead! All this is totally beyond my ability and skill.

This demands I trust God completely. There are no guarantees my plans, my life or mission will proceed as I imagined. The only given is God's will. Unfortunately it doesn't always line up with MY plans.

As I look back on the lessons I learned in India, it's clear my confidence in God has grown. I face life with deeper assurance in God. I know He won't desert me. I know His promises are true. I've tested them in extreme situations and they are true.

I don't like to be stretched and out of my comfort zone, but God knows I need it. I wouldn't want to repeat it, but it is worth the price. Whatever cost we pay to follow Jesus is worth it. Without these stretching experiences we don't grow more Christ-like. These are temporary discomforts with eternal benefits. I thank God for them. Do you? (June 3, 2019 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.***

***2 Peter 3:18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.***

*What are some of the most painful, stretching circumstances you faced in life? What did God teach you through them? Thank Him for His faithfulness in making you more like Jesus.*

### **Blog 753: AN ACT OF GOD – A TRUE STORY**

The following true account was written by Ralph Speas, president of Meridian University of Biblical Training. I have gotten to know and appreciate him and his ministry in India. God is using him in special ways. Read the story below and give glory to God!

"A very troubled demon-possessed girl, Torodi, about 20 years of age, was so bound by demons, she was incapable of talking. Her mother spent a lot of money trying to cure her. Torodi was so disruptive in her village that the chief decided to have her burned. He said her soul was dead but her body was still alive and needed to die, too. A leader in the village heard about an amazing God at

L-tig-da and many were going there to be healed by this God, believed to be greater than all gods. They made the difficult trip to L-tig-da where one of our Meridian Master Trainers pastored a church. The church family surrounded the girl with love, fasting and praying for three days.

“The remarkable happened! She was wonderfully delivered and began to speak. Seeing she was restored, they took her home and back to her idol-infested village in the mountains. When the villagers saw the shocking change in Torodi, they were greatly astounded and wanted to know about the God who cured her. Of course, the Gospel was shared using the stories of the Bible. It was reported that everyone in the village believed in this true God and professed faith in Jesus Christ!! A young man, also demon-possessed was wonderfully delivered by the power of God. This happened in January of 2018.

“In April, four months later, Elliott Freeman and I had the privilege of visiting that village, seeing Torodi, visiting the Chief, and mingling with the villagers. There was so much warmth and kindness there. They once worshipped the idols to fend off the evil spirits but now the idols were entirely ignored. Once an idol worshiper, the village Chief also became a believer. There are few words to adequately express the significance of this display of God’s power that brought an entire idol-worshipping village to faith in Jesus Christ. “To God be the glory, great things He has done.” (June 10, 2019 Doylestown, PA)

***Mark 5:1-14 “When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an impure spirit came from the tombs to meet him. <sup>3</sup> This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain. <sup>4</sup> For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him. <sup>5</sup> Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones.” After Jesus cast the demons out “they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind.”***

*Thank God for His deliverance for this woman, and in your life. Think of all the things that could have happened to you but didn’t!!!*

### **Blog 754: PRIDE OR HUMILITY**

Last month I was videotaped at the LifeWay studios in Nashville. This will be part of the training curriculum for pastors being developed around my 10 books. It went well. It was actually enjoyable once the taping was complete and I could relax. All the special treatment was quite unexpected and almost uncomfortable. I prefer a low profile and blending in. Yet I think God used this LifeWay experience to teach me something.

If we desire to grow spiritually, life is a bit of a struggle. God allows situations in our lives to stretch and deepen our faith. They are opportunities to trust Him. I’ve enjoyed pastoring a small church and ministering behind the scenes. I like that role. The LifeWay experience challenged my comfort level and how I view my ministry.

Paul says in Philippians 4:11-13 he knows how to adjust to living with little or with much. While he’s talking about material needs, his words also apply here. I have learned to be content with being a small fish in a big pond. My day as a big fish in a big pond was quite unsettling. I appreciate and enjoy the privilege of being used by God in this way while still recognizing I am totally dependent on Him for all things. I want to graciously accept the kind recognition with the heightened awareness of the True Provider of it all. I am crucified with Christ (Galatians 2:20) and no good thing dwells in me (Romans 7:18). I am nothing and He is everything (Psalm 16:2). I am a worm (Psalm 22:6), but also a dearly beloved child of the King of Kings (Galatians 3:26). I know He is rewarding and blessing me

with this honor just because He loves me. The experience, wisdom and skill are an underserved infusion from Him because He delights to bless me.

I greatly appreciate what has been unexpectedly dumped in my lap. It is exciting and a privilege beyond anything I could have ever imagined. (June 17, 2019 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.***

*How do you handle success in life? Do you take it as something you deserve, or does it make you feel uncomfortable and unworthy? How do you stay focused on the Lord and not on yourself? Share your thoughts on how you keep the credit going to God and off yourself. I'd appreciate your input!*

## **Blog 755: CAMPING OUT ON PLANET EARTH**

I like camping. I started camping as a Boy Scout and continued in the U.S. Army. When I was young my grandfather made tents in the living room out of blankets and sheets. I did the same for my children. Each summer we camped in the Poconos.

I loved living in a new tent! Everything was clear, functional and organized. However, tents have a way of falling apart easily. They are temporary, flimsy and collapse. Just like our bodies!

Peter recognized this analogy and used a "tent" to refer to his physical body twice (2 Peter 1:13-14). Paul, too, saw our bodies as temporary shelters used on our way from one location (earth) to another (heaven) (2 Corinthians 5:1-4). Soldiers, travelers and traders used tents as they moved from place to place. How true it is of this physical body!

Our bodies are temporary, for this life only. James says this life is like a vapor that appears and is gone (James 4:14). Our bodies are flimsy and easily broken, subject to all kinds of disease and ailments. I don't know about you, but my tent is wearing out !

Thinking of my body as a temporary tent helps. The real me that lives inside will move on to a much better building in an everlasting Kingdom prepared by Jesus Himself (John 14:2). We don't "die," we move out of what was meant to be a temporary dwelling while traveling through this life. We move into a glorious eternal dwelling with God, Jesus, angels and saints.

So, think of this life as camping out (1 Peter 2:11-12). All of us are terminal (Hebrews 9:27). We can't be overly concerned about how our tent is doing today. It'll get us through as long as we need it, then we leave it behind. I'm learning to spend more time thinking about and preparing for my next residence than the gradual decay of the one I'm currently in. How about you? (June 24, 2019 Doylestown, PA)

***Psalms 90:12 Teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom.***

*How preoccupied are you about how your 'tent' is looking and feeling today? Are you a good steward of your body? Do you spend too much time worrying about it and trying to make it appear young? Do you ignore basic maintenance and let it fall apart quicker than it should? Thank God for the body He chose for you (Psalm 139:13-16) but remember it is just a temporary tent. The best is yet to come!*

## **Blog 756: YOU ARE A LEADER, LIKE IT OR NOT**

On some level, everyone is a leader. Leadership is not a special personality type or certain talent. A leader is anyone who influences another such as: authority figures, teachers, fathers, mothers, coaches, and even friends. We might view leaders as specially gifted people that influence

or motivate by their friendly, outgoing personality. We conclude if we don't have that ability or gifting then we aren't leaders. This is NOT true.

You can be a godly leader regardless of your speaking skills, education, personality or position in life. God created you to be the leader He wants you to be – not like another leader, but rather using the gifts and skills He has given you personally and uniquely. There is no one pattern. Listen, apply and put into practice what God shows you. It's a lifelong process, but this will help you grow into a godly leader.

Everyone needs trust worthy people they can learn from, share life with safely and someone they can train. Howard Hendricks, a professor at Dallas Theological Seminary, said everyone needs a Paul, a Barnabas and a Timothy in their lives.

A 'Paul' is someone more mature and experienced to give us wisdom and guidance. We all need someone to hold us accountable, to ask the tough questions, to offer insight, to give us encouragement and direction. Remember, the lone sheep is the one who gets picked off by the lion, so we need to connect closely to those who have experience fighting the lions of life and ministry (1 Peter 5:8). *Who is your 'Paul'? What mature believer have you developed a mentoring relationship with so you can regularly connect with them to learn from their wisdom and experience?*

A 'Barnabas' is a peer to share common experiences with as we journey through life together. Together you mutually encourage, pray, listen and help each other through the good and bad times of ministry. *Who is your 'Barnabas'? Who is your closest ministry friend with whom you can share your victories as well as your defeats?*

And we should have a "Timothy", someone younger in the faith that we can help train, advise and mentor, like Paul did with Timothy and Titus. We must pass on the faith and build into others like Jesus did with His disciples. *Who is your 'Timothy'? Who are you taking the time to really disciple in the faith?* We need all three of these types of people in our lives. (July 1, 2019 Doylestown, PA)

### **Blog 757: JOSEPH HAD IT BAD!**

Often, we assume godly Christians don't struggle like others. We think they have risen above the trials and challenges of life. We think they have arrived at a higher level of spirituality. Not true. In fact, those God uses the greatest often have the hardest times in life. Daniel was taken from his family and put in captivity in Babylon. David was rejected by his brothers and forgotten by his father. Joseph was sold by his own brothers into slavery. (Genesis 37-50).

Nothing in Joseph's family history could have predicted how God would use him. His father had children by four quarrelsome women. Joseph had 10 older stepbrothers. Jacob loved Joseph's mother, Rachel, above the other wives. Joseph was favored causing embittered, jealous siblings that resulted in his slavery. Normally such trauma derails a person's life completely, but Joseph rose above it and grew stronger.

After he was sold into slavery, then spent years in prison for something he didn't do. The challenges matured him. He had a choice in how he responded to the circumstances in his life and he chose to rise above them to become the best person he could be. We can't control much of what happens in life. We can only control our responses to them.

We today have choices to make as well. We have to choose if we are going to live for God or ourselves. We chose if we are going to allow the circumstances of life cause us to quit or continue moving forward. We can find reasons to quit, decide life isn't fair, and envy those who seem to have easier lives than ours. Or, we can do our best to grow and be the person God created us to be. Joseph made that choice and so must we.

Living for Jesus and serving Him is a choice we make. God doesn't force us to serve, He lets us decide if we want to rise above life's troubles or fall under them. He puts the desire in us to serve and gifts us through His Holy Spirit, but it is up to us to choose to follow Him. If we choose to do the very best we can with the one life God has given us then we, like Joseph, will be making godly choices and commitments. (July 8, 2019 Doylestown, PA)

***Matthew 5:16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.***

***Titus 2:7 In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness***

*Are you willing to follow and serve God with all your heart and life no matter the obstacles and difficulties you have had in the past and will have in the future? Will you choose to stay faithful whatever happens? Being a godly Christian is not easy, and without total commitment no one will faithfully serve to the end.*

### **Blog 758: ARE YOU LIKE JOSEPH OR ABRAHAM?**

Christians are to be godly mates. What does that mean? New Testament Joseph is a good example. Joseph was legally engaged to Mary. He gave her his dowry, but before the marriage ceremony he found she was pregnant. This hurt him deeply. God's law said Joseph could not marry her. He would have to break the relationship with her.

There were 3 ways he could break it. He could have her stoned to death for adultery. Second he could bring her in front of all the people and shame. It would show everyone it was her fault and Joseph was innocent. People would mock and criticize her. Joseph would get his dowry back. Most of the men would have done this for being unfaithful. Thirdly, he could quietly break the relationship. Everyone would mock him and blame him. He would lose his dowry. But Mary would be protected from the shame.

Which of those 3 did Joseph choose? – The third. He chose to do it quietly to protect her. It was a big sacrifice on his part but it would protect Mary from the shame. How do you think it made Mary feel?

Not all the husbands in the Bible are like Joseph. Abraham was an example of a husband who did not put his wife first. He obeyed God and moved to a new land but there was a famine. Instead of trusting God to provide their needs he went down to Egypt. En route, Pharaoh would take all the beautiful women and put them in his harem. If the woman was married he would kill the husband. Sarah was very beautiful and Abraham didn't want to die.

Do you know what he told her to do? Tell them you are my sister. When they came and took her for the harem they didn't kill Abraham. How do you think that made Sarah feel? Did she feel Abraham was protecting her? Was Abraham taking care of himself & not protecting her?

Joseph sacrificed himself to protect Mary. Abraham put himself first and didn't protect Sarah. Men, who are you more like? Are you more like Abraham or are you more like Joseph? Who would your wife say you are more like? Would she say, "My husband protects me like Joseph" or "My husband protects himself like Abraham?" God wants us to be husbands like Joseph

Marriage is a picture of God and the church. It shows the world what God's relationship with us is like. For that to happen we need to have godly marriages that reflect God's love to us. (July 15, 2019 Doylestown, PA)

***Ephesians 5:25-33 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. ... In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ... Each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself.***

*Husbands, do you show love to your wife the same as Jesus does to you? Wives, do you do all you can to help your husband show unconditional love to you? Not married: do you show Jesus' love to others in the way you treat them?*

### **Blog 759: GOD'S DESIRE FOR HIS MARRIED SONS**

God expects husbands to SACRIFICIALLY LOVE THEIR WIVES. Ephesians 5:25-33 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. ... God says husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved us. Our example is the way Jesus loves us. He loves us unconditionally, no matter what.

Do you know the story of Hosea and Gomer in the Old Testament? Gomer was unfaithful to her husband Hosea. She had children by other men and left him to live with other men. Later, she was sold as a slave. Hosea went and paid the price to bring her back as his wife. God wanted him to show what God's love was like. God was saying, "My love for you is unconditional, no matter what you do I'll love you."

I have heard men say, "If my wife was a better wife I'd be a better husband." "When she changes some things then I'll love her." Is that what Jesus says to you? "When you are a better Christian and change some things, I'll love you?" He loves us unconditionally, no matter what. He commands us to love our wives the same way. He wants us to realize how special and important our wives are to us.

Adam walked and talked with God before sin entered the world. But there was still something missing in his life. So what did God provide? Did He provide a job to work? Parents to care for? Children to raise? A hobby? No, He provided a wife because Adam needed a wife. In Genesis 2 God says "it is not good for a man to be alone" and He created Eve to fill up his empty spaces.

It's not God's will for everyone to get married. There are some He chooses to remain single, or be widows or widowers. In that, case He completes them Himself. For most people marriage is the way He accomplishes this.

The referenced text above says we sacrifice as Jesus sacrificed for us. What did Jesus sacrifice for you? He left heaven to come to earth. On earth He went through pain and rejection. He was crucified and suffered what we would have suffered in hell to pay for our sins. Did He do that for Himself? No, He did it for us. He sacrificed everything just for us. That's how He wants us to sacrifice for our wives.

Does your wife know that you love her that much? Can your wife say, "I see Jesus' love for me in the way my husband loves me"? That's the way we are to love our wives. There is a cost to sacrificially serve. You sacrifice your time to help her and encourage when she is down. Listen to her talk about the things that are important in her life. Spend time going places and doing things she enjoys. Treat her like your best friend. Protect her from people who criticize or take advantage. Make sure your children obey and respect her. Meet her needs before your own. Initiate. Be the first to forgive and apologize. Initiate reading the Bible and praying together. God says your wife is your first responsibility and first priority in life.

Make sure she knows she is as important to you as you are to Jesus. It sets an example our children. A child never grows up insecure knowing they are #2 in the family to your spouse. It sets an

example to others as they see your priorities. Following the example of Christ is the model that lays the foundation for loving relationships that honor Him. (July 22, 2019 Doylestown, PA))

### **Blog 760: GOD'S DESIRE FOR HIS MARRIED DAUGHTERS**

God desires wives to SACRIFICIALLY TRUST THEIR HUSBANDS FROM THEIR HEART. ***Ephesians 5:22-24 Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.***

In some cultures, women are taught to submit to men from birth. They are trained to respond obediently. In addition, they may grow up thinking they aren't as important as men or their husbands. They serve and obey out of fear not love. The Bible says, "*wives submit to your husbands **AS TO THE LORD.***" It is done out of love and trust not lip biting duty.

A husband is to treat his wife like Jesus treats him. Then she is able to respond to her husband like a Christian responds to Jesus. We do it out of love for Him, not fear. A wife responds to her husband the same way.

When a woman has a husband who treats her like Jesus does, then it is easier. Mary knew Joseph would do what was best for her. He proved himself earlier in their relationship, so she trusted him. When Joseph woke her up in the middle of the night and said they were urgently moving to Egypt, she went. When he said they were moving back to Nazareth, even though people would mock them, she went. She trusted he was going to do what right and best for her.

Sarah didn't trust Abraham. Abraham put her at extreme risk earlier in their relationship to save his own neck. He proved he would put himself first when circumstances got dangerous. Consequently, she took matters into her own hands to provide a child through Hagar and then protect herself from the bitter family fallout that resulted. Abraham didn't show Sarah she could trust him and the repercussions continue to today.

Men, if your wife isn't responding, maybe she doesn't trust you. Have you shown her you will take care of her first? Are your actions respectful and caring? You want her to respond to your safe, proven, sacrificial, loving leadership.

Following your husband comes first through trusting the LORD. Jesus will be with you no matter what happens. Trusting Jesus to provide, protect and lead. Your husband lays the foundation, like Joseph, of putting you first so responding in trust, through God, is possible from our heart. (July 29, 2019 Doylestown, PA)

### **Blog 761: ARE YOU A TURTLE CHRISTIAN?**

If you've been reading my blogs you may remember me mentioning the fable of the tortoise and the hare. It illustrates an important part of my personal life philosophy. I value perseverance, as does God. Sometimes Christians are on fire and live zealously for Jesus, but soon their zeal fades and their life reverts back to before they met Jesus.

Recently I had the joy of reconnecting with several Christians I knew 35 years ago. I was really touched, knowing they are still living for Jesus. Their lives aren't easy, but they stay faithful to their commitment. I called them "Turtle Christians." Their faithfulness is most encouraging to me, and I'm sure to God as well.

It's easy to make a fast start, but to faithfully persevere serving Jesus is impressive to me. I'm sure God smiles when He looks at one of His Turtle Christians plodding away. Are you a Turtle Christian? I hope so! (August 5, 2019 Doylestown, PA)

**Matthew 13:1-21** *A farmer went out to sow his seed. ... Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. ... "Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: ... The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. 21 But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away."*

***I can plod. I can persevere in any definite pursuit. To this I owe everything. William Carey***  
***Read more at [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/william\\_carey\\_404677](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/william_carey_404677)***

*Think of those who are good examples of Turtle Christians and thank God for them. Would others consider you a Turtle Christian? Now think of those who have fallen and pray for them.*

### **Blog 762: HANGING OUT WITH GOD (MOSES)**

*(You are a leader, if you realize it or not. Everyone who influences another person is a leader. The question is if we are a godly leader or not. See blog July 1, 2019)*

Moses is one of the most prominent men in the Bible and Jewish history. He is my favorite person in the Bible. I identify in his struggles and weaknesses. I learn as he overcomes and matures. Several books in the Bible detail his long and fruitful life (Exodus 1-19; Numbers 12-14; Acts 7:20-43; Hebrews 11:23-29). He lived 120 years. The first 40 he was "somebody", then the next 40 he was "nobody". During the last 40 he learned what God could do with a "nobody" who yields to God. Moses developed faith, obedience and trust. He was a man of prayer. He had great failures in his life, but he kept moving ahead by God's grace. Moses was a reluctant leader that willingly followed God's plan. He wasn't perfect, just yielded.

One of the traits I most admire in Moses is his commitment to spend time alone with God. He would speak with God face to face (Exodus 33:7-11; 34:29-35; Numbers 12:5-8; 3:12-17). He didn't spend the time listing demands on God. God already knew. Instead, Moses listened. What God has to say to us is much more important than what we have to say to God.

It takes time alone with God to learn to listen to His Spirit. He puts thoughts, ideas, burdens and scriptures in our minds and hearts. Spend time listening to God each day. It helps to have a special time and place where you meet with God privately. Turn off your cell phone. Let people know you aren't to be interrupted.

God speaks to us through His Word. I spend time slowly reading the Bible and meditating on the verses. God will speak to you through His Word too. Listening to God is a top priority for all Christians, no matter how busy their days are. Jesus would get up early and go off by Himself to spend time alone with God. Sometimes He would even stay up all night praying. If Jesus needed to do this, how much more do we need to do it?

Take special days off throughout the year just to get alone and read the Word while you pray and meditate. I would spend Wednesday mornings alone in my church praying and worshipping. Often it was often difficult schedule, but when I did it was the best time of my week. I also like to pray on long walks. Being in nature helps me to better connect with Him. Find what works for you and do it. (August 12, 2019 Doylestown, PA)

**Exodus 33:11 The LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend.**

*How much time do you spend alone with God each day? Do you spend most of your time talking to God or listening to God? Do you know how to listen to God? Are you able to hear Him when He puts thoughts in your mind or burdens in your heart? Do you hear Him speak to you when you study and meditate on the Bible? Do you take time away from your ministry and other work to relax and enjoy time with family and friends?*

### **Blog 763: EVERY SIN STARTS WITH A LIE**

In John 8:32 Jesus says, ***“You shall know the TRUTH and the truth shall SET YOU FREE.*** That’s why Satan does all He can to keep us from the truth. Satan is a liar and a deceiver. It is his nature— he can do nothing else! John 8:44 says ***“The devil ... was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”***

A lie pretends to be truth. It is intended to mislead and deceive. Lies are in disguise. Sometimes it is hard to tell lies from the truth because the most dangerous lies are those that have some truth in them. The more real a counterfeit appears, the more people are deceived. In 2 Corinthians 11:14 God says Satan poses as an ***“angel of light”*** – he counterfeits God. He is an imposter and his motives are totally malicious.

In the Garden of Eden Satan lied to Eve and deceived her because she didn’t accurately know God’s truth. In **Genesis 3:1-3** we read, ***Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden’?” The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’” God never said they couldn’t touch the fruit, just not eat it.***

For some reason Adam, standing nearby, didn’t intercede, correct or protect Eve. Satan used that weakness in her knowledge of God to deceive her. Satan continues to use our weaknesses to trick us into sin. Verse 4 continues: ***“You will not certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman. “For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”***

Satan lied to her and deceived her. She and Adam ate from the tree and sin entered the human race. Eve believed Satan’s lies instead of God’s truth and the results are still with us today. First she believed the lie, then she acted on it. Satan’s lie to Eve was that God was withholding something good from them. But **Psalms 84:11** says ***“No good thing does God withhold from those whose walk is blameless.”***

Every sin in our lives starts with believing a lie. Beliefs lead to actions and actions have consequences. Wrong beliefs lead to wrong actions and sin leads to bondage. But Jesus came to set us free from lies and bondage. **Galatians 5:1** says: ***“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.”***

Ask God to show you what lies you believe so you can replace them with God’s truth and freedom. Jesus said in **John 8:32**, ***“If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”***

How do we know the truth, so our actions are also true? By making sure we know all of God’s truth accurately and totally as revealed in His Word. God’s Word is absolute final truth, so we must be thoroughly familiar with it. (August 19, 2019 Doylestown, PA)

*How does believing lies lead to sin? What is the truth of God's Word that cancels lies? What lies are you tempted to believe about God not taking care of you, not being as important as others, being a failure in God's sight, etc.?*

### **Blog 764: COMING SOON (DON'T MISS IT) ...**

The next event in God's prophetic program is for Him to come for us, His Bride - the church. In order for us to clearly understand how this will happen it is important for us to understand how marriages in Bible times were established. There is an exact parallel between a Palestinian groom coming for his bride and Jesus coming for us.

In Bible times, when a man wanted to marry, he would go to her home and make a life-long commitment to her. He would pay a bride price for her and the father decided if the price paid was sufficient. If accepted, the groom would offer a drink to the woman. If she was willing to marry, she accepted the cup and drank. Now they were legally married, but did not live together yet. The husband returned home and built a home for his bride. Meanwhile she prepared for his coming. She prepared herself and kept herself pure.

When the time was right, the groom's father told his son to get his bride. He took friends, with horns blowing, to her home and brought her back to his newly prepared home. There was a seven-day wedding feast and the couple spent the rest of their lives together.

This explains how it will be when Jesus comes for us as well. Jesus left heaven to come to our home, earth, as one of us. He made a commitment to us to pay for our sins so we could be with him forever. The bride price He paid for us was His suffering and death on the cross. God the Father brought Jesus back to life, showing He accepted the price as sufficient for the sins of us, Jesus' Bride. He offers His salvation to us as a groom offered the cup to the woman he loved. If we accept His cup, the work on the cross for us, then we are united to Him and are legally His Bride.

But we aren't living with Him yet. Jesus left earth to go back to heaven to prepare dwellings for us, as we read in John 14. He is preparing a place for us even now. Meanwhile we, like the new bride, are to spend our time getting ready for His return. We are to be faithful and true to Him, not serving any other gods or being unfaithful. We are legally His forever even though we aren't with Him yet, just as was true of the Palestinian bride awaiting her husband to take her to her new home to be with him.

Only the groom's father knew when he would tell his son to go for his bride, and only God the Father knows when He will send Jesus for us. With trumpets blowing, Jesus and His attendants, the angels, will come for us. This is called the Rapture and is detailed in 2 Thessalonians 4:13-18. Jesus will take us back to His home, heaven, and there will be a great 7-year celebration. This event is called the Marriage Feast of the Lamb. We will be Christ's Bride from then on and forever more, ruling and reigning with Him for all eternity.

This is the next event on God's timeline, and it could happen any time. We are His already because we have accepted His gift of salvation. Now we await His return to take us to be with Him forever. We don't know when He will be back for us so we must always be ready.

One day there was a schoolgirl who had a very messy desk, it was dirty and papers were everywhere. A man came to school and told the class when he returned he would bring a prize for everyone who had a neat desk. The girl really wanted one of the prizes so she decided every Monday morning she would clean her desk. But what if the man came on Thursday or Friday? So she started cleaning her desk every morning, but by the end of the day it was very messy again. She thought perhaps he might come at the end of the day when her desk was no longer neat. So she realized if she was going to get a prize she better keep her desk neat and clean at all times.

That's how we live as we wait for Jesus to come back for us- faithful, pure, yielded to Him (August 26, 2019 Doylestown, PA)

***Revelation 22:20 He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.***

*Are you always ready for His return? What if He came today? He might you know. One day He WILL.*

### **Blog 765: GETTING OLDER – AND BETTER**

I'm getting older. I bet you are as well. Have you wondered why we couldn't stay young and healthy our whole lives? The Bible tells us aging is a byproduct of sin entering the world, part of the curse. We know it humbles us and reminds us time is short so we are ready for life after this life. I am enjoying retirement, although ministry and family seem to keep us as busy in a good way. The thought of never having to work for a pay check again, ever, is something I am still adjusting to.

When I go to India, I am well respected and honored because of my age. Part of it may be because many die young and there aren't as many older people as in the USA. Here seniors have our own sub-culture. Here I have ministry and influence despite my age. In India I have ministry and influence because of my age. Wisdom and respect are earned as we age.

What does God think of old age? Even though it is a result of the curse, God still has many good things to say about it. He says gray hair is a crown of glory (Proverbs 16:31). He promises to be with us even in old age (Isaiah 46:4; Psalm 91:16; Ruth 4:15). There are benefits of getting older. Including wisdom (Job 12:12; 32:7), experience (Proverbs 20:29), fruitfulness in life (Psalm 92:12-14), enjoying children and grandchildren (Proverbs 17:6), righteous living (Proverbs 16:31) and the promise of daily renewal (2 Corinthians 4:16-17).

There is no retirement from serving the Lord (Titus 2:3-5). In fact, in our older years there are often more opportunities to serve than we realize. In our later years we slow down physically but still can enjoy our richest, most rewarding and productive years for the kingdom. After all, if God still has us alive, it must be for a reason. Do you know the reason He still has you on this earth? Are you fulfilling it? Do you see God's plan and purpose for you in this stage of life? (September 2, 2019 Doylestown, PA))

***Isaiah 40:31 But those who keep waiting on the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not grow tired.***

***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.***

*Are you adjusting to the changes in your body and mind as you age?*

*What are you doing to use your life experience and wisdom to better serve the Lord?*

*Ask God what He wants you to be doing for Him in this stage of life.*

### **Blog 766: A LESSON FROM MY PLANTS**

I love my flowers! I have several pots of marigolds and several basil plants outside our house. It impresses me is how they sacrifice everything to produce more plants. My marigolds get old and the green fades to brown, but the orange blossoms continue to bloom all over the plant. Any remaining growth goes into new buds for more flowers, and more seeds for more plants.

The same thing happens with my basil plants. We love to use the leaves to flavor our food. Like the marigolds, they are more interested in growing flowers for seeds than producing more or larger leaves. I continually keep pinching off the blossoms so growth goes into the basil leaves. If I miss a day, there is a new blossom starting. They just won't give up no matter what I do.

The lessons are clear – our first priority is to 'go to seed.' Planting new "Christian seeds" for the Kingdom. So much of my energy goes into growing my own leaves and plant and not into reproducing other believers. My houseplants will give up everything and totally sacrifice themselves just to seed new plants. That's such a needed lesson in priorities for us!

If plants don't produce seed, the species will die in a year. If we don't see the need to tell others about Jesus, the Christian message of hope could close in one generation. God has no other plan for plants to continue, nor does He have another plan for His hope to spread. It's up to us. (September 9, 2019 Doylestown, PA)

**2 Corinthians 5:20 We are God's ambassadors.**

**Mark 16:15 Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.**

**Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.**

*Are you spreading seeds for the Kingdom? Pray and ask God give you opportunities and the alertness to notice them). Then say a word about Jesus to those around you.*

## **Blog 767: LESSONS FROM GODLY WOMEN**

### **Lesson #1:**

**SERVING GOD MEANS SERVING OTHERS:** In Genesis 24, Abraham's servant was sent to find a bride for Isaac. He selected **Rebekah** because she was willing to give him a drink and sacrificially water his camels. It was no easy task hauling water from a deep well to many thirsty camels.. She didn't even know the person she was helping,

In Matthew 25:34-40 it says, in giving to others, we are really giving to Jesus. What we do for others, we do for Him. We serve by putting the needs of others before our own. Like Rebekah, a godly people give willing to others.

*Are you quick and willing to give to others in need? Will you go out of your way and sacrifice to help someone you don't know and who can't pay you back? Will you help someone even when no one knows the sacrifice you made? This starts in your family. Do you sacrifice willingly to serve others in your family?*

### **Lesson #2:**

**SERVING GOD MEANS SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE:** **Priscilla** was a gifted teacher and writer in the early church. She ministered with her husband, Aquila. When the gifted preacher Apollos spoke in their church, she realized he left out something important in his teaching. Priscilla, her husband with her, took him aside and "explained to him the way of God more accurately" (Acts 18). She didn't interrupt him in public, but talked to him privately. She was tactful and careful in how she approached the topic and how she presented the truth to him. She didn't shame or embarrass him. What she did was to help and improve, not hurt him. She spoke the truth in love and gentleness (Ephesians 4:15), but she **did** speak the truth.

When you need to do this, remember the Golden Rule and talk to others the way you would want them to talk to you in times of needed correction (Matthew 7:12). (September 16, 2019 Doylestown, PA)

*Are you able to correct others with gentleness? Is there someone you know now that needs correcting? How can you best do this, remembering the Golden Rule? How do you respond when someone tries to correct you? Do you humbly listen and learn, or do you react in anger and defensiveness?*

### **Blog 768: CHRISTIANS DENYING THE FAITH (Apostasy – 1)**

Christianity has taken some hits recently. Josh Harris, a well-known pastor and home school advocate rescinded his books, left his church and wife, apologized to LGBT people for his previous stand and said he has “fallen away” from the faith and “I am no longer a Christian.” Then Marty Sampson, worship leader and song writer for Hillsong (“Mighty to Save,” etc.), published a Facebook post saying the Christian faith is not working and is not for him. He found fault with pastors, the Bible, Christians and God Himself.

When someone well known becomes a Christian, we make a big deal of them. We feel affirmed in our faith. How are we to respond when one (or two or three) of our heroes publicly deny the faith and turn from it? How are we to respond? I have been learning what I can about the reason these men, and others, have left the faith. Here’s my opinion.

The common denominator I find in these, and others like them, is they no longer FEEL what they once felt. Their faith “isn’t working for them anymore” means it doesn’t answer their questions or give them the motivation to keep believing. They are relying too much on their feelings to make decisions that should be made with their mind.

Feelings are great – God made them and has them Himself. But they aren’t meant to be the final determining factor in how we make decisions. A 1972 oldies song says, “How Can It Be Wrong When It Feels So Right.” Famous sing-songwriter, Bono, believes “feelings are much stronger than thoughts. We are all led by instinct, and our intellect catches up later.” Disney teaches children to “follow your heart.” With no absolutes, standards and decisions become relative and subjective to each individual.

Unfortunately, many in the church believe that also. As a pastor, I think too many churches follow the same philosophy. Often worship services and sermons are about making people feel good about God, life and themselves. Churches need to attract and keep people coming, so it can be tempting to avoid controversial topics and give motivational sermons without a lot of Biblical teaching. Christians today are not grounded in the Word. People choose a church by how they feel during the worship or their friends. What the church believes isn’t as important as how people feel about the service. Music has become more important than Bible teaching. People get their doctrine from the songs lyrics. Songs can focus on positive feelings more than teaching God’s truth. Jesus says worship must be done in Spirit and truth (John 4:23-24). Knowing and following the Bible must be our priority. (More about this in the next 3 blogs.) (September 23, 2019 Doylestown, PA)

***Romans 10:17 Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.***

*Think about how much your faith depends on your feelings. Are you faithful even when you don’t feel like it? Do you worship even when you don’t feel grateful? Learn to separate your emotions from the truth of God’s Word when the two are in conflict. Let TRUTH explain reality to you emotions. Truth, in your mind, from Scripture is the engine. Emotions are the caboose.*

### **Blog 769: HANDLING DOUBTS ABOUT THE FAITH (Apostasy – 2)**

In my previous blog I wrote about well-known Christians that recently left the faith. These men have expressed doubts about the validity of Christianity and the truth of the Bible. Our cultural emphasis on elevating feelings over truth has spilled over into the church. Those influences easily infiltrate when there is a casual understanding of God's Word. God gave us minds and wants us to use them. He gives us truth in the Bible to base our faith on. Truth, not emotions, is to be the basis of our faith. The church must refocus on God's Word and emphasize preaching and teaching (2 Timothy 4:2; John 21:15-17; Ephesians 4:12).

John Cooper from the Christian band, Skillet, wrote a lengthy Facebook post responding to the criticism of Christianity. He wrote, "It is time for the church to rediscover the preeminence of the Word and to value the teaching of the Word. We need to value truth over feelings. Truth over emotion. ... Brothers and sisters in the faith all around the world, pastors, teachers, worship leaders, influencers...I implore you, please, please in your search for relevancy for the gospel, let us NOT find creative ways to shape God's word into the image of our culture by stifling inconvenient truths. But rather let us hold on even tighter to the anchor of the living Word of God. For He changes NOT. "The grass withers and the flowers fade away, but the word of our God stands forever" (Isaiah 40:8)"

Christians have to deal with hard questions about suffering in the lives of innocent people, the reality of hell for those who reject God's free gift of salvation, scientists who claim science conflicts with the Bible and the issue of same-sex marriage. There are plenty of good web sites to help you understand these things. You can email me ([jerry@schmoyer.net](mailto:jerry@schmoyer.net)) and I'll gladly talk about them with you. (more about this in the next 2 blogs) (September 30, 2019 Doylestown, PA)

***Hebrews 11:1-3 Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for. 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.***

*How do you handle your doubts? Do you ignore them, go by how you feel at the moment or turn to the truth of God's Word instead?*

### **Blog 770: WHEN 'FAITH' ISN'T WORKING FOR YOU (Apostasy – 3)**

In the last two blogs I wrote about some of the issues prominent ex-Christians had with faith. My perspective was they based their beliefs and actions on feelings. If it feels good, do it. If it doesn't make you feel better, don't do it. As Christians we base what we believe on truth in God's Word. Doubts are normal. God's Word gives us enough information to deal with them. Christians need to know God's Word and teach it to others.

Many people who are not Christians go by their feelings. They "follow your heart." What does the Bible say about that? ***Jeremiah 17:9 "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it?"***

Emotions have their place, but basing beliefs and decisions on them is not why God created them. Eve felt right about giving the fruit to Adam, but she was wrong. Abraham felt afraid so he lied to Pharaoh, but he was wrong. Sarah felt desperate when she told Abraham to have a son with Sarah, but she was wrong. Moses felt indignant so he killed an Egyptian, but he was wrong. James 1:22-27 and Proverbs 14:12 tell us we can deceive ourselves.

Think of a train. "Fact/Truth" should be the engine pulling behind it - "feelings." We can't make "feelings" the engine and base of our faith.

How do you respond when someone says Christianity "just isn't working for them"? Think about that statement. What is the purpose of Christianity? Is it to make us feel good? Our

entitlement mentality says everything gets evaluated by the standard of “what do I get out of it?” Our culture even teaches children that it’s all about them: what they want and what makes them feel good. If it doesn’t feel good, forget it. That’s how many evaluate jobs, friends and even their marriages.

The truth of the matter is it isn’t all about me – it’s all about Jesus. Worship, too, must be all about Jesus, not about how it makes me feel or what I get out of it. When Abraham offered Isaac on the altar, thinking he would kill him, and he called that “worship” (Genesis 22:5). That wasn’t based on how he felt emotionally. When Job stood at the fresh graves of his dead children he worshipped (Job 1:20). That wasn’t based on how he felt, either. (The next blog will be about how we can keep our faith strong when doubts hit.) (October 7, 2019 Doylestown, PA)

**Proverbs 14:12** *There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death*

*I asked you to be alert to the role your feelings play in your faith. What have you learned about yourself during the past week? What must you do to focus on the truth of God’s Word and apply it to your feelings?*

### **Blog 771: KEEPING YOUR FAITH STRONG (Apostasy – 4)**

When you hear of someone who has left the faith, how are we to respond? It can be very upsetting, even shake our own faith.

**1. Don’t be surprised.** Falling away from the faith, “apostasy” in the Greek, is something we know will happen as Jesus’ return gets closer (2 Thessalonians 2:3; 1 Timothy 1-4). So don’t be surprised. Unfortunately, there will be causalities in our battle with Satan and his forces. Jesus knew it would happen.

**2. Focus on the Word.** Absolute truth is contained in God’s Word, the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17). It never changes and will be true forever (Isaiah 40:8). All things must be evaluated by God’s Word, not by how we feel. Read the Bible daily, study and memorize it.

**3. Persevere in faith.** C. S. Lewis said, “Faith is the art of holding onto things your reason has once accepted, in spite of your changing moods.” Faith focuses on the truth of God’s promises in His Word (Hebrews 11:1-3), not in how we feel. God never said believing would be easy, that’s why He tells us to persevere (Hebrews 10:35-36; 12:1) Faith is not faith, if we only believe when it is easy.

**4. Keep your eyes on Jesus.** When we read what Josh Harris and Marty Sampson say about their reasons for leaving the faith, neither of them mentions Jesus. Yet He is central to our faith. If He is God come to earth to pay for our sins then we follow Him. It has nothing to do with how we feel about life or what Christianity does for us. Life is not about what Jesus can do for us, but about what we can do for Him (Jeremiah 29:13). So keep your focus on Jesus (Hebrews 12:1-2). When you have doubts or your faith wavers, think about Jesus. If you believe He is God then look to Him, no matter what else is going on.

It’s sad to hear of those who deny the faith, but it shouldn’t surprise us. It should remind **US** to focus on the Word of God and His promises. Following Jesus takes perseverance and that only happens when we keep our focus on Jesus. There will be more who fall away – just be sure you aren’t one of them! (October 14, 2019 Doylestown, PA)

**Isaiah 40:8** *“The grass withers and the flowers fade away, but the word of our God stands forever.”*

*What circumstances are most apt to take your focus off Jesus? When does this usually happen? What should you do at the start of each day to make sure you keep Jesus first?*

## **Blog 772: IMPACTING SAND AND SOULS**

We love sitting on the beach watching the waves come in. We live close enough to the ocean that we can go weekly. We sit at the high tide mark and spend the day thinking, talking, reading, etc. Recently I noticed the footprints of people walking on the beach. Their feet make a deep impression in the wet sand, but sooner or later a wave comes and wipe away all trace of being there.

I thought about my ancestors: parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, etc. They lived their lives and left their footprints, but time washed all but a faint memory of them inside of me (and a box of pictures in the garage). Soon my walk will be over and my footprints will wash away by time. That's the way life is.

However, I realized something else. While my ancestors are gone and mostly forgotten, the values and impact of their lives still carry on in me. The love they showed me, the things they taught me and the life's lessons learned helped form and shape the person I am. In turn, I pass that on to my children and grandchildren. I have added a love for Jesus that now gets passed on as well.

It isn't my money they inherit, the photo albums that get passed down, or even the 'family heirlooms' that really matter. It's what I pass of myself and my beliefs that carry on long after I'm gone, even after my name is forgotten by future generations. I find that very comforting. I also find it encouraging me to keep building into my children and grandchildren because it will last. Our footprints will one day be gone, but what we stand for will live forever in those who are touched by our lives. The Bible says so (read below) (October 21, 2019 Doylestown, PA)

***Deuteronomy 7:9 Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments.***

***Exodus 20:5-6 I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, 6 but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.***

*Who has God put in your life to influence? Are you using the opportunities you have to build into the lives of family and friends? When you feel discouraged or that you aren't making any difference, think of all the people your life touches and remember you are impacting them as others have affected you.*

## **Blog 773: WHEN YOU ARE IN OVER YOUR HEAD**

Moses was a gifted, well-trained, experienced leader. When he died, Joshua led. It was hard for Joshua. He was a typical, average person. He was called to do something he wasn't naturally prepared to do – and he knew it. Still, he was God's choice to lead the Jews into the Promised Land.

Often God chooses those who **know** they are incapable so they will rely and depend on Him. Do you feel that way in your current role? Here are some take ways from Joshua's experience:

***#1-YOU ARE NOT ALONE: Joshua 5:13 Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, "Are you for us or for our enemies?"***

God revealed Himself to Joshua to assure him he was not alone. We all carry responsibilities for other people, and sometimes the stress is overwhelming. We may not see Him, but we know He is with us (Deuteronomy 31:6; Hebrews 13:5). He dwells within us (1 Corinthians 3:16). When Joshua first took over for Moses, God promised to be with him: ***"No man shall be able to stand before you***

***all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you" (Joshua 1:5).*** God is repeating it again to make sure Joshua remembers it. Our own insecurities deceive us that God has forsaken us, no one cares, and we are alone. Those are lies. They contradict God's word - Philippians 1:6.

*When do you feel discouraged? When do you feel alone? Think of all the times God has provided for you. There may be events you don't understand, but somehow God is still with you through them. Quote God's Word. Make a list of memories of His faithfulness and scriptures ahead of time to use in these weak moments.*

**#2-Remember YOU AREN'T IN CHARGE: Joshua 5:14 "Neither," He replied, "but as commander of the army of the Lord I have now come." Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked him, "What message does my Lord have for his servant?"**

Jesus was reminding Joshua, He Himself was "Commander of the army of the Lord," not Joshua. Joshua was outranked. The highest-ranking officer is always in charge, and Jesus outranks Joshua. Jesus outranks you and me as well! We are not in charge!

When you are responsible for others, you are a shepherd. We are shepherds under the Chief Shepherd. The family and people we care for are His sheep, not ours (1 Peter 5:4). They belong to Him and are on loan to us. Since they are His sheep, then He is in charge. We must carry out His plans and orders, not ours! God has a plan for each of us, and it is different than His plan for others around us. We can lead with courage and confidence, but our confidence must be in God and not in ourselves. (October 28, 2019 Doylestown, PA)

*Do you sometimes think those in your family, church or ministry belong to you? Do you ever forget they are really God's and not yours? Do you ever feel like your battles are yours alone to fight? Why is it so important to always remember Jesus is in control and not us? Do you always strive to lead His sheep the way He wants them to go instead of going by your own plans and ideas?*

## **Blog 774: THE OLDER THE BETTER**

I used to say that getting old beat dying young. I still say that, but I'd rather stay young my whole life! Why does God have us age? Why not let us stay young in body even as we age and mature in experience and wisdom? That would be the best of both worlds! Perhaps it keeps us humble as we acknowledge we are running out of time. Aging is a reminder that the next world is coming.

One thing I know for sure is that He isn't done with us as long as we are alive. Our culture may write off old people, but God does not. He honors those who follow Him in their old age (Proverbs 16:31). He promises He will be with us even in our later years (Isaiah 46:4; Psalm 91:16). He says He will give us strength and energy for what He wants us to do (Ruth 4:15; Isaiah 40:31; Psalm 91:16). When we follow Him, we will gain wisdom as we age (Job 12:12; 32:7; Proverbs 20:29). He promises we can still bear fruit in our old age (Psalm 92:14; Psalm 92:12-14). He encourages us to stay active in His service (Titus 2:2-5). God has special purposes for us in each stage of our lives, and it all works together to make us more like Jesus (Philippians 1:6)

If you are still alive, whatever your age, He has a purpose for you. Are you fulfilling it? (November 4, 2019 Doylestown, PA)

***Proverbs 16:31 Gray hair is a crown of glory; it is obtained by following a righteous path.***

***2 Corinthians 4:16-17 That is why we are not discouraged. Though outwardly we are wearing out, inwardly we are renewed day by day. Our suffering is light and temporary and is producing for us an eternal glory that is greater than anything we can imagine.***

*Age is not an excuse to avoid something God wants you to do. Ask God to show you what special purpose He has for you in your stage of life. Then make sure you accomplish what He wants.*

### **Blog 775: WHEN NOT TO PRAY**

Prayer is the starting place to everything. 1 Thessalonians 5:16 says “pray without ceasing”.. Pray. Pray. Pray. No doubt prayer is one of our greatest privileges and weapons. But do you know there is a time when God said, “Don’t pray – take action!” “Then the Lord said to Moses, “Why are you crying out to me? Tell the Israelites to move on” (Exodus 14:15).

Led by Moses with the Egyptian army in pursuit, Moses ran into an insurmountable obstacle – the Red Sea. So, what did they do? They stopped to pray. Who could fault that? Evidently God did!

God told Moses, “Raise your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea to divide the water so the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground” (Exodus 14:16). Clearly there is a time to stop praying and start doing! There’s a place for the spiritual, and there’s a place for the practical.

Of course, it takes balance between the two, but could it be we keep praying instead of doing because it’s easier to pray and expect God to do the work for us? God gave instructions to start moving! He told Moses to lift the staff and the waters would separate. But they had to start moving and not wait. That’s the same lesson God taught Joshua 40 years later when the next generation was crossing the Jordan to go into the Promised Land (Joshua 3:14-17).

For example, are you praying, “Lord, heal my marriage” and then waiting for your mate to change? It’s time to start being the spouse God wants YOU to be, no matter how your mate responds. Or perhaps you are asking God to remove a trial or obstacle in your life but circumstances remain unchanged. Do what a Christian should do and let God take care of the rest. Maybe you have relationship problems with a friend, relative or co-worker. Maybe you are waiting for healing or finances. Prayer is important, but don’t stop there. Get to work living life and doing what you can.

Nehemiah prayed for protection against Israel’s enemies, but everyone kept working while carrying weapons (Nehemiah 4:16-18). There’s a place for the practical, and there’s a place for the spiritual. They both work hand in hand. (November 11, 2019 Doylestown, PA)

***James 2:14-26 What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? ... Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. ... As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.***

*Ask God to show you if it is time to pray or time to act. Be sensitive to how He would “part the waters” to help you through to the other side.*

### **Blog 776: THE ABUNDANT LIFE**

We talk about it, sing about it and hear sermons about it, but do we really understand what living the abundant life means? In John 10:10 Jesus says, “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly (KJV).” It is also translated “have it to the full” (NIV), “more and better life than they ever dreamed of” (MSG), “till it overflows” (AMP) and “a rich and satisfying life” (NLV).

These all convey the idea of something plentiful and more than enough. It reminds me of “my cup overflows” (Psalm 23:5). Jesus promises the life He gives to those who believe in Him is more than we could expect or ask for. Jesus says He gives it. It is His provision. But not all Christians experience abundant living. You can’t have this life to the full by trying to have it. It comes from Jesus as we submit to His Spirit, love and serve Him. It is a byproduct of abiding, remaining, continuing in Him (John 15:4). When we faithfully trust and live for Him, depending on His power, guidance and following His Word, He will abide in us (John 15:4). Then we experience life beyond anything we could imagine. We will be filled with His Spirit (Ephesians 5:18) and enjoy the Spirit’s fruit (Galatians 5:22-23).

Too often we equate “abundant living” with good health, material possessions, success in life, healthy relationships and experiencing the supernatural in our daily lives. Jesus never promises these (1 Corinthians 1:26-29). Can we still have an “abundant life” when we are hurting, discouraged and God feels far away. What about Christians who are persecuted, enslaved or imprisoned? What about when God doesn’t seem to answer our desperate prayers for help – or even seem to hear them? Was Job living the abundant life when he sat in agony and God was silent? We could look at most of our Old Testament heroes and find times when their life seemed anything but “abundant.”

“Abundant” in Greek refers to something that is considerably more than we would expect or anticipate (1 Corinthians 2:9; Ephesians 3:20). Jesus Himself lived the abundant life, but that had nothing to do with external circumstances, or Jesus would have been the wealthiest, healthiest and most popular of all men. But the opposite was true (Matthew 8:20). Abundant life is eternal life (John 17:3). We get a taste of it when we experience His peace and presence in this life, but sometimes we lack even that. He promises spiritual abundance, not material things. He doesn’t promise it every moment, for He says those who follow Him will go through the same kinds of things He went through (Philippians 1:29-30; John 13:16; Matthew 10:24). No matter how bad it gets, we still have something others don’t have. That is more than anyone without Jesus could ever imagine or have. That is Jesus’ “abundant life.”

This life is abundant and full because Jesus says it is. We can’t measure that by our standards of circumstances and feelings. It is abundant: full of meaning, purpose and significance, no matter what is happening or how we feel. God makes available peace beyond understanding (Philippians 4:7), removal of all guilt and shame (Psalm 103:10-12), wisdom and guidance (Proverbs 3:5-6), joy and the other fruit of the spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) and a close personal relationship with God (Philippians 3:10). The next life will be even better! (November 18, 2019 Doylestown, PA)

***John 10:10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.***

*Are you more focused on what Jesus can do for you or what you can do for Him? Ask Him to convict you when you focus on the benefits, He promises instead of on Him Himself.*

## **Blog 777: GRANDFATHERLY INSIGHTS**

As I’ve been watching my adult children and grandchildren I’ve noticed some observations I’d like to share with you.

1. Raising children is a top priority in life, right after God and mate. They need full attention and focus to thrive
2. Adult children remember parts of their childhood different than you do. Sometimes their perspective isn’t flattering. It can be humbling.
3. Some things they must learn on their own.

4. They won't realize your love and sacrifice for them until they have children of their own.

5. The older I get the more I realize how little control I have over life. Youthful optimism gradually changes to a deep appreciation of God's grace and mercy in our lives.

6. I appreciate sharing this stage with my wife, Nancy. Having her to share these experiences with is wonderful, especially with all the 'history' to this point. Your mate is the only other person who truly understands what you both went through raising the family.

I'm sure there will be more lessons to be learned – and I look forward to every one of them. Look carefully in your life and you'll notice what God is teaching you as well. (November 25, 2019 Doylestown, PA)

***Isaiah 46:4 “even to your old age I am he, and to gray hairs I will carry you. I have made, and I will bear; I will carry and will save.”***

***Psalms 103:17 But from everlasting to everlasting the LORD'S love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children's children—***

*What are some lessons God is teaching you from your children, marriage, friends or employment?*

### **Blog 778: YOU ARE WHAT YOU BELIEVE**

What you believe directly impacts your actions. For example: if you believe God is unknowable or angry, you live in fear, always trying to please an unpredictable deity. What we believe also determines who we are. ***Proverbs 23:7*** says: ***“For as a man thinks in his heart, so is he.”*** Our actions show what we think and believe to be true.

Actions start in the mind as a thought. The Bible uses the word “heart” to refer to the part in us where decisions are made. Jesus said ***in Luke 6:45 “The good person out of the good treasure of the heart produces good, and the evil person out of evil treasure produces evil; for it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks.”***

This is one reason God gave us His Word, the Bible. As we know God's truth and yield to the Holy Spirit, our actions will follow and be good. When we don't know His truth and believe worldly lies, our actions will be evil. We need to think like Christ, so we can act like Christ. We need to know what Jesus thought and believed. We find His beliefs in His Word through His Spirit.

We all see the world through the lens of our beliefs, values and experiences. This is called our “world view.” Some people wear glasses to help them see more clearly. Without the glasses everything looks distorted and they can get hurt or perceive objects incorrectly. If they wear someone else's glasses, their vision is still distorted. The Bible shows us how to accurately view life around us. If we look at life through the Bible's lens, we see a divine perspective. Each person has a set of beliefs about who God is and how what determines right and wrong. Beliefs frame our meaning and purpose in life. *Why am I alive? How am I to live this life? What happens after this life?*

How you answer these questions will form how you view everything else in life. Those views and beliefs are then reflected in your actions and responses to life. If you are struggling to respond like Jesus, don't just “try harder.” Instead, immerse yourself in His Word -read it, learn it, and memorize it. As God renews your mind (Romans 12:1-2) you will respond more like Him. Remember, you are what you believe. (December 2, 2019 Doylestown, PA)

***Proverbs 4:23 Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.***

*When God looks into your mind, what thoughts does He find? He does know your thoughts (Psalm 139:1-3). Are your thoughts like Jesus' thoughts, or are they like those of unbeliever around you?*

*Ask God to renew your mind (Romans 12:1-2) and give you the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:14-16; Philippians 2:5).*

### **Blog 779: ONE ON ONE WITH GOD**

After John baptized Jesus, he immediately went into the wilderness for 40 days. There He fasted and prayed to prepare Himself to serve (Mark 1:12-13). He needed to hear from God so He would do exactly what God desired. He needed God's power and protection to do it. Jesus laid aside the use of His deity so He would live and function as a man (Philippians 2:5-7). He was still God, but He faced and experienced everything as a man, the same as we do (Hebrews 2:18; 9:35; 1 Peter 4:1-10). He showed that living a perfect life was possible (1 Peter 2:22; 1 John 3:5).

Facing life as a man meant He needed God's help with everything He did. That's why He would stay up all night praying (Luke 6:12). Jesus would get up early in the morning to have time alone talking to God (Mark 1:35). As busy as He was, with all He had to do in 3 years and all the people who needed Him, Jesus still put spending time with His heavenly Father before anything else. He did this regularly (Matthew 13:1; 4:13, 42; 15:29; Mark 1:35; 6:46; 9:2; Luke 6:12; 9:10, 28; Luke 4:42; etc.). If Jesus needed time alone with his Father, we certainly do as well.

Our time spent with God is not about telling Him what we need Him to do, but instead to listen to what He has to say to us. What He has to say to us is much more important than anything we could say to Him! He already knows what we would say. We can hear Him when we are quiet and sensitive to His Holy Spirit speaking to us; when we read His Word and meditate on what it says. It can happen any time or place, but we only hear when we are silent and listening. Please make sure you turn off your cell phone and other distractions. Listen for what God has to say. (December 2, 2019 Doylestown, PA)

***Mark 1:35 Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.***

*How much time do you spend listening to God? When you pray, do you talk more than you listen? Maybe it seems God isn't answering your prayers because you spend your time telling Him what to do instead of discovering what He wants you to do? Have you learned how to listen to His voice when you pray and hear His Spirit when you meditate on His Word? When is the best time and place for you to have uninterrupted time with God?*

### **Blog 780: NO GREATER JOY...**

**This is an excerpt from my journal on June 1, 2009:**

Yesterday I had the wonderful privilege of dedicating another granddaughter to the Lord. Addison Kate Schmoyer is our 4th grandchild and a very special young lady. 'Addison' means 'son of Adam.' 'Son of Adam' is a term used for all fallen mankind. That's why Jesus came to earth, to die for all of us sons of Adam. Narnia portrays this in a beautiful way. In that wonderful story all human beings are called 'sons of Adam,' or 'Addisons.' Aslan died to set them free, just as Jesus died to set all us current 'addisons' free. That includes Addison Kate Schmoyer. God is her owner by creation and by purchasing her on the cross. Recognizing that ownership and asking for His help in raising her to be the woman God created her to be is our responsibility and privilege.

Watching all my children and their mates live for Jesus is a joy and pleasure words cannot describe. It is by God's mercy and grace that ALL of them are walking in truth. I thank God for His

marvelous faithfulness in drawing each one of my children and their mates to Himself. I am pleased beyond words that each one willingly responds and submits to His lordship. It is Jesus who makes our family what it is and I give Him ALL the credit and thanks, glory and honor. And this isn't the end - there's a lot more blessing to come. Praise God for His faithfulness!!!! (December 16, 2019 Doylestown, PA)

***"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth" (3 John 4).***

***Psalms 128:6 May you live to see your children's children—a peace be on Israel.***

***Proverbs 17:6 Children's children are a crown to the aged, and parents are the pride of their children.***

*Thank God for your family: parents, mate, children and grandchildren. Pray for each one.*

### **Blog 781: WHERE IS GOD WHEN... (Part 1)**

"She wrapped Him in cloths and placed Him in a manger, because there was no room available for them at the inn" (Luke 2:7). When we hear this verse we think of a quiet, peaceful scene, temperature just right, gentle animals nearby while Mary holds a beautiful baby in her arms. That's the way Hallmark portrays it.

The reality was that 2 very young people, only married a few days, find themselves far from home in a dark, damp, cold and very smelly cave. There was no privacy and no sanitation. We can only speculate that a midwife may have been there to help. But maybe not.

Have you ever been in an animal pen overnight? Not nice! She has just spent a week on a donkey's hard back bumping along day after day. The trip was dirty, hot and dangerous. And she's 9 months pregnant with her first child. I'm sure they prayed for a nice place to rest and have the baby but God didn't answer that prayer the way they expected. This was the way He provided for His Son to be born into the world.

What's wrong with this picture? Couldn't God have provided better than this? Didn't He, and Mary and Joseph, deserve the best? Do you think they wondered where God was when all this was happening? I'm sure they did.

Why does God allow it? Actually He more than allows it; He ordained and mandated it to be this way. He does it because He knows this is best (Psalm 115:3). We only get small glimpses into how He uses adverse circumstances that seem to make no sense at the time. From our perspective in time, we can see how Jesus' birth set the tone for His whole life and ministry.

Being born naked in a wooden feed trough (manger) for animals sets the scene for Him dying naked on a wooden cross. It shows His humility; "He made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness" (Philippians 2:7-8). He came into the world with nothing, had nothing while here, and was buried in a borrowed tomb. He identified with the poor and rejected, and certainly they (we) can identify with Him. People tremble to approach a throne, but it's easy to approach a manger.

Jesus went through all we go through (Hebrews 2:18; 4:15-16) starting with His birth. He was born bearing the only cross a baby can bear: extreme poverty, contempt, indifference and rejection (John 1:11). He was born outside Jerusalem and died outside it as well. He became an outsider so we could come inside with Him.

God used the adverse circumstances of Jesus' birth that made no sense at the time. He uses adverse circumstances in our lives as well. We'll look at that in the next blog. (December 23, 2019 Doylestown, PA)

**Psalm 115:3 Our God is in heaven, He does whatever pleases Him.**

*You've heard the story of Jesus' birth so often it may not register any more, but think about it as if you are hearing it for the first time. Mary and Joseph could have wondered where God was when all this was happening, but looking back we can see God had a plan. Where can you now see His plan in your past when you couldn't see it at the time?*

**Blog 782: WHERE IS GOD WHEN... (Part 2)**

In my last blog I talked about how God uses adverse circumstances that make no sense at the time. Case in point was Mary and Joseph having to travel by donkey through dry, dangerous land with her 9 months pregnant. When they arrived in Bethlehem there was no place for them except a dark, damp, smelly and very dirty cave with no privacy and no sanitation. There, without family and friends (but hopefully with a midwife) she went through labor and delivery for the first time in her life. Where was God when they prayed for a place to stay? Why did He provide this? For one thing, it showed Jesus' humiliation, from reigning in heaven to birth in a stable. He put aside everything to become one of us (Philippians 2:7). It set the tone of poverty and rejection for His whole life. Truly He knows what we go through. (Hebrews 2:18; 4:15-16).

God also used these adverse circumstances to stretch Mary and Joseph's faith. They would face much adversary in the future: fleeing to Egypt, returning to Nazareth and watching their son's rejection and crucifixion. Trusting God, no matter what, was a lesson they needed to learn early on.

God uses situations we don't like or understand to stretch and grow our faith as well. Why would He allow cancer, unemployment, family breakup or any number of painful events in our lives? He uses them to bring about our growth and His glory (Romans 8:28-29). They remind us we need Him.

We should not be surprised when they happen, for a servant is not greater than His master (John 13:16; 15:20). If Jesus suffered, so will we. God will use it to help make us more like Jesus. When we respond in trust and submission, our faith will grow and so will our dependence on Him.

Yes, God uses adverse circumstances that make no sense at the time. He is God and does whatever pleases Him (Psalm 115:3). The circumstances we ask God to change are often the circumstances God is using to change us (Max Lucado). Where is God when we suffer? The same place He was when His Son suffered far more than we ever will. (December 30, 2019 Doylestown, PA)

***1 Corinthians 13:12 For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.***

*Has your faith grown to the place where you trust God no matter what, even when things don't seem to make sense? Have you given up a feeling of entitlement and yielded to His will in your life, whatever it may be? Can you trust that whatever happens is because He loves you and has a plan for your life? Pray and commit whatever you are going through now to Him, to use for His glory.*

**Blog 783: CHRISTMAS PRESENTS**

*(This blog was written by my daughter, Grace Cain, for Crossing Community Church in Newtown, PA.)*

Christmas is about presents, am I right? Presents for kids, giving to charity, white elephants and family Pollyanna. I absolutely love giving gifts to others! Every Christmas I hardcore shop with hours of research, theme compiling and assembly. If I can make you cry, I've done my job well!

But what really throws me off – what truly churns my stomach – is when someone comes up to me and hands me a beautifully wrapped present, full of thoughtfulness and sacrifice – and I planned nothing for them in return! I'm caught off guard. All I can offer is 'thank you' and a hug. Why does that upset me so much?

Because, in that moment, I feel unworthy and unbalanced. I have nothing to offer the giver, and my pride is in jeopardy. I can't settle the score with a back-up wrapped candle or plate of cookies: I'm useless and the subject of someone else's compassion. I have no weight in the exchange of that relationship.

In front of God the Father, at the throne of Christ, I have absolutely no weight in that relationship either. I'm incredibly uncomfortable with that! My people-pleasing, pride-protecting self wants some personal investment that I can offer in return for His goodness and redemption. But I have nothing to offer, and that *could* terrify me. Or it could be a force of joy, because He is good and blesses me beyond what I deserve. Beyond what I've done. Beyond what I have to offer!

I want to celebrate his worthiness, complete goodness, and His redemption we can't influence or pay back. We carry no weight; we cannot respond with a gift He deserves. We can only respond with worship, which is supplied through Him. (Grace (Schmoyer) Cain) (January 6, 2020 Doylestown, PA)

***Acts 17:25 Nor is (God) served by human hands as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.***

*How do you feel when you can't repay someone's incredible generosity to you? How ought we respond to God's favor?*

#### **Blog 784: ONWARD CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS!**

Sometimes it's easy to get so wrapped up in our little world we forget about others serving Jesus in other parts of the world. I continue to get emails from pastors in India that remind me of Christians in India. Here are excerpts from some of those emails:

"Hello Sir. I would like to bring few lines of my testimony about your books. I read all 10 books. It is very important for me. Not only for pastors but all the evangelists, church leaders, and me. Every Sunday I prepare messages from these books. It is very helpful for my ministry. And also pastor's classes also I am blessed with the teaching. And I am blessed with the testimony of Miss Nancy and I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to her model life to other ministers here in India. Please pray for me and my family, and my Gods ministry."

"Dear Pastor Jerry, Greetings to you in Jesus' precious name. Hope you and your family doing well there? And I hope you had blessed trip to India and took lots of memories from here. Please keep praying for our ministries and for the Lord's provisions may come down from heaven. Right now we are doing church planting and children ministry. I'm working with two pastors and three teachers in Day Care Center. Day center is all about helping poor kids in their studies and helping them to grow in ways every kid grow. So please uphold us and our ministries in prayers. Thank you."

"Hello sir, I am very happy about pastors training. It has helped me to understand the Bible how to read the Bible, how to understand the Bible. Your books also helping me to understand the word of God in better and deeper way thank you." "Your books are very much useful for me in the ministry, I have been reading and preaching from your books, it is giving me elaborated ideas to understand scripture more and more, thanking you." "Praise the Lord pastor. Your preaching and teachings of Bible facts and about Gods words are very well. The books also very helpful to all the pastors who attended the conferences. The books suggest much good information how preach."

Especially I have learned more things from your conference. Thank you very much sir. (January 11, 2020 Doylestown, PA)

***Revelation 2:2-3, “I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name’s sake, and you have not grown weary. “***

*Hearing from these fine men about their faithful services makes me glad to be part of the family of God. Their perseverance and faithfulness helps me appreciate the privilege we all have of serving Jesus. Pray for them, and thank God that you, too, are part of this wonderful army of God scattered throughout the whole earth.*

### **Blog 785: THE GIFTS THAT KEEP ON GIVING...**

I wrote this blog after our 2019 India trip to help us to remember the pastors and their work in India. It also reminds me that blessings continue long after we are gone. All you have done for Jesus continues to produce fruit as well.

One pastor told Pastor Moses he put the conference books in his shed and didn’t read them. He said God convicted him he should read the books so he brought them into his house and read them. He said what a blessing they were to him.

A pastor told Pastor Moses after a conference he was separated from his wife but the session on marriage convicted him that he was wrong and was going to reconcile with her.

A pastor told Nancy he came to an earlier conference and took the books home. He read them in 2 nights, then traveled a great distance to another conference to hear it all again.

One man shared the teaching was like a banana: I got through the hard outside and gave them all the good stuff inside!

One of the attendees read the *Spiritual Growth, and Discipleship* book and was using it to teach others to witness for Christ in his church.

Another Pastor said, he was “so much blessed to learn the story of Redemption in the Bible, and the family and ministry of a Pastor.”

One more Pastor said he was touched by the story of Elijah in costume and how Elijah struggled with depression. He said he hoped to meet me. As it turned out I went and sat with him after finishing the lesson. He said he knew that was God’s will. He was very appreciative of being able to attend the conference. He said he was in the ministry for 20 years, but never had such a conference in his life. He is reading the books. He concluded with great gratitude and thanks.

Pastor Moses said the Pastors are happy to have “many books for their library to read and preach in their churches” One Pastor told me he is preaching the *Family and Ministry* book in his church. One more said he was “studying the *Bible Overview* book, with lots of information in the books and preaching in his church.” (January 12, 2020 Doylestown, PA)

***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.***

*The acts you do and words you speak for Jesus continue to affect people long after they are done. Look for ways you can serve and encourage people in God’s name today. God will use it for His glory!*

## **Blog 786: FACE YOUR FEARS**

Most of the pastors and Christians in India live in fear every day. They are a hated, unprotected minority. They are careful, but they are also courageous in their faith. They remind me of David in the Bible.

David was born about 1035 BC. Since he was the youngest son, he got the worst job on the farm, watching the sheep. God used those years to train David to be a man who would trust, love and serve God. There are several lessons about serving God we can learn from David.

**COURAGE TO FACE CHALLENGES** By the time he was 10 years old, David had fought a bear and a lion to protect his sheep. That took a lot of courage for a young boy! It takes courage to live for Jesus. God will continually put us in positions where we must trust Him and Him alone for protection and deliverance. David learned he could always count on God. Courage is trusting God is in control no matter what happens. Courage is fear “prayed up”. We may still feel the fear but it doesn’t dictate our response and action. If we follow God, there is ultimately nothing to fear. The popular saying goes, “He doesn’t promise a smooth ride, just a safe landing”

David wrote in ***Psalm 27:1 “The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?”*** David had courage in little things and as the challenges grew, so did his our faith. Before David could face Goliath, he was victorious facing the bear and the lion.

Today, we need courage to stand against mockery, criticism and persecution. It takes courage to take a stand for Jesus and lead others to follow Him as well. It starts in our families and with our friends. (January 13, 2020 Doylestown, PA)

***Hebrews 13:5-6 God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.” So we say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?”[b]***

***Isaiah 41:10 So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.***

*Are you obedient to His Word and leading of His Spirit, no matter what others may think? Are you influenced by the opinion of others? Is your confidence based in God and not your own ability?*

## **Blog 787: DON’T PRAY FOR PATIENCE**

Growing a church in India takes time and patience. Not many men respond, and those who do often don’t take leadership positions. Some come to the faith, but many grow slowly. I can’t teach the pastors patience, but God can – and He does. Without it they don’t stay in the ministry. David in the Bible also was taught patience so he could serve God.

When David was 12 years old, Samuel came to Jesse in Bethlehem to anoint the next king, the one to replace Saul. David’s father never even considered David, as he was the youngest. But God showed them David was to be the next king (1 Samuel 16:3). David was chosen and anointed at 12, but didn’t become king until he was 42, and even then it was only over 2 of the 12 tribes.

Finally, when he was 49, he became king over the whole nation. David had to wait 37 years to become king! God was teaching him patience and trust. David wrote ***“wait for the Lord” in Psalm 27:14***, and that is an important lesson for all of us.

It takes time to become the person God wants us to be, to learn to patiently trust and follow God, to persevere no matter what happens. Patience is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) and we only have it as we rely on His Presence in all things.

Can you imagine the patience God must have for us? Yet He never quits on us. Patience doesn't come naturally. Have you ever seen a patient baby? Patience is something we learn through suffering (Romans 5:2-4). So whenever you are tempted to be impatient, think of it as an opportunity to learn to be patient. Patience comes from trusting God's sovereignty and His timing. So don't pray for patience, instead pray for suffering so you can learn patience. David patiently waited 37 years for God to keep his promise. How long have you been waiting? (January 14, 2020 Doylestown, PA)

***Romans 5:2-4 And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance (or patience); perseverance (or patience), character; and character, hope.***

*Are you faithful now in the little things God has entrusted you? Are you content to wait for God to work, or are you always trying to make things happen as soon as you want? Do you make plans and then ask God to make them work, or do you wait for His leading and direction first? Would those who know you best say you are a patient person? Would God say you persevere and keep faithfully serving no matter what?*

### **Blog 788: SO FOREIGN AND SO FAMILIAR #1**

It is really quite bizarre. We land and everything smells like curry. I (Nancy) imagine the Pizza Hut we pass serves pizza that tastes NOTHING like the pizza at home. Even McDonalds serves veggie burgers (Hindus are vegetarians). All my senses are attacked at once, letting me know I am NOT home and yet everything looks familiar. I know exactly where Moses will stand to greet us as we exit customs. I know the drive from the airport passes the internationally famous FISH building. Very strange yet interesting in a quirky way. All the massive billboards advertise the same sale that was running 5 yrs ago when I first came. I am always entertained by the ads for schools- Brilliant Scholars Grammar School, Wise Child Preschool, First Class High School just to name a few. All the elementary school children wear uniforms similar our parochial schools, but they attend public school—ahh same but different. Cars and motorcycles are everywhere – literally, even on the “sidewalks”. Traffic moves in mostly in the correct direction but can and will change if there is a space to slide your vehicle into to move faster. NYC taxi drivers would be put to shame and considered amateurs behind the wheel on these roads.

All in all, I found myself smiling thankfully that we made it to this familiar but crazy place. I am praising God for people like **YOU** that prayed we would make it here safely. No small feat considering we rerouted AROUND our usual Iran & Iraq flight pattern over a “safer” Pakistan and Afghanistan. These days safety is relative. I requested people to pray we would be “invisible” to any authorities that would not appreciate us entering the country. We literally buzzed right through customs and border control ...a quick look up from the officer followed by a firm stamp on my Visa and a head nod to move forward. I'll take it!! Another checkpoint and onto baggage claim! My suitcase was opened by security in the USA – TSA is kind enough to leave you a note in your luggage. Maybe they just could not believe I had 25 packs of tuna in there and wanted to see for themselves?

Your prayers have resulted in great peace, safety and strength for the moment. We would be in shambles without you interceding to the Father in our behalf. You are needed. You are loved. You are FABULOUS! (January 15, 2020 Hyderabad, India)

***Philippians 1:3-8 I thank my God every time I remember you. 4 In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy 5 because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until***

***now, 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. 7 It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart and, whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. 8 God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.***

*Who do YOU thank God for? Why not tell them today.*

Love, Nancy and Jerry

### **Blog 789: ONE YEAR AGO**

One year ago, we left India. It seems like only a few months ago. Most of the year we are jotting down tips and ideas of small changes we can make in our planning, packing and teaching. You'd think that after 13 years we'd have this down to a science. But planning for the unpredictable makes it an ever-evolving art form. As adventuresome as this all may seem, I (Nancy) truly covet the sweet contentment of an uneventful journey.

After 30 hours of travel through 10 time zones we arrive at our familiar hotel. The building across the street is nearly finished after 5 years of construction. The hotel has a few new employees that don't recognize us. The rest of the all-male staff greets us like old friends. Surprisingly, the room is ready. We quickly ate a breakfast of boiled mixed vegetables, strawberry yogurt and fresh-cut pineapple. Then off to bed for a 5-hour nap, up for a visit at Pastor Moses' house with scrambled eggs, boiled vegetables and gift giving. It's always high-energy fun frantically catching up on a year's worth of family news. Moses' son works for Google at night, as do most tech employees – aka daytime in the USA. His daughter continues to study and test for her medical specialty. Moses' wife has recovered fully from her malaria. Next, a quick round of family pictures, then off to bed again – ahhhh, 10 hours of sleep! It was a surprisingly quiet night; no barking wild dogs, minimal horn honking, no hallway noise or construction hammering at the break of dawn. Already feeling refreshed – praising the Lord for blessings great and small. (January 16, 2020 Hyderabad, India)

***“This is the day the Lord has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it.” Palm 118:24***

*What small things has God blessed you with today? He's all about the details.*

Keep on praying for us – so far so good !..Love Nancy

### **Blog 790: CHANGED LIVES**

As I teach in front of the men, I look at their faces. I know each one has a story and unique life experiences. I look forward to seeing them in heaven when I can spend time sharing what Jesus has done in our lives. I got a glimpse into the life of one pastor who sent me his testimony. I share it with you as he wrote it:

“To Pastor Jerry Schmoyer. I was born and brought up in a “Serivelpur Village, Siddhantham Post” tribe in Andhra Pradesh. Before knowing Christ, I believed in lots of superstitions. Our tribe used to do human sacrifices and worshipped our tribal gods and Goddess etc. I along with some people started robbery and, in a situation, we killed a person. I ran away into forest and lived there for several weeks. Even my father didn't allow me into house. In those days one Saturday evening I was hiding and sitting on a tree and heard a gospel song from a church. I jumped from the tree and started walking towards the sound. Many members got scared of me but the local church pastor look me and shared the gospel with me. The Holy Spirit convicted my heart and I am a sinner and only Jesus can forgive my sins and cleanse me. My life began to change; Pastor of the same church gave

shelter to me for 8 months. I worked in some Christian organization and later on came to a church training program and now planting a new church in our region.

“Thank you for your prayers and support. Please pray as I am going to select 8 surrounding villages and preach gospel to those villages and raise up some believers and church planters from those villages.” By Pastor Obadiah.

What a privilege we have to help train and encourage these men and women God is using in the work of his Kingdom here in India! As you give and pray you also are a part of what is happening. One day you will meet these changed lives in heaven you have prayed for. (January 17, 2020 Hyderabad, India)

***Revelation 7:9-10 After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.”***

*Spend some time now praising and worshipping God for His power, wisdom, majesty and love. Thank Him for the privilege you have in helping God’s Kingdom grow around the world.*

### **Blog 791: PART OF THE ARMY**

Today in the car driving to the conference I told Pastor Moses about the strong oppression we always feel starting the beginning of January. We are hit with fear, doubt, discouragement, etc. We battle it all and don’t give in but it is a constant battle, a dark cloud always hanging around us trying to overwhelm us. I asked Pastor Moses if he experienced that here as well and he said he did. The oppression drives them to prayer. January 2 a dozen pastors got together in his church and stayed all night praying. They have fasting times of prayer often. Even today the women gather in his church for extended prayer about these conferences. Pastors and churches in many different places also gather and pray regularly for us. We know the darkness doesn’t want the Light to expand and will do anything possible to shut it down. Knowing we in the USA are part of a large army of prayer warriors is encouraging. I know people in China, Italy, Africa and many other places are also praying for us. So take heart, you are not alone. Your prayers join with those from many others praying in different places and in various languages. God hears and answers them all!

We know there is no guarantee that everything will be safe or easy, but we do have the guarantee that God is with us and whatever happens is for His glory. That’s guarantee enough! (January 15, 2020 Hyderabad, India)

***Hebrews 12:1-3 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, <sup>2</sup>fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. <sup>3</sup>Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.***

Thanks for praying – but don’t stop!

Jerry

### **Blog 792: LESSONS FROM THE CHURCH IN INDIA**

What do the two largest democracies in the world have in common? Obviously, many things, but the one I am noticing is their treatment of Christians. In both India and the USA, the powers that be are siding with those who oppose Christianity.

In the USA Christians are condemned for their “intolerance” of LGBT life styles. Because we believe Jesus is the only way, we are seen as going against cultural norms. In India Christians are condemned for their rejection of Hinduism with all its gods and idols. Because they believe Jesus is the only way they are seen as going against their cultural norms.

In India the oppression is social, economic and often physical. In the USA persecution hasn't turned physical yet, but is certainly economic and social. Since this has been going on in India much longer than in the USA, what can we learn from them? What will the future look like in the USA?

For one thing, in a democracy the majority rules. It does not seem likely that Biblical Christianity will ever gain a majority, not until Jesus returns. When Christianity did control government by its majority, it was a diluted form of Christianity and the government often wasn't much better than other governments.

Nowhere do we read in the Bible that we will win the world to Christ, or become the majority. Not until Jesus comes back. In fact, the Bible says over and over that persecution will grow worse as time goes on (2 Timothy 3:1-12; Matthew 10:17; 24:10-12; Jude 18-19; Luke 21:12; John 15:20; 16:2; Revelation 2:10; etc.). So it looks like this is the new norm for Christians in America. It's always been the case for Christians in India.

However, God's power has ways of being seen more clearly during times of persecution. We know what it has done to the church in China, North Korea and Muslim countries. Quality replaces quantity. It's been said the church can stand anything but success, so maybe what's coming will help prune and strengthen the true Church. I pray for my grandchildren to stay faithful for they will live in a different country than the one I grew up in.

Remember, the battle will continue until Jesus returns. Don't pray for God to stop the battle now, for He won't override man's free will. Do pray for strength to remain faithful in the battle. Read the end of the Book – we win! (January 18, 2020 Hyderabad, India)

***1 Timothy 6:12 Fight the good fight of faith (2 Timothy 4:7)***

***Ephesians 6:12 “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against ... the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.”***

***James 1:12 “Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life,***

*What is your attitude to the changes in our country? Do you fear for the future? Or do you ignore them and go about your life as if they aren't happening? Ask for wisdom and courage so you can faithfully stand for Jesus and His Word in all you say and do. God has put you on earth at this time so carry out your duties in the army of God as a good soldier of Christ (2 Timothy 2:3).*

### **Blog 793: YOU KNOW YOU ARE IN INDIA WHEN: ( from Nancy)**

- You hoard toilet paper (see picture below).
- Eat boiled vegetables for breakfast.
- The same song plays repetitively in the restaurant.
- Air fresheners double as bug repellent.

- Five people and a goat ride on one motorcycle.
- Stop signs are only a suggestion.
- It's mandatory to use an EasyPass on the highway, but the EasyPass lanes are all closed indefinitely.
- You carry hospital grade wipes in your purse.
- Boiling 10 liters of water a day is routine.
- Tuna actually tastes good (but its only week one).
- You can't trust the "Not Spicy" sign in restaurants.
- The best yogurt ever is served up from buffalo milk (think melted Haagen Dazs Ice Cream).
- A water buffalo costs the same as my first car.
- ALL buildings are made with concrete. It is transported upward by workers climbing stick-thin scaffolding.
- It's January and it's a perfect 75 degrees.
- Curry means all things are spicy.
- Starting on time is 1 ½ hours late.
- “Monkey Business” refers to real monkeys doing their business.
- Adults laugh joyously over Jerry's magic tricks.
- White rice is served at breakfast, lunch and supper.
- 5 different people simultaneously attempt to read aloud the requested Bible text.
- Catered lunches arrive on ox-drawn carts.
- There is a pile of sandals at the threshold of every door.
- Large, loud PA systems are used in small rooms.
- People are everywhere.
- Honking a horn is the polite way to pass a car. (January 19, 2020 on the highway between Hyderabad and Vijayawada, India)

#### **Blog 794: A TYPICAL DAY IN INDIA**

We wake up about 6:30, after sleeping 9 to 11 hours. Our morning routine includes putting everything semi-valuable in locked suitcases. American guests are rare in this hotel and we don't want to tempt anyone.

We bring everything we'll need for the whole day: teaching materials, magic tricks, purified water, a large assortment of emergency medicines, lunch, etc. Nancy makes peanut butter and jelly or brings tuna packs – whatever we don't eat for lunch we have for supper, plus a pack of oatmeal. It's not as bad as it sounds – when you are hungry it tastes great! Plus it is safe food. We supplement with peelable fruit: oranges, bananas and boiled vegetables from the hotel restaurant.

We have a continental breakfast at the hotel about 7:30. We have eggs, juice, fruit, boiled vegetables, sometimes yogurt, potatoes and bread (for our lunch).

We drive with Moses 1 ½ to 2 ½ hours to the conference. While driving, I write blogs, organize my pictures and get them ready to use and even take a nap. The conference is scheduled to start at 9 AM. We are some of the first to arrive at 10:30 but it actually starts between 11:30 and 12. We are on India time. The group starts small and by lunch we have our maximum number. Sometimes attendance tapers after the meal.

Day #1, I speak about What God Expects of Pastors, Bible Overview (red thread of redemption through the Bible – my favorite session), and What God Expects of Churches. If they request another session I include one on the Character of a Pastor. Chai tea arrives sometime in the morning and lunch is anywhere from 1:30 to 2:15. The meal is white rice, vegetable sauce and hard-boiled eggs. Our conferences have a reputation for serving quality food, both physical and spiritual.

Day #2 I dress up as Thomas and talk about his life and ministry, including his trips to India. While I get change my clothes, Nancy shares her testimony, which everyone loves to hear. She tells them about the “young pastor” she met and baptized her – then points to me. Everyone cheers!

My second session is a lively, practical session about how to study the Bible and prepare sermons. There is lots of group involvement. I also have a session on the roles of husbands and wives. I explain that being a good husband is more important than being a good pastor and their wives must come first. They have never heard this before. The women enjoy hearing how they should be loved and cared for. The last session covers Spiritual Warfare and closes with prayer for deliverance. It’s a very powerful time!

We finish the meeting with the pastors’ testimonies about what they learned, then a group picture. Travel money, a stack of 11 books I wrote are given to each person or couple.

We pile into the car exhausted, drive to the hotel, and get ready to do it all over again. We arrive at the hotel about 6 or 7, wash hands, feet and sandals. Nancy purifies about 8 liters of water for the next day. I put the day’s lessons away and organize for the next day’s teaching and magic. We eat, wash out clothes, answer a few emails and get right to sleep. THANKS for your emails; they are very encouraging. Sorry I can’t answer them.

Sightseeing? Oh, we see plenty of sights in India. We don’t need to go out of our way see more! (January 20, 2020 Vijayawada, India)

***Psalm 118:24 This is the day the Lord has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it.***

*When is the last time you thanked God for your daily routine? You may not like it, or find it boring, but living in America means it is better than most of the rest of the world. Thank God for yours.*

### **Blog 795: WHAT I LIKE BEST IN INDIA**

There are some parts of our time in India that I especially appreciate. They may seem like little things, but as we all know, little things are important. I really like the warm weather. I thank God He sends me to India, not Siberia! I love wearing sandals all day and going barefoot inside. In the USA my feet are always cold, but here. I enjoy teaching and preaching barefoot. It is a very appropriate way to show respect to God and His Word.

I love teaching the Word every day, several times a day. It is a joy and privilege I continually thank God for. Many are very hungry to learn God’s Word. What could be better than speaking God’s truth to hungry listeners all day every day? Also it is gratifying to write and give out my books. It’s very humbling that God choose me and I praise Him for it.

The magic tricks are a lot of fun. I delight in seeing how the people are educated and entertained by them. They help the “light bulb” go off in their heads, as they understand the content.

The people in India are wonderful. The Christians are loving, caring, friendly and very appreciative of everything we do. The women dress colorfully and feminine. It is a privilege developing relationships with them year after year. They are an example of joy and faithfulness under difficult circumstances. I remember this all year long. They give a fresh perspective to what is important in life and what is not. I thank God for all the blessings I receive from our involvement in India. (January 20, 2020 Vijayawada, India)

***Luke 16:10 “One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much.***

***John 6:9 “There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?”***

***Matthew 13:32 It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.”***

*Take some time and think about the ‘little’ blessings God provides in your daily life. It’s too each to miss them. Thanks God for them and think of them throughout the day.*

### **Blog 796: TAKE TIME TO UNWIND**

No one was busier than Jesus. He had 3 years to spread His message and train others to do so. There was no other plan. Yet He often took time to relax and get away with those closest to Him (Mark 6:31). When He worked, Jesus worked hard. But He wasn’t always working. He knew everyone needs time to relax and rest. That’s why God commanded we all have a Sabbath Day of rest every seven days (Exodus 20:8-11). After feeding 5,000 men, Jesus went away to recharge (Matthew 14:23).

This is an important principal Jesus taught His followers. After Jesus returned to heaven, John the disciple lived in Ephesus, and while here he taught and led many churches, but he also raised pigeons as a hobby. One day someone questioned why he should spend so much time on his own pleasure when there was so much work to be done. John took the bow the man was carrying and asked why the string was loose and not tight. The man said if he didn’t loosen it when he wasn’t using it, the bow would lose its power when it was needed. John said that is why he took time to relax, so he would be better able to work when the time came. God does not expect us to be at work all the time, he expects us to relax and enjoy life (Ecclesiastes 3:1-8). We must be good stewards of our bodies and health, and that means getting away to relax and enjoy life. It’s also important we use these times to spend with our family doing things they enjoy and having fun together.

This is a message I try to communicate to the pastors in India, but most of the ones I know seem to stay very very busy. People in India work constantly – most of them have to in order to have food and stay alive. There is so much to do that it can be hard to a break. We certainly know how that feels as well.

Many times, we as Christians feel guilty if we relax and take time for ourselves or our family, yet that is very important for our future wellbeing. I have always liked to run and sometimes ran in long races. If I started off as fast as I could I would never finish. I must pace myself so I have energy left at the end. I must go at a slower pace so I can stay consistent my whole life. That’s how it is in ministry as well. Working hard every day of the week may mean we accomplish a lot for a while, but we won’t be able to keep it up. Our health and our relationships will suffer. We’ll lose energy to keep going. A good runner knows just how fast to go to cover the distance in the shortest time without having to stop before the end. The same is true of a good Christian. (January 22, 2020 Vijayawada, India)

***Ecclesiastes 3:1 There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens: a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance, a time to keep and a time to throw away,***

*Do you set a good example to those around by working hard but also taking time to rest and relax? Do you have one day a week when you don't work at your job or ministry but spend with your family or do things you enjoy? What do you do to relax? Do you have something you enjoy like John raised pigeons? Would God say you are keeping His command for a day of rest each week? If not, what can you start doing right now to obey Him? It can be any day, since pastors can't rest on Sunday. The day isn't as important as the fact you obey the principle of rest for one day each week.*

### **Blog 797: PERSECUTION'S IMPACT ON US**

We have not experienced any persecution during our almost 2 weeks in India. Of course, Nancy's been praying that God's angels make us invisible, like Peter when he walked out of the prison (Acts 12:1-10). The states we are in have Christians in government and pretty much leave the church alone. Still the changes affect everyone, even those in these states. The rules now state that no one can preach or evangelize outside a church building. They can't give out tracts or Bibles, something that churches used to do a lot of. Speaking about faith can only be done inside a church building. Foreigners are not permitted to speak outside a church or even inside a church. They have a democracy but don't follow their own constitution. That can change so everyone is careful.

Pastor Moses has to fill out paper work about why we are coming and what we are doing. They do not say we do pastors' conferences. He says we do training for marriages and family life. New Hope Foundation is also involved with water wells, orphans, sewing schools, leprosy work, children's programs and other similar things. Bringing in large amounts of money is difficult and noticed by the authorities.

On a more positive note, the current situation has caused the pastors and churches to work together. Previously they were often suspicious of each other and very competitive. Now they need each other and must work together. That has been VERY good for the church in India.

Pastor Moses also said that things are easier for Christians in the big cities because "nobody cares." That seems typical of big cities everywhere. In the villages everyone has their nose in everyone else's business, and that can cause problems. We stay in hotels in big cities but our conferences are in village churches. Everyone is very careful and protective of us, especially God. We are in good hands! (January 22, 2020 Vijayawada, India)

***Acts 12:6-10 6 The night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries stood guard at the entrance. 7 Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. "Quick, get up!" he said, and the chains fell off Peter's wrists.***

***8 Then the angel said to him, "Put on your clothes and sandals." And Peter did so. "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me," the angel told him. 9 Peter followed him out of the prison, but he had no idea that what the angel was doing was really happening; he thought he was seeing a vision. 10 They passed the first and second guards and came to the iron gate leading to the city. It opened for them by itself, and they went through it. When they had walked the length of one street, suddenly the angel left him.***

*Thank God for the religious freedom you still have in the USA. Use it to the best advantage possible. Pray for the Christians in India to have wisdom and courage and they spread God's Word in their country.*

## **Blog 798: WHY SPIRITUAL WARFARE?**

In India the battle between good and evil, God and Satan and believers and demons is very real and evident. The darkness does all it can to keep out the Light. It should not surprise us that we, in the USA, face the same enemy. God commands us to be involved in spiritual warfare against Satan and his demons (1 Timothy 6:12). ***Ephesians :126*** says "***Our struggle is not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers.***" Paul describes in great detail the armor provided for us to fight this battle. He says every Christian is in a battle and needs to be prepared.

Paul tells the Corinthians in ***2 Corinthians 2:11***: "***We are not ignorant of Satan's devices.***" If Satan uses his power against us, then surely we are to oppose him. But some may wonder, if God is sovereign, why do we need to fight Satan? If God is sovereign, why do we need to witness, pray, believe, work for our money, drive carefully, go to see a doctor, or any of those things? *If we trust in God, why lock doors at night?* There are some common-sense things God expects us to do for ourselves, even though He is in control of everything. We take care of our health, lock our doors, drive carefully and keep from sin. By doing these things we learn to trust Him more.

Here are some reasons we know we are to use spiritual warfare. First, the **Jews were given the land of Canaan but had to fight** to live in it. When we fight we see His provision, might and deliverance. When we learn about spiritual warfare we are better able to pray for and give guidance to others. Also, we see the awfulness of sin and its consequences so we can better turn from it. We see His glory as He uses us to bring victory to others.

A second reason we know about spiritual warfare is because **Jesus used it**. Jesus talked about Satan & demons more than anyone in the Bible. He cast out demons and He commanded His disciples to cast them out, too. He taught His disciples to fight Satan and overcome evil (Matthew 10:8; Luke 10:1, 17-20). He was disappointed when they were unable to deliver a demonized boy (Mark 9:14-29).

We see **examples of others in the Bible** involved in spiritual warfare as well. Daniel prayed spiritual warfare prayer for three weeks while a demon prevented God's angel from coming with the answer to Daniel's prayers (Daniel 10:2-6,12-14). Paul was twice involved in casting out demons, in Acts 13 and 16 (Acts 13:6-12; 16:16-18). Paul wrote a lot about spiritual warfare in Ephesians 4 and 6 and Galatians 2 (Ephesians 4:26-27; 6:10-13; Galatians 2:10, 13; etc.) His thorn in the flesh was a demon, an angel of Satan (2 Corinthians 12:7-9). Moses was challenged by Satanic forces in Jannes and Jambres (Exodus 7:1-11, etc.).

Many examples in history and today show the involvement of **God's people in spiritual warfare**. We know in the last days spiritual oppression will increase. The book of Revelation makes this clear.

Satan has opposed God from the beginning. Satan attacked God through His creation. First Adam and Eve, then Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God's people ended up in Egyptian slavery for 400 years until God delivered them. God did it all: provided the innocent blood and the power to protect them from the angel of death as well as deliver them unharmed through the Red Sea. They did nothing but accept His salvation. Then the battles started for them: the Amalekites attacked, then the Canaanites, and on it went. The Jews had to learn to fight. When they learned to fight behind their leader Joshua, who is a picture of Jesus, they conquered and settled the land God had for them. When we learn to fight behind our Commander, Jesus, we have victory in life. (January 24, 2020 Vijayawada, India)

## **Blog 799: WHO AM I?**

We've made some great friends among the pastors in India. They are men I admire for their courage, faithfulness and humility. Some of our long-time good friends, who we've seen year after year, came today. It was instant joy to be together again. They are great, humble servants. It's easy to spot a prideful pastor here, but the humble ones stay in the background. God sees them, though. He blesses them and uses them for His kingdom. He did that with David as well.

When David was 13, he was chosen to play music for King Saul (1 Samuel 16:21-22). It was quite a privilege for a shepherd boy whose father saw him as insignificant! Being in Saul's court could have caused great pride in David, but it didn't. He was always amazed that God would choose and use him. ***"Who am I and who is my family, that you have brought me this far?" (2 Samuel 7:18).*** David always remembered that all he had and all he was came from God. He wrote about this often in his Psalms (Psalm 100:3, etc).

To serve God today we must be confident, but still humble. Our confidence must be in God, not in own ability. It's a great privilege to serve Him, but never think it is because we deserve it. None of us deserve anything from God (Titus 3:5-7; Ephesians 2:8-9; Isaiah 64:4-6). If it weren't for Him, we would be failures. I'm reminded of that constantly in India. Who am I to stand and be listened to and admired by these fine men and women of God? Who am I to have this privilege? Clearly, it's all by His amazing grace!

Pride is the sin that turned Satan from God, and it is something he tries to instill in all who would serve God. He is very subtle. He puts thoughts of our own importance into our minds, and unless we are alert, we will start listening to and believing them. As Proverbs says, pride always leads to a downfall (Proverbs 16:18-28).

The problem is that pride is easy to see in others, but almost impossible to see in ourselves. Ask God to convict you or any pride (Psalm 139:23-24). When you feel His Spirit nudging you, don't make excuses or justifications. That is pride at work. To be like Jesus means we must be humble. Ask Him to humble you, whatever it takes. That's the only way you can be like David, and like Jesus. (January 25, 2020 Vijayawada, India)

***Proverbs 16:18-19 Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall. It is better to be of a lowly spirit (humility) among the poor than to divide the spoil with the proud.***

***Proverbs 8:13 The fear of the Lord is hatred of evil. Pride and arrogance and the way of evil and perverted speech I hate.***

***Proverbs 11:2 When pride comes, then comes disgrace; but wisdom is with (those who have humility,***

*Would those around you say you are humble or proud? When do you have the greatest struggle with pride? What can you do to have victory over it? If God took His presence and blessing from you right now, how would you do as a leader?*

## **Blog 800: NO GUARANTEES**

I start the second day of each pastor's conference by dressing in costume as Thomas and sharing his testimony. When life doesn't go as we expect, instead of doubting God we must put our faith in His promises. That's what Thomas learned the hard way. We must remember that God is in control of all that happens and has a plan and purpose for everything. However, there is no guarantee things will go the way we want. Just because we are serving Him and in the center of His will doesn't guarantee a smooth, easy life. If you look at the lives of God's servants in the Bible you will see they all faced many obstacles and challenges in life.

What God does guarantee in His promises, though, is that He will always be with us no matter what we go through (Hebrews 13:5; Deuteronomy 31:6). He also guarantees that everything that happens will be to make us more like Jesus (Romans 8:28-29) and that He will be glorified in it (1 Corinthians 10:31). We glorify Him as we see Him helping us through the difficulty and others glorify Him as they see us trusting Him in hard times. That's our only guarantee – and that's enough.

We aren't guaranteed our time in India will be easy or painless; our health will be perfect or our load light. When the unexpected happens and we don't understand why, think of Thomas and instead of doubting God, fall back on His promises. I have some of my hardest times in India, but that is when God always seems closer to me. His promises ARE true. He never promised continual good health, wealth, success or perfect relationships. He did promise His presence and His will be done. What more could we ask for? (January 26, 2020 Vijayawada, India)

***2 Timothy 3:12 In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,***

***John 5:20 Remember what I told you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also.***

*What are some of your favorite promises in the Bible? Read or quote them. Remember them today. Write them out and carry them with you if that will help. They are true, and they are the only thing you can really count on.*

### **Blog 801: THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY – IT'S UNIVERSAL**

The condition of the human heart is universal. We have seen the generosity of the desperately poor and the greed of leaders. We have seen the compassion of a housekeeper and the epitome of self-serving behavior in a few pastors. We have seen some pastors travel far distances to sit in a hot, crowded room for 6 hours and repeat it again the next day.....joyously.

Early in my faith I realized when people said they were a Christian; it didn't mean anything except they were going to heaven when they died. At some point they had asked Jesus for forgiveness as they saw their need of a Savior. It told me nothing about their maturity, honesty, work ethic, sacrificial heart or generosity. All qualities you would expect of a Christian.

The saying goes, "aging is inevitable but maturity is optional." I'm sure you know of an older person who is still self-centered, unyielding and demanding. Life's difficult circumstances should nudge us towards maturity. Not always. Sometimes people just live through those times and become bitter and more self-seeking. Others graciously embrace the pruning of self-centeredness.

It grieves me to watch the immaturity of Christians, both Indians and Americans. They behave in such a way as to tarnish their testimony for the Lord. No doubt my grief is multiple many times over in the Lord's heart (Isaiah 65:5). Our offense is a stench to Him all the day long. How does He STAND it! Even in me, a sinner, my righteous indignation rises up like a volcano inside.

Are your life's hard circumstances making you sweeter, gentler, gracious, yielding and kind? Or are they moving you towards bitterness, resentment and feeling cheated in life? Just something to think about..... Love, Nancy (January 27, 2020 Vijayawada, India)

***Colossians 3:12-14 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. 13 Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. 14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.***

## **Blog 802: MY KINDNESS DIARY**

One of my favorite TV series is the *Kindness Diaries*. You can find it on Netflix, on sale at Amazon and even parts on YouTube. It features a man traveling across the states and even around the world on a motorcycle with a camera crew. He is dependent solely on the kindness of others to house, feed, and provide for all his traveling needs, even gas. Along the way he meets incredibly trusting, generous people with their own heart-breaking stories, who are still willing to share what little they have. Before he continues on the next day, he reveals his real mission- to bless those who are a blessing. Watch for yourself and be blessed.

I too have my kindness stories here in India. Despite being in this hotel room 7 days in a row, sick, sad and disappointed to say the least, I have experienced random acts of pure kindness and love from strangers.

Before I was sick, the first act of kindness came from a young pastor's wife. The previous day, I complimented the ladies on their beautiful saris and how lovely they looked. They giggle like schoolgirls. Frankly, I don't think they get much affirmation about their beauty. They ARE breathtakingly stunning. They have perfectly smooth dark skin and coconut smelling hair all draped in India's flowing colorful silks and linens that Italian designers would die for!

The next day she and her young pastor husband presented me with a sari. My heart sunk. Saris are not cheap. I felt so unworthy. How could I possibly accept this, let alone WEAR it? Truly her kindness will be remembered.

The next act of kindness came as a knock on the door. I opened to a meticulously groomed woman in a supervisor's sari. I immediately noted an uncommon gold cross around her neck. She asked about my laundry needs and tried to continue the broken English conversation. Soon she asked me where I was from and if I was a Christian. Pleasantly surprised I said yes and a very short conversation ensued. Frankly, I was too sick to be much company. I did tell her I was sick. Then twice that day she circled back to check on me, asking me if I needed food or help. I suppose I looked pretty pitiful. Sigh. Later, when Jerry was home she came again and chatted with him. Her uncle is a pastor and he asked her to get Jerry's contact card. She was very encouraged to know we were there to strengthen the local pastors. Since then, she has come every day to check. So sweet.

During my sickness NOTHING from my suitcase pantry remotely interested me. Ugh! But long about the end of yesterday, I craved bread. Not sliced white cardboard from yesterday's breakfast but bakery bread. Moses heard me say this to Jerry and walked several kilometers in either direction to find a bakery. This morning he dropped off 2 bags of bakery rolls. Ummmm.. eatin'good ! The walk is part of the gift!

Lastly, it is common for the pastors to honor Jerry/us with a prayer shawl and a lay of flowers around our neck. But this time, early in the session, someone took a photo of Jerry and had it made into a plaque (see below). So touching and special for Jerry. This pastor went beyond the usual to honor his teacher... and the ONE who sent him. Jerry does like pictures!

Other acts of continual kindness are from the children and even many of the young men that insist on carrying Jerry's heavy teaching suitcase. They reach to carry his water bottle. They run before him to open the car door. They linger at the car window waving good-bye. What a special place. What special people.

Are you a vessel of random acts of kindness? Consider it today and bless someone. Hopefully it becomes habit forming!! Love Nancy (January 29, 2020 Vijayawada, India)

*Ephesians 4:32 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ... Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as Christ God forgave you. —*

### **Blog 803: COMMENTS FROM THE PASTORS - 1**

The conferences have been going quite well, as they do every year. We thank God for that – it certainly isn't something for which we can take credit. We try to faithfully present His Word, but once the words are out of our mouths (I teach, Moses translates) it's God's Spirit Who applies them to the hearts and lives of the listeners.

Person after person in each conference says the teaching is something, they need but have never had. They call it a "new way of teaching." They are referring to the way I teach and apply the Bible using visuals and examples. They have no way to get good Bible teaching where they live. They love hearing God's Word taught in a way they understand. They say it is practically applied to their lives and situations. They say we educate them in the Bible, give practical help and motivate them to apply it to their lives.

Many make comments on my talk about marks of a healthy church from the example of the **church in Antioch**. They identify with the small house churches and are encouraged that God uses small churches. It's not church programs or structure that impresses God but faithful witnessing, teaching, praying, helping others and living by His grace that is important.

I show a picture of a frog and talk about how it waits for insects to come to it. Then I use a lizard to show how we should look everywhere for those we can witness to. A woman in her testimony said she was convicted that they were all like lazy frogs but needed to become like lizards and go out with the gospel. That can be true of us as well.

One man was touched by Barnabas' example of bringing Paul to Antioch to teach. He then let Paul take the lead on their journeys. He said pastors today need to be humble and not proud. They must let others help with their ministry.

**Thomas' testimony** about trusting God and believing His promises instead of doubting touches many of the people. One said he was really moved by Thomas. Another said he was so encouraged he cried.

In **Bible Overview** I trace redemption throughout the Bible while giving an outline of Bible history from Genesis to Revelation. The focus is on Jesus and His provision of salvation. It's my favorite session (Moses' also) and I am touched and thrilled by it each time I do it. The magic really reinforces the main truths and it is not only educational but a great time of worship. People take notes and there are always those who want a copy of my drawings to teach the people in their church. Many Christians are ignorant of the flow of truth in the Bible and can't tell the story from beginning to end. That's a shame and a discredit to the teaching ministry of the church today.

Many said, "Bible Overview taught me the entire Bible in a short time. I saw how it is all connected. Now I can better understand God's plan in Bible. I want to teach this to my people so they understand the Bible better."

Perhaps the most immediate impact is made by the session on **husband-wife relationships**. I introduce it the first day, and more attend the second day to hear it developed. Marriages in India have never been founded on Bible truth. They more resemble the caste system where one is better than the other. Love, kindness, sacrificial service and forgiveness as applied to marriage are lacking. I support everything I say with Bible verses and God convicts them. Over and over I hear them say they didn't know these things, they have not been the husband or wife God wants, and they want to

change and have the marriages God wants them to have. One of the 11 books they get is about marriage so they can follow-up by reading and applying what they learn. (January 29, 2020 Vijayawada, India)

(continued tomorrow)

*Do you avail yourself of the excellent Bible teaching you have available in church, in books on the radio and Internet? Spend some time today reading or listening. God has given us a great privilege those in other parts of the world don't have.*

## **Blog 804: COMMENTS FROM THE PASTORS - 2**

During the marriage talk I use Joseph as an example of a husband who put Mary first by being willing to take a loss and divorce her quietly to protect her from shame. I use Abraham as a man who put himself first by saying Sarah was his sister. I ask them who they are like, then who their wife would say they are like. After one conference one woman stood up and berated the men for all being like Abraham! She went on and on. They took it well, probably because she knew them personally and knew what she was talking about.

A common comment I receive after the session on marriage is that pastors regret not bringing their wives. They just aren't considerate of them and realize it after hearing God's Word. They say their will honor their wives and treat them better.

Another man bragged he was like Abraham so I asked who his wife would say he was like. Clearly she wouldn't agree. She was sitting on the other side (men and women always sit separately). He laughed and laughed and so did everyone else in the room.

When I teach about how to **study the Bible** I emphasize the fact that it must be interpreted accurately. I use a felt circle and twist it into various hats showing that people often twist the Scriptures to mean what they want. They admit many pastors make the Bible say what they want. They say they learned how to study the Bible and develop good sermons that communicate God's truth in an understandable way.

People say they love what I say and also how I say it. They say I teach "from the bottom of the book." They mean I give the whole picture of a Bible book and make the deep things easy to understand. I refer to how I teach as an example of what they should do when they teach and they are very motivated to focus on one main idea in a message and explain it with examples and illustrations.

I always close with talking about **spiritual warfare** (Mark 5:1-13). It's a very moving talk with excellent magic tricks and concludes with prayer for freedom for themselves, their family and their church. They often comment about how they rejoice that we have power over demons in Jesus' name. The trick that reinforces this is one they talk about years later. Pastor after pastor thanks me for teaching them how to have victory over Satan and demons. The rule through fear and can be quite open in their work in India. Few Christians know of the victory that is theirs in Jesus. It's a joy to make them aware of it.

Reports come back from pastors about how they rebuke demons in Jesus' name and the demons leave. Instead of being powerless against Satan's power, which is overt and strong in India, they can have freedom and victory. Imagine living in India and not knowing Jesus gives them victory over Satan and his forces.

The stack of books their receive are a real blessing. It is a library of good teaching and practical help. They say they read the books and they are very helpful. Many tell me they preach

from the books so the people will learn the information as well. This also reinforces it in the pastor's life. I give each pastor a business card with my email and India web site on it. The ones who can use English go to the site and many email me. I receive several emails every day, all thanking me for the conference and the books. Most mention they are reading and preaching the books. They all assure me they pray for us daily. What a blessing that is! (January 30, 2020 Vijayawada-Hyderabad Road, India)

### **Blog 805: INDIA 2020 EVALUATION**

We are home from our trip to India to train pastors. We held 7 conferences in 12 days with 650 pastors and 150 wives attending. This brings the total to 354 days in India in 13 years, holding 194 days' worth of pastors' conferences for 8,200 pastors and 2,500 wives. But who's counting? That doesn't include Sunday preaching in churches, talks to children, youth, orphans, or lepers groups. No wonder I'm sleeping so much!

But statistics don't tell the story of trained and encouraged pastors and wives. It doesn't reflect the smiles and joy in their eyes. They report their faith is stronger and they learned many things from God's Word. They thank us for better equipping them to minister with Biblical teaching and the accompanying 11 book library distributed.

I received this email yesterday from one of the few pastors who knows English.

*This is Pastor \_\_\_\_\_ from Almighty church in \_\_\_\_\_. Greetings to you in the name of our lord and savior Jesus Christ. It's my privilege to send you mail. First of all I thank heavenly father for he has given me the privilege to listen very valuable things from you. I'm very sure today it was very great program many pastors were enlightened by your valuable presentation of inspiring message, pictures, drawings and some magics as well. You are very loving and kind hearted person like Jesus because you have spent your valuable money to give us books, travel money and for delicious food even. We did really enjoy the program once again I do praise God for that. We have reached home safely my family also very happy I hope you too. We do pray for you, your family and your ministry and please do pray for me and my family and ministry.*

Training and empowering pastors already in the culture is the most efficient, cost effective way to spread the gospel. Each one we influence goes on to influence dozens of others that in turn influence many more. They minister to people we could never reach. It's like throwing a stone in a lake and watching the ripples.

Moving forward into the next year, our Indian coordinator, Pastor Moses, will teach follow-up conferences throughout 2020 and expand into new areas to minister. The financial help for pastors, installing desperately needed fresh water wells, overseeing the orphanage and a variety of other ministries will continue as well. Additionally, I hope to write another book and coordinate the ministry from here. Your continued prayers and support are greatly needed and appreciated make this ministry possible. Thank you with all my heart. (February 3, 2020 Doylestown, PA)

Jerry Schmoyer & Pastor Moses

***2 Timothy 2:2 And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.***

### **Blog 806: WAS IT WORTH IT?**

During the last conference in India, I thought, "Is this worth it?" Ministering in India is a real struggle, not just for us but for Pastor Moses and those working in India as well. They attribute it to

Satan's opposition to the Light driving back his darkness. My response was, "Yes, it's worth it." But is that a legitimate question to ask? Only God knows the real cost and benefits. Deciding it is "worth it" is not the reason we do obey. Quantifying the results by our human standards is not important to God.

The pastor who benefits most from our time in India is me. God tailor-made this experience for my growth. I don't like to travel or speak to strangers. I don't like to be stretched, be out of my comfort zone, be surprised by the unexpected, live with the unknown or be physically ill. So what does God do? He provides all of them so I'll turn to Him and grow.

I have always said everyone should be poor once in their lives. It has the potential to change you for the better for the rest of your life. It's also true that everyone should be weak once in their life – weak enough to know they are out of resources and totally dependent on God. Rick Warren says, "You never know God is all you need until God is all you have." How true. I feel God's presence in a very real way when I am in India. I always know I need Him, but in India it becomes more of an every-day reality.

As I said in a previous blog, there are no guarantees with God. We aren't guaranteed safe travel, protection from authorities or those who oppose Christianity, freedom from debilitating illness, smooth conferences or a positive response to the message. We aren't even guaranteed we'll live to the end of the day – no one anywhere is. But we are guaranteed that His presence and grace will be with us. Whatever happens will be for His glory and our growth. We couldn't want any more than that.

God uses this ministry as a tool to fashion me into the image of Jesus (Romans 8:28-29). He promises He will do that with my life (Philippians 1:6). In the USA we often feel 'entitled' to His provision of the good life. If not we wonder why our prayers aren't being heard. God has something more important going on than building our little kingdom – it's building His great Kingdom. That's why we pray "YOUR kingdom come, YOUR will be done" (Matthew 6:10). It's not about us, it's all about Him! If it wasn't 'worth it,' He wouldn't put us through it. Whatever He allows in our life IS worth it. Ask anyone in heaven and they'll tell you it is. (February 10, 2020 Doylestown, PA)

***2 Corinthians 12:8-10 Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. 8 Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. 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.***

*How are you handling the speed bumps and potholes life throws in your way? Do you complain and demand God remove them, or do you see them as God's tool to make you more like Jesus? Don't resent the hard stuff in life. We need it to keep reminding us of our weakness so we'll rely on His strength!*

### **Blog 807: WE ARE TRYING SOMETHING NEW IN 2020**

Pastors are continually asking us to come back next year. Many invite us to their communities to hold these conferences there. We never go to one place twice. We always go to new areas for pastors who have never had this training, but still, we only reach a small percent of the need. In order to train more pastors, we will be doing something new in 2020. Pastor Moses wants to shift some of his duties so he has more time to train pastors. I suggested he hold a series of two-day pastors' conferences during this year doing just what I do. The man has translated about 1,000 lessons and

sermons I've presented over the years, he certainly knows my material. I left all my teaching notes, including a few simple magic tricks, with him as well. He will do what we do without me being there. This can help us reach another 300 to 500 pastors a year.

We need your help to do this. First, we need prayer for Pastor Moses to have time, wisdom and energy to do this. There is a lot involved planning and putting on a conference, and doing all the teaching adds more to it. Second, we need financial support for this. It'll cost about \$1,000 per conference, depending on how many attend, and we'd like to have 5 conferences this year. Cost per pastor for our two-day conferences is about \$15 plus \$10 for books. That is \$25 per pastor and \$40 per couple. That's quite a deal for the benefit!

By the way, cost for the recent 2020 trip was slightly over budget. Costs continue to rise in India though. We thank God for providing for our financial needs. He is faithful!

Please pray for this new outreach and respond as God leads you. Thanks! (February 17, 2020 Doylestown, PA)

***Acts 20:17 From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church. 18 When they arrived, he said to them: ... 32 "Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. ..." 36 When Paul had finished speaking, he knelt down with all of them and prayed. 37 They all wept as they embraced him and kissed him.***

*Please pray for God to put it on the heart of the person or persons He would have help me and eventually take over for me. I'd love to have help NOW and share this ministry. Pray God would provide. If any names come to mind please let me now! Pray for help for Pastor Moses in India as well.*

### **Blog 808: COMMENTS FROM THE PASTORS - 3**

Pastor Moses tells me he gets numerous calls every day from pastors saying how they benefitted from our conference and books. I don't get phone calls, but I do get some emails. Here are a few.

"Drear sir, Greetings to you in the name of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ .I'm \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_ district, India. It's great to listen to Gods message through you on last 29 January At CSI Church in \_\_\_\_\_,in India. I am blessed by the teaching of Bible in way of demonstrative, by picturizing the things happened in the Bible. Thank you sir, Your bro in Christ, Solomon"

"Dr. Jerry, We are blessed with your training class and books. Thanking you. Please conduct a seminar in \_\_\_\_\_ Praise the LORD, In Christ, David"

"Dear brother how are you and your family and ministry. .really I'm blessed for your message in India. last week your teaching and preaching. kindly pray for my ministry and family needs. your brother in Christ. pastor John . ."

"Dear beloved sir, greetings in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ. I attend to your classes on 24th and 25th. I get strengthness through your explanation. May God will use in more and more places in my country. Thank you, Yours in Lord' s service Pastor \_\_\_\_\_ "

"Thank you sir, it's great privilege to share my Testimony and my experience. I'm Hindu background accepted Jesus is my personal savour in 2004 march 17. By the grace of God I'm pastoring in \_\_\_\_\_,I started minstry in 2013 now it's seven years. I'm doing independent ministry. But we could not build church construction. Still we have been conducting prayer in Rented house. Altogether 40 believers will be gather in Sunday service. We have been praying for Church

construction this year. Kindly remember sir we fully doing ministry no one in front and back of our life's only God is leading us. Thank you sir, Salmon."

"Dear Brother, Greetings in the Name of Our Lord Jesus Christ. How's your beloved wife now? i heard about her health condition at the time of here pastor's conference at \_\_\_\_\_ on 24th and 25th of January. I missed to see your beloved wife at that time. any how i see her picture on books. Just i read your books out lines, i will read one by one later. Thank you. I have been praying for you and your blessed family and also for your blessed ministry. Please pray for my ministry and my church work. yours in His service Pastor \_\_\_\_\_"

"Praise the Lord. I am thankful and great full to my heavenly father and our Lord Jesus Christ and the holy sprite of God, My name is \_\_\_\_\_, native of \_\_\_\_\_. I was Born and brought up in a HINDU family. When I was in childhood I didn't know about the Jesus Christ is God. I am suffering with Rheumatoid Authorities severely at that time one of the Evangelist going in front of me, he saw my condition and came to me and said to Believe Lord Jesus Christ, He will heal you. Slowly. I went to Church with him. After some time I did not go to Church and Pray, my illness is repeated and my both Hip joints are damaged. I repented and Prayed to LORD, I received the word of God. I accepted Lord Jesus Christ as my personal savior and He is True GOD. I Baptized on 03-03-2013. He shows a remedy to Hip replacement Surgery through a Charitable Hospital and I got Hip Replacement Surgeries. GOD spoke me through Isaiah 41:10, After that my Health condition is better. I dedicated to Gospel Services. Today I am doing Gospel Tracts Distribution and Bibles Distribution and Preaching Gospel and Leading Worship and wining souls and leads Jesus Christ Way. All the glory and honored to God." (February 24, 2020 Doylestown, PA)

***Philippians 1:1-3 I thank my God every time I remember you. 4 In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy 5 because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, 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.***

*Think about your brothers and sisters in Jesus throughout the world. Thank God for them and their faithfulness. Pray for protection, provision, courage and guidance for them.*

### **Blog 809: COMPARING AMERICANS AND INDIANS**

We always have great conversations while riding in the car with pastor Moses. We spent 50+ hours driving this trip. One day when Nancy was in the hotel resting I asked him what differences he saw between Americans and Indians as people. We had touched on this before but I wanted to hear his take.

It's not always easy to have him give his opinion about things. In fact, that was his first comment. "US people speak openly, Indians don't speak openly." Which means you never really know what they are thinking. They don't commit but leave you guessing. Their natural response is to say what you want to hear, even if it is totally untrue. Pastor Moses isn't this way, but most are. This gets difficult for US employers of Indians as well.

He went on to say US people laugh and joke a lot, Indians are not so much, they are more serious. He noted that in India there are many different cultures, languages and cases but in the US just one culture and language. He also said that US people worry about tomorrow but Indians worry about today. I thought hat was very insightful!

We talked about the differences in roles of women and children and view of marriage and family. These are things I had done much research into years ago when I developing my talk on marriage and the family.

Prejudice seems to be growing in the US, especially against Jews and even Christians. In India prejudice is really increasing as the government clearly states Hindus are better than Moslems, Christians and others. Acts of violence against minorities are allowed and continue to grow.

Pastor Moses also said that in India Satan works openly, like the sickness he brought to Nancy and myself. But, he said, God's work goes on for we didn't miss a conference. He said in the US Satan works in secret. Very true, and very dangerous!

Finally, he talked about his disappointment in many Indian pastors and churches for their immaturity, lack of prayer and lack of power. Too many pastors are taken with their own importance and don't humbly serve the people like Jesus commands. It's sad but true.

God created us all to be different nations and people. That's what the tower of Babel was all about. But he wants us to understand each other and get along with each other. (March 2, 2020 Doylestown, PA)

***Galatians 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.***

*Do you find yourself in any of those stereotypes? Like worrying about the future or prejudice against others? Don't find fault with those who are different, learn from them.*

### **Blog 810: A PASTOR'S TESTIMONY**

My name is \_\_\_\_\_, young son of Pastor \_\_\_\_\_. I was born and brought up in a poor Christian family. In my very young age, I was up bring by my parents in reverence of God. Since my childhood onwards I have been participating in my father's mission field like singer and drummer also. I too in that atmosphere grown up. I was made up with the Holy Spirit of God. I accepted Jesus Christ in my heart as my savior and Lord Jesus Christ. I obeyed to the word of God and take water immersion Baptism in 1980 June 6th. I great desire is to serve Lord and I was waiting for His ministry for His call. The spirit of God specifically spoke with me through dreams, visions and through prophesy. The every moment I gave my life to the Lord, the meaning of the God's call in the ministry became to clear to me. I then had dedicated him self to the preaching of the Gospel. Then I left my study in the time of BA final year. I was sent prayerfully by my father to COTR Bible institutes Vizag for Pastor Training. I received a good anointing conducted a good seminar. Till now, I was fully committed to God and became full time minister.

According to Gen. 2:18, I got married to \_\_\_\_\_. After my marriage, I was sent prayerfully my father to \_\_\_\_\_ along with my wife and two children Moses Paul and Rachel Glory in 1986 in this new place. The village is one of the remote village called \_\_\_\_\_. Then I started my ministry work in one of place called \_\_\_\_\_. The people were non-Christians especially idolaters. Most of them hardness of hearted people. I started first Sunday worship under a tree at that shore of drainage. After I cleaned some place on shore of drainage and build a small shed, and conducting prayer meetings on Sundays and another days in week. . In this mission we face very bitter and unforgettable experiences such as beatings, mockery starvation and many such anxieties. But we are persistent in our efforts, with a zeal and enthusiasm for the extension of the kingdom of God. I have received third blessing of Samuel Paul from God in 1988.

I am doing ministry independently among the non-Christians especially idolaters. In this mission I face every bitter experience such as beatings, mockery starvation and many such anxieties. But I am persistent in my efforts with zeal and enthusiasm for the extension of the Kingdom of God. I really believe that God has plan of His and He guides me where He wants me to go. In fact the ministry I have established us is an outcome of prayers, tears, fasting and strenuous, struggle. I

really worked hard to spread the gospel. Many idolaters saved from their worshiping idols traditions of their forefathers. God helped in every way of my trails. (March 9, 2020 Doylestown, PA)

**Please visit my 'you tube' songs links here.**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7yW471DPfRk>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dbrppXytXIA>

***Revelation 12:11 They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.***

### **Blog 811: IDOL WORSHIPPER TURNS TO JESUS**

One Subramanyam (name of a hindu god ), was worship in the idols especially a hindu god named 'Ayyappa'. Then he wore the black dress for formality as a Ayyappa devotee.

He listened the day he came to my house and he asked me about Jesus Christ. I shared the word of God with him. I explained about idols from Acts. 17:29 and Rom.1:23 – 25. At the same time I explained about Jesus Christ Crucified, Resurrection. He believed Jesus Christ as His savior and accept Him as the real God and living God. He came to our Church with white dress and he gave his witness in a Sunday service, which was conducted by me.

I shared the word of God with him from Mark 16:16 and Matt. 28:19. So he obeyed to the word of God. He became ready. So I gave him water immersion Baptism. Now, he is one of the pillar in our Church. Now this person named Mark. Mark is excommunication of their relatives and community, because he accepted Jesus Christ as his Savior.

In this way many were saved from their idol worshipping and accepted Jesus Christ as their real God and took Baptisms. Please pray for our Church believers especially converted Christians. (March 16, 2020 Doylestown, PA)

### **Blog 812: CORONAVIRUS & GOD**

As I watch the world around me react to the coronavirus spread, I'm reminded of what will be happening in the Tribulation when these kinds of things occur but on a much worse scale. During the first half there will be major wars in various locations, famine, volcanoes, earthquakes, the sun turning black and the moon red, stars will fall from the heavens and every mountain and island will be moved. Then in the second 3 ½ years it gets much worse! What we are going through now is nothing compared to what will happen then. Praise God His children won't be here for it!

I think God is sending another warning to mankind, reminding us we aren't in control but God is. God is allowing the natural consequences of sin to be seen by all. When man fell, sickness and death entered. This is all a continuing result of that fall.

A bigger danger than the virus itself is the fear it brings. Fear is one of Satan's strongest weapons. Demons are often behind and use fear (Romans 8:15). If it takes the form of insecurity, anxiety, worry, preoccupation with problems, or whatever, it is still fear. Anything not of faith is sin (Romans 14:23). God does not give us fear (2 Timothy 1:7; Romans 8:15), so if you experience fear realize it is not from God but from Satan.

Scripture teaches us that fear crowds out faith and leaves little room for trusting in the supreme power of God to care for us and provide in every situation, even a breakout of a virus (Isaiah 41:10). Fear causes us to miss the "peace that surpasses understanding" (Philippians 4:6-9). Fear robs us of living as "lights in the world" (Philippians 2:15). We must replace fear with faith (John 14:27).

Fear takes root when we choose to focus on circumstances instead of God. Peter walking on water is a good example (Matthew 14:22-33). When his eyes were on Jesus his faith was strong, but when he looked at the waves they grew in his mind to be greater than Jesus' power and he started sinking. He did the right thing, though, and put his eyes back on Jesus.

Trust is the antidote to fear. Victory over fear comes from focusing on God's power and control. We do that by memorizing and quoting Scripture such as Deuteronomy 31:6; Proverbs 3:25; Psalm 23:4; 34:4; 56:3-4; 118:6; Joshua 1:9; 10:8; Exodus 14:13; 1 Samuel 17:45-47; Isaiah 41:10; Matthew 10:28; Philippians 4:6-7, 13; 2 Timothy 1:7; 1 John 4:18.

God is in control of all that is happening. It is part of His plan, so we have nothing to fear but fear itself (FDR 1933).

***Philippians 4:6-7 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.***

***2 Timothy 1:7 For God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love and of a sound mind (KJV).***

*Ask God to show you any fear you have in your life. Confess it as sin and quote Scripture against it. Arm yourself with favorite Scriptures about fear. Memorize the ones you don't already know.*

### **Blog 813: COVID-19 IN INDIA & EVERYWHERE**

I've been following the development of the coronavirus in India as well as here. The problem is the same both places. I received this from Pastor Moses on Saturday:

"Hope you are well and your family. We are doing well, in spite of all the Corona problem. Our Government has announced to have Curfew tomorrow, that means stay home, no more going outside tomorrow, no worship services, closing all the temples, mosques, and Churches in India. All the grocery stores closed. So we had church tonight (Saturday), not having tomorrow morning. People are affected more and more day by day, so the government declared holidays to school, malls and banks. Hospitals are working with limited staff, so appreciate your Prayers. Thank you for your Prayers and support. Love you and Praying for you. Pastor Moses"

Pastor Moses' March conference is on hold until April. It seems tourists are not allowed entry in many places. I'm grateful for our books and web site that can still train pastors, even during this time.

In India people live their lives outside in crowded conditions. Isolation is impossible. There are few that go to the doctor because of limited availability or no money. Also, doctors have limited resources. These conditions have enabled the spread of treatable diseases i.e. tuberculosis – 3 million new cases each year. Also, the swine flu epidemic is getting worse each year as well. Pray for the pastors and Christians in India to use this as an opportunity to share the good news of Jesus and minister in His name. Pray for their protection and health. Pray we ALL be wise, prudent turn to the LORD for mercy and not give in to fear or panic.

Fear takes root when we choose to focus on circumstances instead of God. Peter walking on water is a good example (Matthew 14:22-33). When his eyes were on Jesus his faith was strong, but when he looked at the waves, fear grew in his mind to be and he started sinking. He looked back to Jesus and was rescued.

Trust is the antidote to fear. Victory over fear comes from remembering and meditating on God's power and control. Memorize and then quote Scripture such as Deuteronomy 31:6; Proverbs 3:25;

Psalms 23:4; 34:4; 56:3-4; 118:6; Joshua 1:9; 10:8; Exodus 14:13; 1 Samuel 17:45-47; Isaiah 41:10; Matthew 10:28; Philippians 4:6-7, 13; 2 Timothy 1:7; 1 John 4:18. God is in control of all that is happening. We have nothing to fear but fear itself. (FDR 1933). (March 23, 2020 Doylestown, PA)

***Philippians 4:6-7 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.***

***2 Timothy 1:7 For God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love and of a sound mind (KJV).***

*Ask God to show you any fear in your life. Confess it as sin and quote Scripture against it. Arm yourself with favorite Scriptures about fear.*

### **Blog 814: HOW TO PRAY ABOUT COVID-19**

Someone wrote last week and asked me to write a prayer to remove COVID-19 from the earth. I did a lot of thinking before responding. How should we pray for this situation? Prayer is not effective based on our words alone. God sees our heart and that matters more. So how do we pray in these days?

God is in total control and will ultimately be glorified through all that is happening. Clearly, the nations of the world need to **repent and turn to Him**. Pray that will happen! God will use this to strengthen His church and Christians throughout the world as He prepares us for difficulties, as the time of Jesus' return gets closer. Pray the **church would reach out** to a hurting world with the hope of Jesus.

We can pray for the **virus to be stopped** when it has completed God's purposes. "Your Kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven (Matthew 6:10)" is appropriate. God never said He would keep us from trials, but that He would be with us through them (John 17:15). He will use this in each of our lives if we **let Him**. Is God trying to get your attention? For what reason? What is He trying to teach you through this? Focus your prayers on these things.

We can **pray for peace** to coexist with the trial. David says in Psalm 23:5, "He prepares a table before me in the presences of my enemies." Yield to His authority in this situation and allow His peace to rule over you. Colossians 3:15 "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts .... And be thankful."

I also pray for a bubble of **protection for loved ones**, like Job did (Job 1:10-20). It's no guarantee of exemption from the trials of life, but God says we should ask Him (Matthew 7:7-8). James says don't have because we don't ask (James 4:2-3). Even if it is His will to not protect us, our response is to be faithful and persevere following Jesus' and Job's examples (Job 1:21; 13:15).

Continue to **praise and worship** Him in prayer. Thank Him that food is available, nice weather, the Internet to stay in touch with family and church. Acknowledge He is still in sovereign control of everything (Romans 8:28; Matthew 10:29-31; Colossians 1:16-17; Isaiah 45:7-9). (March 30, 2020 Doylestown, PA)

### **Blog 815: NEVER THE SAME AGAIN**

The world will never be the same. What is happening because of COVID-19 will change the world forever. We have no control over that. It will change you and me forever as well – but we have total control over how it changes us. God is allowing these things to happen in our lives so we grow to become more like Him.

Paul says in Romans 8:28 that God brings good out of all situations. He does not say that all things are good, or that God changes bad things to become good, but that despite how evil something may be, God will use it for His glory and our good. He uses it to build good spiritual qualities into us.

A key to understanding this verse is found in the word “good.” God uses whatever happens, that which we see as good or bad, to bring about something ‘good’ in our lives. That does NOT refer to health, finances, prosperity, popularity or any such thing. The ‘good’ contributes to us becoming more like Jesus. The next verse, Romans 8:29, says God’s plan for us is to be “conformed to the image of His Son.” God promises He does not withhold anything “good” for us (Psalm 84:11). That means whatever happens is for our ultimate “good” (becoming more like Jesus). If something we think is good does not happen that is because God knows that, in the long run, it is not really “good” for us. So, He withholds it. He knows that what the current crisis brings into our lives is good for us, but we must trust Him and keep our eyes on Him.

Do you see what you are currently facing as an opportunity to trust God? We can’t control what is happening in the world and in our lives, but we can control how we respond to it. Respond in a way that shows your trust in God and you won’t regret when this is over. Look for where God is working in your life and learn from Him! (April 6, 2020 Doylestown, PA)

***Romans 8:28-30 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. 29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. 30 And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.***

*What is God teaching you during this time? What is He teaching you about your values? Your priorities? Your fears? Your relationships with others? Your relationship with God?*

*How is He using what He is teaching you to make you more like Jesus? This would be a good time to journal what is happening in your life during this time. It will help you learn, grow and process all that is happening. It will help you grow more like Jesus.*

### **Blog 816: A BLESSING FROM THE CURRENT CRISIS**

In lieu of this Covid crisis, it makes me wonder what life will be like when Christ returns. This current crisis has shut down most every sector of life globally and yet this is just a foreshadowing of that terrible time after His return. I can’t imagine it! I don’t want to imagine it. Is this a part of the “birth pains” that proceed that time (Matthew 24:8)? Is God warning mankind, showing us how vulnerable we are? Nothing will compare to that future time. I am humbly blessed that Christ has provided a way out before that terrible crisis.

Thankfully, Jesus promises to return for His Church, Christians, in “a twinkling of an eye”. We will be raptured and with Him in heaven (1 Thessalonians 4:15-18; 1 Corinthians 15:51-52). His return will be followed by a time of wars, death, disease, famine, great earthquakes, plagues that kill large portions of mankind and even changes in the sun and stars. Praise God we will be with Him in heaven during all this!

If you put your faith in Jesus, He will save you too. I praise the One who paid our price so there will be no future judgment for us (Romans 8:1). As Noah was preserved from the flood, Lot from Sodom and Rahab from Jericho, so our Lord will keep us from the coming judgment. That is a real blessing and assurance for us! (April 13, 2020 Doylestown, PA)

**1 Thessalonians 1:9-10** *They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son*

*Today, whenever you start thinking about the current crisis you are living through, think instead about the coming greater crisis which you will NOT have to live through. Share this truth with one other person whom you think it will help.*

(If you would like more information about God's future plans for us and the earth, email me and I'll send you an PDF of my book in Biblical Prophecy. Or you can download it at

<https://www.christiantrainingonline.org/download/india/Books/BiblicalProphecy/Biblical-Prophecy.pdf>

**Blog 817: JESUS DOESN'T DO SOCIAL DISTANCING**

I heard a pastor make an interesting observation. He said Jesus never practiced social distancing. In Jesus' day, leprosy forced anyone with even a spot of leprosy on his or her skin to be out casted. It eventually ended in a slow, painful death. It was worse that COVID-19.

Yet Jesus didn't avoid lepers. The law said no one could go near or touch a leper (Leviticus 5:3). He went up to a leper and touched Him instead of keeping at a distance (Matthew 8:3-4; Luke 5:12-16). It was the first time this man was touched by another human being since he contracted leprosy. Touching a leper could bring contamination from the unclean person to the clean one. But when Jesus touched a leper it went the other way – His cleanliness removed the uncleanness of the leper. Jesus doesn't stay away from us because of our uncleanness and sin. Instead, He comes to us and touches us with His healing and cleansing power. Every leper who came to Jesus in faith was healed.

Jesus still touches and cleans every soul who comes to Him. No matter our sin or shame, He will never practice social distancing with us. He asks us to come to Him for cleansing and restoration. No matter what sin is defeating you today or what guilt you are dealing with, take it to Him for full cleansing and removal! You may have to stay 6 feet from others, but not from Jesus! (April 20, 2020 Doylestown, PA)

**1 John 1:9** *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

**Psalms 51:7** *Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.*

*As you withdraw from most people, make sure you don't withdraw from Jesus as well. Use this time to draw closer to Him. If you have a burden of sin or failure, take it to Him for cleansing right now.*

**Blog 818: THIS WORLD IS NOT MY HOME**

This world is not my home; I'm just a passing through.  
My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue;  
The angels beckon me from heaven's open door,  
And I can't feel at home in this world anymore.

This old classic by Albert E Brumley was one of the first Christian songs I learned as a new believer back in 1965. It's been a favorite ever since. It's never been truer than today! (you can hear the whole song, with lyrics, at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CAKtCM3U3oE>).

Apostle Peter reminded the struggling Christians they were “foreigners and exiles” (1 Peter 2:11-12 NIV). Other translations use “aliens and strangers” (NASB), “pilgrims” (KJV) and “sojourners and exiles” (ESV). Whichever translation you prefer, the meaning is obvious. We are traveling through this world looking for a better home for all eternity (Hebrews 11:13). We are citizens of heaven (Ephesians 2:12, 19; Hebrews 12:22; 13:14). Our Father is there (Matthew 6:9). Our home is there (John 14:2-3). Our treasure is there (Matthew 6:2; Colossians 1:3). Our assurance and security are there (Colossians 1:15).

During these times of uncertainty, it becomes clear this world is indeed not our home. Praise God we have a better future home. We are just passing through this place. For us this is as bad as it gets for all eternity, but for unbelievers this is as good as it gets! When this life is over, we will be with God in heaven forever (2 Corinthians 5:1). Until then keep looking up! Don't look to this world to meet needs only God can meet! Don't panic or fear, no matter what happens in this world. Remember this isn't your home! (April 27, 2020 Doylestown, PA)

***1 Peter 2:11-12 Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.***

*Listen and sing to this song. Send it to someone else who needs encouraging. Memorize some the verses to encourage you to keep your eyes on your Heavenly Home.*

### **Blog 819: “WE ARE LOCKED DOWN BUT NOT KNOCKED DOWN”**

Pastors in India tell me daily how they are managing and assure me they pray for Christians in the USA. One said, “**we are locked down but not knocked down.**” I like that! I'd like to share what happened this past week.

**The response to the need for food for poor pastors in India is phenomenal.** God's people here in PA, NJ, SC, OK, MD and MO have given sacrificially and generously. A number of Chinese Christians, living in China, donated a large sum of money as well. We even received a donation from a nurse in Italy that is caring for Covid infected patients. It's wonderful to see God's people from different parts of the world join together to help brothers and sisters in need. What a joy to see the Body of Christ function as it can and should!

Stories from individual pastors are uplifting and joyous. Pastor J. (see picture below) comes from a family that washes clothes. He came to know the Lord 20 years ago and God called him to pastor. He started a ministry in two villages. He pastors in a very poor slum area. He called Pastor Moses and said his family of 3 children had nothing to eat. He didn't know what to do and started crying. Pastor Moses was able to provide food for his family. He, along with all the other pastors, are very happy and grateful. All the pastors overwhelmingly express of appreciation.

One of our conference pastors, Pastor D. (see picture below), grew up as an idol worshiper and was addicted to alcohol. One day while working in a cement factory he fell down sick. A Christian co-worker shared the gospel with him. He accepted the Lord and was healed. He started going to church and following Jesus. He received Bible training and, with his wife, son and daughter, started planting churches. He started 4 churches and trained a man to pastor each church. He currently pastors a church with 10 people. His family was struggling for food and praying for God to provide. Another conference pastor informed him about CTO's food distribution network. Now he has food and is thanking God for answered prayer and is most grateful. He is using this shutdown time to read the conference books and to prepare sermons.

Additionally, my material on LifeWay's pastoral training website is soon to be launched. Pray God would use it in miraculous ways. You can see the site at <https://www.lifewayequip.com/> (May 4, 2020 Doylestown, PA)

**Matthew 25:44-45** *"They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?' 'He will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'"*

### **Blog 820: SOME THINGS SHOULDN'T CHANGE**

The recent pandemic has drastically changed the way we function as the body of believers. In a healthy church the basics remain intact. The church in Antioch is a model example

The Antioch church, composed of many small house churches, was strong and active. New believers started it after Pentecost (Acts 2). Stephen's martyrdom and the onslaught of persecution caused many new Christians to move from Jerusalem to Antioch (Acts 11:19-21). They demonstrate important lessons in growing a healthy church.

First, we see a **focus on grace** (Acts 11:22-24). God's grace was evident to all the Christians. The church loved and accepted readily. They generously gave to those in need (Acts 11:27-30). Christians from both Jewish and gentile backgrounds worshipped together. Rich and poor, young and old sat side by side. Believers were first called "Christians" in this church (Acts 11:26). They acted like Jesus so their unbelieving neighbors labeled them in mockery. They responded to insults with grace and love.

A second mark of a healthy church is a **focus on God's Word** (Acts 11:25-26). The leaders emphasized teaching God's Word and evaluated all they believed and did through the lens of the Word. Paul was one of their teachers communicating God's truth. A deep understanding and respect for God's Word is essential for a healthy church.

Next, they saw the importance of **training people** in how to apply the Word in daily life and in ministry (Acts 11:25-26). Barnabas actively trained others, including Paul. The people were called "disciples" because they were committed followers of Jesus.

Healthy churches **pray, worship, fast and listen obediently to the Spirit's voice**. In Acts 13:2-3 the Christians "were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off." This was an important part of the early church (Acts 2:42). Healthy churches pray and listen obediently to the Spirit's voice.

Finally, this church had a **desire to reach others** (Acts 13:2-3). They sent their two best men, Paul and Barnabas, on the First Missionary Journey. The church heard reports of their travels (Acts 14:26-28) and sent them out again on the Second and Third Missionary Journeys. A desire to share God's truth and grace characterizes a Godly church.

The world needs healthy churches today more than ever. What can you do to help your church be the kind of church God that glorifies and brings honor to Him. (May 11, 2020 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."*

*Does your church: 1) focus on grace, 2) communicate God's Word, 3) train believers, 4) pray 5) reach out with the gospel?*

*Do you do encourage and participate in these areas?*

(For more on "What God Expects of Churches," go to <https://www.christiantrainingonline.org/our-ministries/india/> and click on "Download Books." )

## **BLOG 821: ENCOURAGING TESTIMONIES**

I'd like to share some encouraging testimonies I have recently received from India. They will give you new reasons to praise God and reassure you of God's continued work in your life. God is still God!

Water wells provide life-giving water during these times of isolation. Just before the COVID-19 crisis, Pastor Moses relayed this story. One local believing woman that had fallen away from her faith came, to the well. When she saw the pastors at the well, she started screaming and shouting at them to leave because the place where the well was located apparently belonged to one of the demonic village gods. Then she fell down to the ground (see picture below). The pastors prayed for her and she was delivered from the demonic oppression.

Another story was about a husband who abandoned his sick wife and 4 children. She was dying and no one could help her. One of her brothers heard about Jesus and asked the local pastor to pray for her. She was healed, became a believer and was baptized. Her life completely changed and she started living for Jesus. She began selling cooking vessels and plastic material in the villages to earn money for her family. She faithfully shared her testimony with those she met. Because of her influence, her brother accepted the Lord and became a pastor working in their village among their tribal people.

Pastor Pr. (see picture below), a former idol worshipper, ran a village grocery store. There were no Christians in his village until he married a Christian woman. He hated Jesus and beat his wife when she prayed. One day a pastor came to the grocery store and shared the gospel. At first this man was angry, but later he started listening. After a few months he accepted Jesus and started going to church with his wife and 2 sons. He began studying the Bible and his whole family was baptized. His family was the first Christian family in the village. He built a small church with palm tree leaves and slowly people started to come to the church. One day while praying he heard a voice from God calling him to become a pastor. He went to Bible school with help from another pastor. He came back to his village and shared the gospel joyfully. Since then many have been baptized. He encouraged his oldest son to go to Bible school and now he too is pastoring a church in a nearby village. Pastor Pr. now oversees 20 pastors in local villages. He trains and encourages them in faith and leadership. **He passes on his deep appreciation for those who have provided food for him and his family.** (May 18, 2020 Doylestown, PA)

***Psalms 34:1-5 I will extol the LORD at all times; his praise will always be on my lips. I will glory in the LORD; let the afflicted hear and rejoice. Glorify the LORD with me; let us exalt his name together. I sought the LORD, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears. Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame.***

*Take some time right now to close your eyes and praise God for all He is doing in the world and in your life. Worship Him for Who He is as well as what He is doing at this time in history.*

## **BLOG 822: PRIVILEGED TO BE CALLED A CHRISTIAN**

We carry the name “Christian” today with humility and honor. However, many of those around us use it in a negative, derogatory way. In our past generation, “Christian” was a respected term, even if others didn’t agree. Now the name is again used in critical ways. We shouldn’t be surprised, for the Bible says this will happen in the last days (2 Peter 3:3).

The term was first used for believers in Antioch (Acts 11:26). Mockers labeled followers of Jesus to identify them. The term is only used two other times in the Bible (Acts 26:28 and 1 Peter 4:16).

“Christ” is the Greek word for the Hebrew “Messiah,” the Anointed One of God (Acts 10:38; Luke 4:18). “Christ/Messiah” was really the title of God Himself come to earth as a man to pay for the sins of the world. It became synonymous for Jesus.

The “ian” ending is a Latin adjectival ending. Greek, Hebrew, and Latin, were the languages that “The King of the Jews” sign was written on the cross (John 19:20).

To be identified with Christ and carry His name is a great honor and privilege. Never be ashamed of it (Romans 1:16). Never make excuses for it. Never hide your identity. Jesus identified Himself with **us**, went to the cross and suffered our eternal punishment in hell. Gratitude enables us to be identified with Him and bear the consequences that may result. Are you grateful to be a Christian? I am! I hope you are as well. (May 25, 2020 Doylestown, PA)

***Matthew 5:11-12 Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.***

*Are you thankful to be a Christian? Do you honor Jesus by your life, your choices and your responses to others? It is a joy to carry His name and be His representative on earth? Take the name of Christ with you wherever you go today.*

**TESTIMONIES FROM INDIA:** Pastor Moses sent me this: “Pastor Pras was very happy with his family receiving food today (see picture below). He comes from the Dalit community (Untouchables) community and has one daughter studying 12<sup>th</sup> class. He had bad life in the past but God changed his life and called him to God’s ministry. He stayed with a church and learned ministry. One day God spoke to him to share the gospel to a village people. He obeyed and started God’s ministry and people started accepting Jesus. Soon he started fellowship and again went to another village sharing the gospel and again people started having fellowship. So now he has two churches. He is happy and thankful to the Lord for using him in God’s ministry. Appreciate your prayers for him.”

## **BLOG 823: ILLUSIONS OF CONTROL**

Most things in life we can’t control: when or where we are born or die, our character, personality or physical appearance. This pandemic has forced us to be more aware of how little control we have in life. We can’t totally prevent exposure to COVID19 or control its’ severity if we get infected. We can’t even control the economic impact.

In America we like to think we are in control of our lives and circumstances, but it is an illusion. Control has always been an illusion. We just recognize it more clearly under these conditions. It is not a matter of losing control but rather we never had it to start!

Ecclesiastes 3 reminds us who is in control-God. In addition, it is comforting to know He has our best interests at heart (Isaiah 41:10). It’s in His hands if and when a cure is found or if it gets

worse. The economy is in His hands also. Our lives and loved ones are in His hands. What better place could we be than in the hands of our sovereign, loving, merciful God!

What CAN we control? -our response to the uncertainty and to trust Him. As a child trusts his parents for things he cannot control, so we trust our heavenly Father for all that is out of our control. (June 1, 2020 Doylestown, PA)

**Luke 12:22-26** *“Do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?”*

**Philippians 4:6-7** *“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”*

*Does loss of control bring fear into your lives? Where do you sense that the most? Think about those areas and read the verses again, applying them specifically to your fears. Do that throughout the day whenever these thoughts return.*

**TESTIMONIES FROM INDIA: As told by Pastor Moses-** Pastor S (see picture below) comes from a tribal family. He worshiped idols and had sinful habits. One day a pastor came to him and shared the Gospel. After rejecting the message, he became sick. Despite several hospital visits, he was not healed. Soon his wife started going to church. She accepted Jesus and asked her husband to come with her. Slowly he began attending church and accepted the Lord and was baptized. After some time, God spoke to him to share his testimony to his tribal community. He obeyed and people started coming to his home for prayers. Many accepted Jesus as their Lord. He continues to joyfully share the gospel in his community. He has two married daughters. He and his wife are serving the Lord faithfully. Getting food has been a great blessing for they were in great need.

## **BLOG 824: IT'S YOUR CHOICE**

*My favorite teaching session in India is Bible Overview. It is a timeline of God's plan of redemption from eternity past to eternity future. This blog is the introduction to the session.*

On the day of Jesus's resurrection, he traveled on the road to Emmaus. There he met 2 of His disciples but they didn't recognize Him. They were grieving the death of Jesus and felt confused. Jesus proceeded to reveal in all the scriptures about the suffering purpose of the Messiah starting in Genesis and through the Old Testament.

The entire Bible is about Jesus. Both the Old and New Testament God reveal His plan of salvation. The story starts with the pre-existent God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. There was a time when God chose to create mankind and desired to have fellowship with us. He had to decide how He was going to make us. There were two options. He could create us **without** a free will and we would serve Him robotically. Or He could create us **with** a free will so that we could choose to serve & love Him. God gave us a free will.

There was a boy with a wooden dog. He put a rope around the dog and pulled it around. The wooden dog did everything he made it do. Then when he was older, he got a real dog. That dog was glad to see him and would run up to play with him. But sometimes the dog destroyed things and ran away. Which of those two dogs do you think the young man liked best? Of course, the real dog!

God gave us a free choice so we could choose to love Him. But mankind chose to sin and destroyed the intimate communion with perfect, Holy God. So, what did God do? He gave us a free will but volunteered to pay for our sin Himself.

He planned this before He even created the world. A free will was a part of creating us in His image. He left heaven, came to earth and pay for our sins on the cross. Fellowship restored forever. That's the story of Redemption in the Bible. (June 7, 2020 Doylestown, PA)

***Joshua 24:15 But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord."***

*What would your life be like if you didn't have a free will to make choices in life? Are you using your free will to serve God, or to fulfill your own desires?*

*What free will choices have you made lately that please the Lord? What choices have you made which don't please Him? What godly choices should you make today? Will you make them?*

**To see** the rest of the story of redemption through the Bible, with magic and visuals, go to: <https://www.christiantrainingonline.org/our-ministries/india/media/bible-overview/> (English & Telugu in India)

<https://www.christiantrainingonline.org/our-ministries/india/media/redemption-in-the-bible/> (English, Rockpoint Church, Doylestown, PA)

**To read** all the blogs in this series, <https://www.christiantrainingonline.org/our-ministries/india/articles/bible-history-culture-doctrine/the-story-of-redemption/> or ask me and I'll send them to you – jerry@schmoyer.net

BLOGS

## **BLOG 825: CHANGED LIVES**

I love hearing how God is changing lives in India. Here are some testimonies from pastors YOU have been helped with food. Thank God for YOUR faithfulness to Jesus. As told to me by pastor Moses:

Pastor S. (see picture below) came from a family of shepherds. His grandparents accepted the Lord when they were first married but had no children. His parents went to church and his mother prayed like Hannah, "Lord, bless us with a boy." When he was born, they dedicated him to God for the ministry. However, he was apathetic towards God. He became very sick with asthma and went to the hospital but they couldn't help him. His mother reminded him of his dedication to God and he recommitted his life to Jesus. He prayed for healing and God graciously healed him. He attended Bible school and started a ministry in his community of shepherds. Five people were baptized and then 10 more accepted the Lord. Now there are 45 coming to the church. He and his wife were blessed with a daughter but his wife died. He continues to minister alone. At 73 yrs. old, he continues to attend our conferences and is very thankful to the donors for the food.

Pastor D. (see picture below) comes from the lowest cast or the Dalit community. When he was a young man, God healed him. He started going to church and grew in his faith. God called him to witness in a village 6 miles away. He went and shared the gospel. Many people accepted the Lord and were baptized. He remains faithful to the Lord, serving Him in any way he can. He comes to our conference every year. He would appreciate your prayers for him and the church he is pastoring in that village. He is very thankful for the food.

Pastor P (see picture below) was raised in the home of a pastor, but turned from the faith. One day a lady spoke to him about the love of Christ. He gave his life to Jesus and went to Bible school for 2 years. He got married and started a church among the tribal people. People started coming to Jesus and the church grew. He then planted another church in a nearby village and it too grew. He started a third church and currently pastors all 3 fellowships. He has 2 small two boys and his wife helps in his ministry. When the churches were closed, they had no food. He is grateful to God and those who provided food for his family. (June 15, 2020 Doylestown, PA)

***2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.***

***Ezekiel 36:26 “I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you.”***

*How has God changed YOUR life? Think of what you would be like without Him and who He has helped you become. Thank Him for doing His work in your life.*

### **BLOG 826: “DELAYS POSSIBLE”**

As we drive to see family there is road construction everywhere! One road sign said “Delays Possible.” It should really read “Delays Probable.”

Our patience runs low with delays. We just want to get to our destination ASAP. But for the Christian, life’s delays are an important part of our trip. In fact, delays can help us get to God’s destination quicker! When we trust God’s delays, patient endurance grows and we become more like Jesus, our ultimate destination in life.

We don’t always see the purpose of the road slow-downs. It seems there is no active road work but the reduced speed signs remain posted. We don’t always know why God slows life down. Unresolved problems, prayers that seem unanswered, pain that continues, trials that don’t end – God is behind them all. We may not always see “Men at Work” while driving, but we know God is always at work in our lives. Trust Him with whatever is going on in your life. Remember, delays are not only possible, they are probable. (June 22, 2020 St. Michaels, MN)

***2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you,***

***Romans 12:2 Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.***

*Where do you most lack patience in life today? Where does it seem God is moving too slowly in your life? How do you respond to the delays in life? Think of them as opportunities to trust God and turn them over to Him. He is never early and never late!*

### **BLOG 827: REJOICING ANYWAY**

What has God been teaching you through this pandemic, economic crisis and time of civil unrest? Probably one truth is to keep your eyes on Him more and on conditions around us less. As Americans, we have had everything quite good for so long that we come to expect it will continue forever. When circumstances change, we can start focusing too much on what we don’t have instead of what we do have.

Various studies have shown people in poorer countries feel happier than those in richer countries although it seems the opposite should be true. Clearly prosperity doesn’t guarantee

happiness. And lack of prosperity doesn't automatically bring sadness. When we depend on external conditions to bring satisfaction and enjoyment, we will be disappointed. As Christians we know peace and joy come from the Spirit within (Galatians 5:22-23), not from circumstances without. Yet in times like these we can allow changes round us to take away our contentment. I believe one of the lessons God is teaching His people is to keep our eyes on Him and not what is changing around us. (June 29, 2020 St. Michaels, MN)

No matter what happens, God is with us and we can rejoice in Him. Habakkuk proclaimed that judgment for sin was coming on the Jews (Habakkuk 1:5-11). But God promised to be with them no matter what. ***Habakkuk 3:17-18 Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior.***

***Lamentations 3:22-23 Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.***

*Are you able to keep your eyes on Jesus during these times and rejoice in Him? Think what a testimony it would be if God's people showed the world how to trust in God through challenging circumstances. Try focusing on rejoicing in Jesus all day and see what difference it can make.*

*What other lessons is God teaching you during these times? Please email me a few sentences summarizing what God has been teaching you through all of this. [jerry@schmoyer.net](mailto:jerry@schmoyer.net)*

EMAIL FROM PASTOR K (see picture below): "My heartiest Thanks for sharing about the training classes for pastors. It's great to that they shall be using your books to teach pastors. As I read your books, with that experience I feel confident and sure that every pastor will shine in preaching and following the word of Almighty Jesus through your books. I gained practical knowledge, spiritual strength from your books. Once again, my heart full thanks for that. My family and I are safe and secured under the arms of Almighty during this pandemic situation. Suffered a lot and suffering a lot, but no problem, ALMIGHTY is with me. I am mangling myself and family. I proclaim the word of lord as an Evangelist. I shall go to different churches to preach; I meet people to proclaim the miracles of God. We always remember you in our prayers. Thank you, Pastor. With loving heart Pastor K"

## **BLOG 828: THE BLESSING OF GIVING**

It's easy to think about our needs during these times and forget those who have greater needs than ours. We don't want to become so focused on ourselves that we neglect God's command to give to others in greater need. I want to thank you for praying and giving to help the poor pastors in India. God is using your gifts in a great way. You will meet these people in heaven, but I'd like you to meet some of them today:

**A DALIT:** Pastor RV (see picture below) comes from a Dalit community. He says he lived a sinful life before becoming a believer and had no peace in his heart. A village pastor shared the Gospel with him. He was interested so he started attending church and reading the Bible. He gave his life to Jesus and was baptized. One day while reading the Bible God put a great burden on him to share the Gospel with others so he started doing so. People responded and soon he had a group of believers meeting for church. A few months later he started a church in another village. He has 4 daughters; 2 married and 2 still in school. He is using the books he received at our conference to teach his people on Sundays. He is very grateful for the food he received during this time of being locked down.

**A MUSLIM:** Pastor MV (see picture below) comes from a Muslim Family. When he was a child, his mother was indwelt by a demon. She went to one of the Muslim shrines for healing but was not healed. Someone told her Jesus could heal her, so she went to a church and heard the Gospel. She accepted Jesus Christ as her personal Savior and asked the pastor to pray for her. He prayed and the evil spirit left her. She then started praying and going to church with her children. Her son, MV, accepted Jesus and started reading the Bible and going to church. One day God called him to share his testimony with other Muslim families. Some families started attending the fellowship. He married a Muslim believer and started a church in his village. They have 3 sons. People are coming to the Lord and the church is growing. He was happy and thankful for the food and for the donors at this time of Pandemic.

**AN INDIAN ABORIGINAL:** Pastor CN (see picture below) comes from one of the original tribal groups of people who lived in India before the Hindus arrived. They live in very poor slums by rivers and canals and catch fish to stay alive. One of his sisters became a Christian and invited him to her house. A local pastor had a prayer meeting there that day. He heard the Gospel and became a believer. Before long, God spoke to him telling him to share the Gospel with his relatives. He went to them and shared the Gospel and his testimony. When he was done, he prayed and some of them accepted Jesus. He started a church fellowship with them. God has been bringing more and more people to his church. At this time of crisis, he is very thankful to the donors for the food for his family.

**A HINDU FEMALE:** Ruth comes from a Hindu family. Her husband left her when her son was born. She already had 2 girls. She had a lot of trouble caring for them by herself. A relative invited her to come to church but she refused. Then one day she went and continued to go. She heard the Gospel and accepted Jesus as her Savior. She attended church regularly and started learning God's Word. She is uneducated and cannot read or write. One day when listening to God's Word she heard God calling her to witness to neighboring people. She faithfully did that and people started putting their faith in Jesus. Someone erected a small shed so they could gather for worship and now there are 20 people attending this church. They look to her for leadership and teaching and she is happy to serve God any way she can. She has been praying for food. She is thankful to God, and to the donors, for answering her prayers. (July 6, 2020 Hebron, KY)

***Matthew 10:8 ... Freely you have received; freely give.***

***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.'"***

***1 Timothy 6:17-19 Be generous and willing to share.***

*Are there those God has put in your life that need prayer and/or help? Ask God to show you, and do what you can to minister to them during these needy times.*

## **BLOG 829: MAKING THE MOST OF NOW**

Do you find yourself missing life? Are you anxiously waiting for the time things return to normal? You aren't alone. Many of us are just enduring the present conditions until they are over. But what if they don't go back? What if change is the new normal? What if there are always new challenges the USA or the world must face? How are we to adjust to that?

As Christians, this world is not our home. We are pilgrims here (1 Peter 2:11-12). God uses difficulties in life to turn unbelievers to Himself. We need to be ready to point them in His direction. He also uses those times to make His children more like Jesus. His goal for our life is to become

Christ-like, not just have an easier life (Romans 8:28-29). What is happening today gives us opportunities to trust Him and witness for Him.

When the Jews were taken into captivity, they wanted to just pass time until they could return to Israel. God told them captivity was their new norm so they should live their life under the current conditions. Jeremiah 29:4-6 say, "This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: "Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease." Then HE encourages them with a glimpse into the future. **"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) Do you know what His plans for you are during July, 2020? What has He been teaching you? (July 13, 2020 Doylestown, PA)

A couple weeks ago I asked you to share with me what God has been teaching you during this time. Here are the responses I received. I'd love to hear from you.

*"Throughout this whole thing and my husband's 2-month hospitalization with Covid-19, God has given me much peace. I am definitely looking to Him every single day. I am spending more time with in prayer. I'm looking to Him every single minute, every single second. I'm realizing more and more every day that He is definitely in control of everything. I have a closer and closer walk with the Lord, more than I have ever encountered before."*

*"God is good all the time. He has given me peace no matter what happens. I know He goes before me so His will, not mine will be done. I rejoice because I know where I am going and even death cannot take that away."*

**Psalms 18:2 The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.**

**Isaiah 43:18-19 "Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. 19 See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland."**

*Do you see the present situation as an opportunity to trust and witness? Are you committed to grow during this time? Where is He working in your life right now (let me know, I'd love to hear – jerry@schmoyer.net).*

### **BLOG 830: NO TIME LIKE THE PRESENT**

I find myself thinking of life in 2-week time segments. Two weeks ago, I did this-or-that but I haven't gotten sick so things are OK. Today I did such-and-such but I have to wait 2 weeks to see if I was exposed. We are quite careful and compliant, but Nancy still does the shopping and we bike, walk or run regularly outside. We even talk to neighbors and friends at a distance. I seem to look ahead to 2 weeks down the road a lot. Do you?

I know some people live in the past, but I've always had a tendency to live in the future. I plan, look ahead, anticipate, prepare, etc. Sometimes I get so absorbed in the future I miss focusing on the present. It's OK to enjoy the past and plan for the future, but it takes balance to make sure we don't miss the only time we can really live life – the present.

During these days of uncertain it is easy to look behind or ahead while letting today pass us by. But God says, **"THIS is the day the LORD has made. We will rejoice and be glad in IT"**

(Psalm 118:24). The focus is on today, not the past or present. Paul says we are to forget what is behind and use the present to push ahead (Philippians 3:13). Jesus said we are to pray for our DAILY bread (Matthew 6:11). Lamentations 3:23 reminds us that **“God’s mercies are new every morning.”** Like manna, God gives grace, wisdom, power and mercy in daily supplies. He doesn’t provide it for the past or future, just today. And if we don’t use it today it will be gone!

Go ahead, enjoy past memories and prepare for the future, but focus on living life to the full this very day, this minute and hour. It’s what God gives us to use. The rests is in His hands.

We want to be in the moment so we don’t miss anything God has for us now. (July 20, 2020 Doylestown, PA)

*Are you missing out on the joys and blessings, the lessons and challenges, the opportunities and privileges of today because you are too concerned about the past or future? Ask God to help you focus on the present moment. Make that your goal as you go through this day and tomorrow.*

### **BLOG 831: BAD NEWS - GOOD NEWS...**

On January 1, 2020, we had great hope for the New Year. Now we hear of one problem after another: Covid-19, unemployment, racial tension, political upheaval, foreign relations issues (China, etc.), the “cancel culture” movement, strong criticism of the police and more. The bad news may not end soon. In fact, the second half of 2020 could be more difficult than the first half. Additionally, we have our own family health financial, and emotional issues. How are we as Christians to respond to all this? Turn to God’s Word.

Isaiah wrote in a time of bad news followed by more bad news. Israel was about to be attacked and destroyed by their enemies. He was informed his homeland would be conquered, culture dispersed, temple destroyed, economy ruined, thousands of people killed and the survivors taken away into slavery. How did he respond? “My body is racked with pain, pangs seize me, like those of a woman in labor. I am staggered by what I hear, I am bewildered by what I see” (Isaiah 21:3). He was distraught beyond comprehension. What can we learn from his response to bad news?

**1. DON’T PRETEND.** Isaiah didn’t minimize his pain, hide it or deny it. He let his grief and fear out. He was honest about how he felt. He didn’t pretend all was OK and he wasn’t upset. But he let it out to God, not to everyone around him. He told God how hard this news was on him. He expressed his agony. He confessed how hard it was to see or hear God in the midst of all the suffering. We can do the same.

**2. STAY FAITHFUL.** Isaiah feels hopeless (Isaiah 21:4-5) but God told him to stay faithful to his work (Isaiah 21:6). Despite years of faithful preaching to Israel, there was no repentance and now judgment loomed ever closer. God was pleased with Isaiah’s faithful service despite their disobedience (Isaiah 49:3). Isaiah was discouraged and felt all he did was worthless (Isaiah 49:4a), but he still submitted to God’s sovereign plan and left everything in His hands (Isaiah 49:4b).

The lesson for us is to stay faithful and continue to serve Him no matter what the circumstances look like around us. Stay consistent in your prayer life, read the Bible daily, connect with other believers, spend time in praise and worship and listen regularly to good teaching. This is essential in tough times.

**3. REMEMBER GOD’S PROMISES.** Isaiah was able to serve despite painful and discouraging conditions because he knew God’s Word and remembered God’s promises. Although God’s news to Isaiah was bad in the present, God promised a blessed future. He promises the same for us today.

Remembering and focusing on God's promises is key to handling the bad news that keeps coming. Read and meditate on some of God's promises to Isaiah: (July 27, 2020 Doylestown, PA)

**Isaiah 26:3** *The LORD will keep you in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in Him.*

**Isaiah 40:8** *The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever.*

**Isaiah 40:29** *He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.*

**Isaiah 40:31** *but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not be faint.*

**Isaiah 41:10** *So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*

**Isaiah 43:2** *When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.*

**Isaiah 54:17** *"No weapon forged against you will prevail, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and this is their vindication from me," declares the LORD.*

*Which promises speak to your current situation? Write them down and carry them with you today.*

### **BLOG 832: "FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS"**

It's as if God knew this worldwide pandemic was going to happen – and made provisions for His people before it hit! God knew when a terrible famine was going to devastate the Jews in Jerusalem so He developed a relationship between the Christians in Jerusalem and the ones in Antioch (Acts 11:19-30). Christians in Antioch were able to send food to the Jerusalem believers in their time of need. Again, that's what happened when God sent Joseph to Egypt to provide food for his family back in Canaan (Genesis 47-50). God also placed Esther in King Xerxes' court to prevent the Jews from being exterminated (Esther 1-4). Now God continues to do the same in providing food for our pastors in India.

Since 2006, I have developed a strong, trusting relationship with Pastor Moses who coordinates all we do in India. We have established a network of competent, faithful, responsible leader-pastors in the locations we have conferences. These partnerships have established a good reputation among the pastors that trust we genuinely care for them and want to help them.

Here in the USA we have been able to get money into India quickly and safely. We have a core group of about 65 individuals and families who pray and give regularly to the ministry. In total, God provided \$30,000: \$6,000 from Christians in mainland China, \$6,000 from another ministry to India in the US and \$20,000 from you who pray and give to CTO.

Clearly God knew this was coming and set the network up so all it took was one email from me to Pastor Moses to start the food distribution in a matter of days. For 18 weeks we have been giving 60 families 3 weeks' worth of food. Most attend our conferences and have our books. God provided a way for us to feed them spiritually and physically. We didn't know we would need it, but He did.

Yes, God knew this worldwide pandemic was going to happen and planned provision for His people! (August 3, 2020 Doylestown, PA)

**Genesis 50:20 But Joseph said to them, “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.”**

**Esther 4:12-14 Mordecai said: “who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?”**

*Where have you seen God’s provision for you during this time? Are you worried about the future? Remember God saw your need and prepared for it long ago. Trust for His provision in His time.*

### **BLOG 833: THE CAPTIAN IS OUR CAPTIAN**

Joshua was by Jericho, the pagan stronghold at the entrance - the doorway so to speak - into the land promised by God to the Israelite nation, and was replaying in his mind their recent experience of crossing the Jordan River on dry land, for the LORD had stopped the waters of the river. He was pondering all the LORD had spoken to him, “he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, a Man stood opposite him with His sword drawn in His hand.” (Joshua 5:13) Joshua, having received instruction from the LORD and from Moses (Deuteronomy 3:28; Joshua 4:10), realized that to get into the Promised Land they must first contend with this great fortified city. When asked if He was for the Israelites or for their adversaries, the Man replied, “No, but as Commander of the army of the LORD I have now come.” (Joshua 5:14) Joshua quickly identified himself and his people as belonging to the LORD, for he “fell on his face to the earth and worshiped and said to Him, ‘What does my Lord say to His servant?’” (Joshua 5:14) The first command was for Joshua to take off his sandals, “for the place where you [Joshua] stand is holy.” (Joshua 5:15) The first command was to worship the Lord God as His servant.

Here was a land promised by God to his people, those who had said they would serve Him. But here was also a great pagan city blocking their free entrance into their promised home. A city great in strength and number and reputation, yet we learned earlier in Joshua 2 that they had shut themselves in for fear of the Israelites. No one went into the city, neither came out of the city. The enemy was sitting in a stronghold, hindering the Israelites’ way to promised freedom in the LORD while keeping its sinful citizens trapped within its walls - a pawn of Satan who ever works to hinder the people of God, to keep them from being all God has for them to be. A mere mortal alone could never overcome such a strong city, such a work of Satan as this. Defeating an enemy of this magnitude would require heavenly intervention. And so, the Commander of the host, Lord Sabaoth is His name, comes from heaven on high to destroy the works of this city and to destroy the work of Satan who plots to keep God’s people from living in His promises. The battle and the victory are the Commander’s, the city is destroyed, the door to the Promised Land opened. And now the tribes of Israel are recognized by the surrounding kingdoms as the army/people of God.

Now fast forward many centuries from that time, in the same land but a different city. This city called the House of Bread - Bethlehem, a small city where the Shepherd King David had grown up so long ago. A city which had received a promise God gave through the mouth of the prophet Micah. “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.” (Micah 5:2). Many around the world now know this story of the Baby Jesus born in Bethlehem under the light of a new star. How curious that an angel announced His birth to the shepherds of Bethlehem, the shepherds who attended the birth of and watched over the first born lambs set apart for the daily God-ordained sin sacrifice and for the Passover sacrifice observed every year by the Jews, their recognized identity now being as people of Judah - which just happened to be the tribe from which the Messiah was prophesied to come.

Not only one angel announced the birth of this child Jesus, but “suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God...” (Luke 2:13) Why? Why the heavenly host, the army of the LORD? Could it be they were hailing this helpless looking child as their Commander who was again stepping into the world to defeat the works of Satan? To break through the great enemy’s stronghold set up before the people to hinder their way to promised freedom in the LORD? What could the Commander possibly do as a baby?

The battle truly was intense from the beginning, from His entering the world by way of a virgin’s womb. The enemy, Satan, was building strongholds of sin in every people, including the Jews. In this sin, no Jew could hope to receive entrance into God’s heaven, into a home where he may be free to live in God always. This baby, mysteriously God dwelling in flesh, grew into a man, one without any taint of sin, for evil cannot abide with the Lord. (Psalm 5:4) While walking about as a man, He showed great power over creation, both physical and spiritual. He went to the frontline of battle, facing the enemy of mankind, to offer the sacrifice of His life as a ransom for many. The enemy was hoping for a victory at the death of this Man. But the Commander had one more strategic move to make, He arose from the grave!

In paying the required price for sin - “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23) - He obtained forgiveness from that debt for all who identify themselves as His and worship Him. Now with that and through His Resurrection Power, the Commander is victorious! This time utterly, for all time, destroying the work of Satan and his stronghold, He opens the door to heaven so that God’s people may enter into their promised eternal home, - “in my Father’s house are many mansions....I go to prepare a place for you.” (John 14:2) And all those who worship Him are recognized as His army/people in heaven and on earth.

The Commander of the host of the LORD, our Captain our Lord, the One Who “set(s) before you an open door, and no one can shut it” (Revelation 3:8), Who fought for our salvation that we may return without fault or blemish to worship God as He desires “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23,24) - to Him give all thanksgiving, all you who are baptized in His Name and worship Him as Lord, for the great works He has done. Amen. (Written by Melanie Chu) (Charleston, SC August 10, 2020)

*Have you followed your Captain and entered His Promised Land for you today, the place of salvation in Him? If so, spend some time thanking Him for all He has done in opening the way for you.*

### **BLOG 834: SATAN AND COVID-19**

When something bad happens, some people want to know whose fault it is and why it is happening. Some Christians are asking the same question about Covid-19. Is this from Satan? Is this all made up by the government? Is God bringing judgment on the world? Or is it just a fluke of nature? I must admit I wonder about those things myself – or I wouldn’t be writing this blog!

The Covid-19 crisis could be from Satan, who is the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4). In Job we see Satan was responsible for Job’s skin disease and other calamities to his family (Job 1-2). Satan loves to murder, destroy (John 8:44), and promote fear. But even if Satan intends it for evil, God will use it for good (Genesis 50:20).

Additionally, Covid could be from God who used plagues as a means of discipline or punishment (Exodus 11:1; 32:35; Leviticus 26:25; 2 Samuel 24:10-17; Jeremiah 21:7; Revelation 6-20). Certainly, the rampant immorality, persecution of God’s people, killing of babies and genocide of cultural groups are all reasons enough for Him to act. Is Covid a warning, like many believe 9-11 was? Could it be part of the early birth pangs predicted before Jesus’ return (Matthew 24:8)? Or is it a natural consequence of the fall and brokenness of nature since the Garden of Eden.

Whatever the reason, God uses all things to accomplish His purposes. (Amos 4:10). If God is sovereign then everything comes back to Him. Even what Satan does is under God's ultimate authority (1 John 4:4; Job 1-2). So, which is it? I don't know, and I don't think we can know.

I can say with confidence Satan loves to use times like these to bring about fear and death. Deaths from suicide and drug overdoses are increasing, as well as those that have already died from the virus. He can ignite political unrest and racial tensions. Economic problems are in his toolbox too. He desires us to be a godless country. Satan will take advantage of anything he can and uses it for his purpose. But God is ultimately in total control (Lamentations 3:37-39; Psalm 115:3; 135:6)

Perhaps if we knew just what God has planned in all this it would help us better adjust and trust. But we don't know. Trusting in a sovereign God who loves us and wants our best is our solution no matter the cause. He promises to care for us as He does for the sparrows (Matthew 19:29-31). So, whatever is going on, God is still in control and always will be. We are safe in the loving care of our Father Who loves us so much He sent His only Son from heaven to die on the cross for us. We are in good hands (Psalm 30:4). (August 17, 2020 Doylestown, PA)

***Colossians 1:16–17 For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.***

***Job 42:2 “I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.”***

### **BLOG 835: GREAT IS HIS FAITHFULNESS**

As Christians we are quick to share instances of God's faithfulness in our lives. But sometimes, when things are not going well, we tend to forget. If this is one of those times for you, I want to remind us that God is faithful.

Even when we aren't faithful to Him, He is faithful to us. When we are ungrateful for His blessings, He is still faithful. When we forget Him and put other things first, He remains faithful. When we are too busy to pray or read the Bible His faithfulness continues. When we doubt His love or goodness, He is still faithful. Even when we are in sin, He remains faithful to us.

We see God's faithful His promises to Israel (Deuteronomy 7:9). God promised Noah that He would keep him safe (Genesis 6:17-18; 9:9-17). He kept His promise to return the Jews to their land (Zechariah 8:7-8). God faithfully sent His Son to die for our sins as promised (Hebrews 5:5-10). He kept His promise to bring Him back to life (Matthew 16:21; 27:62-64).

God is faithful. He cannot lie nor can He break a promise (Hebrews 6:18; Numbers 23:19). God is faithful (1 John 1:9; 1 Corinthians 10:13).

Life changes. Life isn't what we planned or expected. The future may be uncertain. Our country is challenged politically, racially and economically. We face a virus we can't defeat. There are protests and rioting in the streets nightly. Churches can't function normally. Everything is thrown off kilter. But God is faithful. Sing with me: *“Great is Your faithfulness, O God my father. There is no shadow of turning in thee. Thou changest not, Thy compassions they fail not. Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me.”* Let that great hymn play in your mind and heart throughout the day. (August 24, 2020 Doylestown, PA)

***1 Corinthians 1:9 “God, who has called you into fellowship with His son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.”***

**2 Thessalonians 3:3** ***“The Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.”***

*If you need some reassurance today about God’s faithfulness, look up the references in the blog and read them. Pick out some that really speak to you. Write them down and read them over and over until you memorize them. At the end of the blog are many great promises you can use!*

### **BLOG 836: ALL OUR NEEDS MET**

For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favor and honor; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless. Psalm 84:11

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name sake. Psalm 23:1-3

And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:19  
I will never leave you or forsake you. Hebrews 13:5

### **ANSWERED PRAYER**

Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. Matthew 7:7

This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us - whatever we ask - we know that we have what we asked of him. John 5:14:15

### **BLESSING THROUGH TRIALS**

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. Romans 8:28

No temptation/testing has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted/tested beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted/tested, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it. 1 Cor. 10:13

### **FEAR**

The Lord is with me; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me? Ps. 118:6

Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go. Joshua 1:9

### **GUIDANCE**

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. Proverbs 3:5-6

### **PEACE**

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:7

### **REWARD FOR PATIENCE, FAITHFULNESS**

But those who hope (wait upon) the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not be faint. Isaiah 40:31

## STRENGTH FOR WHATEVER COMES

I can do everything through him who gives me strength. Philippians 4:13

My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. 2 Corinthians 12:9

### **BLOG 837: IS THERE A CONSPIRACY?**

Conspiracies. Yes? No? Maybe? Are 5G radio waves used to control our minds? Was George Floyd's murder a hoax? Is there any truth to them? How should Christians respond?

Conspiracy theories are not new. The common denominator is the belief that powerful actors are secretly controlling events and institutions for evil purposes. Isn't that what Satan himself is doing? He uses fear to cause panic and draw attention from God. It's as if God isn't really in control after all, but some unseen forces with evil designs are taking over.

A growing distrust of authority feeds the spread of these theories. Suspicion is common today. We don't trust the news, politicians, policemen, church leaders or anyone in authority. So, we decide for ourselves what is truth and what isn't. People do that with the Bible as well. They embrace what they like and ignore what they don't like. They become the final determination of truth, the final authority. Each one picks their own reality and structures their worldview around it.

Thirty years ago, evangelicals warned what would happen when people abandoned absolute truth found in the Bible and substituted relative truth. This was based on suspicion of those in authority and acceptance of changing moral values and norms. Now even evangelicals are supporting conspiracy theories. Many are leaving churches and breaking fellowship with others over these things. "My brothers and sisters, this should not be" (James 3:10).

As Christians we have basic beliefs that can seem very strange to others. We believe a man came back to life 2,000 years ago, lives in heaven, will return to remove evil and establish a perfect world. That is far harder to believe than the most outlandish conspiracy theories making the rounds today.

Our reality is based on the sovereignty of a loving God who has revealed authoritative, absolute truth in His Word. That is our message and our credibility. What credibility do we have among unbelievers when we tell them about Jesus if we are fighting among ourselves? Will they listen when we tell them Jesus is the answer but Communists are taking over America. As evangelicals embrace and argue, will the world be attracted to Jesus?

Where is the peace, joy and fleshing out the work of Jesus when young people and unbelievers see parents, pastors and teachers spreading ideas they see are untrue. Does that inspire them to know more about Jesus's church or the Body of Christ? The Bible says we are to be peacemakers and point the way to Truth. Jesus says, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life". (John 14:6) This is how we are to respond instead of spreading fear and division.

Authorities can and have been powerfully self-serving. We shouldn't be surprised because "the heart is desperately wicked" (Jeremiah 17:9) and "the thoughts of man are continually evil" (Genesis 6:5). However, they aren't our focus. We are not to devote ourselves "to things which promote controversial speculations rather than advancing God's work – which is by faith" (1 Timothy 1:4). We are to focus on what is "true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things" (Philippians 4:8). We renew our minds as we focus on His Word (Romans 12:2).

So, what is my concern about these theories? They undermine trust in authority, including in the church and God's Word. Too many Christians are spending time reading and inquiring about

theories and speculations and “ alternative “ truths and neglect reading the Bible. The theories cause disunity among believers. They move people further from Jesus, not closer to Him. They feed on fear and insecurity. I ask you, does that sound like the fruit of a movement of God Spirit, or the work of Satan? (August 31, 22020 Doylestown, PA)

***2 Corinthians 10:5 We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.***

***1 Peter 1:22-23 See how they love one another.***

*Pray and ask God for wisdom. If you have been neglecting your Bible reading or witnessing to others, correct that today.*

*(I'm interested in your thoughts and experiences with this subject. [jerry@schmoyer.net](mailto:jerry@schmoyer.net))*

### **BLOG 838: 9-11 AND COVID-19**

As a young Christian, I realized God allowed things to happen to get my attention The quickest way to get my attention is an upset stomach. I hate nausea! My first response is to pray and ask God if He is trying to tell me something.

God disciplines those He loves so they grow in Him (Hebrews 12:4-11; Proverbs 3:12). Even if we are following Him, He allows things to prune us to be more fruitful (John 15:1-8). The events of 9-11 did that for a short time in our nation. For a few weeks church attendance increased, “God Bless America” was played frequently and many people turned to God for peace. Unfortunately, it didn’t last long.

Now our Sovereign God allowed COVID-19. Nationally, our response is different than it was September 11, 2001. There is no “God Bless America” but instead there is criticism, anger and governmental distrust. If God is allowing this to get our attention it hasn’t happened turned our hearts towards Him for help.

God used the plagues in Egypt to motivate the Egyptians to obey Him and allow the Jews to leave (Exodus 9:8-11). He also wanted the Jews to give up their homes and go to a new homeland. During the Tribulation, God will send many terrible plagues so unbelievers obey Him and repent (Revelation 9:15-19). He used those plagues to get the people’s attention so they turn to Him. As the world and often God’s people too, drift from Him, let’s make sure He gets our attention as we humble draw and ourselves closer to Him.

After the Jews left Egypt, they complained and did not appreciate God’s provision. Manna wasn’t enough. They wanted food like in Egypt. To teach them to be grateful, God sent a plague that killed many of them (Numbers 11:31-33). Perhaps today we need to learn to be grateful for all the many wonderful blessings God has given us in this time and place. Are you grateful for even in this Covid situation?

The heart of God expressed in 2 Chronicles 7:14 is still the way He responds to those who repent: “If My people, who are called by My name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.”

I am writing this to myself and God’s people first and foremost (1 Peter 4:17). I need to be grateful and do what is right to set an example to unbelievers. We can only control our response to life’s circumstance, not others. Is God using this to get your attention? What is your response? (September 7, 2020 Doylestown, PA)

***Psalm 19:12 But who can discern their own errors? Forgive my hidden faults.***

***Psalm 32:5 Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD." And you forgave the guilt of my sin.***

*Is God trying to get your attention? What might He be telling you? What changes does He want you to make? Do you complain instead of being grateful for what you do have? Spend some time in prayer and fasting today and let God speak to you about these things.*

### **BLOG 839: REMEMBER THE CHILDREN**

With everything going on in the world today I'm glad to be retired. I wouldn't want to be starting a career or a family during these times. If my retirement savings holds out, I can coast from here. However, if I want to serve God and continue to follow Him, I can't sit back and watch the world go by. While I can't be as active as I used to be, I can do what God assigns to me now.

One important assignment God has given me is both a responsibility and a pleasure. That is building into my grandchildren. They will grow up in this world and live their lives with circumstances very different than mine. What better use of my time now than to help prepare them for what they will face as they grow and serve the Lord. I spend 4 mornings a week teaching two children at a time online.

When I retired from pastoring, I felt I left the front lines. Now I sometimes take trips to the "front lines" to assist others in any way I can but mostly I work behind the lines with prayer, encouragement and training others. Teaching my own grandchildren, the Word and applying it to their lives is a privilege and necessity. Long after I am gone, they will have God's Word and apply it in times and places I could never reach. Then they pass it on to their children. My adult children do a wonderful job training our grandchildren. I am grateful for the opportunity of equipping future servants of the King. I want them to be prepared to step to the front lines and defend their faith.

You may not be on the front lines, either. Life circumstances and less energy have slowed you down. As long as God gives us life, He has work for us to do. I encourage you to find some children around you and build into them, in person or online.

Pray for them. Encourage them. Teach them Bible verses. Send them letters. Buy them Bible books. The world they live in will be more difficult as a Christian than for us. Do what you can now to help prepare them. Paul told his son in the faith, Timothy: "The things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others" (2 Timothy 2:2). Remember the children. (September 14, 2020 Doylestown, PA)

***Deuteronomy 6:6-9 6 These commandments that I give you today are to be upon 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. 8 Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. 9 Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.***

*What children do you come in contact with in your life? What can you do to help prepare them for their future?*

### **BLOG 840: OUR UNCHANGEABLE GOD**

In the summer, Nancy and I go to the beach often. We leave early in the morning and walk in the surf as soon as we arrive. I realize I can't look down at the water when I walk without losing my

balance. When the water rushes past my feet, then reverses direction and goes out again, makes me stumble. Instead, I look ahead and focus on something stable. Then the waters swirling around my feet in don't affect me.

In life I do the same thing. Nothing seems stable. Life is swirling around, continually changing and the end of change doesn't seem near. Focusing on what is circling around us creates fear and anxiety and we lose our balance.

There is only one stable focus for us – God Himself. He is called “Hua” (pronounced “Hoo”) in Psalm 102:25-27. “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.” “You remain the same” is the Hebrew word “Hua.” The name “Jehovah” signifies this attribute as well (Exodus 3:14). God is the eternal, unchanging, self-existent one with no beginning and no end (Psalm 90:2; Genesis 1:1).

Since God is perfect (Psalm 18:30). He cannot improve on perfection. He is already as perfect. He cannot become less. God doesn't change.

His love for us doesn't change either. There is nothing we can do to make Him love us anymore. There is nothing we can do to make Him love us any less. His mercy and grace never falter. His promises to be with us and provide for us never change. Nothing in His Word or His Person ever change.

So, focus on Him and not the swirling changes around you. Spend less time reading the news and more time reading your Bible. Spend less time in gossip and more time in prayer. Instead of thinking about conspiracy theories, think about God's promises. When fear or worry arise, turn to praise and worship. If you want to keep your balance during these changing times, look beyond the shifting circumstances and focus only on Jesus Christ, the One who is the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8). (September 21, 2020 Doylestown, PA)

***Hebrews 13:8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.***

*Spend some time now reading your Bible and praying. Plan how you can keep your mind on Jesus today instead of the stress around you.*

## **BLOG 841: THE ONLY TRUE WAY**

*(This is 1 in a series of blogs on the names of Christians in the Bible)*

Sarah Michelle Gellar, star of Buffy the Vampire Slayer and the Scooby Doo movies, said this about spirituality. “I consider myself a spiritual person. I believe in an idea of God, although it's my own personal ideal. I find most religions interesting, and I've been to every kind of denomination: Catholic, Christian, Jewish, Buddhist. I've taken bits from everything and customized it.” (Quoted from Brian Mavis message Jesus is the Only Way to God True or False)

It's common for people to consider various religions. They pick and choose what they like and don't like. It's like attending a religious smorgasbord. Man rejects the fact we are made in God's image and instead tries to remake God in his own image. Man creates a God to his liking where God does what they want and they don't have to do what He wants.

Jesus says there is only one way (John 14:6) and God gets to define that one way because He is God. This exclusivity is a real stumbling block for people in a pluralistic society. Picking and choosing our own way that is most pleasing to our liking is our making our own god and is ultimately idolatry and ends in destruction (Ephesians 4:14-15). People are more open than we realize to

"spiritual" discussions. As a follower of The Way, share your experience with the Living God and what you know of the true Savior no matter how little you think you know. Then flesh it out by living a honest, kind, caring and considerate lifestyle that honors God and How Word. We are to show the way to others by what we say and how we think, act, talk and live.

Jesus is God. As such He shows us God and the Way to Him. As His followers, we are to show what God is like by our words and actions. By following His way, we show others the true Way. The first name given to believers in the book of Acts was "followers of the Way" (Acts 4:12; 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22). Sometimes Christians try to 'remake' their image of God into something more to their liking and expectations. They play down the holiness of God or expect Him to meet all their wants and desires. To know God as He is, get to know Jesus. We God to be a different way, but He is only one Way and that is the way shown by Jesus. (September 28, 2020 Doylestown, PA)

**John 14:6 Jesus answered: "I am the way the truth and the life. No one comes to the father except through Me."**

**John 14:8-10 He who has seen the Father has seen me."**

*When people see your life, do they see the way to Jesus? Are you thinking and living the way Jesus taught, or are you trying to mix various different ways into one in your life? Ask God to show you if you are following any way but His.*

## **BLOG 842: IF YOU ARE A CHRISTIAN...**

*(This is 2 in a series of blogs on the names of Christians in the Bible)*

Remember when you first heard name "Christian"? What did it mean to you? What does "Christian: mean to unbelievers today? How do they define it? How do we define it?

The name "Christian" was first used for believers in Antioch (Acts 11:26). Mockers labeled them "Christians" to identify them as followers of Jesus. It was not a complement but said in ridicule. The term is used only two other times in the Bible: Acts 26:28 and 1 Peter 4:16). "Christian" is based on "Christ," the Greek word for the Hebrew word "Messiah." Literally it means "The Anointed One of God" (Acts 10:38; Luke 4:18). "Christ/Messiah" was not a name of Jesus, but rather the title of God Himself come to earth as a man to pay for the sins of the world. Through usage it became synonymous with Jesus.

When you became a Christian, you took Jesus' name as your identification: "Christian." It is the same as a woman who takes her husband's name when marrying. She becomes identified with him. How she lives reflects honor or shame on that name. The same is true of us as Christians.

Unfortunately, not all those who go by the name 'Christian' today are really followers of Christ. Not all 'Christians' are "Christians." How can someone reject the authority of the Bible and the deity of Jesus and still claim to be a Christ-follower? They are following a religion of their own making and labeling it 'Christian.'

Many of those who identify as "Christian" do not bring honor to His name or further the work of His Kingdom on earth. He will reject many who claim His name when they stand before Him (Matthew 7:21-23). Calling yourself a Christian does not make a person a Christian any more than calling yourself a surgeon, professor, or accountant.

There was a time when identifying as a Christian was a positive thing. Now many see it as negative. Classifying yourself as a Christian can result in rejection and criticism. That's why it is important we live in such a way as to always bring glory to Him. There is no greater honor than being called a Christian. (October 5, 2020 Doylestown, PA)

**1 Peter 4:16 However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.**

*Do you wear the title proudly? Are you glad to be a Christian? Do others honor Christ because they know you as a follower of His?*

### **BLOG 843: DO YOU BELIEVE?**

*(This is 3 in a series of blogs on the names of Christians in the Bible)*

Normally we find a product we like and believe in it. Seldom do we put faith in something before we try it out. However, Christians put faith in Jesus first then receive the product – salvation. The Christian label is so diluted it doesn't describe our relationship with Jesus. "Believer" is more distinctive

Everyone believes in something. All people have a worldview lens through which they view life. When people give up all belief, they become hopeless and despondent. As believers we see the world through the lens of the Bible, the Christian world view. That gives us faith in the present and hope in the future. What we believe is very important.

The best-known verse in the Bible is John 3:16: "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." Two verbs describe what God did: "loved" and "gave." One verb describes our response: "believe."

God's "love" is the motive behind His action of "giving" His son. He gave His very best for those who did not even know Him. It is love that costs. The gift He gave was His unique, "only" Son. The title "Son of God" was first used for the prophesied Messiah in 2 Samuel 7:14 and is repeated in Psalm 2:7 and many other passages.

He gave His very best so we would "not perish". This word does not refer to annihilation, but rather exclusion from fellowship with God. Instead, He gives the opposite – "eternal life": life with unlimited time (John 3:15-17). It is the opposite of perishing (John 3:16; 10:28; 12:225; 17:12).

Our response to this wonderful, merciful, sacrificial act by God is to "believe" by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. "Believe" refers to putting faith in Jesus for salvation. In Greek it is in the aorist tense, referring to a one-time event in the past. The verse doesn't say we have to keep on believing to earn or keep our salvation. It refers to the one point in time in the past when we came to Him for salvation.

Paul told the Philippian jailer: "believe and be saved" (Acts 16:31). A believer is one who receives faith in Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 16:31; Romans 10:9). As a result, we are called "sons of God" (John 1:12) and "righteous" (Romans 3:22, 28). We inherit all spiritual possessions (Romans 4:16).

This spiritual transformation results in mental understanding that becomes "belief". This will result in changed actions (James 2:14-26). Even demons believe the facts about Jesus but do not put their faith in Him (James 2:19). Belief is shown by actions. If I truly believe my house is on fire, I will act on that belief by doing something about it. If I say I believe it is on fire but don't move, then I don't really believe. Likewise, if we "believe" in Jesus, we will act on our belief and our lives will show the difference. It's not just a mental assent, but a life change that comes from believing in Jesus through the work of the Holy Spirit. (October 12, 2020 Doylestown, PA)

***John 5:24 "Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life. (see also John 6:40, 47; 3:36)***

**Acts 16:31 They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.”**

*Are you a believer in Jesus? Does your belief show in your life? Do your actions in life show your belief? Can others see a difference in your life based on your belief in Jesus?*

## **BLOG 844: DESPERATE NEED FOR DISCIPLES**

*(This is 4 in a series of blogs on the names of Christians in the Bible)*

A young man was eager to grow in His Christian life. He got a piece of paper and made a list of all the things he would do for God. He wrote down the things he would give up, the places he would go and areas of ministry he would work. He was excited. He took the list to church and put it on the altar. He thought he would feel joy, but instead he felt empty. So, he went home and started adding to his list. He wrote down more things he would do and wouldn't do. He took the longer list and again placed it on the altar. Still, he felt nothing. He sought the counsel of a wise, old pastor. The pastor said, “Take a blank sheet of paper. Sign your name at the bottom. Put that on the altar.” The young man did. Peace came to his heart.

In previous blogs we've looked at the designations “Christian” and “Believer.” They both refer to redemption, to one who accepted Jesus' free gift of salvation and will spend eternity in heaven with Jesus when they die. Salvation is a free gift. We do nothing but receive it. The price was paid by another and we simply receive the benefits by stopping rejecting them. It is a one-time action that lasts for all eternity.

But there is another designation the Bible uses for those who follow Jesus: “Disciple.” Discipleship follows becoming a Christian. Some Christians are not disciples, but no one can be a disciple without first being a Christian. Step 1 is to accept the free gift of salvation. Step 2, then, is to decide who we will live for in this life: ourselves or Jesus.

In the original Greek, disciple is a pupil who submits to his leader for a process of learning and becoming like the leader. The term is used 270+ times in the New Testament. Multitudes believed in Jesus as Messiah and put their faith in Him for salvation, but when He challenged them to live for Him each day and become one of His disciples most of them turned away (Matthew 16:24-26; Luke 9:62). They didn't lose their salvation, but they didn't live a life of victory and fruitfulness for God. They will be in heaven but won't be rewarded for faithful service while on earth (1 Corinthians 3:15).

Discipleship is the process of becoming like Jesus in what we think, feel and do. It starts with turning from putting ourselves first to putting Him first. Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:31-32). He was speaking to Christians, to believers, for they “had believed in Him” (John 8:31). Now He is challenging them, and us, to follow Him in daily life, to “hold to My teachings. (John 8:31).

The mark of a true disciple is continuing in the instructions of the teacher. When you stop following the Master, you are no longer a disciple. You are still a Christian, but not a disciple. Jesus never forces anyone to follow Him as a disciple. He knows there is a cost to pay (John 21:15-23). Salvation is free by accepting what He has paid for. Discipleship requires denying ourselves, yielding what we want to serve Him. It can be hard and costly. This is the process to spiritual growth and fruitfulness in this life and rewards in the next. (October 19, 2020 Doylestown, PA)

**Luke 9:23-25 “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life**

***for me will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self?***

*Are you a disciple of Jesus? Or are you a Christian who is concerned about what Jesus can do for you? Are you willing to serve Him no matter what? Can you give Him an empty sheet with your name on the bottom? Why not get a blank piece of paper now and sign it? Put it in your Bible as a reminder of your commitment to be His disciple.*

## **BLOG 845: YOU ARE A NEW CREATION**

*(This is 5 in a series of blogs on the names of Christians in the Bible)*

The Invaders was a 1968 TV series with aliens that looked and acted like humans. God says we are a new creation. We may look, act and even talk like other humans, but He has made us new creations in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17).

In 2 Corinthians 5:17 Paul say: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has gone, the new is here!" When we come to Jesus for salvation, we become a new person, a new creation. Distorted perspectives, prejudices, misconceptions, enslavements, priorities, motives and goals are challenged. Our viewpoints evolve as we grew in Him to the mind of Christ

At the moment of salvation God makes many changes in us. He Himself lives inside of us in the form of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19-12; 3:16). All our sin and shame from the past are gone (Colossians 1:14). Present and future sin is gone forever (Ephesians 1:1; Romans 8:1-2, 31-34). We become a member of God's family by new birth (John 1:12) and by adoption (Ephesians 1:5). As part of God's family, we are brothers and sisters with other believers (1 Corinthians 12:27). We are God's friend (John 15:15). We have peace with God (Romans 5:1) and peace from God (Philippians 4:7; Colossians 3:15). We are unconditionally loved by God (Romans 8:35-39). Law is replaced by Grace (2 Corinthians 12:9; Hebrews 14:6). We can talk to God any time we want (Ephesians 2:18; 3:12). God will provide power (Acts 1:8; Philippians 4:13), guidance and wisdom (1 Corinthians 2:16) for us.

As a new creation, God promises us victory over the control of sin (2 Corinthians 5:17; Romans 6:2; Galatians 2:20) and victory over Satan and demons (Colossians 1:13; Luke 10:18-20). He assures us we will never lose our salvation (2 Corinthians 1:21-22) and that we will be in heaven with Him forever (Ephesians 2:6; Philippians 3:20). These tremendous blessings are ours whether we enjoy them or not. We can experientially enjoy His grace as we grow and learn His word. Unfortunately, many Christians don't grow in His word.

An elderly lady walked slowly into a life insurance office during the worst part of the Great Depression. She wanted to know if she could stop paying the premiums on her husband's life insurance policy. "He's been dead some time now," she said, "and I don't believe I can afford making the payments anymore." The puzzled clerk behind the desk looked up her husband's policy and discovered it was worth several hundred thousand dollars. This poor lady was wealthy, but she was totally unaware. No one ever explained to her how life insurance works. She was making payments when she should have been collecting benefits. That's how many Christians live. We think we need to do certain things to please God, when in fact He has already done all of it for us. We need to enjoy and apply His great benefits. Are you? (October 26, 2020 Doylestown, PA)

***Ephesians 4:24 and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.***

***Romans 6:6 knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin;***

***Colossians 3:10 and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him—***

*Do you regularly thank God for all the privileges and benefits you have as a New Creation in Christ? Which blessings listed above are you are most thankful for right now?*

## **BLOG 846: PREACHING & TEACHING THE BIBLE**

I read a story about a man that gave his pet dog medicine. Every morning he would hold the dog tightly, pry open his mouth and try to force the medicine down his throat. The dog would kick, shake and try to get away. It was extremely difficult for the owner to make the dog to swallow the medicine. Then one day, before he could hold the dog down, the man spilled the medicine on the floor. Immediately the dog ran over and licked up every drop of it. The man realized the dog liked the medicine! The dog didn't like the way he gave it to him!

As Christians we are commanded to teach God's Word to others. Three times Jesus commands His followers to ***"Feed My sheep" (John 21:15-17)***. If you preach or teach the Bible, lead a Bible study or Sunday school class, have devotions with your mate or teach the Bible to your children you are feeding God's sheep.

What a shame if people didn't desire God's Word because of the way we present it to them. His Word is life giving and nourishing for our souls. There is no problem with God's Word, but there can be a problem with how we feed it to others.

Our bodies are designed to need physical food to grow and remain physically strong and healthy. Our souls are designed to need spiritual food to grow and remain strong and healthy spiritually as well. We need to present God's Word in a way that is interesting, holds attention and is easy to apply to daily life. Good teaching or preaching means we communicate God's Word in a way people understand, remember and apply it to their lives. It can only be done with God's help and dedicated work (2 Corinthians 3:5). We are to feed His sheep with the nourishment He provides in His Word, and do it to the very best because it has an eternal impact (Romans 10:9-15).

It is wonderful if God has put a burden or desire in your heart to share His Word with others. Paul says in ***1 Corinthians 9:16, "I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!"*** Preaching or teaching God's Word is a great privilege. If your church isn't meeting you can still teach, encourage, counsel and help those you meet or talk to. Let's make sure we communicate God's Word in a way that attracts people to God and helps them understand and love Him better.

***Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is alive 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.***

***2 Timothy 4:2 Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage – with great patience and careful instruction.***

*Thank God for the privilege you have of studying and learning God's Word. Ask Him to help you be faithful with the opportunities you have to pass it on to others. Spend some time reading your Bible today.*

**(For a free copy of this book go to <https://www.christiantrainingonline.org/our-ministries/india/> 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.”**) Our India web site has many examples of sermons as well (<https://www.christiantrainingonline.org/our-ministries/india/sermons/>). If you do any preaching or teaching perhaps they can be of help to you.

### **BLOG 847: WHEN GOD DOESN'T ANSWER 1**

Have you ever prayed for a real need in your life but nothing seemed to happen? What do you do about seemingly unanswered prayer?

Paul and Silas prayed for direction and protection. God sent them to Philippi. There they were beaten and thrown into prison. Job prayed for a hedge of protection around his children every day, One day they were all killed. Lazarus was crippled, sickly, homeless and starving. Nothing changed until he went to heaven. God never gave a reason or explanation. Total silence. We aren't alone when we experience these things, are we?

Mary and Martha were good friends of Jesus. Their home was always open to Him. It was the closest thing He had to a 'home.' They provided food and financial support for Jesus and the disciples. Their brother Lazarus was sick, but Jesus didn't heal him. They knew Jesus healed even strangers, but there was no healing for Lazarus. When Lazarus was about to die and they sent word to Jesus, Jesus still didn't heal him long distance as He had done others. He didn't even come to offer condolences immediately. He sent word Lazarus would be OK, and then didn't even show up for the funeral! (See John 11 for the full story)

Can you imagine how Mary and Martha must have felt? They were confused, discouraged, disappointed and maybe even angry over the loss of Lazarus. They must have asked the 'why' question over and over. We know the end of the story but they didn't.

In our situations we look to the past and see how God has worked. But our present situations we don't know how it will turn out – those are the tough ones to handle.

These are the only real opportunities we have to trust God and they only exist while we live on this earth. Put your faith in Him unconditionally, as Job did and see how God uses it in your life and others. God is STILL using Job's life to teach and encourage others today.

. Next blog will talk about why God may not answer. In the meantime, try to see it as a great opportunity to show your unconditional faith in God. (November 2, 2020 Doylestown, PA)

***2 Corinthians 5:7 We walk by faith, not by sight.***

***Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight.***

*Think of a time when it seemed God wasn't answering your prayers. How did you respond? How should you have responded? What can you learn from that to help your faith grow?*

### **BLOG 848: LIGHT IN THESE DARK DAYS**

This Saturday, November 14, the 5-day Hindu festival Diwali begins. A billion Hindus in southeast Asia and around the world will participate. It is the biggest, brightest and most elaborate of all the Hindu festivals. People clean their homes, buy new clothes and stock up on special food. They decorate with sparkling lights and colorful flowers. It is called the "Festival of Lights" because they believe the lights represent the inner light. This light is an extension of the divine force in all nature and people. It is similar to "Mother Nature." New Age beliefs brought this error into our western culture claiming we are all 'gods.'

Hindus believe the lights make them more aware of this inner power leading to freedom from spiritual darkness and victory over evil. They feel this force defeats demons around them. The people perform ritual worship ceremonies and pray to idols in their homes and temples, asking for good fortune and prosperity in the coming year.

How sad it is to see a billion people lost in darkness and turning to a counterfeit substitute that cannot deliver. Darkness is everywhere. People are aware of their need for light but Satan counterfeits God's true light (2 Corinthians 11:14). Only God can create light (Genesis 1:3). Jesus is the true light (John 8:12; 9:5).

We can recognize their darkness, but it isn't as easy to see our own. When we look to any person, group, leader or political party for light and deliverance we are sadly disappointed. It is only Jesus that brings the illumination, warmth, guidance, peace and joy to the God created inner soul. Keep your confidence in Him, not any earthly substitute or demonic power. He is in sovereign control of our lives, our country and everything that happens. He alone is light and all who do not follow Him walk in darkness (John 3:19). He still reigns and His light still shines. That is a truth Americans and Hindus need to know and experience.

Fill your mind with His truth in His word. Walk in His presence and He will fill you with His light. (November 9, 2020 Doylestown, PA)

***John 8:12 Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."***

***John 9:5 Jesus said, "I am the light of the world."***

*Are you discouraged by all the recent events in our country and world? Only Jesus can burn away the doom. Read John 8 and 9, spend time in praise and worship and "turn your eyes upon Jesus."*

*Think of southeast Asians you know. What can you do to help them see the true light that is only found in Jesus? Pray for courage, wisdom and an opportunity to share Jesus with them.*

## **BLOG 849: WHEN GOD DOESN'T ANSWER 2**

Why does it sometimes seem like God doesn't hear our prayers? Why didn't He heal sick Lazarus when He was staying in Lazarus's home? Why didn't Jesus heal Him long distance when He received word Lazarus was dying? Why didn't He at least show up to comfort Mary and Martha in their loss? All He did was send word that Lazarus would be OK – but he was already dead? Why?

Perhaps it was because Jesus didn't know that Lazarus was that sick and that he died. However, that couldn't be true because John 11:14 says Jesus did know. He told the disciples Lazarus was dead. Then maybe Jesus did know, but He just didn't care. But three times (John 11:3, 5, 36) we read that Jesus loved Lazarus. Mary and Martha provided the only home Jesus knew during His last 3 years on earth. We assume if someone loves us they will do all they can to help us, so when Jesus doesn't help us we tend to question His love for us. Why didn't Jesus answer? It wasn't because He didn't know and it wasn't because He didn't care. Could it have been, then, because He wasn't able? We know that isn't true. He healed many others. He is sovereign God and nothing is too great for Him! So, that leaves only one explanation – He has a greater plan in store.

Jesus said He was glad Lazarus was dead for their sakes! Jesus' unspoken answer was – trust me! When He finally did show up, Martha challenged Him as to why He didn't come (John 11:17-27). Jesus just told her He was the resurrection and the life, and then asked if she believed. She said she did believe in Him. That was the end of the conversation. There was no explanation, no justification – just asking her to trust Him.

Mary came next (John 11:28-37) and Jesus cried with her, but didn't offer any rationalization as to why He was so late in showing up. He knows, He cares, He is able, but He doesn't explain what He is doing. Why?

Parents know that sometimes they can't explain to a child their reasons for what they do. There is a good reason, and later the child will understand, but when all they see is the needle in the hand of the doctor and their parent is holding them down, no explanation will help. They can only ask their child to trust them despite what the circumstances seem to indicate. You see, it's all based on trust, not on proof. We walk by faith, not by sight. As children trust their earthly parents, so we are to trust our heavenly Father. (Nov 16, 2020 Doylestown, PA)

## **BLOG 850: THANKING GOD IN HIS LOVE LANGUAGE**

I'm getting better. I remember to thank God more often for the things He does for me – big things, little things, asked-for things and unasked for things. I'm more consistent in thanking Him afterwards. But it has taken many years and a real effort to remember to say thanks. Still, it is often a bit late and sometimes weaker than He deserves. I can only hope He reads my heart and knows I am truly thankful, for if He had to depend on my words, He might wonder some times.

It's easy to remember to pray and beg God for something in life, to be motivated to seek Him over and over again, to persist in faithfully bringing a need before Him. Yet when He responds favorably to me, my 'Thanks' often pales in comparison to my request.

How can we best thank God and show Him our love and appreciation? We are created in His image so we can communicate with Him like we do with each other. The same love languages we use with each other also are true of God.

**Verbal affirmation** is the way we usually thank God – just by saying "Thanks." God wants this (Psalm 66:4), and we do this when we sing or worship. Telling others what He has done for us is another way of verbally communicating our appreciation.

**Acts of service** is a second means of communicating love and gratitude. Jesus asks us to do this (John 15:20; Matthew 23:11-12). We serve Him by serving others. Anything that helps build His kingdom is service to Him. When you serve, do it with an attitude of showing love to God, not for the recognition you will get from others.

**Giving gifts** is a tangible way to show love. God asks us to worship Him by giving (Luke 21:1-4; Deuteronomy 16:10-11). This includes giving money or material gifts to God's work as well as to those in need. It also includes using our time, skills, talents and gifts for Him. When you give in any way, do it with a heart full of thankfulness and love for Him.

**Quality time** is a very important way to let God know how you feel about Him. Read, study and memorize His Word (Psalm 119:97). Spend time listening to His Spirit speak to your heart while you meditate about Him (Psalm 77:12). We are careful to tithe our money, but what about our time? That would amount to about 1 ½ hours a day – each day, not just each week on Sunday morning. God wants us to spend time with Him. That is why He created us and redeemed us!

**Physical touch** is also a way to show love and thanks to God. Clearly we can't touch God, but He enjoys seeing us share loving touches with each other, just as we love seeing our children share loving touches with each other. The early church practiced greeting each other with a holy kiss (Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:26). The opposite is also true – harsh touches or angry actions hurt others and God.

Thanking God isn't just saying a few quick words, it is living a life that focuses on Him in all we think, say and do. After all, God puts us first in all He thinks, says and does – how can we do any less? (November 23, 2020 Doylestown, PA)

**1 Chronicles 16:34 - O give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; For His lovingkindness is everlasting.**

*What is your love language? How can you communicate your love and thankfulness to God by using the language that most clearly speaks love to you? Spend some time now, or some time today, communicating your thankfulness.*

### **BLOG 856: WHEN GOD DOESN'T ANSWER 3**

Is God expecting too much of us when He expects us to trust Him, without any word of explanation, when terrible things come into our lives and prayer doesn't seem to make any difference? What right does Jesus have to ask that of us? What has He ever done for us?

But that's just it – He has every right to ask us to trust Him because He's already done the very best thing for us – paid for sins to keep us from hell. So He has every right to expect us to trust Him – and rightly so! He has proven His love and dependability beyond any doubt. He may not do what we want, but He does what He knows is best.

Hananiah, Azariah and Mishael didn't know if God would keep them from the fiery furnace. They knew He was able, but they didn't know if He was willing (Daniel 3:18-19). It's important to always remember that God is always able, and if He isn't willing it's because He has a greater plan for us. Our responsibility is to trust Him.

Remember what He has already done for you in the past. Realize He took your eternity in hell because He loves you. He would never hurt you unless there was a greater reason for it.

Jesus had another plan, a greater plan. Part of it was for their growth. God allows these 'opportunities' to stretch our faith, to give us an occasion to trust Him when it seems He isn't there for us. Mary and Martha had probably at one point said to Jesus, Jesus, help my faith to grow." This is His answer.

Have you ever asked Him to help increase your faith? This is His answer. That's what happened to Job when his children died, to Abraham when he was told to kill his only son, to Paul and Silas beaten and in prison in Philippi, to Mary and Martha, and to you and to me.

One reason Jesus didn't heal Lazarus was to stretch Mary and Martha's faith. He wants our faith to stretch and grow as well. He does have a reason for all He does, even if it is not what we would like. When He says "No," there must be a greater "Yes" coming in the future.

He does these things for our growth, but also for His glory. He was glorified in the raising of Lazarus. Coming back to life in front of everyone who had showed up for the funeral brought more glory to Jesus than if Jesus would have healed Lazarus months ago during one of His visits to their home. We bring glory to Him when we trust Him even when it doesn't seem He is answering.

We bring glory to Him when we see how He does eventually provide. And we bring glory to Him when others see us trust Him despite everything going wrong around us.

No doubt Mary, Martha and Lazarus had one time said, "Jesus, use us for your glory in any way you choose." Now He is doing just that.

Have you ever said that to God? He may be taking you up on it! The raising of Lazarus brought glory to Jesus in many ways. It still brings glory to Him today as we read and think about it.

God used this to bring about the crucifixion and resurrection on Passover, just as God had predicted. When the religious rulers saw Lazarus come out of the tomb and the stir it made right outside Jerusalem, they realized they would have to put Him to death quickly to silence His influence. Jesus has many reasons for what He does, or doesn't do – and they all are for our growth and His glory. Make sure Jesus is glorified in your situation, no matter how bad it seems to you! (November 30, 2020 Doylestown, PA)

## **BLOG 857: ARE YOU GROWING SPIRITUALLY? HERE'S HOW TO TELL - 1**

Are you growing spiritually? How can you tell? When my children were young, we measured their growth every 6 months. We would mark on a chart how tall they were and we could see how much they had grown since the last time. We don't have that kind of measuring stick to tell if we are growing as Christians, but we do have some standards in God's Word which can help us measure growth. I want to give you 10 of them. See how you are doing compared to them, and see how your church is doing as well.

**1. Do you yearn more and more for heaven, think about it, etc? (Philippians 1:21-24; Titus 2:11-13)** As you grow spiritually, you will think more about heaven and look forward to it more and more. When we are new Christians heaven is a nice but vague place, but the closer we get to God the more we look forward to being in heaven with Him. As we become more like Jesus this world and the things of it are less important. The sin and suffering become more and more distasteful to us. We think often of heaven and being in perfection with God for all eternity.

**2. Are you becoming more loving in how you treat others? (Matthew 22:36-40; 1 John 4:20-21)** Do you find you are becoming kinder to people, more patient and compassionate than you were? Are you more sensitive to the needs and hurts of others? Does your heart ache for the trials and difficulties others face? As we become more like Jesus, we love others as He loves – totally and unconditionally. That's how He loves us. It's only natural that as we grow to become more like Him we find ourselves loving people more like He does.

**3. Are you more aware of God's work in your life? (Philippians 3:10; Galatians 2:20)** As we grow we will recognize God's hand in our life more and more. At first, we see the big things He does, but as we grow closer to Him we start noticing that everything that happens is because of Him. Do you give Him credit for the little things as well as the big things in your life? Are you more aware that He is in control of all that happens, the difficulties as well as the good things? Are you less willing to give yourself credit for what you accomplish and quicker to give God credit?

**4. Does God's Word have a greater place in your life than it used to? (1 Peter 2:2-3; Psalms 119:9-11; Hebrews 4:12)** Do you find the Bible is more important to you than it was in the past? Do you appreciate it and turn to it more than before? Do you remember God's promises and think of them during the day? Do you have an increasing number of favorite Scriptures you turn to in difficult times? As we grow so does our appetite. That is true of children, and it's also true of Christians. All growing things need a source of food, and the Bible is the food source for our soul.

**5. Is your worship more God-centered and frequent than it used to be? (Job 1:20-21; Psalm 100)** Do you find yourself worshipping more than you used to? Does praise to God naturally come to your mind throughout the day? Do you feel closer to God than you used to when you worship? When we are new Christians, we enjoy worship because it makes us feel good. Praising God is great and very enjoyable for us. But the purpose of worship isn't so that we feel good. It's so that God feels good! Worship is all about God, not all about us! As we grow, our worship focuses more and more on Who and what God is. We worship when walking outside, sitting at home or lying in bed.

Worship becomes a part of our everyday life. It isn't just something we do when singing on a Sunday morning. (December 7, 2020 Doylestown, PA)

## **BLOG 858: ARE YOU GROWING SPIRITUALLY? HERE'S HOW TO TELL - 2**

We have been looking at ways to measure our spiritual growth. We talked about yearning more and more for heaven, being more forgiving of others, becoming more aware of God's work in our lives, growing in our appreciation of the Bible and having our worship become more God-centered as signs we are growing spiritually. We'll look at 5 more signs this blog:

**6. Are you more sensitive to sin than you used to be? (Romans 12:1-2; 7:14-19)** As young Christians we are aware of things that are sin, things we shouldn't think or do. But as we grow closer to God we begin to see sin in more and more areas of our life. We start recognizing that our selfish motives and prideful attitudes are sin. We become more and more aware of how far we fall short of God's perfection. Instead of becoming more and more like Jesus, we feel less and less like Him. When Paul was a new Christian, he wrote that he was the least of all apostles. Later he wrote that he was the least of all Christians. Toward the end of his life he wrote he was the least of all people. Do you see the progression? As he grew, he became more and more aware of his own sin and failure. Are you more sensitive to sin in your life than you were last year?

**7. Are you quicker to forgive others who hurt you? (Matthew 6:14-15; Mark 11:25; Colossians 3:13)** Do you find that you are quicker to forgive people than you were a few years ago? Are you less likely to argue or seek revenge against those who hurt you? Do you forgive people as soon as they hurt you and not wait for them to apologize first? Do you forgive them as soon as the offense takes place? Jesus is our perfect example of forgiveness. He forgives us immediately and totally, even before we ask Him for forgiveness. As we become more like Him, we will find ourselves being quicker to forgive others. They may hurt us on purpose or accidentally, but our first response is to quickly forgive them.

**8. Are you becoming more aware of how great and powerful God is? (Psalm 19:1; Isaiah 64:8; 2 Corinthians 12:10; Philippians 4:13)** Is God 'growing' in your spiritual life? Are you continually seeing more and more ways He controls everything? When we grow in our faith, we become more and more aware of what a wonderful, awesome, all-powerful God He is! As we see evidence of His sovereign control day after day our concept of Him gets larger and larger.

**9. Is your prayer life becoming more personal and stronger? (James 5:16; Jeremiah 29:12-13; Matthew 7:7-8)** Do you find yourself talking to God more than you used to? Is prayer more natural, something you do throughout the day without even realizing it at times? Are your first thoughts about asking God for wisdom or talking to Him about the problem you are facing? When a relationship grows, people learn to communicate better. Do you find your prayer life becoming more personal and stronger? If so, you are growing spiritually.

**10. Do you find yourself better able to recognize His voice when He speaks to you? (John 14:26; 10:4, 16, 27; Acts 9:11-15)** Do you find yourself more interested in listening to God, in wanting to hear from Him, instead of just being interested in telling Him what you want Him to do for you? Do you recognize that what God has to say to you is much more important than what you have to say to Him? Are you better able to recognize when God is speaking to you?

These 10 standards can help you see how and where you are growing. Look at each one carefully, pray about where you are and if you are growing in this area. If you find one where you haven't been growing as you should, then you can focus on that so you can grow in that area.

Remember, it is God who brings about the growth in us as we allow His Spirit to work in us (John 15:1-8) and produce His fruit in our lives (Galatians 5:22-26). Just as a parent oversees the maturing of his child, so our heavenly Father oversees our growth. His promise is that He will work in us as long as we are on this earth so that we continue to grow more and more like Jesus (Philippians 1:6). What a blessing and what a privilege that is. God expects us to grow, but He doesn't expect us to do it on our own. He will bring that about as we follow Him. (December 14, 2020 Doylestown, PA)

### **BLOG 859: KEEPING CHRISTMAS FRESH**

It's that time of the year when we are continually reminded that God left heaven and came to earth as a baby. I think there are two ways we can respond to hearing the same thing over and over. One, of course, is to become numb to it. But what if we would be hearing this amazing truth for the very first time? How would it impact us then? In India many have never heard about Jesus. What a privilege it is to tell them the good news for the first time. Looking at the incarnation through their eyes and ears makes it fresh and new, as it always should be.

Let's be honest. The magic of God Himself visiting earth can be lost in the business of the season. The more we think about the Incarnation the more we should be totally amazed that God would leave heaven to come to earth because He loves us! That fact has stopped being just words and has taken on newer and deeper meaning the more I think about it. It's just awesome to realize that God really did visit this earth for us, because He loves us and wants us with Him!

My wish for you this Christmas is that these words would take on newer and deeper meaning than ever before, and any over-familiarity you have with this story would be replaced with awe-inspiring wonder. Ask God to make the truth of this season real - it's a gift He would love to give you this Christmas. Have a Merry Christmas! (December 231, 2020 Doylestown, PA)

*Take a few minutes and pretend you have never heard of Jesus. Think of what your life would be like. Then imagine someone told you the story of God becoming a man and coming to earth for the first time. Let the wonder and amazement of it flow over you.*

*Now read the following passage slowly, as if you are reading it for the first time.*

***John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood \* it.***

***6 There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. 7 He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. 8 He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. 9 The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. \****

***10 He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. 11 He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. 12 Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— 13 children born not of natural descent, \* nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.***

***14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, \* who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.***

## **BLOG 860: NOW THAT CHRISTMAS IS OVER....**

For the past several weeks our lives have been pointing toward December 25. Some count down the days until Christmas with dread (because of all the work still to be done), others with anticipation (because of the joy of the day itself). Now Christmas is over and we can get back to our 'normal' lives. But think about that last sentence for a minute. "Christmas is over." "We can get back to our 'normal' lives." Are those statements true? Unfortunately, most people live as if they are true, but for the Christian is Christmas ever over?

The December 25th date comes and goes, but the truth that we live on a planet once visited by God Himself in the form of a man is never over. Life can never be the same once this awesome fact is understood. No, Christmas is never over for the Christian. The holiday observance comes and goes once a year, but the celebration of the coming of Christ (which is what the word 'Christmas' means) should be part of our lives all year long. So, instead of thinking, "Now that Christmas is over....", think "now that Christ has come life will never be the same!" (December 28, 2020 Doylestown, PA)

*Read the following passage slowly. Make note of each benefit you have received because Jesus came to earth.*

***Ephesians 2:1 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. 3 All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature \* and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. 4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. 6 And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, 7 in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. 8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast. 10 For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.***

*What difference will it make in your life in 2021 that God Himself visited planet earth 2,000 years ago?*

*Write down some ways you can keep Christmas fresh in your heart and life all year long. How can you prevent everything going on in the world and in your own life from causing the joy of Jesus to fade?*

## **BLOG 861: JESUS ASLEEP IN YOUR BOAT**

*(We won't be going to India this year but Pastor Moses is holding Pastor's conferences using my notes. I sent him the following to read to each gathering of pastors.)*

Greetings to everyone. I am very sorry I cannot be with you today. I've gone to India for the last 13 years so it is very different for me to stay home, but that is how God wants it this year. I think of you and pray for you often, as do many others in the United States. I know Pastor Moses and his helpers are doing a wonderful job and I thank all of them for their help. I thank you for coming today.

It's been a hard year in India, and the United States as well. Sometimes we wonder where God is during this time and why He is allowing so many hard things to happen to us. We can ask, "Where is Jesus when we need Him?" Jesus' disciples wondered the same thing. (Please read Matthew 8:23-27)

Jesus was with His disciples in a boat when a terrible storm came. They were experienced sailors who were on the lake fishing almost every day. They knew this was no usual rain, though, but a very strong, dangerous storm. If it there was no storm, or if it had been a small one, they would not have turned to Jesus for His help. They wouldn't have seen His greatness in taking care of them through the storm. He allows large storms like we are going through now so we turn to Him as well. Without storms we wouldn't realize our need of Him and see His deliverance.

Jesus was in the boat with them, but He was asleep. He must have been very tired to sleep through the wind and waves that threatened to sink the boat and kill them all. They had recently seen Jesus feed 5,000 men from almost nothing. They believed He was God, so they turned to Him in their time of need. But they went to Him in fear, not faith. We, too, have seen God's provision and deliverance many times in our lives, but are we turning to Him in fear or faith during these hard days? We can't have both fear and faith. We can only have one. Which do you have when life's danger threatens to overwhelm you and it seems Jesus is asleep and not helping you?

The storm was an opportunity for them to trust God. They should have realized that the boat wouldn't sink with Jesus in it. God won't let us sink, either, for He lives in us who believe in Him. The problems facing us today are opportunities for us to trust Him as well. Are you trusting, or are you giving in to fear?

Jesus was a man like us. He was tired and slept. But He was also God, for He spoke to the storm and it stopped. Immediately it was gone. If Jesus as God could stop the storm so easily, why didn't He prevent it from ever coming? The disciples needed it to stretch their faith and to see God's care of them. We need the storms in our lives today for the same reason. Don't pray to have the problems in your life gone, but pray to have faith to trust God through them, even if it seems He is asleep.

This event helped their faith grow. They learned they could trust Jesus to provide for their needs. We can as well. He promises to meet all our needs (Philippians 4:19), to never leave us or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5), to give us strength for what He wants us to do (Philippians 4:13) and to provide grace whenever it is needed (2 Corinthians 12:9). There is nothing for us to fear (Psalm 118:6) for God is always with us (Joshua 1:9) when we patiently trust in Him (Isaiah 40:321).

Does it seem Jesus doesn't know or care about what you are going through? Remember this story and keep your faith in Him. He will never desert you (Joshua 1:5; Deuteronomy 31: 6-8; Isaiah 41:10; Romans 8:28-29). (January 4, 2021 Doylestown, PA)

#### PRAY

I cannot be with you to teach you today, but there are many books, sermons and articles on my India pastor's web site for Christian Training Organization. You can read it in English, Hindi or Telugu. I send a blog to pastors each week as well. It is in English. If you would like to receive the blog send me an email. My email address is in the books you will receive. Please write me if you can. I would love to hear about your ministry and see pictures of your family.

### **BLOG 862: THE LOST ART OF MEDITATION**

What comes to mind when you think of 'meditation'? If it has something to do with sitting in a monastery (or on a mountain top), bored to death while your mind wonders, then you are pretty typical. We seem to delegate meditation to the great mystics of long ago, to the church fathers who were so spiritual they were more in heaven than on earth anyway. I got quite a surprise recently when I started to study what meditation really is. I found it isn't that at all.

While the Hebrew root can mean ‘to ponder,’ it can also mean ‘to converse aloud.’ In fact, it is often translated ‘cried out,’ and ‘voiced his complaint.’ Psalm 77 is an example of Asaph meditating out loud. Read it and listen to his meditation. The New Testament equivalent is praying without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Meditation, therefore, is speaking and listening to God by expressing what is on your heart and reflecting on what He says to you in the Bible and by the Holy Spirit. It’s like a friendly, after-meal conversation with a good friend when you feel close and aren’t in a hurry to end the connection.

Try talking to God out loud (this works best when you are alone and no one can overhear you!). It is a good discipline to put thoughts into words. We focus better and communicate more precisely. Try praying a Scripture passage. Read it out loud, think about it, read it again, talk to God about it and listen to what His Spirit tells you. Writing down your thoughts in a journal can help add to this experience. Sure, it takes a little more effort – but any good relationship takes effort to grow. The results are definitely worth it! (January 11, 2021 Doylestown, PA)

***Psalms 119:97 Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long.***

***Psalms 1:1-2 Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.***

***1 Thessalonians 5:17 Pray continually;***

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

*When was the last time you had a good, long time of fellowship with God, where you just relaxed and enjoyed His presence?*

*What is the main obstacle to your having these kinds of refreshing, rejuvenating times with God?*

*Take a few moments to meditate right now.*

*Share what God has taught you about meditating by commenting on this blog. We can pass on some of these insights in future blogs.*

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