

The Home Bible Study Library

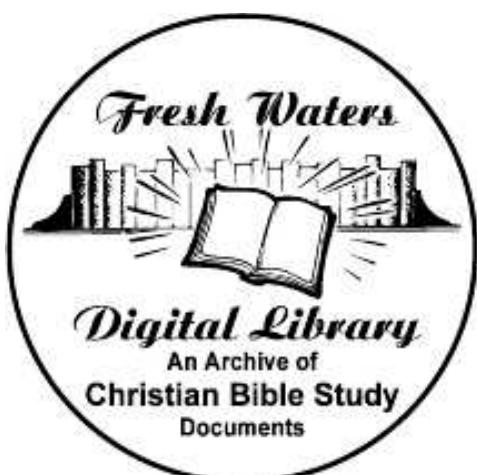
Illustrations for the

Preacher and Teacher



Edited By Dr Terry W. Preslar

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...when thou comest, bring with thee...the books,
but especially the parchments. **(2 Tim. 4:13)**

Psalms 107:2 s **\u00c9** s Romans 12:1-2
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The Home Bible Study Library

Illustrations for the Preacher and Teacher

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Illustrations for the Preacher and Teacher

Collected and Edited By Dr. Terry W. Preslar

Introductory Preface

Illustrations capture our attention and further our understanding in a way that no other sermonic tool can. This former pastor and current seminary president demonstrates why illustrations should be used in biblical preaching and then goes on to share how to find and integrate them effectively. It is clear that illustrations are integral to effective preaching and teaching, not because they entertain, but because they expand and deepen the applications the mind and heart can make.

Kinds of illustrations are important on a degree as to their use. In Gospel Sermons and Bible lessons we find that an illustration that comes from imagination is the least powerful. Then there is the illustration that is taken from real life (your's or some other's life) will be a little more effective. The most powerful illustration of all is a "Bible Illustration" taken from the text of Scripture.

The Law of the Bible Illustration

Even though there are no "Laws of Biblical Interpretation" outlined in the Bible itself, we have discovered a few rules that make hermeneutics easier. One of these can be called the "Law of the Bible Illustration." It is stated thus: "For most truths God gives one classic illustration to carry the truth home to the heart and mind of the believer." (An example is Sin Guiltiness - Isa. 53:6).

The master preacher or teacher knows that having a bag full of tricks or elements to engage his hearers is vital to the success of the topic he is covering in his message or lesson. In all forms of "public speaking" one of these tools is properly using illustrations.

The Use of Illustrations In Preaching and Teaching with Power

There is nothing that will substitute for the power of the Holy Spirit on our preaching and teaching. We must ever seek His filling, enduing and anointing. But, that said, preaching and teaching is also a mechanical and scientific discipline. In the preparation of Sermons and Lessons there are tools that allow us to produce fruitful messages and effective lessons. In order to understand the topic of sermon illustrations, it is important to recall a few facts about preaching and teaching. These factors apply in all of the several types of sermon and lesson styles (Expository - The teaching of a book or longer passage of the Bible, usually as a series of messages. Consecutive teaching that does not let you ride some hobby horse or avoid difficult passages, Textual - This method develops an outline from a single verse or a short passage of Scripture. You will want to check lexicons for meanings of words, and cross references for other verses that will help in the understanding of the passage, and Topical - One theme or topic, but using a number of portions of the Bible to develop the overall teaching of the Bible on the subject.).

Illustrations in Exposition

In reading, if you miss the author's point, you can go back and reread the paragraph. If the author's exposition is complex, you can scan over the text or flip to the introduction to regain your bearings. It is important to remember that your congregation cannot do any of these things while you are preaching. They must hear your sermon in the order that you preach it and at the speed you preach it. If they are distracted for any reason, they may miss a portion of what you say. They don't know where you're going until you actually get there.

Pastors that have attended Bible College or Seminary, when they first begin preaching, their sermons sound like academic papers - but when they are read out loud to an audience that does not possess a printed copy, even the most readable academic papers become boring and dull. Remember, your sermon is going to be heard, not read.

to be heard, not read, so organize it accordingly.

Oral exposition must necessarily be simpler than written exposition, because no one can go back over the text and reread a passage they didn't understand the first time. If your illustrations have too many details, even if they are all relevant to your point, your point will be lost. If your argumentation has too many points, even if they all build to your conclusion, your congregation will still be struggling to make sense of all the points and they won't hear the conclusion. Make sure that your exposition is simple, direct, and compelling. One way to do this is to include illustrations. Here are a few general tips:

- 1- Get to the point and do not dwell on the story. – *The length of an illustration must be limited to allow the development of the subject matter.* It must be kept in mind that the point is more vital than a long exemplification of the theme. Otherwise, the congregation will remember the story and forget the point.
- 2- Use a variety of illustrations over time. – *You don't want your congregation to tune you out because* they perceive that you're just riding your hobby horse. For example, it is moving and appropriate to talk about the last things that Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote, before he was executed by the Nazis. However, if all your illustrations deal with Nazis, some in your congregation will hear history lessons instead of the gospel and your point will be lost.
- 3- Keep the illustrations simple, with just the right level of detail. – *While details make the illustration* colorful, too much color is garish and the picture is lost. For example, if you are deriving a lesson from your observation of an anthill you saw on a picnic, don't include information about the menu. The congregation doesn't know where you are going with the story, so they must retain all details until they figure out which ones are important. If you load them down with too many colorful details or if they pick the wrong details to follow, they'll miss your point.
- 4- Use illustrations sparingly. – *You must have time, in the time space given to you, to preach the* Gospel. There is no reason to preach if the Gospel is un-heard. If you use too many illustrations, the congregation will be overwhelmed by the picture gallery and never get the point.

Illustrations that Presume too Much

Be mindful that your congregation does not have the same shared experience. Not everyone is married, not everyone has children, not everyone has living parents, not everyone grew up in the local area. It's possible that an illustration flies over someone's head now and then, but make sure you don't fly over the same people on a regular basis. If a person hears too many irrelevant illustrations, you can make them feel like outsiders and the alienation may cause them to tune you out or even leave the church. I once attended a service that had a narrow focus. The prayers, the songs, the sermon, everything presumed that the congregation consisted solely of married couples in their thirties, whose parents were still living and who had small children. However, that was not actually the case. The service alienated everyone who was single, widowed, divorced, orphaned, adopted, childless, infertile, too old, too young, or whose parents had died, and some walked in pain.

We should hold marriage and family life in high honor, but we should never allow even the affirmation of virtue to push the lambs for whom Christ died off the precipice and into the pit of despair.

Illustrations from Sports, Warfare, or Controversial Events

Wartime generates a lot of good illustrations, because it is a time when anxiety is high and when people learn many insightful truths about life – but not everyone in your congregation lived through the same war that you did. You may think you are making a point, but the old people are smiling at your youth and the young people are tuning you out as an old fogey. If you dwell on the name of the war or the identity of the enemy, you may raise issues that obscure your point. It's tempting to reminisce about the decade in which the war occurred, but that is usually an extraneous detail. Allow your listeners to concentrate on the situation and the lesson you want to derive from it. Be careful also that the inherent violence of the situation does

overcome your point.

Any time you draw a lesson from a controversial event, be careful to focus on your point so that you don't bring in extraneous issues. If the backdrop is controversial, and you do not deal with it skillfully, your congregation will be unable to hear your sermon as they mentally debate the incidental issues. Make sure that you do not raise issues that you do not intend to deal with. If you've ever had the experience of preaching on topic A, but discovering that the congregation heard topic B, which was not edifying and which you wanted to avoid, this is what went wrong.

Not everyone is a sports fan. To people who do not follow football, a football story is simply incomprehensible, and whatever point you are making is lost. Then by the time your story is over, they'll have found something interesting to read in the bulletin or to whisper to a friend, and your sermon has no effect on them because they are no longer paying attention. If you relate how God answered the prayer of a football player, someone in the congregation may rightly wonder where God was in the life of the man he tackled - and instead of learning of God's providence, he'll question God's justice. It's okay to use football stories, but make sure that everyone can follow along.

Illustrations from Historical Personages

Not everyone has the same opinion about historical figures - especially if your congregation is ethnically mixed or comes from different regions of the country - so a story about Robert E. Lee's piety may be offensive to those who associate him with slavery. Of course, you could attempt to balance it by telling a parallel story about Martin Luther King, but unless you pull it off skillfully, you may just end up offending everyone. In my opinion, it's not good to use stories from non-biblical historical figures. If they are relevant, not everyone holds them in the same esteem, and the point is lost. If they are from the distant past, the story sounds idealistic and irrelevant.

Stories About the Preacher

Personal stories can humanize you in the eyes of your congregation, by reassuring them that you can relate to their struggles and victories - but they can also backfire, by leaving them with the impression that you are defective.

If you recount an uplifting experience that is too sublime, they may think you are transporting the congregation to worlds above, but if they can't follow, they may conclude that you are trying to glorify yourself or that you are a delusional air-head. Some spiritual experiences contain things that you should relate - Paul and John both testify to this in scripture. Suppose you had a vision of Jesus on the cross. If you talk about it in the sermon, make sure that you keep it in proportion, or you will lose a significant part of your congregation, as they sit poised on the edge of the pew for the cue to call the men in white coats. Tone down positive stories about yourself, make sure that they are believable, that they don't make you sound delusional, and that they are not self-serving.

If you recount a personal crisis of faith or a sin, make sure that you spend more time on the lesson you learned than on the problem itself. If you dwell too much on the negative part of the story, you may feel cleansed by the confession, but before the service is over, you will find out that you have disqualified yourself in the eyes of your congregation. Suppose you did something in college under peer pressure, but you regretted it instantly and resolved never to do it again. If you dwell too much on your attraction to a woman in an effort to empathize with those under temptation, they may be wondering if they want a delinquent as a pastor. If the story is particularly disquieting, they may despair - for if you, their leader in the faith, have lost your way, how can they possibly be on the right path? If, for example, your mother's death leaves you in anguish and despair and without hope, then who will give them hope?

Talking to the Congregation

It is often a good idea to address the congregation in the imperative mood, to bless them and encourage them.

them. If you are requiring them to do things they are inclined but afraid to do, or conferring blessings and pardon, you'll come across quite well. However, you must use your authority sparingly, or they will dismiss you as excessively bossy or presumptuous.

A good rule of thumb is to use "you" when you are praising the congregation and "we" when you are criticizing them. That way you include yourself in your criticism and you don't come across presumptuous or judgmental.

Talking about Outsiders

A cheap way to denounce evil practices is to attribute them to third parties who are not present in the room and who therefore cannot defend themselves. There are two problems with this technique:

- 1- You may create or exacerbate a paranoid us-versus-them mentality that thwarts the Great Commission by reinforcing bigotry or prejudice.
- 2- Your description will not be valid for all the members of the group, and if anyone in your congregation knows someone who belongs to the group but does not fit your characterization, it will discredit yourself in their eyes.

For example, suppose you are incensed by a recent civil suit in which a lawyer got a large percentage of his client's exorbitant settlement, and you want to use that as an illustration in your sermon. You might be tempted to characterize lawyers as obsessed with money. However, if a member of your congregation is related to a lawyer who nearly bankrupted himself by taking on a pro bono case, you will put that member in distress and you will lose not only him, but all the other people in whom he seeks solace.

Whenever you characterize a group, make sure that the characterization is specific. Make sure that your condemnation is conditional and admits to exceptions, and that you hold even the vilest members of the group as lovable and redeemable.

Jesus on Sermon Illustrations

Jesus Christ used illustrations. What he said though still influences people today. If you study the things he said and the way he talked you'll find he taught largely with illustrations. In fact the Bible itself says that Jesus would not speak without the use of Parables (illustrations) ("Therefore speak I to them in parables" Matt. 13:13). And many times when those that he was speaking to did not fully grasp what he was saying, he would employ illustrations and after he did this, his audience would grasp what he was telling them. There you have a testimony of just how powerful illustrations can be in your preaching and teaching.

- I- Follow Jesus' example. ***He never draws a lesson from the lives of historical heroes. He tells no anecdotes about Judas Maccabee or Antiochus Epiphanes, historical figures everyone knew about at the time. He doesn't draw any lessons from the incidents that occurred during that war, even though it liberated Judea and made it an independent country until the Romans came. Jesus' lessons come from stories about anonymous people in everyday situations.***
- II- Follow Jesus' example. ***Use a broad variety of illustrations from everyday life, make sure they are pointedly relevant, use them judiciously and sparingly, keep the details sparse, and get to the point quickly.***
- III- Follow Jesus' example. ***Invert the congregation's expectations when you characterize groups to make a point. Ordinary Judeans in the first century respected Pharisees, scribes, and rich people because they were suspicious of Samaritans, tax collectors, and poor people. So Jesus uses Pharisees, scribes, and rich people as the bad guys in His illustrations, and He uses Samaritans, tax collectors, and poor people as the good guys.***

The Functional Use of Illustrations

Illustrations need not be long or complicated. If they are it's just going to be harder on you and on your hearers to get the point of what you are saying. Instead simple illustrations not filled with text

details but that get right to the point is what you want in your illustrations. If you have too many details the listener is going to get exhausted listening to an illustration that has turned into a full blown story.

The transition is also an important element of your illustration telling. You want to find an area in your illustration that parallels the most with the point you are really trying to get across to your hearers. When you find the place to end your illustration you need to transition into your point.

Illustrations also work well at the very beginning of your sermon or lesson. Usually you want something to attract attention to your whole discussion. Illustrations attract attention and can bring the ears of your hearers to your message. That's why starting out with a simple illustration can benefit you. It also will benefit you because, usually, telling illustrations is fun and easier than having to explain the main point of your sermon or lesson. So by doing that in the beginning you are building your own confidence in your message for the rest of your sermon or lesson.

Where to find Illustrations

If you're looking for ideas of illustrations you can check the Internet for various stories to pick from. However the greatest key I have found to finding good illustrations is just by good reading. Usually I'll pickup illustrations for my preaching from things I've read in the past from magazines, books, news items, facts or internet web sites. So maybe you have something in your memory to use for your illustrations. These stories need to be maintained in a file or computer database (There was a program that was an app available that came with MS-Windows until Win98 (very simple but it will work). "AZZ Cardfile" is a simple database program I use for many of these tasks (Has many features not found in Windows Cardfile, will work "portable" from a flash drive). Parson's "Bible Illustrator" ver. 3 is great too - It was made to manage illustrations. (Uses the topics list of the Thompson Chain Bible, there are many supplements to download free from the Internet). There might be other programs to use but you must start today. Your collection will grow if you think "Illustrations"...

The Conclusion of the Matter

Remember that giving illustrations is fun for the preacher or teacher. When you think back to your message you may find that the most fun came when you talked about the illustration. If you have fun with your illustrations your audience will have fun listening to them. So don't be afraid to be lively even a little emotional and energetic when telling your illustration.

This collection represents many of my favorite illustrations. You may have heard many of them before but, here, I have them expressed in text for you to use in many ways (devotional reading, support for your writing, and illustrations for your sermons and lessons). This book is sent out to help preachers and teachers with their preparation for the pulpit or podium.

Illustrations for the Preacher and Teacher

America

The United States and Her Citizens

French writer Alexis de Tocqueville, after visiting America in 1831, said, "I sought for the greatness of the United States in her commodious harbors, her ample rivers, her fertile fields, and boundless forests – and it was not there. I sought for it in her rich mines, her vast world commerce, her public school system, and in her institutions of higher learning – and it was not there. I looked for it in her democratic Congress and in her matchless Constitution – and it was not there. Not until I went into the churches of America and heard her pulpits flame with righteousness did I understand the secret of her genius and power. America is great because America is good, and if America ever ceases to be good, America will cease to be great!" – Alexis de Tocqueville.

Apathy

If the Stars Came out Once a Year

"Emerson said that if the stars came out only once a year, everyone would stay up all night to behold them. We have seen the stars so often that we don't bother to look at them anymore. We have grown accustomed to our blessings."

Anger

Walt Frazier's Productive Anger

Many years ago during a Knicks-Bullets playoff game, one of the Bullets came up from behind the great Walt Frazier and punched him in the face. Strangely, the referee called a foul on Frazier. Frazier didn't complain. His expression never changed. He simply called for the ball and put in seven straight shots to win the game, an amazing display of productive anger.

There's Nothing Wrong With Losing My Temper Mr. Sunday

A lady once came to Billy Sunday and tried to rationalize her angry outbursts. "There's nothing wrong with losing my temper," she said. "I blow up, and then it's all over."

"So does a shotgun," Sunday replied, "and look at the damage it leaves behind!"

Assurance

Ironside's More Sure Word

Many years ago I was holding a series of evangelistic meetings in a little country schoolhouse some miles out of Santa Cruz, California. One day I was out driving with a kindly old gentleman who was attending the services nightly, but who was far from being sure of his personal salvation. As we drove along a beautiful, winding road, literally embowered with great trees, I put the definite question to him, "Have you peace with God?" He drew rein at once, stopped the horse, and exclaimed, "Now that's what I brought you here for. I won't go another foot until I know I am saved, or else know it is hopeless to seek to be sure of it."

"How do you expect to find out?" I inquired. "Well, that is what puzzles me. I want a definite witness, something that I cannot be mistaken about." "Just what would you consider definite, some inward emotion or stirring?" "I can hardly say, only most folks tell us they felt some powerful change when they got religion. I have been seeking that for years, but it has always eluded me."

"Getting religion is one thing; trusting Christ may be quite another. But now suppose you were seeking salvation, and suddenly there came to you a very happy feeling, would you be sure then that you were saved?" "Well, I think I would."

Then, suppose you went through life resting on that experience, and at last came down to the hour of death. Imagine Satan telling you that you were lost and would soon be beyond hope of mercy, what would you say to him? Would you tell him that you knew all was well, because you had such a happy emotional experience years before? What if he should declare that it was he who gave you that happy feeling, in order to deceive you, could you prove it was not?" "No," he answered thoughtfully, "I couldn't. I see that a happy feeling is not enough." "What would be enough?"

"If I could get some definite word in a vision, or a message from an angel, then I could be sure." "But suppose you had a vision of a glorious angel, and he told you your sins were forgiven, would that really be enough to rest on?" "I think it would. One ought to be certain if an angel said it was all right." "But if you were dying and Satan was there to disturb you, and told you that you were lost after all, what could you say?" "Why, I'd tell him an angel told me I was saved." "But if he said, 'I was that angel. I transformed myself into an angel of light to deceive you. And now you are where I wanted you - you will be lost forever.' What then could you say?"

He pondered a moment or two, and then replied, "I see, you are right; the word of an angel won't do. "But now," I said, "God has given something better than happy feelings, something more dependable than the voice of an angel. He has given His Son to die for your sins, and He has testified in His own unalterable Word that if you trust in Him all your sins are gone. Listen to this: 'To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.' These are the words God spoken through His apostle Peter, as recorded in Acts 10:43.

Atheism

If He Isn't in Heaven, You Ask Him

There was a Christian woman who had to do a lot of traveling for her business, so naturally she did a lot of flying. Flying made her extremely nervous, so she always took her Bible along with her to read since it helped relax her on the long flights.

One time, she was sitting next to a man. When he saw her pull out her Bible, he gave a little chuckle, smirked, and went back to what he was doing. After a while, he turned to her and asked, "You don't really believe all that stuff in there do you?"

The lady replied, "Of course I do. It is the Bible." He said, "Well, what about the guy that was swallowed by the whale?" She replied, "Oh, Jonah. Yes, I believe that, it is in the Bible." He asked, "Well, how do you suppose he survived all that time inside the whale?" The lady said, "Well, I don't really know. I guess when I get to heaven, I will ask him." "What if he isn't in heaven?" the man asked sarcastically. "Then you can ask him," replied the lady.

The Parting of the Red Sea

A boy was sitting on a park bench with one hand resting on an open Bible. He was loudly proclaiming his praise to God. "Hallelujah! Hallelujah! God is great!" he yelled without worrying whether anyone heard him or not. Shortly after, a man came along who had recently completed some studies at a local university. Feeling himself very enlightened in the ways of truth and very eager to show this enlightenment, he asked the boy about the source of his joy.

"Hey" asked the boy in return with a bright laugh, "Don't you have any idea what God is able to do? I just read that God opened up the waves of the Red Sea and led the whole nation of Israel right through the middle." The enlightened man laughed lightly, sat down next to the boy and began to try to open his eyes to the "realities" of the miracles of the Bible. "That can all be very easily explained. Modern scholarship has shown that the Red Sea in that area was only 10-inches deep at that time. It was no problem for the Israelites to wade across."

The boy was stumped. His eyes wandered from the man back to the Bible lying open in his lap. Content that he had enlightened a poor, naive young person to the finer points of scientific insight, he turned to his way. Scarcely had he taken two steps when the boy began to rejoice and praise God louder than ever.

before. The man returned to ask the reason for this resumed jubilation. "Wow!" exclaimed the boy happily. "God is greater than I thought! Not only did He lead the whole nation of Israel through the Red Sea, He topped it off by drowning the whole Egyptian army in 10-inches of water!"

God Doesn't Always Settle His Accounts in October

An Atheist farmer often ridiculed people who believed in God. He wrote the following letter to the editor of a local newspaper: "I plowed on Sunday, planted on Sunday, cultivated on Sunday, and hauled in my crops on Sunday; but I never went to church on Sunday. Yet I harvested more bushels per acre than anyone else, even those who are God-fearing and never miss a service." The editor printed the man's letter and added this remark: "God doesn't always settle His accounts in October."

Bible

The Graduation

A young man was getting ready to graduate from college. For many months he had admired a beautiful sports car in a dealer's showroom, and knowing his father could well afford it, he told him that was all he wanted. As Graduation Day approached, the young man awaited signs that his father had purchased the car. Finally, on the morning of his graduation, his father called him into his private study. His father told him how proud he was to have such a fine son, and told him how much he loved him. He handed his son a beautifully wrapped gift box. Curious, and somewhat disappointed, the young man opened the box and found a lovely, leather-bound Bible, with the young man's name embossed in gold. Angry, he rose his voice to his father and said "with all your money, you give me a Bible?" and stormed out of the house. Many years passed and the young man was very successful in business. He had a beautiful home and wonderful family but realized his father was very old, and thought perhaps he should go to him. He had not seen him since that graduation day. Before he could make arrangements, he received a telegram telling him his father had passed away, and had willed all of his possessions to his son. He needed to come home immediately and take care of things. When he arrived at his father's house, sudden sadness and regret filled his heart. He began to search through his father's important papers and saw the still gift-wrapped Bible, just as he had left it years ago. With tears, he opened the Bible and began to turn the pages. His father had carefully underlined a verse, Matt. 7:11, "And if ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father which is in Heaven, give to those who ask Him?" As he read those words, a car key dropped from the back of the Bible. It had a tag with the dealer's name, the same dealer who had the sports car he had desired. On the tag was the date of his graduation, and the words PAID IN FULL.

What do we miss by failing to open God's Word?

The Bible has an Answer for Everything

A new pastor was visiting in the homes of his parishioners. At one house it seemed obvious that someone was at home, but no answer came to his repeated knocks at the door. Therefore, he took out a card and wrote: "Revelation 3:20" on the back of it and stuck it in the door. When the offering was processed following Sunday, he found that his card had been returned. Added to it was this cryptic message: "Gen 3:10." Reaching for his Bible to check out the citation, he broke up in gales of laughter. Revelation 3:20 begins "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." Genesis 3:10 reads, "I heard your voice in the garden and I was afraid for I was naked." The Bible has an answer for everything.

I Filed Chapter 11

Christians have learned over the centuries to use the Bible as their guide. When the preacher's car broke down on a country road, he walked to a nearby tavern to use the phone. After calling for a tow truck, he spotted his old friend, Frank, drunk and shabbily dressed at the bar. "What happened to you, Frank?" asked the minister. "You used to be rich." Frank told a sad tale of bad investments that were threatening him financially. "Go home," the preacher said. "Open your Bible at random, stick your finger on the page and there will be God's answer." Some time later, the preacher bumped into Frank, who was wearing a Gucci suit, sporting a Rolex watch and had just stepped out of a Mercedes. "Frank," said the preacher, "I am going to heaven."

to see things really turned around for you." "Yes, preacher, and I owe it all to you," said Frank. "I my Bible, put my finger down on the page and there was the answer - Chapter 11."

It would not be wise to use this method, however the answers to all of life's problems are found in Word.

It's a BMW not a Porsche

A hispanic man walked up to a fancy house and knocked on the door, saying "I'm really down on my luck, and would really appreciate any help that you could give me." The owner said rather gruffly, "Eve penny I have, I earned. I'm not going to give you a handout. However, if you walk around back, you'll fir a brush and a can of paint. If you paint the porch, come back here and I'll give you what I think you're worth." 15 minutes later the hispanic man knocked again on the front door.

The owner was shocked, and said "How did you finish so quickly?" The hispanic man said, "Well, I worked as hard as I could because I really wanted to please you. By the way, there's something that yo should know: it's a BMW, not a Porsche."

God has given us a clear concise record of His word and what He want's us to do.

John Thorpe Convicted by His Own Preaching

"After hearing George Whitfield preach in May 1750, John Thorpe and three friends went to a taver and began mimicking Whitfield. At Thorpe's turn, he grabbed a Bible, jumped on a table, and shouted, will beat you all!' But his eyes fell on 'Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.' Thorpe was sudden struck by his sinfulness, and he stopped the charade and began preaching in earnest. Two years later I became one of John Wesley's itinerant preachers."

The Bible is a living breathing book that has the power to change lives and show men how sinfi really are.

I Followed the Code

In 1992 Hurricane Andrew hit southern Florida, leaving behind an estimated \$12 billion in damages people dead and thousands homeless. A TV news camera crew was filming this devastation when they c to a neighborhood where all the homes were flattened except for one. The owner was outside cleaning up his yard, so the crew stopped and asked, "Sir, why is your house the only one still standing? How did you manage to escape the severe damage of the hurricane?" "I built the house myself," the man replied. "Ia built it according to the Florida state building code. When the code called for 2'X6' roof trusses, I used 2 X 6' rooftrusses. I was told that a house built according to code could withstand a hurricane. I did, and it did. I suppose no one else around here followed the code."

You home can weather the storms of life if you will just follow the code.

They all Lived and They all Died

A London merchant named Henry Goodyear was inclined to scoff at the Bible. But one Sunday, just to please his niece, he went to church. The young lady was greatly disappointed when she learned that the pastor's message was based on the fifth chapter of Genesis. As she listened to the monotonous list of names being read, she wondered why God had permitted him to pick such an uninteresting passage. She feared her uncle would close his mind to those gloomy verses. As they walked home, little did she know that even the tread of her uncle's feet, every throb of his heart seemed to repeat the doleful refrain, "And he died! And he died!"

The next day he could not concentrate on his work. That night he searched for a half-forgotten family Bible. Finding it, he read once again, "And all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years: and he died.. And all the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years: and he died.. And all the days of Enosh were nine hundred and five years: and he died." The simple story was the same for the good as well as the wicked: "He lived - and he died." Henry Goodyear thought, "Now I'm living, but someday I too must die, and then where will I spend eternity? That very night he asked the Lord Jesus to forgive him and make him His child.

This perfectly illustrates the convicting power of God's Word.

Painting Over the Lines

In California some years ago, some kids decided to play a practical joke on unknowing travelers. They took some black paint and darkened the white lines on the highway. And then they took white paint and painted the white lines going off the road toward a cliff. Along that dark highway came an unsuspecting family in their automobile. The father was driving, his wife was beside him and their two children sat in back seat. The father drove the car along the path of the white lines at full speed and drove through the guardrail and off the side of the hill. The entire family died. They were led astray.

It is important to know your Bible. There are many whom the father of all lies has used to conc clear lines drawn in God's word and make a whole new set of lines. Don't be led Astray.

A Message From Above

Eighty National Guard soldiers from Fort Dix were fighting a huge forest fire. They had become surrounded by the horrendous fire and were uncertain of how they would escape this danger. To their re an airplane flew overhead and dropped three weighted notes. With the notes they received directions o to escape. The pilot could see from above a way of escape. When they read the note, they fled. They did n doubt the authority of the pilot, they fled to safety. Fortunately, they received a message of escape from above. That is what God offers every individual. A message from above.

Three Feet Deeper

There is a true story about a man who went West to seek his fortune in gold. This man was one lucky ones. He found gold and quite a bit of it.

He began to mine his gold using only a few tools. But, finding this to be too slow and difficult, he traveled back East to interest his friends and relatives in his venture. While there, he raised enough m to buy the necessary mining equipment.

Now, with enough financial support, the man went back to his gold mine. After a period of time, his debtors were all being paid off, and he was about to become a very wealthy man. Suddenly, however, h dream collapsed. The gold mine went dry!

Disgusted, the man sold his mining equipment to a junk dealer. And, thinking the mine to be wor he gave the deed to the junk dealer.

The junk dealer called in a mining engineer to study the mine. The engineer finished his study and reported that only "three feet deeper" was another vein of gold. And so, the junk dealer became rich w the other man learned a costly lesson.

It is a sad fact that many are satisfied with a "surface" knowledge of God's word. If they would c a little deeper they would find treasures to sustain them for a lifetime

Hierro's Will in a Book

Vido Nati, a student in Barcelona, Spain, was working on a thesis for his doctor's degree. In the cour of his research he scoured the university library for the writings of Hierro, an obscure philosopher of the eighteenth century whose writings had been generally neglected. After a lengthy search he unearthed volume by that author. As he leafed through it he came across a document written by Hierro in 1741. It turned out to be his will, and it entitled all his earthly goods to the first man who would study his book...I must have realized it would be neglected by unappreciative successors.

The Spanish court declared the will legal, and Vido Nati collected nearly a quarter of a million c from Hierro's estate!

Many people have neglected God's book down through the ages but for the ones who study it, th God's will and treasure that will sustain them for a lifetime.

The Gutenberg Bible

A man interested in old books met an acquaintance who had just thrown away a Bible from the attic his ancestral home. "Somebody named Guten-something had printed it," he told the first man. "Not Gutenberg!" gasped the book lover. "You idiot. You've thrown away one of the first books ever printed.. copy sold at auction recently for almost \$5 million and over a million people a year from all over the wor travel to look at it." The second man was unmoved. "My copy wouldn't have brought a dime," he said.

"Some fellow named Martin Luther had scribbled all over it in german."

A Value cannot be ascribed to this Bible that was disregarded. Nor can a value be placed on the wonderful truths that are missed by any other person who neglects God's word.

Bitterness

Ruben Hurricane Carter

We could all learn much from what Ruben Hurricane Carter said about bitterness. Carter was a celebrated black boxer, who was falsely charged and wrongly convicted of murder. On June 17, 1966, two black men walked into the Lafayette Grill in Paterson, New Jersey, and shot three people to death. Carter and an acquaintance fit the description of the murderers - they fit the description in that they were two men. So Carter was convicted and jailed, but he never shut up. The fiercely outspoken boxer maintained claims of innocence and became his own jailhouse lawyer. After serving nineteen years, he was finally released. As a free man, Carter reflected on how he has responded to injustice in his life.

The question invariably arises, it has before and it will again: "Rubin, are you bitter?" And in answer to that I will say, "After all that's been said and done-the fact that the most productive years of my life, between the ages of twenty-nine and fifty, have been stolen; the fact that I was deprived of seeing my children grow up-wouldn't you think I would have a right to be bitter? Wouldn't anyone under those circumstances have a right to be bitter? In fact, it would be very easy to be bitter. But that has never been my nature, or my lot, to do things the easy way. If I have learned nothing else in my life, I've learned that bitterness only consumes the vessel that contains it. And for me to permit bitterness to control or to injure my life in any way whatsoever would be to allow those who imprisoned me to take even more than the 19 years they've already taken. Now that would make me an accomplice to their crime.

Calvary

A Bridge Instead of a Fence

Once upon a time two brothers who lived on adjoining farms fell into conflict. It was the first serious rift in 40 years of farming side by side, sharing machinery, and trading labor and goods as needed without a hitch. Then the long collaboration fell apart. It began with a small misunderstanding and it grew into a major difference, and finally it exploded into an exchange of bitter words followed by weeks of silence. One morning there was a knock on John's door. He opened it to find a man with a carpenter's toolbox. "I'm looking for a few days work" he said. "Perhaps you would have a few small jobs here and there I could help with? Could I help you?" "Yes," said the older brother. "I do have a job for you. Look across the creek at that farm. That's my neighbor, in fact, it's my younger brother. "Last week there was a meadow between us and he took his bulldozer to the river levee and now there is a creek between us. Well, he may have done this to spite me, but I'll go him one better. See that pile of lumber by the barn? I want you to build me a fence, an 8 foot fence, so I won't need to see his place or his face anymore."

The carpenter said, "I think I understand the situation. Show me the nails and the post-hole digger and I'll be able to do a job that pleases you." The older brother had to go to town, so he helped the carpenter get the materials ready and then he was off for the day. The carpenter worked hard all that day measuring, sawing, nailing. About sunset when the farmer returned, the carpenter had just finished his job. The farmer's eyes opened wide, his jaw dropped. There was no fence there at all. It was a bridge - a bridge stretching one side of the creek to the other! A fine piece of work handrails and all - and the neighbor, his younger brother, was coming across, his hand outstretched. "You are quite a fellow to build this bridge after all I said and done." The two brothers stood at each end of the bridge, and then they met in the middle, taking each other's hand. They turned to see the carpenter hoist his toolbox on his shoulder. "No, wait! Stay a few days. I've a lot of other projects for you," said the older brother. "I'd love to stay on," the carpenter said, "but, I have many more bridges to build."

The Cross serves as a bridge that can reconcile a spitefully wicked man to a Holy God.

A Twisted Bike and The Lord's Supper as Fresh Reminders

Roger Rose said that when he was a boy, his family lived on a farm alongside a dirt road. Only on rare occasions would an automobile pass by. But one day as Roger's young brother was crossing the road on a bicycle, a car came roaring down a nearby hill, struck the boy, and killed him. Roger said, "Later, when my father picked up the mangled, twisted bike, I heard him sob out loud for the first time in my life. He carried it to the barn and placed it in a spot we seldom used."

Father's terrible sorrow eased with the passing of time, but for many years whenever he saw that bicycle tears began streaming down his face." Roger continued, "Since then I have often prayed, 'Lord, keep the memory of Your death as fresh as that to me!'

Every time I partake of Your memorial supper, let my heart be stirred as though You died only yesterday. Never let the observing of the Lord's Supper become a mere formality, but always a tender and touching experience."

I Didn't Lose it, I Gave it

Canadian author William D. Matheson, in "My Grandfather's War", tells of a veteran who walked through the streets of his hometown with an empty sleeve. When a passerby commented on the loss of his arm, the veteran replied, "Losing implies that I do not know where it went. I didn't lose it. I gave it." This describes what Jesus did for us. He didn't lose His life on the cross, He gave it. Jesus willingly took our place at Calvary. He suffered and died in our place.

Character

If You Think You Can Write a Better Hymn, Then Why Don't You

A young boy complained to his father that most of the church hymns were boring to him—too far behind the times, tiresome tunes and meaningless words. His father put an end to his son's complaints by saying, "If you think you can write better hymns, then why don't you?" The boy went to his room and wrote his first hymn, "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross." The year was 1690, the teenager was Isaac Watts. "Joy to the World" is also among the almost 350 hymns written by him.

Be a Solution to the problem, not an Addition.

Michael Jordan Keeps His Word

Until 1997 Michael Jordan, indisputably the leading player in the NBA for over a decade, was never the highest paid player. When asked why he did not do what so many other players do—hold out on their contracts until they get more money—Michael replied, "I have always honored my word. I went for security. I had six-year contracts, and I always honored them. People said I was underpaid, but when I signed on the dotted line, I gave my word."

Three years later, after several highly visible players reneged on their contracts, a reporter asked Michael Jordan once again about being underpaid, and he explained that if his kids saw their dad breaking a promise, how could he continue training them to keep their word? By not asking for a contract renegotiation, Michael Jordan spoke volumes to his children. He told them, "You stand by your word, even when that might go against you." His silence became a roar.

The Man in the Glass

When you get what you want in your struggle for self, And the world makes you King for a day, go to the mirror and look at yourself, And see what that guy has to say.

For it isn't your Father, or Mother, or Wife, Who judgement upon you must pass. The feller who's verdict counts most in your life Is the guy staring back from the glass.

He's the feller to please, never mind all the rest, For he's with you clear up to the end, And you passed your most dangerous, difficult test If the guy in the glass is your friend.

You may be like Jack Horner and "chisel" a plum, And think you're a wonderful guy, But the man in the glass says you're only a bum If you can't look him straight in the eye.

You can fool the whole world down the pathway of years, And get pats on the back as you pass, But

final reward will be heartaches and tears If you've cheated the guy in the glass.

I'd Rather You Walk With the Bases Loaded

Some years ago, when Earl Weaver was manager of the Baltimore Orioles, Pat Kelly, one of his outfielders, showed up late for practice. When Weaver asked him why he was late, Kelly, a born-again believer said, "I was in my quiet time with the Lord. You do want me to walk with the Lord, don't you?" Weaver remarked, "Actually, Pat, I'd rather you walk with the bases loaded."

Quiet time with the Lord is no excuse to disregard our obligations.

The Conscience Fund

Guilt moved a former American soldier in 1974 to send a note to the United States government that "Enclosed is \$10 for blankets I stole during World War II. My mind could not rest. Sorry I'm late. I want to be ready to meet God." His money was placed in the "Conscience Fund," which was started in 1811. The fund was started because people began sending money to the government because of a guilty conscience. It has taken in a total of over \$3.5 million and receives an average of \$45,000 each year. Thus is the power of guilt!

Back Taxes

A letter and a Money Order for \$150 was received at the office of the IRS. The letter said that the writer had not reported his income correctly the previous year and he had been bothered in his conscience. The Money order was an attempt to clear his guilt. If that did not do it he would send more. Thus is the power of guilt!

One Who Can't be Trusted With Butter Can't be Trusted With Money

A bank employee was due for a good promotion. One day at lunch the president of the bank, who happened to be standing behind the clerk in the cafeteria, saw him slip two pats of butter under his slice of bread so they wouldn't be seen by the cashier. That little act of dishonesty cost him his promotion. Just cents' worth of butter made the difference. The bank president reasoned that if an employee cannot be trusted in little things he cannot be trusted at all.

We Failed to Put That Glass in our Facility

A man in New York sold break-proof glass. He was on TV advertising the product. He was interesting because he used many stunts to show that the glass could not be broken. One day he called the police to his building. He had been robbed. When asked how the thieves had gotten into the building, he admitted that they had broken a window and climbed through. "But aren't you the man who advertises the break-proof glass on TV?" "Yes," he replied, "but I am ashamed to admit that we failed to put that glass in our own facility."

Christmas

The Boys Will be Home for Christmas

In December 1903, after many attempts, the Wright brothers were successful in getting their "flying machine" off the ground. They were exhilarated over the success and sent a telegraph message to their mother, Katherine, stating: "We have actually flown 120 feet. Will be home for Christmas." She went immediately to the editor of the local newspaper and showed him the message.

He glanced at it and responded, "How nice. The boys will be home for Christmas." He totally missed the point! Man had flown for the first time!

It is easy for that to happen today, especially at Christmas time. Jesus and His miraculous birth can easily get left out of the modern Christmas. Family gatherings, delicious meals, decorations, and gift buying can blot out the glorious birth of Christ.

History is Made in a Cradle...

Take the year 1809. The international scene was tumultuous. Napoleon was sweeping through Australia. Blood was flowing freely. Nobody then cared about babies. But the world was overlooking some terribly significant births.

For example, William Gladstone was born that year. He was destined to become one of England's finest statesmen. That same year, Alfred Tennyson was born to an obscure minister and his wife. The child would one day greatly affect the literary world in a marked manner.

On the American continent, Oliver Wendell Holmes was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts. And not far away in Boston, Edgar Allan Poe began his eventful, albeit tragic, life. It was also in that same year that a physician named Darwin and his wife named their child Charles Robert. And that same year produced the cries of a newborn infant in a rugged log cabin in Hardin County, Kentucky. The baby's name? Abraham Lincoln.

If there had been news broadcasts at that time, I'm certain these words would have been heard: "The destiny of the world is being shaped on an Austrian battlefield today." But history was actually being shaped in the cradles of England and America. Similarly, everyone thought taxation was the big news - when Jesus was born. But a young Jewish woman cradled the biggest news of all: the birth of the Saviour. - Adapted from Charles Swindoll

Church

Just a Private

General Eisenhower once rebuked one of his Generals for referring to a soldier as "just a Private." He reminded him that the Army could function better without Generals than it could without its foot soldiers. "If this war is won," he said, "it will be won by Privates." In the same way, the common, ordinary, one-tale Christians are the very backbone of the church.

A Service Department not a Showroom

In Christian Reader Jim Corley tells of a conversation he had with a friend named Alex who attended his church. Alex was struggling over his many failures to live the Christian life the way he knew he should. One day they met at the car dealership where Alex worked. Corley writes: That day in his office Alex got straight to the point. "Jim, I feel like a hypocrite every time I go to church because I fail to live for Christ so often." "Alex, what do you call this part of the dealership?" I asked, nodding to the area outside his cubicle.

"You mean the showroom?" I smiled. "Yes. And what's behind the showroom, past the parts counter?" "The service department," Alex said confidently. "What if I told you I didn't want to bring my car to the service department because it was running rough?" "That would be crazy! That's the whole point of service departments - to fix cars that aren't running right." "You're absolutely right," I replied. "Now, let's get back to our initial conversation. Instead of thinking of church as a showroom where image is everything, start thinking of it as God's service department. Helping people get back in running order with God is what the church is all about."

Sosa's Unselfish Attitude

In the 1998 baseball season, slugger Sammy Sosa was the first to reach 66 home runs, but McGwire ended the season four ahead with a record setting 70 roundtrippers.

It's conceivable that Sosa might have hit more. As the season wore on, McGwire's St. Louis Cardinals were not in contention, so he had the freedom to swing for the fences at every bat. Sosa's Cubs were contending for a play-off berth, so he needed to put the requirements of his team above his own goal. Often he attempted to reach first by getting a walk, or he would deliver a base hit to advance a runner. Sosa said, "My team's desires are more important than my quest for a home run record."

His attitude and hitting helped his Cubs make it to the playoffs, and Sosa went on to be voted Most Valuable Player of the National League.

The Most Valuable people in the church are the ones who are more concerned about the church mission than being in the spotlight.

The Mangled Man was Your Son

The phone rang in a high society Boston home. On the other end of the line was a son who had

returned from Viet Nam and was calling from California. His folks were the cocktail-circuit, party king drinking, wife swapping, gambling, all the other things that go with it. The boy said to his mother, "I just called to tell you that I wanted to bring a buddy home with me." His mother said, "Sure, bring him along for a few days." "But, mother, there is something you need to know about this boy. One leg is gone, one arm's gone, one eye's gone, and his face is quite disfigured. Is it all right if I bring him home?"

His mother said, "Bring him home for a few days." The son said, "You didn't understand me, mother. I want to bring him home to live with us." The mother began to make all kinds of excuses about embarrassment and what people would think...and the phone clicked. A few hours later the police called from California to Boston. The mother picked up the phone again. The police sergeant at the other end said, "We just found a boy with one arm, one leg, one eye and a mangled face, who has just killed himself with a shot in the head. The identification papers on the body say he is your son."

Jesus didn't come to save the righteous but the lost. The church doors should be opened to help those that are mangled.

The Sunday I Miss, Jesus Shows Up

It was Palm Sunday and Sue's five year old son had to stay home from church, with a neighbour, because of a bad throat. When the family returned home carrying palm branches, he asked what they were for. His mother explained, "People held them over Jesus' head as he walked by." "Wouldn't you know it," the boy fumed, "The one Sunday I don't go, Jesus shows up!"

That's why it is good to be faithful to church. The Service you miss may be the one where Jesus shows up.

Those Who Died in the Service

One Sunday morning, Pastor McGhee noticed that little Alex was staring up at the large plaque that was in the foyer of the church. The 7-year-old had been staring at the plaque for some time, so the pastor walked up, stood beside the boy, and said quietly, "Good morning, Alex." "Good morning, Pastor," replied the boy, focused on the plaque. "Pastor McGhee, what is this?" Alex asked. "Well, son, these are all the people who have died in the service," replied the pastor. Soberly they stood together, staring at the large plaque.

Little Alex's voice barely broke the silence when he asked quietly, "Which one, the 9:00 or the 11:00 service?"

Two Sets of Deer Antlers

In an old monastery near Babenhausen, Germany, you can observe two pairs of deer antlers permanently interlocked and hanging on the wall. They were found in that position many years ago by someone walking through the woods. Apparently the animals had been fighting fiercely, and their horns became so tangled that they could not pull themselves apart. The result for both was that they died from hunger. A speaker said, "I would like to carry those horns into every home and school as a warning against fighting to the last ditch to have your own way! I would also bring them into every church so that their silent message might sink deep into the hearts of those who seem to delight in 'locking horns' with other Christians at the least provocation."

Blest be the Tie That Binds

It was on the day of his departure from Wainsgate Church in England that pastor John Fawcett wrote the words to one of our most famous hymns. After 17 years he was leaving Wainsgate to go to a new pastoral in London. As he and his family loaded their possessions and were ready to leave, something happened to their hearts as they said good-bye. The congregation was so much a part of his life that he literally decided that he could not leave them. So he unpacked his carriage and offloaded his possessions and stayed after the next day was Sunday, and the congregation tearfully sang the hymn their pastor had penned the previous midnight - "Blest Be the Tie That Binds." John Fawcett stayed at Wainsgate Church another 37 years.

Battlefield Bible Church

Dennis De Haan tells about the day he and his wife were driving to the Antietam National Battlefield near Sharpsville, Maryland: "A neat red-brick church grabbed my attention. I pulled the car into the church parking lot, reached for my camera, and said to Dorothy, 'I've got to get a picture of this.' In big white let-

on the building was the name 'Battlefield Bible Church.' How typical, I thought, feeling a bit judgment about some congregations that claim to be true to the Bible yet are so prone to infighting. Gently God's Spirit began challenging my spirit.

I decided to chat with the pastor. He smiled when I told him what caused me to stop and capture his church on film. 'There are three reasons behind our name,' he said. 'First, it identifies our location. Second, we want to be on the battlefield for Christ. And third, we never want this church to become a battlefield.' I suddenly realized that this congregation had not lost sight of where the real action is.

Comfort

It is Well With my Soul

"It Is Well with My Soul" is a very influential hymn penned by hymnist Horatio Spafford and composed by Philip Bliss. This hymn was written after several traumatic events in Spafford's life. The first was the death of his only son in 1871, shortly followed by the great Chicago Fire which ruined him financially (he had been a successful lawyer). Then in 1873, he had planned to travel to Europe with his family on the S. S. Ville Du Havre, but sent the family ahead while he was delayed on business. While crossing the Atlantic the ship sank rapidly after a collision with another ship, and all four of Spafford's daughters died. Spafford's wife Anna survived and sent him the now famous telegram, "Saved alone." Shortly afterwards, as Spafford traveled to meet his grieving wife, he was inspired to write these words as his ship passed near where his daughters had died.

When peace like a river, attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll;
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,
It is well, it is well, with my soul.

It is well, with my soul,
It is well, with my soul,
It is well, it is well, with my soul.

Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,
Let this blest assurance control,
That Christ has regarded my helpless estate,
And hath shed His own blood for my soul.

My sin, oh, the bliss of this glorious thought!
My sin, not in part but the whole,
Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more,
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!

It is well, with my soul,
It is well, with my soul,
It is well, it is well, with my soul.

And Lord, haste the day when my faith shall be sight,
The clouds be rolled back as a scroll;
The trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descend,
Even so, it is well with my soul.

It is well, with my soul,
It is well, with my soul,
It is well, it is well, with my soul.

Commitment

My Commitment as a Christian

I'm a part of the fellowship of the unashamed. I have HOLY SPIRIT power. The dye has been cast. I have stepped over the line. The decision has been made. I'm a disciple of HIS. I won't look back, let up, slow down, back away, or be still.

My past is redeemed, my present makes sense, my future is secure. I'm finished and done with low living, sight walking, small planning, smooth knees, colorless dreams, tamed visions, mundane talkin cheap living, and dwarfed goals.

I no longer need pre-eminence, prosperity, position, promotions, plaudits, or popularity. I don't have to be right, first, tops, recognized, praised, regarded, or rewarded. I now live by faith, lean on HIS presence, walk by patience, lift by prayer, and labor by power.

My face is set, my gait is fast, my goal is heaven, my road is narrow, my way is rough, my companion few, my guide reliable, my mission clear. I cannot be bought, compromised, detoured, lured away, turn away, turned back, deluded or delayed. I will not flinch in the face of sacrifice, hesitate in the presence of adversary, negotitate at the table of the enemy, ponder at the pool of popularity, or meander in the maze of mediocrity.

I won't give up, shut up, let up, until I have stayed up, prayed up, payed up, preached up, for the cause of CHRIST. I am a disciple of JESUS. I must go 'til HE comes, give 'til drop, preach 'til all know, work 'til HE stops me. And when HE comes for HIS own, HE will have no problems recognizing me - my banner will be clear! (The author seems to be unknown. It is said to be by a young African pastor. The report is that the persecuted pastor signed it and tacked it on the wall of his house for all to see.)

Compassion

The Stamp Machine Won't ask About my Arthritis

Mamie Adams told how she always went to a branch post office in her town because the postal employees there were so friendly. She went there to buy stamps just before Christmas one year and the lines were particularly long. Someone pointed out that there was no need to wait in line because there was a stamp machine in the lobby. To which Mamie replied, "I know, but the stamp machine won't ask me about my arthritis."

People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. People just want to be cared for.

The Night we Sang the National Anthem with Natalie Gilbert

He's not a mother. I don't know if he is a father. I do know that he is a coach. I don't know if he calls himself Christian. I do know that he made a decision to invest his life in another's life and I think that must have made the entire heavenly chorus sing out. A simple, yet profound decision that affected not only one young girl, but a stadium full of people, who, for a moment, were given the opportunity to invest themselves in another's life, by his example.

On Monday night, April 28th, during the NBA playoffs, Maurice Cheeks, the Coach of Portland's Trail Blazers, left his team's bench to put his arm around 13 year old Natalie Gilbert as she stood at mid court holding a microphone, but fumbled the words to the national anthem, and stopped singing, and then stood alone, visibly in despair, as all eyes were on her and her silence. Can you imagine her humiliation? Coach Maurice Cheeks went beyond the job description of coaching his team that night and entered into the landscapes of a young girl's life as he went to her, put his arm around her and told her not to worry, that everything was going to be okay.

Coach Cheeks started singing, and Natalie joined in, and then he motioned for everyone to sing...as they did. And when it was over, he was overheard to say to her, "this is the night that I and a stadium full of people got to sing the national anthem with Natalie Gilbert!" and she and those there walked away with lifted spirits, because a coach went beyond job description, got up off his bench, and showed us how to live in relationship, investing ourselves in another.

A Friendly Gesture That Saved Jackie Robinson's Career

Jackie Robinson was the first black to play major league baseball. Breaking baseball's color barrier, faced jeering crowds in every stadium. While playing one day in his home stadium in Brooklyn, he committed an error. The fans began to ridicule him. He stood at second base, humiliated, while the fans jeered. Then, shortstop Pee Wee Reese came over and stood next to him. He put his arm around Jackie Robinson and faced the crowd. The fans grew quiet. Robinson later said that arm around his shoulder saved his career.

What a difference even a small friendly gesture might make in someone's life.

Compromise

This Generation Dropped it

A little girl called out, "Mommy, you know that vase in the china cabinet - the one that's been handed down from generation to generation?" "Yes, dear, I know which one you mean. What about it?" "Well, Mommy, I'm sorry, but this generation just dropped it!"

As God's people we must strive to preserve the faith "once delivered to the saints."

Consecration

Bobby the Skye Terrier

In the 1850's a man by the name of John Gray took a job with the Edinburgh Scotland Police Department as a night watchman. To keep him company during the long Scottish nights, he took on a partner, a Skye Terrier named Bobby. For several years, the two were a familiar sight as they trudged along the streets and lanes of the city. In 1858, John Gray died of tuberculosis and was buried in Greyfriars Kirkyard. After he was buried, Bobby the terrier refused to leave his master's grave. He sat there day and night, leaving only at 1:00 PM to go to a local coffee house he had frequented with his master each day. He would go there, the owner would give the little dog a meal, and he would return to his post at the grave of John Gray. The gardeners and keepers of the graveyard tried to evict the little dog, but they had no success. Eventually, they built a small shed beside the grave so the dog could have some sort of shelter. For the next fourteen years until its own death in 1872, Bobby the Skye terrier maintained his vigil at his master's grave.

After Bobby's death, a bronze statue was erected and placed in the graveyard with this inscription, Greyfriars Bobby - died 14th January 1872 - aged 16 years - Let his loyalty and devotion be a lesson to us all. If a little dog can be that devoted to a dead master, how much more should we be devoted to our living Lord?

Conviction

Conviction on the Golf Course

A well-known professional golfer was playing in a tournament with President Gerald Ford, fellow pro Jack Nicklaus, and Billy Graham. After the round was over, one of the other pros on the tour asked, "Hey what was it like playing with the President and Billy Graham?" The pro said with disgust, "I don't need B. Graham stuffing religion down my throat!" With that he headed for the practice tee. His friend followed and after the golfer had pounded out his fury on a bucket of golf balls, he asked, "Was Billy a little rough on you out there?" The pro sighed and said with embarrassment, "No, he didn't even mention religion." Astonishingly, Billy Graham had said nothing about God, Jesus, or religion, yet the pro stomped away after the game accusing Billy of trying to ram religion down his throat. By R.C. Sproul, The Holiness of God.

Lasting Conviction

Sociology professor Anthony Campolo recalls a deeply moving incident that happened in a Christian junior high camp where he served. One of the campers, a boy with spastic paralysis, was the object of heartless ridicule. When he would ask a question, the boys would deliberately answer in a halting, mimicking way. One night his cabin group chose him to lead the devotions before the entire camp. It was one more effort to have some "fun" at his expense. Unashamedly the spastic boy stood up, and in his strained, slurred manner – each word coming with enormous effort – he said simply, "Jesus loves me – a I love Jesus!" That was all. Conviction fell upon those junior-highers. Many began to cry. Revival gripped the camp. Years afterward, Campolo still meets men in the ministry who came to Christ because of that testimony. In *Our Daily Bread*, April 1, 1993.

Conviction: on the Other Hand

Tevye, the Jewish dairy farmer in the musical *Fiddler on the Roof*, lives with his wife and five daughters in czarist Russia. Change is taking place all around him and the new patterns are nowhere more obvious than in the relationship between the sexes. First, one of his daughters announces that she and a tailor have pledged themselves to each other, even though Tevye had already promised her to the village butcher, a widower. Initially Tevye will not hear of his daughter's plans, but he finally has an argument with himself and decides to give in to the young lovers' wishes. A second daughter also chooses the man she wants to marry: An idealist revolutionary. Tevye is rather fond of him, and, after another argument with himself, he again concedes to the changing times.

A while later, Tevye's third daughter wishes to marry. She has fallen in love with a young Gentile. This violates Tevye's deepest religious convictions: It is unthinkable that one of his daughters would marry outside the faith. Once again, he has an argument with himself. He knows that his daughter is deeply in love and he does not want her to be unhappy. Still, he cannot deny his convictions. "How can I turn my back on my faith, my people?" he asks himself. "If I try and bend that far, I'll break!" Tevye pauses and begins a response: "On the other hand..." He pauses again, and then he shouts: "No! There is no other hand!" By Richard J. Mouw, *Uncommon Decency*, pp. 123-124.

Truth or Fiction??

There is a tale told of that great English actor Macready. An eminent preacher once said to him: "I wish you would explain to me something." "Well, what is it? I don't know that I can explain anything to a preacher." "What is the reason for the difference between you and me? You are appearing before crowds night after night with fiction, and the crowds come wherever you go. I am preaching the essential and unchangeable truth, and I am not getting any crowd at all." Macready's answer was this: "This is quite simple. I can tell you the difference between us. I present my fiction as though it were truth; you present truth as though it were fiction." By G. Campbell Morgan, *Preaching*, p. 36.

Against All the World

Athanasius, early bishop of Alexandria, stoutly opposed the teachings of Arius, who declared that Christ was not the eternal Son of God, but a subordinate being. Hounded through five exiles, he was finally summoned before emperor Theodosius, who demanded he cease his opposition to Arius. The emperor reproved him and asked, "Do you not realize that all the world is against you?" Athanasius quickly answered, "Then I am against all the world." Source Unknown.

Mob Violence and Conviction

That great American hero, editor, school teacher, and Presbyterian clergyman Elijah Lovejoy left the pulpit and returned to the press in order to be sure his words reached more people. The Civil War might have been averted and a peaceful emancipation of slaves achieved had there been more like him. After observing one lynching, Lovejoy was committed forever to fighting uncompromisingly the awful sin of slavery. Mob action was brought against him time after time; neither this nor many threats and attempts on his life deterred him. Repeated destruction of his presses did not stop him. "If by compromise is meant that I should cease from my duty, I cannot make it. I fear God more than I fear man. Crush me if you will, but I shall die at my post..." And he did, four days later, at the hands of another mob. No one of the ruffians was prosecuted or

indicted or punished in any way for this murder. (Some of Lovejoy's defenders were prosecuted! One of mob assassins was later elected mayor of Alton!) However, note this: One young man was around who was deeply moved by the Lovejoy martyrdom. He had just been elected to the Illinois legislature. His name, Abraham Lincoln. By Paul Simon, "Elijah Lovejoy," Presbyterian Life, 18:13 (November 1, 1965), quoted in K. Mennenger, Whatever Became of Sin, p. 210.

A Philosopher's Conviction

David Hume, 18th century British philosopher who rejected historic Christianity, once met a friend hurrying along a London street and asked where he was going. The friend said he was off to hear George Whitfield preach. "But surely you don't believe what Whitfield preaches do you?" "No, I don't, but he does." By John R.W. Stott, Between Two Worlds, p. 270.

Courage

The Courage of Hugh Latimer

The dauntless courage of this noble servant of God was seen in his conduct towards Henry VIII. One year's day, instead of carrying, according to the custom of that age, a rich gift to the king, he presented him with the New Testament, a leaf of which was turned down at this passage, "Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." This might have cost him his life; but bluff Hal, instead of being angry, admired the good man's courage. Upon a certain occasion, when preaching before Henry, Hugh, as was his wont, spake his mind very plainly, and the sermon displeased his majesty; he was therefore commanded to preach again the next Sabbath, and to make an apology for the offense he had given. After reading his text, the bishop began his sermon:—"Hugh Latimer, dost thou know before whom thou art this day to speak? To the high and mighty monarch, the king's most excellent majesty, who can take away thy life if thou offendest; therefore take heed that thou speakest not a word that may displease! But then consider well, Hugh, do thou not know from whence thou comest; upon whose message thou art sent? Even by the great and mighty God! who is all present! and who beholdeth all thy ways! and who is able to cast thy soul into hell! Therefore, take care that thou deliverest thy message faithfully." He then proceeded with the same sermon he had preached the preceding Sabbath, but with considerably more energy. The sermon ended, the courtiers were full of expectation to know what would be the fate of this honest and plain-dealing bishop. After dinner, the king called for Latimer, and with a stern countenance asked him how he durst preach in such a manner. He, falling on his knees, replied, his duty to his God and his prince had enforced him thereto, and that he had merely discharged his duty and cleared his conscience by what he had spoken. Upon which the king, rising from his seat, and taking the good man by the hand, embraced him, saying, "Blessed be God, who have so honest a servant."

Death

Return to Sender

At our local crematorium families are given the chance to chose the music CD they would like to play during the service to. One family asked to enter to Elvis Presley's hit, "Love me Tender."

Well the day of the funeral arrived and the music was started ready for the family to walk in during the service.

Unfortunately the wrong track number was entered into the CD player, and the family found themselves walking in to, "Return to Sender." To be absent from the Body is to be Present With the Lord.

You Are Scheduled to Pitch This Saturday

I heard about a preacher and his song leader were both avid baseball fans. These guys didn't just like baseball, they lived, breathed and ate baseball. When they weren't involved in church duties, they were attending a game, watching a game on the tube, or coaching a Little League game in the park. One day, one of them mused about whether there would be baseball in heaven and quite a conversation ensued. Everything is perfect in heaven, isn't it? We will want for nothing in heaven, will we? Surely there will be baseball.

in heaven! They finally made a pact that whichever one got to heaven first would somehow try to contact the other and let him know for a fact whether they had baseball. Well, as it turned out, the preacher died. A week later he appeared to the song leader in a dream and said, "Well, I have some good news and some bad news. The good news is, there is indeed baseball in heaven. The bad news is, you're scheduled to pit this Saturday." We all have an appointment in Heaven, for which we will not be late.

Congratulations on Your New location

A bank in Binghamton, New York, had some flowers sent to a competitor who had recently moved in a new building. There was a mix-up at the flower shop, and the card sent with the arrangement read, "With our deepest sympathy." The florist, who was greatly embarrassed, apologized. But he was even more embarrassed when he realized that the card intended for the bank was attached to a floral arrangement to a funeral home in honor of a deceased person. That card read, "Congratulations on your new location."

For a person who leaves this world knowing Christ it would be well in order to congratulate them on their new location. To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.

Three Incorrect Names on the Vietnam Wall

The Vietnam Memorial in Washington, D.C., is an imposing structure. It is a black granite wall upon which are carved the names of 58,156 young Americans who died in combat during that conflict. Since 1982, this memorial has stood as a silent, dark reminder of the price of war. Three names appear on the wall which are of great interest: Robert Bedker, Willard Craig, and Darrall Lausch. These three names were carved on the wall by mistake. They are listed as dead, but they are alive.

For the child of God, death may carve our name on a tombstone, but we will still be very much alive.

Right Back in the Courtroom

Gary Tindle was in a California courtroom charged with robbery. He asked and got from Judge Armando Rodriguez permission to go to the bathroom. While the bathroom door was guarded, Mr. Tindle climbed up onto the plumbing and opened a panel in the ceiling. Sure enough, a dropped ceiling with space between the panels. He climbed up and into the crawlspace and headed south. He'd gone thirty-plus feet when the ceiling panel broke from under him and dropped him to the floor. Right back in Judge Rodriguez's courtroom.

No matter how hard one tries to escape it: "...it is appointed unto man once to die and after that judgment."

Sister, Are You Sinking

One of Spurgeon's favorite stories was about a dying Welsh lady who was visited by her minister. Seeing her weakened condition, he bent over and whispered, "Sister, are you sinking?" She didn't reply, but looked at him as if she couldn't believe her ears. He repeated his question, "Sister, are you sinking?" With a supreme effort she raised herself a little and then said triumphantly, "Sinking? Oh, no! Did you ever know a sinner to sink through a Rock? If my hope was built on the shifting sands, I'd be greatly distressed; but thank God, Pastor, I'm resting my all upon the Rock of Ages!"

My Home is on the Other Side

A Christian who always had a secret dread of having to pass through the portals of death frequently prayed to be released from this disturbing fear. Finally one night while walking past a graveyard, she found the deliverance she sought. Seeing a little girl entering the gate, she inquired, "Don't you dread crossing the cemetery alone, especially when it is so dark?" "Afraid?" replied the child. "Oh, no! My home is just on the other side of the cemetery!" The woman thought about those words and realized that her heavenly home was just on the other side of the cemetery. She lost her fear of dying.

Determination

Daddy Can I Have a Drink

A little girl said, "Daddy, may I have a drink?" He said, "honey, daddy is working on a project, give me just a minute." After several repeat attempts the little girl's daddy said "If you ask me for a drink one more time, I am going to get up and spank you." She said, "Daddy, when you get up to spank me, would you bri-

me a drink, please?"

If There is no Road

A South African missionary society wrote to David Livingstone, 'Have you found a good road to where you are? We want to know how to send some men to join you.' Livingstone wrote back: 'If you have men who will come only if they know there is a good road, I don't want them. I want men who will come if there is no road.'

We Have Light Because a Man Wouldn't Quit

On October 18, 1879, a young inventor by the name of Thomas A. Edison sat in his laboratory. He was weary from 13 months of repeated failure in his search for a filament that would stand the stress of electric current. To add to his problems, the men who had backed him financially were now refusing to put up any additional funds. Having tried every known metal in his experiment, Edison was admittedly baffled. Casually picking up a bit of lampblack, he mixed it with tar and rolled it into a thin thread. Suddenly the thought struck him, why not try a carbonized cotton fiber? For 5 hours he worked on the first filament, but it broke before he could remove the mold. Two entire spools of thread were used in similar fruitless efforts. At last a perfect strand emerged, only to be ruined when he tried to place it inside a glass tube. Still Edison refused to admit defeat. He continued to work without sleep for two more days and nights. Eventually he managed to insert one of the crude carbonized threads into a vacuum-sealed bulb. When we turned on the current, he said, "the sight we had so long desired to see finally met our eyes!"

His persistence in the face of the most discouraging odds gave the world one of its greatest inventions - the electric light!

The Best way to Acquire Knowledge

A devoted follower of Socrates asked him the best way to acquire knowledge. Socrates responded by leading him to a river and plunging him beneath the surface. The man struggled to free himself, but Socrates kept his head submerged. Finally, after much effort, the man was able to break loose and emerge from the water. Socrates then asked, "When you thought you were drowning, what one thing did you want most of all?" Still gasping for breath, the man exclaimed, "I wanted air!" The philosopher wisely commented, "When you want knowledge as much as you wanted air, then you will get it!" The same is true with our desire for righteousness.

Three Frogs on a Log

There are three frogs that were sitting on a log. The first frog decided to jump into the pond. How many frogs were left on the log? If you said two, you were wrong. The frog that decided to jump off the log never actually left. That's the way it often is with decisions we make for Christ. We make decisions, but never follow through.

Find Me the Man That Keeps Knocking Everybody Down

A coach was talking to one of his players, and said. "There is one kind of player we want on our team. What kind is that? Well, there is the kind of player that you knock him down and he stays down." Player said, "We don't want that kind, do we coach?" "No. Then there is the kind that gets knocked down and gets up. But then the next time he is knocked down he stays down." Player said, "We don't want that kind, do we coach?" "No. Then there is the kind that gets knocked down and gets up, he gets knocked down and gets up. He keeps getting knocked down and he keeps getting up." The Player said, "Yea, that is the kind of player we want, right coach?" "No! Find me that man that keeps knocking everybody down, that is the kind of player we want!!!" God help us as Christians to be on the Offensive and Knock Some Things Down

Disciple

Counting the Cost

A shoplifter was caught red-handed trying to steal a watch from an exclusive jewelry store. "Listen," the shoplifter, "I know you don't want any trouble either. What do you say I just buy the watch, and we forget about this?" The manager agreed and wrote up the sales slip. The crook looked at the slip and said,

"This is a little more than I intended to spend. Can you show me something less expensive?"

Many have contemplating following Christ until it came time to pay the price. Then they settle something less expensive.

The Testimony of an Enron Employee

The May 2002 issue of Fast Company tells the stories of five people who worked for Enron, a company that in 2001 filed for the largest bankruptcy in U.S. history.

One person profiled in that article was Phyllis Anzalone. She went to work for the company in 1996 selling energy supply contracts. Her personal earnings quickly went to six figures. She says, "As devastating as it was, I'm glad I did it. It was like being on steroids every day." But when Enron went bankrupt, she lost roughly one million dollars. She says, "The whole Enron debacle was probably the best thing that ever happened to me. I was so emotionally attached to that company, and it took so much life out of me."

Many others would say the same thing if they could be detached from what consumes their life and them from following Christ.

Fifteen Minutes Each Day

When Billy Sunday was saved and joined the church, a fellow believer said to him, "William, there are three simple rules I wish you'd practice. If you do, no one will ever write 'backslider' after your name." The counselor then gave Mr. Sunday these worthwhile suggestions: "Take 15 minutes each day to let God talk to you; allow 15 minutes to talk to Him; and then spend 15 minutes telling others about the Savior." The young Christian was deeply impressed, and he determined to make these rules the pattern for his life. From that time forward he never failed to set aside the first part of the morning to be alone with God, studying and meditating upon His Word. After this he engaged in a session of fervent prayer. Then at each opportunity throughout the day he would witness to sinners and talk with saints about the Lord. Later when he became a nationally known evangelist, important letters and telegrams often flooded his home; but he wouldn't respond to them until he had completed his devotions. He attributed much of the blessing of his ministry to the fact that his first impressions of the day came directly from Heaven itself.

Two Crabs in a Bucket

If you've ever been crabbing, there's this old fisherman's adage which says... If you put a live crab in a bucket, you must put a lid on the bucket because the crab can climb out, but, if you put two crabs in the bucket, there is no need to put a lid on it because neither crab will allow the other one to escape. They'll latch onto each other and keep pulling each other back down into the bucket.

If you plan to grow there will be people in your life that you will have to limit your exposure to. Otherwise they will continually pull you down.

Faith

The African Impala

The African impala can jump to a height of over 10 feet and cover a distance of greater than 30 feet. These magnificent creatures can be kept in an enclosure in any zoo with a 3-foot wall. The animals will not jump if they cannot see where their feet will fall.

Faith is the ability to trust what we cannot see, and with faith we are freed from the flimsy enclosures of life that only fear allows to entrap us.

If I Had Your Bank Book I Would Answer Half Your Prayers

Dr. G. Campbell Morgan tells of visiting the home of a very wealthy Christian man. On one occasion, during family prayers in the morning, the man prayed tenderly and eloquently for the missionaries and the heathen. When he had finished, his teen-age son said to him, "Dad, I like to hear you pray for missionaries." His dad said, "Well, son, I am glad to hear that." And the boy said, "But do you know what I was thinking while you were praying? I thought, 'If I had your bank book I would answer half your prayers.'" Faith without works is dead!

I Believe Many Things I Don't Understand

D. L. Moody said, "I am glad there's a depth in the Bible I know nothing about, for it shows its Divine authorship. A man once came to me with a very difficult passage and said, 'Mr. Moody, how do you explain that?' I replied, 'I don't.' 'But how do you interpret it?' 'I don't interpret it.' 'Well, how do you understand it?' 'I don't understand it.' 'What do you do with it?' 'I believe it! I believe many things I don't understand. In John 3, Jesus reminded Nicodemus that if he was unable to grasp earthly things, heavenly things would be far beyond him. Nature itself is filled with wonders we cannot fathom so how can we expect to know everything spiritual?'"

Family

Family Altars that Started a Fire

The Christian home is the place where personal morality and church vitality is developed. Richard Baxter discovered this truth in his own ministry. As a young preacher he was called to a large church which was filled with people more interested in their social status than in understanding and obeying the Word of God. Baxter was disturbed by the spiritual coldness of his members and found his work very difficult. After much prayer to know the will of God, the young pastor found the answer. "I believe the way to save the church and this community," he said to a friend, "is to establish family altars in the homes of my members. For the next 3 years he visited his members and pleaded with them to set aside a time each day for prayer and Bible study.

Soon his congregation began to catch fire and had a new zeal for God. Those who rededicated their homes exerted such a strong spiritual influence that his church was revived. His ministry became increasingly effective because many of his people had followed the example of the Joshua who stated, "for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

The Edwards and the Jutes Family

The father of Jonathan Edwards was a minister and his mother was the daughter of a clergyman. Jonathan Edwards was a great servant of God and reared his family to love God. Of the descendants of Jonathan Edwards there were 14 presidents of colleges; more than one hundred college professors; more than one hundred lawyers; thirty judges; sixty medical doctors; more than 100 clergymen, missionaries, and theology professors; and about sixty authors. All that from one family with a godly father!

The Jutes family lived about the same time as Jonathan Edwards. Someone studied their descendants as well. The father in the Jutes family was ungodly and lazy. The family was said to have cost the state of New York an enormous sum of money. Their entire record is one of pauperism and crime, insanity and imbecility. Among 1,200 known descendants, 300 were professional paupers, 440 wrecked their physical lives with wicked living; 60 were habitual thieves; 130 were convicted criminals; 55 were prostitutes; 7 of them were convicted murderers!

Giving

Plow Work for the Lord

Dr. Roy L. Laurin tells in one of his books about a Christian business man who had gone out to Korea on a visit. As he was traveling about he noticed one day in a field beside the road a rather strange scene. He saw a boy about eighteen or nineteen years of age pulling a plow, and holding the handles of the plow was an older man, evidently the boy's father. This tourist took a snapshot of it and said to his guide, "What a strange thing that is. I suppose they must be very poor people." The guide, who was a Christian, said, "Yes, they are poor. I know the story behind this. A number of months ago, when the church to which these people belong was erecting a new building all the members were asked to contribute something.

This father and his boy wanted to give but they felt they had nothing to give, until it dawned upon them that they could give their only ox. So they killed the ox, cut it up, sold the meat in the market and gave all the proceeds of it to the building fund of the church. This spring they have had to pull the plow themselves. The businessman said, "That must have been a most remarkable sacrifice for them." The guide said, "T

did not think so. They thought they were rather fortunate to have an ox to give." That man came back to own pastor in this country, took the picture to him and told him the story, and said, "Pastor, I want to dou my giving to this church this year. I have never given anything that cost me something. I want to do som plow work for the Lord Jesus Christ!"

The \$3,500 Pledge

On one occasion Dr. George W. Truett, an outstanding preacher of his day, was asked to help a struggling congregation raise money for their church building. The amount still needed was \$6,500. Ti called it the slowest, most reluctant effort to obtain funds he had ever encountered. When the people re to pledge more than \$3,000, he exclaimed in exasperation, "What do you expect of me? I don't have the other \$3,500 you need to reach your goal. I'm just a guest here today!" Suddenly a woman near the bac the audience stood up to speak. Looking at her husband seated on the platform recording the pledges, s said in a quivering voice, "Charlie, I wonder if you would be willing for us to give our little home? We we offered exactly \$3,500 cash for it yesterday. If the Savior gave His life for us, wouldn't He be pleased if w made this sacrifice for Him?"

Truett said, "The fine fellow responded with equal generosity, 'Yes, Jennie, I was thinking the same thing.' Turning to me with tears in his eyes, he said, 'Brother Truett, if it's needed, we'll raise our pledge by \$3,500.' Silence reigned for a few moments, and then some of the folks began to sob. Those who 15 minutes earlier had refused to do more, now either added their names to the list or increased their dona

In a short time their goal had been achieved, and Charlie and Jennie didn't have to forfeit their

I Didn't Give my Ring to You, I Gave it to the Lord

A well-known preacher who was making an appeal for funds before a large congregation. He asked people to bring their gifts to the front of the church as an act of willing and cheerful liberality. Many can forward to present their offerings; among them was a little lame girl who hobbled along at the rear of th procession. Pulling a ring from her finger, she placed it on the table at the foot of the platform and then r her way back up the aisle. After the service an usher was sent to bring her into a side room where the preacher met her and said, "My dear, I saw what you did tonight. It was beautiful. But the response of th people has been so generous that we have more than enough to take care of our needs. We don't feel rig about keeping your treasured ring, so we've decided to give it back to you." To his surprise the little girl shook her head in refusal. With a look of rebuke in her eyes, she said, "Pastor, you don't understand. I di give my ring to you; I gave it to the Lord."

God's Will

Gary Kildall, The Man Ahead of Bill Gates

In 1973 Gary Kildall wrote the first popular operating system for personal computers, named CP/M. According to writer Phillip Fiorini, IBM approached Kildall in 1980 about developing the operating syst for IBM PCs. But Kildall snubbed IBM officials at a crucial meeting, according to another author, Paul Carroll. The day IBM came calling, he chose to fly his new airplane. The frustrated IBM executives turne instead to Bill Gates, founder of a small software company called Microsoft, and his operating system na MS-DOS.

Fourteen years later Bill Gates was worth more than eight billion dollars. Of Kildall, who has since di author Paul Carroll says, "He was a smart guy who didn't realize how big the operating system market w become."

God desires for us to have an abundant live centered in His will. Don't resist His plan, you have i what you are missing out on!

That Was Only the Parade

A little boy who lived far out in the country in the late 1800s had reached the age of twelve and had never in all his life seen a circus. You can imagine his excitement, when one day a poster went up at sch announcing that on the next Saturday a traveling circus was coming to the nearby town.

He ran home with the glad news and the question, "Daddy, can I go?" Although the family was poor, the father sensed how important this was to the lad. "If you do your Saturday chores ahead of time," he "I'll see to it that you have the money to go."

Come Saturday morning, the chores were done and the little boy stood by the breakfast table, dressed in his Sunday best. His father reached down into the pocket of his overalls and pulled out a dollar bill—the most money the little boy had possessed at one time in all his life. The father cautioned him to be careful and then sent him on his way to town.

The boy was so excited, his feet hardly seemed to touch the ground all the way. As he neared the outskirts of the village, he noticed people lining the streets, and he worked his way through the crowd until he could see what was happening. Lo and behold, it was the approaching spectacle of a circus parade! The parade was the grandest thing this lad had ever seen. Caged animals snarled as they passed, bands beat rhythms and sounded shining horns, midgets performed acrobatics while flags and ribbons swirled overhead. Finally, after everything had passed where he was standing, the traditional circus clown, with floppy shaggy pants, and a brightly painted face, brought up the rear. As the clown passed by, the little boy reached into his pocket and took out that precious dollar bill. Handing the money to the clown, the boy turned around and went home. What had happened? The boy thought he had seen the circus when he had only seen the parade! Are you seeing all that God has for you or are you settling for the Parade.

Guidance

Two Shepherds Calling Their Sheep

Maze Jackson tells of going to the Holy Land and seeing two shepherds bring their sheep to a river to drink water. The sheep proceeded to intermingle with each other. Maze wondered how the Shepherds would separate them.

After a while, one shepherd stood a short distance from the sheep and began to call out with a loud voice in words which Maze could not understand. Some of the sheep came out of the water and followed that shepherd. The other shepherd stood across the way and called out with similar words. Then the others followed him. Maze said that the incident reminded him of what Jesus said, "I know my sheep, I call them by name, and they follow me." Maze said he tried to call out and could not even get a goat to follow him.

Manhattan for Twenty Four Dollars

Peter Minuit purchased Manhattan Island from Native Americans for \$24 worth of trinkets, beads and knives. Over the next few years other colonists arrived and a large settlement was established on Manhattan Island. The chief port on Manhattan was named New Amsterdam (later changed to New York). now it is a strip of land that is the backbone of America's economy...if you place your life in the hands of the devil and live for the world you will end up with little to show for it like the Indians, but in the hands of God you could never imagine what God could do.

I Need to Find it to Know Where I'm Going

Former Senator Dwight W. Morrow searched in vain to find his railroad ticket as he was on a train leaving New York City. "I must find that ticket," he muttered. The conductor, who stood waiting beside him, said, "Don't worry about it Mr. Morrow. We know you had a ticket. Just mail it to the railroad when you find it." "That's not what's troubling me," replied Morrow. "I need to find it to know where I'm going." Many people travel through life with no clear direction.

I Was Afraid You Would Tell me No

A woman lost her life savings in a bogus investment scheme sold to her by a skillful swindler. When her money disappeared and her dreams were shattered, she went to the Better Business Bureau. "Why didn't you call us first?" the representative asked. "Didn't you know about us?" "Of course I did," the lady responded. "I've known about you for years. But I didn't come because I was afraid you'd tell me no." Many times we don't want God's direction on a certain matter because it will not be the answer we want to hear.

Heaven

I'll Walk Slow so You Can Catch Up

Dr. Adrian Rogers told of a great evangelist (the editor thinks it was J. Harold Smith) who's wife went on to Heaven ahead of him. He was married to his childhood girlfriend, Murtis, for 64 years.

When they first met, He immediately had a crush on Murtis. He took quick action and wrote her a note asking for permission to walk her home after school. But first, he had to clean the teacher's erasers. He asked if she would wait for him. Murtis wrote back that she needed to get home, but that she would walk slowly. Obviously, she didn't mind if he caught up with her. This was the beginning of a romance that lasted a lifetime.

Many years later, Murtis was the first one to go. She told her husband as she lay dying, "I'm going to heaven to be with Jesus." And then she added, "But I'll walk slow."

Some of us have loved ones on the other side who await us. I believe with all my heart that they are walking slowly so we can catch up. I love the beautiful old hymn that affirms, "When we all get to heaven what a day of rejoicing that will be." I am so thankful today for faith. For Jesus. For the promise of a wonderful reunion on the other side.

This is Just the Elevator

The story is told of a farmer who called into a radio station during a contest, and being the fifth caller he was given an all expense trip paid to New York City. The farmer was absolutely overwhelmed by his trip and the new experiences. A stretch limo picked him up and took him to the airport; his first flight; his first glimpse of New York City, etc.

As the bell hop carried this farmer's luggage into the five star hotel, they opened the door and entered a room. The bell hop noticed a look of disappointment on the farmer's face and asked, "Sir, is something wrong? You don't look like you're satisfied." The farmer said, "I shouldn't complain because I haven't paid for any of this, but I am a little disappointed that my room is so small and that I have to share it with two other people (there were two other people in the room also). The bell hop looked at the farmer with a puzzled look and said, "Sir, your room is 60 floors up. This is just the elevator to take us there."

Well now, before we chuckle at this farmer, we may find that we are making the same mistake that he made. Sometimes people will question whether or not God really loves them. They wonder why pain, suffering, and sorrow are a part of their lives if God loves them.

The answer is simple. We, like the farmer, have confused our journey with our destination. Friends never promised Heaven on Earth, but he did promise Heaven after Earth to all who are faithful.

Next time you're tempted, due to less than ideal circumstances, to question whether God loves you remember that this life is the journey and not the destination.

Hell

She Came to America in a Suitcase

In January 1985, a large suitcase, unmarked and unclaimed, was discovered at the customs office at Angeles International Airport. When U.S. Customs agents opened the suitcase, they found the curled-up body of an unidentified young woman.

She had been dead for a few days, according to the county coroner. As the investigation continued, it learned that the woman was the wife of a young Iranian living in the U.S. Unable to obtain a visa to enter the U.S. and join her husband, she took matters into her own hands and attempted to smuggle herself into America via an airplane's cargo bay. While her plan seemed to her simple though risky, officials were hard-pressed to understand how such an attempt could ever succeed. Even if she survived the journey in the cargo bay, she would remain an illegal alien, having entered through improper channels.

Some people believe they'll enter the kingdom of God on their own since they've been reasonably good citizens or church attendee's. But entry plans of our own design prove not only foolish but fatal.

Holy Spirit

The Water was Pumping the Man

"A.J. Gordon, one of the founders of Gordon Conwell Divinity School, told of being out walking and looking across a field at a house. There beside the house was what looked like a man pumping furiously; one of those hand pumps. As Gordon watched, the man continued to pump at a tremendous rate; he seemed absolutely tireless, pumping on and on, up and down, without ever slowing in the slightest, much less stopping. Truly it was a remarkable sight, so Gordon started to walk toward it. As he got closer, he could see it was not a man at the pump, but a wooden figure painted to look like a man. The arm that was pumping so rapidly was hinged at the elbow and the hand was wired to the pump handle. The water was pouring from the pump but not because the figure was pumping it. You see, it was an artesian well, and the water was pumping the man! When you see a man who is at work for God and producing results, recognise that it is the Holy Spirit working through him, not the man's efforts that are giving results. All he has to do - and all you have to do - is keep your hand on the handle."

You Can't Paint Like the Good Master Without His Spirit

A young Italian boy knocked at the door of an artist's studio in Rome. When it was opened, he exclaimed, "Please, madam, will you give me the master's brush?" The painter had died, and the boy, inflamed with the longing to be an artist, wished for the great man's touch.

The lady placed the requested item in the youth's hand, saying, "This is his brush; try it, my boy." With a flush of earnestness on his face, he made a supreme effort but soon found he could paint no better with it than with his own. The lady then said, "Remember, my child, you cannot imitate the great master unless you have his spirit."

Home

What is Home?

Home is a place...Home is a refuge...Home is a responsibility. Robert Frost has an interesting definition of "Home." "Home is the place where, when you have to go there, they have to take you in."

Jesus Christ

A Crippled Puppy for a Crippled Boy

A store owner was tacking a sign above his door that read "Puppies For Sale." Signs like that have a way of attracting small children and sure enough, a little boy suddenly appeared under the store owner's sign. "How much are you going to sell the puppies for?" he asked. The store owner replied, "Anywhere from \$10 to \$50."

The little boy reached in his pocket and pulled out some change. "I have \$2.37," he said. "Can I please look at them?" The store owner smiled and whistled and out of the kennel came Lady, who ran down the aisle of his store followed by five teeny, tiny balls of fur. One puppy was lagging considerably behind. Immediately the little boy singled out the lagging, limping puppy and said, "What's wrong with that little dog?" The store owner explained that the veterinarian had examined the little puppy and had discovered he didn't have a hip socket. It would always limp. It would always be lame.

The little boy became excited. "That is the little puppy that I want to buy." The store owner replied, "You don't want to buy that little dog. If you really want him, I'll just give him to you." The little boy got quite upset. He looked straight into the store owner's eyes, pointing his finger, and said, "I don't want you to give him to me. That little dog is worth every bit as much as all the other dogs and I'll pay full price. In fact, I'll give you \$2.37 now, and 50 cents a month until I have him paid for."

The store owner countered, "You really don't want to buy this little dog. He is never going to be able to run and jump and play with you like the other puppies." To this, the little boy reached down and rolled up his pant leg to reveal a badly twisted, crippled left leg supported by a big metal brace. He looked up at the store owner and softly replied, "Well, I don't run so well myself, and the little puppy will need someone to take care of him."

who understands!"

We have not a High Priest Which Cannot be Touched with the Feelings of Our infirmities, but w all Points Tempted as we are, Yet Without Sin!

You'll Find Jesus There

The surgeon sat beside the boy's bed; the boy's parents sat across from him. "Tomorrow mornin surgeon began, "I'll open up your heart..."

"You'll find Jesus there," the boy interrupted. The surgeon looked up, annoyed. "I'll cut your open," he continued, "to see how much damage has been done..."

"But when you open up my heart, you'll find Jesus in there." The surgeon looked to the parents, who sat quietly. "When I see how much damage has been done, I'll sew your heart and chest back up and I'll] what to do next."

"But you'll find Jesus in my heart. The Bible says He lives there. The hymns all say He lives there. You'll find Him in my heart." The surgeon had had enough. "I'll tell you what I'll find in your heart. I'll fin damaged muscle, low blood supply, and weakened vessels. And I'll find out if I can make you well." The boy had the last word, "You'll find Jesus there too. He lives there."

The surgeon left. The surgeon sat in his office, recording his notes from the surgery: "...damaged ac damaged pulmonary vein, widespread muscle degeneration. No hope for transplant, no hope for cure. Therapy: painkillers and bed rest. Prognosis:" here he paused, "death within one year."

He stopped the recorder, but there was more to be said. "Why?" he asked aloud. "Why did You do thi You've put him here; You've put him in this pain; and You've cursed him to an early death. Why?" The Lord answered and said, "The boy, My lamb, was not meant for your flock for long, for he is a part of My flock, and will forever be. Here, in My flock, he will feel no pain, and will be comforted as you cannot imagine. His parents will one day join him here, and they will know peace, and My flock will continue to grow."

The surgeon's tears were hot, but his anger was hotter. "You created that boy, and You created tha He'll be dead in months. Why?"

The Lord answered, "The boy, My lamb, shall come home to My flock, for he has done his duty: not put My lamb with your flock to lose him, but to retrieve another lost lamb."

The surgeon wept. The surgeon sat beside the boy's bed; the boy's parents sat across from him. ' awoke and whispered, "Did you cut open my heart?"

"Yes," said the surgeon. "What did you find?" asked the boy. "I found Jesus there," said the sur If someone could look into your heart, would they find "Jesus There"?

He Who Takes the Son, Takes All

Some time ago during the war, a famous American art collector learnt that his Son had been killed in action saving the life of another soldier. The following Christmas the soldier who survived and who him was an amateur painter, gave the art collector a simple portrait he'd sketched of his son. It was nothing] a master piece, but it became very special to the man in his loneliness. Not long afterwards the art collector died; and his paintings were to be auctioned, according to his will, on Christmas Day. To everyone's surprise the auction began with a painting which no-one had ever heard of or seen. It was the painting of the art collector's son.

"Who will open with \$100?" the auctioneer asked. Nothing was offered. It was suggested they move But the auctioneer said: "No! We must sell this painting first." Eventually a friend of the old man, not a collector, and not very rich, offered a small sum: "I knew the boy, he said, so I'd like to have it." "Will anyone go any higher?" the auctioneer asked. There was silence. So the auctioneer said: "Going once, go twice, gone." There was a huge sigh of relief around the room as people hoped they could now get on with the real business. But the auctioneer stood up, looked at the audience and declared that the auction was

There was stunned disbelief. "It's very simple," said the auctioneer. "According to the will of the f whoever takes the son....gets all." Whoever takes the Son, gets all that God has to offer!

I Don't Have to outrun the Bear

Two men were out hunting in the northern U.S. Suddenly one yelled and the other looked up to see a grizzly charging them. The first started to frantically put on his tennis shoes and his friend anxiously asked "What are you doing? Don't you know you can't outrun a grizzly bear?" "I don't have to outrun a grizzly. I just have to outrun you!" Jesus is a True Friend that will Never Leave nor Forsake You!

If You Miss Jesus, You're Out

Bobby Bowden was playing college baseball, and he had never hit a home run. Finally he hit one down the right-field line, into the corner. He rounds first and looks to the third base coach. He turned at second base was halfway to third and the coach was still waving him on. He got to home; he hit the plate. He had his first home run, he was so excited and everybody was slapping him five. Then the pitcher took the ball, threw it to the first baseman, and the umpire called him out.

Coach Bowden said, "If you don't take care of first base, it doesn't matter what you do." The same is true in life, "If you don't honor the Lord first, it doesn't matter what else you do. You're Out"

Jack Wurm's Inheritance

Columnist L.M. Boyd recently described the amazing good fortune of a man named Jack Wurm. In 1972 Mr. Wurm was broke and out of a job. One day he was walking along a San Francisco beach when he came across a bottle with a piece of paper in it. As he read the note, he discovered that it was the last will and testament of Daisy Singer Alexander, heir to the Singer sewing machine fortune. The note read, "To avoid confusion, I leave my entire estate to the lucky person who finds this bottle and to my attorney, Barry Collier, to share and share alike." According to Boyd, the courts accepted the theory that the heiress had written the note 12 years earlier, and had thrown the bottle into the Thames River in London, from where it had drifted across the oceans to the feet of a penniless and jobless Jack Wurm. His chance discovery netted him over \$6 million dollars in cash and Singer stock.

How would you like to have been making Mr. Wurm's footprints on that San Francisco beach? As a Joint Heir of Jesus Christ we have a much bigger inheritance than Jack Wurm.

A Parachute Maker

Charles Plumb, a U.S. Naval Academy graduate, was a jet fighter pilot in Vietnam. After 75 combat missions, his plane was destroyed by a surface-to-air missile. Plumb ejected and parachuted into enemy hands. He was captured and spent six years in a Communist prison. He survived that ordeal and now lectures about lessons learned from that experience.

One day, when Plumb and his wife were sitting in a restaurant, a man at another table came up and said, "You're Plumb! You flew jet fighters in Vietnam from the aircraft carrier Kitty Hawk. You were shot down!"

"How in the world did you know that?" asked Plumb. "I packed your parachute," the man replied. Plumb gasped in surprise and gratitude. The man pumped his hand and said, "I guess it worked!" Plumb assured him, "It sure did - if your chute hadn't worked, I wouldn't be here today."

Plumb couldn't sleep that night, thinking about that man. Plumb says, "I kept wondering what he might have looked like in a Navy uniform - a Dixie cup hat, a bib in the back, and bell bottom trousers. I wondered how many times I might have passed him on the Kitty Hawk. I wondered how many times I might have seen him and not even said 'Good morning, how are you,' or anything because, you see, I was a fighter pilot and he was just a sailor." Plumb thought of the many hours the sailor had spent on a long wooden table in the bowels of the ship carefully weaving the shrouds and folding the silks of each chute, holding in his hand each time the fate of someone he didn't know.

Many people don't give Christ a 2nd thought because they don't realize what he has done for them. They have never experienced His act of salvation.

Rob Cutshaw's Star of David

Unless you subscribe to The Atlanta Journal Constitution, you probably missed the story that was in the May 17, 1987 edition.

A rock hound named Rob Cutshaw owns a little roadside shop outside Andrews, North Carolina. Many in the trade, he hunts for rocks, then sells them to collectors or jewelry makers. He knows

about rocks to decide which to pick up and sell, but he's no expert. He leaves the appraising of his rocks to other people. As much as he enjoys the work, it doesn't always pay the bills. He occasionally moonlights cutting wood to help put bread on the table.

While on a dig twenty years ago, Rob found a rock he described as "purdy and big." He tried unsuccessfully to sell the specimen, and according to the Constitution, kept the rock under his bed or in a closet. He guessed the blue chunk could bring as much as \$500 dollars, but he would have taken less if something urgent came up like paying his power bill.

That's how close Rob came to hawking for a few hundred dollars what turned out to be the largest, most valuable sapphire ever found. The blue rock that Rob had abandoned to the darkness of a closet two decades ago—now known as "The Star of David" sapphire—weighs nearly a pound, and could easily sell for \$2.7 million.

To many, at some point, Jesus Christ was just a popular historical figure and after salvation He became the most precious friend ever known.

Superman Doesn't Need an Airplane

The story is told years ago that boxer Mohammed Ali was on an airplane about to take off. As the flight attendant was checking seat belts in first class, she noted that Ali didn't have his seat belt on.

"Sir, please fasten your seat belt. We're ready for take off." "Superman don't need no seat belt," replied.

The flight attendant came back without missing a beat, "And, Superman doesn't need an airplane. You need Christ whether you will admit it or not.

The Story of Dr. Claude Barlow

John Haggai in his book tells about Dr. Claude H. Barlow, a missionary to China and one of the most revered foreigners to work in that land. A strange disease for which he knew no remedy was killing people. There were no research laboratories for this disease, so Dr. Barlow conducted his own research. He studied the disease, filling a notebook with his observations.

He then procured a vial of disease germs and sailed for the United States. Before he arrived, he took the germs into his own body, then went to the John Hopkins University Hospital to be observed. Claude Barlow was very sick now. He allowed his old professors at John Hopkins to use him for experimentation. A cure was found, which a healthy Claude Barlow took back to China with him. His efforts saved countless lives. When asked about the experience,

Dr. Barlow replied, "Anyone would have done the same thing. I happened to be in a position of value and had the chance to offer my body." I doubt that just anyone would have done that, don't you?

Only a person with a very special kind of love in his or her heart would make that kind of sacrifice. He took our sin on himself that we might all be healed.

The Train

It was in 1937, Dennis Hensley tells us, when this true story took place. For the first time, he brought his 8-year-old son, Greg Griffith, to work with him to see what Daddy did all day. The little boy was wide-eyed with excitement, and he clapped his hands with glee when the huge bridge went up at the beck and call of his mighty father. He watched with wonderment as the huge boats steamed down the Mississippi River.

Twelve o'clock came, and his father put up the bridge. There were no trains due for a good while, and they went out a couple of hundred feet on a catwalk out over the river to an observation deck. They sat down, opened their brown bag, and began to eat their lunch. His father told him about some of the strange faraway lands that some of these ships were going to visit. This entranced the boy.

The time whirled by, and suddenly they were drawn instantly back to reality by the shrieking of a distant train whistle. John Griffith quickly looked at his watch. He saw that it was time for the 1:07, the Memphis Express, with 400 passengers, which would be rushing across that bridge in just a couple of minutes. He knew he had just enough time, so without panic but with alacrity he told his son to stay where he was.

He leaped to his feet, jumped to the catwalk, ran back, climbed the ladder to the control room, and put his hand on the huge lever that controlled the bridge, looked up the river and down to see if a

were coming, as was his custom, and then looked down to see if there were any beneath the bridge. And suddenly he saw a sight that froze his blood and caused his heart to leap into his throat. His boy! His boy had tried to follow him to the control room and had fallen into the great, huge gear box that had the monstrous gears that operated this massive bridge. His left leg was caught between the two main gear the father knew that as sure as the sun came up in the morning, if he pushed that lever his son would be ground in the midst of eight tons of whining, grinding steel.

His eyes filled with tears of panic. His mind whirled. What could he do? He saw a rope there in the control room. He could rush down the ladder and out the catwalk, tie off the rope, lower himself down, extricate his son, climb back up the rope, run back into the control room, and lower the bridge. No sooner had his mind done that exercise than he knew – he knew there wasn't time. He'd never make it, and there were 400 people on that train. Suddenly he heard the whistle again, this time startlingly closer. And he could hear the clicking of the locomotive wheels on the track, and he could hear the rapid puffing of the train. What could he do? What could he do! There were 400 people, but this was ... this was his son, this was his only son. He was a father! He knew what he had to do, so he buried his head in his arm and he pushed the gear forward.

The great bridge slowly lowered into place just as the express train roared across. He lifted up his tear-smeared face and looked straight into the flashing windows of that train as they flashed by one after another. He saw men reading the afternoon paper, a conductor in uniform looking at a large vest-pocket watch, ladies sipping tea out of teacups, and little children pushing long spoons into plates of ice cream.

I Have Painted Christ...

It is said that the celebrated artist, Dannecker, was asked by Napoleon Bonaparte to paint a Venus for the Louvre, and declined. An almost fabulous price was then offered, and he still refused. The insulted emperor, astonished that any one should refuse money, and still more that he should refuse him, demanded to know why he declined. "I have painted Christ and I can never lower my brush to paint an inferior subject." And it had taken him half a lifetime to paint his picture of Christ. The first time he painted Him, after eight years of labor, he asked his little daughter to look at it. Uncovering the canvas he brought her in. She clapped her hands together with an expression of intense surprise and admiration. "Who do you think it is?" he asked. "Oh," she said, "it is a great man." His countenance fell and he took his brush and daubed the picture in a perfect wreck. "I have failed. It is not Christ." He went to work again and toiled and prayed, and when he took the child in the next time there was not the same expression of wonder, delight and admiration, but tears came and she stole softly up as though it were the real Christ, whispering, "Suffer the little children to come unto me." Ah, it was Christ! The expression was there!

So there are lives that remind you of a great man, and there are others that reveal the vision of a living Savior; and they are messages that are not forgotten. All that remains is the memory of Jesus, and you will somehow your heart burned within you as you got near the Master, and you are the better for it. Thus the epistle to the Colossians is the picture of Jesus. It reveals to us the heart of Christ.

A Lamb in Place of the Steeple

In Norway there was a church which had an unusual sight. Instead of having a cross high upon its steeple, there was a wooden lamb perched above the church. Visitors were always asking about the lamb, why no cross was on the steeple. The answer was rather remarkable. It seems that while the church was being built, men were working at the very top of the steeple readying it for a cross to be attached. Just then one of the men slipped and fell to the street below. The workmen hurried down from the roof of the church fully expecting to see the worker crushed. To their surprise, he was up walking around.

How did he survive. It happened that when he fell, a flock of sheep were passing near the church. The worker had fallen into the flock, landing on a large, soft sheep. The sheep was crushed to death, but the worker lived. Remembering the Lamb slain on the cross of Calvary to redeem us from our fall, they church opted to have a lamb placed above the church.

When man had fallen in sin there was a lamb there to save him from destruction. That lamb is the Lord Jesus Christ.

All Eyes on the King

The great English preacher John Henry Jowett liked to tell about the time he attended the coronation of Edward VII. Westminster Abbey was filled with many dukes, duchesses, earls, princes, and princesses. Jowett said, "Much bowing and respect was shown as nobility of high rank entered the cathedral." When the king arrived, however, a hush came over the audience. Every eye was upon him, and no longer did the dignitaries of lower status receive the gaze and interest of the people. Everyone's attention was fixed upon their royal leader.

At times we have the opportunity to worship with noble people, but no comparison to our King.
Everyone Has the Same Life Preserver

Every cruise is the same. Soon after boarding the craft, everyone would be required to participate in a lifeboat drill. "One requirement was that everyone had to wear a life jacket. When the alarm sounds, all passengers and crew must gather at the appointed location. The scene is amazing. Every man, woman, and child on that ship was wearing the same kind and color of life jacket. Finely dressed ladies with expensive jewelry were wearing exactly the same kind of life jacket as the cleaning women. Men in elegant tuxedos wore the same life jacket as the men who worked in the kitchen.

"This is a beautiful illustration of the reality of the church. Every time the people of God gather, it is like that lifeboat drill. No matter what our status or economic level, everyone must have the same life preserver - Jesus Christ."

Do You Still Love Your Mom

Diane Downs took her children for a ride on a dark Oregon highway some years ago. She pulled a 22 caliber pistol out and shot all three of them. After a long investigation, she was arrested and tried. In the courtroom they brought evidence against her. Finally, a tense moment came. Into the court came a little child. Her name was Christie. She was one of the children and she had survived the tragic crime. The little child was asked, "Who shot your sister sitting in the front seat?" Christie answered, "My mom." Then she was asked, "Who shot your brother sitting in the back seat?" She answered, "My mom." Then came the crucial question. "Christie, who shot you?" The little girl dropped her face in her hands. She wept. The courtroom wept. Finally, she answered, "My mom." Surely the questioning could end. No. There was one more question, "Christie, do you still love your mom?" Christie answered, "Yes."

How could Christie still love her mom? It was a part of her nature as the daughter of her mom. Her mother did not deserve her love, but she loved her anyway. You and I crucified Jesus, but He says, "I still love you." That is the grace of God!!!

Joy

I Stepped Outside the Circle three Times

One day, while a blonde was out driving her car, she ran into a truck. The truck's driver made her pull over into a parking lot and get out of the car. He took a piece of chalk and drew a circle on the pavement. He told her to stand in the middle and not leave the circle. Furious, he went over to her car and slashed her tires. The blonde started laughing. This made the man angrier so he smashed her windshield. This time the blonde laughed even harder. Livid, the man broke all her windows and keyed her car.

The blonde is now laughing hysterically, so the truck driver asks her what's so funny. The blonde replies, "When you weren't looking, I stepped out of the circle three times!"

In Paul's letter to the church at Philippi, he teaches that a Christian can have joy even when our life is falling apart

Leadership

I Look for Gold Instead of Dirt

At one time Andrew Carnegie was the wealthiest man in America. He came to America from his native Scotland when he was a small boy, did a variety of odd jobs, and eventually ended up as the largest

manufacturer in the United States. At one time he had forty-three millionaires working for him. In those days a millionaire was a rare person; conservatively speaking, a million dollars in his day would be equivalent to at least twenty million dollars today. A reporter asked Carnegie how he had hired forty-three millionaires. Carnegie responded that those men had not been millionaires when they started working for him but had become millionaires as a result.

The reporter's next question was, "How did you develop these men to become so valuable to you that you have paid them this much money?" Carnegie replied that men are developed the same way gold is mined. When gold is mined, several tons of dirt must be moved to get an ounce of gold; but one doesn't go into the mine looking for dirt—one goes in looking for the gold.

That's exactly the way we pastors need to view our people. Don't look for the flaws, warts, and blemishes. Look for the gold, not for the dirt; the good, not the bad. Look for the positive aspects of life. Like everything else, the more good qualities we look for in our people, the more good qualities we are going to find.

He Struck Seversky in His Good Leg

Alexander de Seversky, U. S. aviator and engineer, was once visiting a fellow flyer in the hospital. The young man had just lost his leg; de Seversky, who had had an artificial leg for some time, tried to cheer him up. "The loss of a leg is not so great a calamity," he said. "If you get hit on a wooden leg, it doesn't hurt a bit! Try it!" The patient raised his walking stick and brought it down hard on de Seversky's leg. "You see," he said cheerfully. "If you hit an ordinary man like that, he'd be in bed for five days!" With that he left his friend and limped into the corridor, where he collapsed in excruciating pain. It seems the young man had struck de Seversky on his good leg!

As a Leader There are times you have to neglect your own pain in order to help someone with their problem.

What Saved Willie Mays Career

Willie Mays began his major league baseball career with only one hit in his first 26 at-bats. Though he went on to hit 660 home runs (third on the all-time list), and steal more than 300 bases, his debut was so unimpressive it seemed unlikely he would last more than a few weeks as a big-leaguer, let alone become one of the greatest to play the game.

The turning point for Mays occurred when his manager, Leo Durocher, found him crying in the dugout after yet another miserable performance at the plate. The coach put his arm around Mays and said, "What's the matter, son?" Mays said, "I can't hit up here. I belong in the minor leagues."

Durocher said this to Willie Mays: "As long as I'm manager of the Giants, you'll be my centerfielder. You know how the story ends. It wasn't long before Mays began hitting the ball, and he was on his way to becoming a legend of the game.

If Willie had been left alone in the dugout that day, his career might have ended before it started. Fortunately for him (and for baseball) someone believed in him even when he didn't believe in himself.

Shall We Gather at the River

A preacher was preaching once and made the statement "...if I had my way I'd gather all the whiskey in the world and poor it in the river." Immediately following the sermon the song leader led the congregation in "shall we gather at the river..." When selecting leaders make sure they are heading in the same direction as you.

I Love You too Much to let You Stay That Way

A handicapped girl with leg braces became discouraged with her condition and wished she could give up her physical therapy. One day when her father insisted that she continue, she fell into his arms and asked, "Daddy, don't you love me just the way I am?" Knowing how she felt, he hugged her and replied, "Yes, honey, I love you just the way you are. But I love you too much to let you stay that way."

Genuine leadership loves people the way they are and also loves them enough to tell them the truth that they don't stay that way.

Hi Joey

There was a Texas oilman who after a prolonged illness died. He had his attorney set a time to

the family to read the will. The will was read: "To my brother George, I leave my ranch. To my cousin Till I leave one of my office buildings in Houston. To my neighbor John, I leave all my oil fields." It went on and on till at the end there was one that said, "Finally, to my cousin Joey who never did anything but sit around and always wanted to be remembered in my will, 'Hi, Joey.'" Be careful about who you invest in.

Living

His Hands are Bigger Than Mine

One day little Johnny went with his mom to the old country store. The storekeeper came to him and said, "Take a handful of candy, Son." But the boy never would. Finally the storekeeper reached into the box and gave him a handful. On the way home his mother asked, "Why is it, when he asked you to take a handful, you wouldn't take it?" The boy replied, "Because his hands are bigger than mine." You can choose to live out of your own blessings or God's. Rest assured His hands are bigger than yours! Who do You Play For

Slap the Boy Next to Him

Did you hear about the boy who was away at camp and was difficult to deal with? His counselor called his mom and told her that he might need to be punished while at camp. She said, "Please don't slap Irvin, he is sensitive. Just slap the boy next to Irvin and that will scare him into submission." It is a wise person who learns from the experiences of others

Stop, Look, and Listen

Some years ago the Grand Trunk Railroad offered a reward of \$2,500.00 for the best phrase to use on their railroad signs. The phrase that won the award is one you have seen many times: "Stop, Look And Listen." That is the need today. Stop - The speed of life can keep you from looking to the Lord. Look - Stop looking only at material things and look unto Jesus - set your affections on things above. Listen - Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God! Let the Lord speak to you through His Word.

The 15/15/15 Plan

One of the greatest evangelists of all time was Billy Sunday. A former baseball player, he was converted to Christ and became a preacher. Thousands came to Christ under his preaching. He was asked the secret of his ministry. He replied that when he was saved, a man told him to use the 15/15/15 plan in his life. Fifteen minutes a day should be devoted to listening to God through His Word and prayer. Fifteen minutes a day should be added in talking to God. Fifteen minutes a day should be spent talking to someone about Jesus with the goal of winning souls.

Billy began that way and added time to his commitment. Soon God had raised him up to be one of God's greatest servants.

Love

Gladys Kidd's Introduces Self Denying Love

On May 2, 1962, a dramatic advertisement appeared in the San Francisco Examiner: "I don't want my husband to die in the gas chamber for a crime he did not commit. I will therefore offer my services for 10 years as a cook, maid, or housekeeper to any leading attorney who will defend him and bring about his vindication."

One of San Francisco's greatest attorneys, Vincent Hallinan, read or heard about the ad and contacted Gladys Kidd, who had placed it. Her husband, Robert Lee Kidd, was about to be tried for the slaying of an elderly antique dealer. Kidd's fingerprints had been found on a bloodstained ornate sword in the victim's shop. During the trial, Hallinan proved that the antique dealer had not been killed by the sword, and that Kidd's fingerprints and blood on the sword got there because Kidd had once toyed with it while playful dueling with a friend when they were both out shopping. The jury, after 11 hours, found Kidd to be not guilty. Attorney Hallinan refused Gladys Kidd's offer of 10 years' servitude. This is a preview of the self-denying love that Jesus has for us.

Marriage

She Needs That Twice a Week

After just a few years of marriage filled with constant arguments, a young man and his wife decided only way to save their marriage was to try counseling. They had been at each other's throats for some time and felt that this was their last straw. When they arrived at the counselor's office, the counselor jumped right in and opened the floor for discussion. "What seems to be the problem?" Immediately, the husband held his long face down without anything to say. In contrast, the wife began talking 90 miles an hour, describing all the wrongs within their marriage.

After 15 minutes of listening to the wife, the counselor went over to her, picked her up by her shoulders, kissed her passionately and sat her back down. Afterwards, the wife sat speechless.

The marriage counselor looked over at the husband, who stared in disbelief. The counselor said to the husband, "Your wife NEEDS that at least twice a week!"

He was startled with an amazement, thinking to himself that one kiss quieted her down. The husband scratched his head and replied, "I can have her here on Tuesdays and Thursdays."

A Man Who's Been Married for Twenty Years

A man picked up his young son from school to take him to a dental appointment. Knowing the parents the school play were supposed to be posted that morning, he asked his son if he'd gotten one.

With great enthusiasm, the boy said that he had. "I play a man who's been married for twenty years," he said. "That's great, son," the dad said. "Keep up the good work and before you know it they'll be giving you a speaking part."

We Need to Bring Your Mamma Here

A farmer and his son went to a large city for the first time. He stood in front of an elevator, something he had never seen. He saw an old, shriveled up little lady get inside. The door closed, some lights overhanging the elevator blinked a few times and the door opened again. Out stepped an attractive young woman. The farmer looked at his son and said, "Boy, I should have brought your mamma up here."

As You and Your Spouse Grow Older together you will learn to love the person on the inside more than the person on the outside.

Missions

Holding the Rope

Through the quiet streets of a fishing village that lay at the mouth of the turbulent river, a cry rang out, "Boy overboard!" Quickly a crowd gathered, and anxious eyes searched the rushing water for the figure of the boy. Each anxious mother's heart was asking, "Is he my boy?"

The strongest swimmer in the village volunteered to rescue the drowning lad. Tying one end of the rope to his waist, he threw the other end to the crowd and plunged into the water.

Anxiously they watched him breast the tide with strong, sure strokes, and a cheer went up when he reached the boy and grasped him safely in his powerful arms. "Pull in the rope!" he shouted over the swirling waters.

The villagers looked from one to the other. "Who is holding the rope!" they exclaimed. In the excitement of watching the rescue, they had allowed the rope to slip into the water. Powerless to help, they watched the two figures in the water go down. No one had made it his business to hold the rope.

We are responsible to get the gospel to our Jerusalem and we are also responsible to hold the rope, the missionaries who spread the gospel around the globe.

Obedience

One Act of Obedience is Better Than a Thousand Sermons

"When Hitler began interfering with the churches and humiliating the German Jews, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a loyal German himself, began to resist and protest. He refused to participate in the Nazi party, and he spoke out against Hitler's policies. He was eventually arrested and died in a concentration camp."

churches, which bowed down to the führer's demands. Several of Bonhoeffer's friends urged him to b
They argued that they would lose the opportunity to preach altogether if they followed Bonhoeffer's
example. He replied, "One act of obedience is better than a thousand sermons." He eventually paid with
life for holding that conviction.

Parenthood

Men in Prison Lack Fathers

A nun who worked in a men's prison was asked by one of the inmates if she would buy him a Mother's Day card to send to his mom. She agreed, and word traveled fast; soon hundreds of inmates were asking for cards. Resourcefully, the nun contacted a greeting card manufacturer, who obliged with crates of Mother's Day cards, all of which she passed out. Soon afterward, she realized that Father's Day was approaching. Thinking ahead, she again called the card manufacturer, who responded quickly with crates of Father's Day cards. Years later, the nun said she still had every one of those cards. Not one prisoner requested a card for his father. Clearly, men in prison lack fathers.

Mom Told You This Morning that we Were Moving

"One morning a pastor grabbed his brief case and was hurrying out the door when his wife said, 'No, remember, honey, we're moving today. When you come home, our furniture won't be here.' The harried pastor mumbled something and rushed out the door. After a full day at the office, by habit he drove home down the same street and into the same driveway. He walked to the front door of his old house and found it locked. He looked in the front window and saw no furniture inside. Standing there scratching his head, he saw a boy riding a bicycle down the sidewalk. 'Sonny,' he called out, 'do you know where the family that used to live here moved to?' The boy replied, 'Awww, come on, Dad. Mom told you this morning we were moving!'"

He Finished the Book, but He Lost the Boy

A young man was to be sentenced to the penitentiary for committing forgery. The judge had known him from childhood, for he was well acquainted with his father, a famous legal scholar and the author of an exhaustive study entitled *The Law of Trusts*. "Do you remember your father?" asked the magistrate. "I remember him well, your honor," came the reply. Then trying to probe the offender's conscience, the judge said, "As you are about to be sentenced, and as you think of your wonderful dad, what do you remember most clearly about him?" There was a pause; then the judge received an answer he had not expected. "I remember, sir, when I went to him for advice, he looked up at me from the book he was writing and said, 'Run along, boy, I'm busy!' When I went to him for companionship, he turned me away, saying, 'Run along, son; this book must be finished!' "Your honor, you remember him as a great lawyer; I remember him as a lost friend." The magistrate muttered to himself, "Alas! Finished the book, but lost the boy!"

The Father of J.C. Penny

J.C. Penny worked at a grocery store as a boy. He came home one day bragging about how the owner made some extra money. He explained to his father that the store owner mixed regular coffee with an expensive blend and sold it at the expensive price, thus making extra profit. The father asked J.C. Penny if the store owner would feel if someone were doing that to him. Penny replied that he would not like it. The lad quit the job immediately. Later, when he started his own business he had a hard and fast rule, everything he sold would be just as he advertised it. He had a great success and tithed on all his income, giving millions to missions. His father figured greatly in his success! He had taken time to give his boy proper direction.

President or Assassin

One day a boy was born and the family stood by the bed and said, "Just think, this is America. One day our son could grow up to become president of the United States." But one day that boy stood outside a building in Washington, D.C., waiting for President Reagan to emerge. As the president exited the building, John Hinckley pulled out a pistol and started firing. He did not become president, he tried to assassinate the president. The dream had been destroyed that day for the Hinckley family. Within every child is great

potential. To be something very great or something very bad. Let this be a reminder to pray regularly and train them diligently.

Patience

Blowing the Horn...

A man's car stalled in the heavy traffic as the light turned green. All his efforts to start the engine failed and a chorus of honking behind him made matters worse. He finally got out of his car and walked back to the first driver and said, "I'm sorry, but I can't seem to get my car started. If you'll go up there and give it a try, I'll stay here and blow your horn for you."

To Fight Foremost in the Ranks of the Prince

When the Spartan king advanced against the enemy, he always had with him someone that had been crowned in the public games of Greece. And they tell us that a Lacedaemonian, when large sums were offered him on condition that he would not enter the Olympic lists, refused them. Having with much difficulty thrown his antagonists in wrestling, one put this question to him, "Spartan, what will you gain this victory?" He answered with a smile, "I shall have the honor to fight foremost in the ranks of my prince."

The honor that appertains to office in the church of God lies mainly in this: that the person who is set apart for such service has the privilege of being first in holiness of example, abundance of liberality, patience of longsuffering, zeal in effort, and self-sacrifice in service. Gracious King of kings, if you have made me a minister or deacon in your church, enable me to be first in every good word and work, shunning no sacrifice, and shrinking from no suffering. - Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *The Quotable Spurgeon*.

Perseverance

The Master Pianist and the Novice

Wishing to encourage her young son's progress on the piano, a mother took her boy to a Paderewski concert. After they were seated, the mother spotted a friend in the audience and walked down the aisle to greet her. Seizing the opportunity to explore the wonders of the concert hall, the little boy rose and eventually explored his way through a door marked "NO ADMITTANCE."

When the houselights dimmed and the concert was about to begin, the mother returned to her seat and discovered that the child was missing. Suddenly, the curtains parted and spotlights focused on the impromptu Steinway on stage. In horror, the mother saw her little boy sitting at the keyboard, innocently picking out "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star." At that moment, the great piano master made his entrance, quickly moved to the piano, and whispered in the boy's ear, "Don't quit. Keep playing."

Then leaning over, Paderewski reached down with his left hand and began filling in a bass part. Soon his right arm reached around to the other side of the child and he added a running obligation. Together, the old master and the young novice transformed a frightening situation into a wonderfully creative experience. And the audience was mesmerized.

Whatever our situation in life and history ~ however outrageous, however desperate, whatever dryness of the spirit, whatever dark night of the soul ~ God is whispering deep within our beings, "Don't quit. Keep playing. You are not alone, Together we will transform the broken patterns into a masterwork of my creative art. Together, we will mesmerize the world with our song of peace."

Possessions

Ask Me One Hundred Years From Now

A minister preached a sermon along the lines that everything belongs to the Lord. An old farmer skeptically sat in the congregation, listening to, but not agreeing with the sermon. That afternoon he invited the preacher to Sunday dinner with him and his family. After dinner they walked outside, the farmer making a point of showing the preacher around his house, barns, tool shed, and pointed to his beautifully kept farm. Then he asked the preacher half jokingly, "Pastor, I worked all my life on this land. Do you mean to tell me that it all belongs to you?"

that it's not my land, that its the Lord's land?" The minister reflected for a moment and then quietly the farmer. "Ask me the same question a hundred years from now."

Oh No, I've Lost my Rolex

I heard about a fellow who had a wreck. A policeman showed up and found the man crying loudly, "O, my BMW, O, my BMW." The policeman said, "Sir, I'm sorry about your car but I think there is something far more important here - your left arm is missing." The man then began to scream, "Oh no, I've lost my Rolex! I've lost my Rolex!" Materialism has a way of making your priorities get way out of line

Power

The Lantern Wasn't Lit

Marc Gafni tells the story of a train crossing the Hudson River on its way to lower Manhattan. The year is 1904 and the Hudson is a busy route. The bridge over the river is raised for ships and lowered for trains. As a train approached the bridge, the engineer would sound his whistle. A man on the bridge would swing a lantern if the bridge was up for ships and the train needed to stop. If the lantern did not swing, the engineer knew it was safe to proceed across the bridge. On a fateful day in 1904, a train crashed into the river. Many died. Others were injured. The train route would be closed for 18 months. Everyone wanted to know what caused the tragedy. Was it the conductor, asleep at the wheel, or did the lantern swinger forget to signal the train? Eventually, the lantern swinger went to trial.

After several juries could not reach a verdict, the lawyer for the lantern swinger decided to put the young man on the witness stand. It was a great gamble. The attorney asked his client several questions with all the drama of a Perry Mason trial: "What is your occupation?" The man said, "Lantern swinger." The lawyer continued, "Where were you the night in question?" The man answered, "At my post." The lawyer asked, "Did you see the train coming that night?" The man said, "Yes."

The lawyer continued his line of questioning, "Had you been drinking?" The man said, "No." Finally the attorney came to question all had been waiting for: "Did you on the fateful night in question swing your lantern?" The man stuttered, "Y-y-y-y-e-e-s. I'd-d-d-I'd-d-d-d." Did the man stutter from nervousness because he was lying? The jury believed that the poor man was lying because he was nervous and returned a verdict of not guilty. But his own lawyer was unconvinced and believed that the man lying under oath. In the privacy of a room off the side of the court, the lawyer asked one last question: "Were you lying on the witness stand? Have you been lying all this time?" The frightened young man said, "No. I didn't lie. But you asked me the right question."

You asked me if I swung the lantern. I did. You didn't ask me if it was lit." The lantern was not lit, but we try to reach others it is so important to have the power of God in our lives to reinforce what we are.

People From All Over Come and Watch me Burn

John Wesley was once asked why so many people came to hear him preach. He said, "Many years ago God ignited a fire in my soul and now people from all over come and watch me burn."

The Faulty Chain Saw

I'm reminded of the story of the slow-witted farmer who purchased a chain-saw. "This beauty's guaranteed to cut down 40 trees a day", the salesman boasted, "or we'll give ya' your money back." "I'll take it", he replied. And moments later he was driving home with his new purchase. One week later, however, he was back in the store. "This thing don't work", he complained, "I've been workin' my tail off and I ain't able ta' bring down more than five trees a day." The salesman frowned at the saw. Then he took it and pulled the starter cord. Hearing the chain saw roar to life, the farmer jumped back in shock and exclaimed, "Well, that!" How often do we fail to use the power of God in our lives.

Praise

An Instrument of Ten Strings

An elderly gentleman at a midweek meeting offered this prayer: "O Lord, we will praise Thee; we will

praise Thee with an instrument of ten strings!" People wondered what he meant, but understood when I continued, "We will praise Thee with our two eyes by looking only unto Thee. We will exalt Thee with our two ears by listening only to Thy voice. We will extol Thee with our two hands by working in Thy service. We will honor Thee with our own two feet by walking in the way of Thy statutes. We will magnify Thee with our tongue by bearing testimony to Thy loving kindness. We will worship Thee with our heart by loving only Thee. We thank Thee for this instrument, Lord; keep it in tune. Play upon it as Thou wilt and ring out the melodies of Thy grace! May its harmonies always express Thy glory!

Prayer

I Only Have an Eight Inch Pan

It was one of those days when it wasn't just the bugs who were biting - the big fish were. And this particular angler kept reeling in fish that were at least a foot long, and he kept throwing them back. A fisherman in a nearby boat kept watching this with a mixture of amazement and disgust. Finally, he could not resist. He called over to the fisherman after he had just thrown back another fish that was over a foot long. "Hey!" he called, "why are you throwing back all those big fish?" The answer was more disturbing than not keeping them. He replied, "Hey! I've only got an 8 inch pan!" Many times we pray foot long prayers, but our faith is just an eight inch pan.

Two Boats and a Helicopter

There was a man called him Jim, who lived near a river. Jim was a very religious man. One day, the river rose over the banks and flooded the town, and Jim was forced to climb onto his porch roof. While sitting there, a man in a boat comes along and tells Jim to get in the boat with him. Jim says "No, that's ok. God will take care of me." So, the man in the boat drives off. The water rises, so Jim climbs onto his roof. At this time, another boat comes along and the person in that one tells Jim to get in. Jim replies, "No, that's ok. God will take care of me." The person in the boat then leaves.

The water rises even more, and Jim climbs on his chimney. Then a helicopter comes and lowers a ladder. The woman in the helicopter tells Jim to climb up the ladder and get in. Jim tells her "That's ok." The woman says "Are you sure?" Jim says, "Yeah, I'm sure God will take care of me."

Finally, the water rises too high and Jim drowns. Jim gets up to Heaven and is face-to-face with God. Jim says to God "You told me you would take care of me! What happened?" God replied "Well, I sent you two boats and a helicopter. What else did you want ..."

This Year I Want Cold Hard Cash for a Change

A man asked his wife what she wanted for her birthday the next week. She thought for a moment, then said, "This year I want cold hard cash for a change." The following day her husband filled her request. He put \$20 in nickels, dimes, and quarters into a quart jar, then filled it with water. On her birthday he took the jar out of the freezer and handed it to his wife. Often people pray for things like patience. Be careful what you ask God for. You may get it.

Preaching

32,000 Meals

A church goer wrote a letter to the editor of the newspaper and complained that it made no sense to go to church every Sunday. "I've gone for 30 years now," he wrote, "and in that time I have heard something like 3,000 sermons. But for the life of me I can't remember a single one of them. So I think I'm wasting my time . . . and the pastors are wasting theirs by giving sermons at all." This started a real controversy in the "Letters to the Editor" column, much to the delight of the editor. It went on for weeks until someone wrote this clincher:

"I've been married for 30 years now. In that time my wife has cooked some 32,000 meals. But for the life of me, I cannot recall what the menu was for a single one of those meals. But I do know this: they all nourished me and gave me the strength I needed to do my work. If my wife had not given me those meals,

I would be dead today." No comments were made on the sermon contents anymore.

Preach On! (A Poem by Susan Soria)

If you're preaching from the Bible,

Well, preach on;

If you're longing for revival,

Just preach on.

Preach on sin and condemnation,

Preach for sinners: His salvation,

Preach for Christians: consecration...

But preach on.

If your sermon's from the Lord,

Then preach on.

Never mind if some look bored,

Just preach on.

If the Devil looks down on it,

Just preach on.

If the critics frown upon it...

Just preach on.

If you step on someone's corns,

Well, preach on.

Take the "bull right by the horns"

And preach on.

Even though we may not like it,

Even though some try to fight it,

Where there's wrong the Lord can right it...

So preach on.

Let not time be a restriction,

Just preach on.

If a sinner's got conviction,

Then preach on.

Christ can save his soul from Hell,

So preach on.

Cleanse his heart and make him well, (Even if it's after twelve)...

Just preach on!

From the Law to Revelation,

Yes, preach on.

Christ for every situation, oh,

Preach on.

Even if your members doubt it,

Just preach on.

And say they can do without it...

Still, preach on.

Think of Christ's own message clear,

And preach on.

There for all who wish to hear,

Oh, preach on.

All are sinners, they must know

That His blood did freely flow;

He can wash them white as snow...

Oh, preach on!

In the Holy Spirit's power, oh,

Preach on!

He'll reward you in His hour,

Just preach on.

Broken hearts and sins forgiven,

Blessings here so freely given,

And a crown up there in Heaven...

Oh, preach on!

Stolen Car With Rat Poison

In 1981, a Minnesota radio station reported a story about a stolen car in California. Police were staging an intense search for the vehicle and the driver, even to the point of placing announcements on local radio stations to contact the thief.

On the front seat of the stolen car sat a box of crackers that, unknown to the thief, were laced with poison. The car owner had intended to use the crackers as rat bait. Now the police and the owner of the Bug were more interested in apprehending the thief to save his life than to recover the car.

When preachers have to preach on things that are not pleasant to the hearer it is not to punish; they are merely trying to help you.

The Man With the Mississippi Stuff

According to Peter Kendall in the Chicago Tribune, Ruben Brown, age sixty-one, was known on the south and west sides of Chicago, as the friendly neighborhood cockroach exterminator with "the Mississippi stuff." The Mississippi stuff was a pesticide Brown had bought hundreds of gallons of in the South, and it really did the trick on roaches. Brown went from door to door with his hand sprayer, and his business grew as satisfied customers recommended the remarkably effective exterminator to others.

In the process, however, Brown is alleged to have single-handedly created an environmental catastrophe. The can-do pesticide-methyl parathion-is outlawed by the EPA for use in homes. Southern farmers use it on boll weevils in their cotton fields, and within days the pesticide chemically breaks down into harmless elements. Not so in the home. There the pesticide persists as a toxic chemical that can harm the human neurological system with effects similar to lead poisoning.

The EPA was called into Chicago for the cleanup. Drywall, carpeting, and furniture sprayed with the pesticide had to be torn out and hauled to a hazardous -materials dump. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimated that the total cost of the cleanup would be some \$20 million, ranking this as one of the worst environmental nightmares in Illinois history.

Brown was charged with two misdemeanors. He apparently didn't know much about the pesticide he sprayed so liberally. Brown's attorney said, "It's a tragedy. It is one of those situations where he did a lot of harm, but his intention in no way matches the damage he has done. He is a family man and handled it

his own hands. Do you think he knew how toxic it was?"

This applies to preachers, teachers, and parents. The right intentions is not enough you must make sure you are giving out the right information.

What Hockey Team Does She Play For

A lad walks into a country grocery store and asks the cashier in a rather , "I want to know if i can buy half a head of lettuce." The cashier goes to the back of the store and tells his manager, "Sir, there's, a real dumb lady out there asking for a half a head of lettuce."

He turns around and finds the lady standing right behind him. The cashier then says, "And this fine gentleman here wants the other half." Later the manager congratulates the cashier for getting out of the sticky situation. He says, "Son, that was good. You have a wit about you. Where are you from?" The cashier says, "I'm from Michigan...the state where the women are either ugly or hockey players." The manager replies, "Boy, watch your mouth; my wife is from Michigan."

The cashier says, "Uhhh really? What hockey team does she play for?" If you preach the whole counsel of the Word of God, you won't always be able to tell everyone what they want to hear.

I Want the Name of the Person Who Pushed me In

A millionaire threw a massive party for his fiftieth birthday. He got a bit bored with the regulars of butt-kissing friends and relatives so he decided to stir things up a bit.

He grabbed the mic and announced that in the garden of his mansion he has a swimming pool with three great white sharks in it. He offered anything he owns to anyone who will swim across the pool for the evening.

The party continued for some time with no one accepting his offer, until suddenly there was the sound of a loud splash echoing across his vast property. All the party guests ran to the pool to see what had happened. In the pool a man was frantically swimming as hard as he could. Fins came out of the water and the jaws snapped ferociously as the guy just kept on going. The sharks were gaining, but the guy managed to reach the other side of the pool. He leapt out of the pool. His expensive suit was soaked.

The millionaire grabbed the mic and said, "I am a man of my word. Anything of mine I will give for you are the bravest man I have seen since I dared my best friend to bite a wild rattle snake. So, what will it be?" the millionaire asked.

The guy grabbed the mic and said, "Why don't we start with the name of the person that pushed me in?" As Preachers we try to provoke people in the right direction.

Grave Eschatological Ramifications

C. S. Lewis tells of hearing a young preacher say in a sermon, "If you will not believe in Jesus Christ, you will suffer grave eschatological ramifications." Later Lewis asked him if he meant that those who choose not to believe in Christ will go to hell. "Precisely," replied the young man. "Then why don't you say that!" exclaimed Lewis. The separation faced in the death of the lost is a separation in hell forever. It is important to preach the absolute truth in clear and concise terms.

He Said Exactly What I Needed to Hear

Children's television personality Fred Rogers (Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood) was also an ordained minister. He says, "I remember so keenly one of the times I learned how individually the Spirit can work. It was years ago, and my wife and I were worshiping in a little church with friends of ours, another husband and wife. We were on vacation, and I was in the middle of my homiletics course at the time. During the sermon I kept ticking off every mistake I thought the preacher, who must have been 80 years old, was making. When this interminable sermon finally ended, I turned to my friend intending to say something critical about the sermon. I stopped myself when I saw the tears running down her face. She whispered to me, 'He said exactly what I needed to hear.'

Think About Your Face and Cut Your Message

A preacher said one Sunday morning, "While shaving this morning, I was thinking about my message and I cut my face." After the service a man came up to the preacher and said, "Next time why don't you think about your face while you are shaving and cut your message."

Provision

Buddah is Sleeping

In a large city in Sri Lanka there is a huge statue of Buddha in a reclining position. The chiseled face is calm, the eyes are closed, and the head rests upon one hand. A full 50 feet long, the image is impressive except for one thing: Buddha is sleeping while the world goes by. He is paying no attention to his worshipers! How unlike our God who is constantly watching to see what we need and to satisfy us with treasures from His inexhaustible supply.

Why God Didn't Give the Israelites a Year's Worth of Manna

One of Rabbi Ben Jochai's scholars once asked him, "Why did not the Lord furnish enough manna to Israel for a year all at one time?" The teacher said, "I will answer you with a parable. Once there was a king who had a son to whom he gave a yearly allowance, paying him the entire sum on the fixed date. It soon happened that the day on which the allowance was due was the only day of the year when the father ever saw his son. So the king changed his plan and gave his son day by day that which was sufficient for the day; and then the son visited his father every morning. How he needed his father's unbroken love, companionship, wisdom and giving! Thus God dealt with Israel and deals with us."

Random Topics

God is Watching the Apples

The children were lined up in the cafeteria of a Christian elementary school for lunch. At the head of the table was a large pile of apples. The teacher made a note, and posted it on the apple tray: "Take only ONE apple. God is watching."

Moving further along the lunch line, at the other end of the table was a large pile of chocolate cookies. A child had written a note, "Take all you want. God is watching the apples."

Almighty God in Christ's Tabernacle

On a Saturday night several weeks ago, this pastor was working late, and decided to call his wife before he left for home. It was about 10:00 PM, but his wife didn't answer the phone. The pastor let it ring many times. He thought it was odd that she didn't answer, but decided to wrap up a few things and try again in a few minutes. When he tried again she answered right away. He asked her why she hadn't answered before and she said that it hadn't rung at their house. They brushed it off as a fluke and went on their merry way. The following Monday, the pastor received a call at the church office, which was the phone that he'd used that Saturday night.

The man on the other end wanted to know why he'd called on Saturday night. The pastor was dumbfounded and couldn't figure out what the guy was talking about. Then the caller said, "It rang and I answered, but I didn't answer." The pastor remembered the apparently misdirected call and apologized for disturbing the gentleman, explaining that he'd intended to call his wife. The called said, "That's OK, let me tell you my story. You see, I was planning to commit suicide on Saturday night, but before I did, I prayed, 'God if you're there, and you don't want me to do this, give me a sign now.' At that point my phone started to ring. I looked at the caller ID, and it said, 'Almighty God'. I was afraid to answer!" Isn't it something how God can take our mistakes and use them for His glory?

Crowned, Then Beheaded

It is said that on his retreat from Greece after his great military expedition there, King Xerxes boarded a Phoenician ship along with a number of his Persian troops. But a fearful storm came up, and the captain told Xerxes there was no hope unless the ship's load was substantially lightened. The king turned to his fellow Persians on deck and said, "It is on you that my safety depends. Now let some of you show your regard for your king." A number of the men bowed to Xerxes and threw themselves overboard! Lightened of its load, the ship made it safely to harbor. Xerxes immediately ordered that a golden crown be given to the pilot for preserving the king's life—then ordered the man beheaded for causing the loss of so many Persian lives!

Beware When all Men Speak Well of You. They May Crown You Today and Behead You Tomorrow
Keep Your Eyes on Jesus. He is the Same Yesterday, Today, and Forever.

Reba McEntire Couldn't Afford One TV so she Bought Two

Recently, I heard a story about the country music star, Reba McEntire. It seems in her poverty days, before her great success, she was in the market for a used television. She went to a pawn shop and found all of the used televisions were still far out of her budget. Then, over in the corner, she spotted two televisions. One was marked \$10 and the other was marked \$15. Since all of the other TVs were priced at well over \$100, she investigated. She discovered that the \$10 television had sound but no picture, and the \$15 television had picture but no sound.

Conventional wisdom would tell us that she couldn't buy a working TV within her budget. But Reba got out of the box and, for \$25, bought both televisions, set them up in the corner of her home – one atop the other – and used one for sound and the other for the picture. Conventional wisdom would never tell you if you can't afford a TV you should simply buy two. When you think you've thought of everything, you probably haven't.

I'm an Incurable Gossip

Four preachers, taking a short breather from their heavy schedules, were on a park bench, chatting and enjoying an early spring day. You know, since all of us are such good friends," said one, "this might be a good time to discuss the problems that are disturbing us." They all nodded in agreement. "Well, I would like to share with you the fact that I drink to excess," said one. There was a gasp from the other three. Then another spoke up. "Since you were so honest, I'd like to say that my big problem is gambling. It's terrible, I know, but I can't quit. I've even been tempted to take money from the collection plate." Another gasp was heard, and the third clergyman spoke. "I'm really troubled, brothers, because I'm growing fond of a woman in my church—a married woman. "More gasps. But the fourth man remained silent. After a few minutes, the others coaxed him to open up. "The fact is," he said, "I just don't know how to tell you about my problem. "It's all right, brother. Your secret is safe with us." "Well, it's this way," he said. "You see, I'm an incurable gossip."

The Best Years of My Life Were Spent in the Arms of Another Woman

A young preacher was to preach his first sermon. He asked an old preacher for advice. The old preacher said, "You want a good introduction. A good introduction gets the attention of the people." The young preacher then asked the old preacher if he knew a good introduction. The old preacher said, "There is an introduction that I have used frequently and it has always got the attention of the people. When you get up to speak, look at the people and tell them that the best years of your life were spent in the arms of another woman. Pause for a few seconds and then tell them that woman was your mother." The young preacher asked, "Is this the kind of introduction you sure that will get their attention?" The old preacher answered, "Young man, it's a sure-fire attention getter. It always works. But let me warn you to tell your wife about it before you use it."

The Sunday came for the young preacher to preach his first sermon. He got up to preach and was scared to death. He had also forgot to tell his wife about his introduction. Nervously he looked out at the congregation and said, "Folks, the best years of my life were spent in the arms of another woman." He paused. Folk's mouths fell open. People gasped all over the building. His wife jumped up out of her seat and started to the pulpit. He was already scared to death and when he saw the reaction of the people and saw his wife storming up the aisle, it really rattled him. He stuttered and said, "And to save my life, I can't tremble who it was." There are Some Things we Can't Afford to Forget

My Mommy Told me I Couldn't Cross the Street

A little boy kept riding his bicycle around the block, and a police officer was sitting by the side of the road and he watched this little boy ride around the block about ten times. Finally, he got out of his squad car and stopped him and said, Son, you keep riding around this same block over and over, what are you doing? The little boy said, 'I'm running away from home.' The officer said, 'Running away from home? How can you be running away and keep going around the same block?' The little boy said, 'Because my Mommy told me I couldn't cross the street! There's no use in trying to run from God. You will never be able to get any place.'

further away from him.

I am Girabaldi

1808 in Manchester England a man came to the door of Dr. James Hamilton. The man said, "I have a great malady. I am contemplating suicide." Dr. Hamilton told the man that what he needed was to get out of himself and get some new interest. "There is a circus in town, go and see the funniest clown in all the world. His name is Girabaldi. Go see Girabaldi and you will be better." The patient said to the doctor, "But sir, I am Girabaldi."

Many times we make the assumption that someone who laughs and jokes a lot is happy. That can be a way of covering up the hurts they experience inside.

Resurrection

A Sunday School Teacher that Shook North America for God

In 1855, a Sunday School teacher, Mr. Kimball, led a Boston shoe clerk to give his life to Christ. The clerk, Dwight L. Moody, became an evangelist. In England in 1879, Dwight L. Moody awakened evangelistic zeal in the heart of Frederick B. Meyer, pastor of a small church. F.B. Meyer, preaching to an American college campus, brought to Christ a student named J. Wilbur Chapman. J. Wilbur Chapman, engaged in YMCA work, employed a former baseball player, Billy Sunday, to do evangelistic work. Billy Sunday held a revival in Charlotte, NC. A group of local men were so enthusiastic afterward that they planned another evangelistic campaign, bringing Mordecai Hamm to town to preach.

During Mordecai Hamm's revival, a young man named Billy Graham heard the Gospel and yielded his life to Christ. Only Eternity will reveal the tremendous impact of that one Sunday School teacher, Mr. Kimball, who invested his life in the lives of others. Makes you think, doesn't it? Everything we do in the name of Jesus Christ has an effect which will be viewed through Eternity.

Wellington Defeated

The Battle of Waterloo, one of the most famous battles in history, occurred on the mainland of Europe on June 18, 1815. It pitted the French army, commanded by Napoleon, against the Anglo-German-Dutch forces lead by the Duke of Wellington and the Prussian forces commanded by General Gephard Blucher. Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo ended the twelve-year period of wars known as the Napoleonic Wars.

There is an interesting story about how the news about Waterloo reached England. News about the English victory was carried first by a ship that sailed from Europe across the English Channel to England's southern coast. The news was then relayed from the coast by signal flags to London. When the report was received in London at Winchester Cathedral, the flags atop the cathedral began to spell out Wellington's defeat of Napoleon to the entire city: "Wellington defeated . . ." However, before the message could be completed, a heavy fog moved in. The rest of the message was hidden from London.

Based on incomplete information, the citizens of London thought Napoleon had won. That would have been a devastating defeat for England. Gloom filled the nation as the bad news quickly spread everywhere.

But when the mist began to lift, the flags high up on Winchester Cathedral completed the news. They spelled out this triumphant message: "Wellington defeated the enemy!"

English fears were unfounded! Joy immediately replaced the gloom. All over England people danced in the streets, rejoicing at this great victory over one of the most dangerous enemies the nation had ever faced.

Revival

I've Never Seen the Church on Fire

In a small town, the local church house became ablaze one night with fire piercing out its roof and windows. The whole town was awakened and the call put forth for everyone to assist in containing the inferno. A noted atheist was seen running to help. One of the elders of the church remarked to him, as they worked side by side, "You have never had time for this church, why would you come down here now?" The atheist replied, "I've never seen the church on fire."

atheist man quipped back, "Well, I've never seen the church on fire before!" He did not realize it, stated very penetrating words that night, penetrating indeed.

Salvation

It is No Secret

One day Stuart Hamblin encountered John Wayne, with whom he had appeared in "Flame of the Barl Coast," and Wayne asked him, "What's this I hear about you, Stuart?" "Well, Duke," answered Hamblen "I guess it's no secret what God can do." "Is That Some Kind of Song You Wrote?," asked Wayne.

The casual remark provided a creative spark for Hamblen. One night, sitting alone at home, he began writing a song. When he heard a clock strike the hour, he wrote, "The chimes of time ring out the news. Another day is done. Someone slipped and fell. Was that someone you?"

In 17 minutes Hamblen had created. "It Is No Secret," a gospel classic which would be translated into nearly every language in the world. It is no secret that anyone who comes to God for salvation can be gloriously saved

Michelangelo's David

From all over the world, people come to Florence to see Michelangelo's famous "David," one of the most beautiful and one of the most celebrated statues in the world. Looking at it in the great hall of the University, one finds the story behind it hard to believe; but the story is true. That lovely piece of art was made from a rejected stone.

For fifty years it lay in the work yard behind the Duomo at Florence. Duccio had tried to make something of it but gave it up, leaving a great gash in the middle. Only a Michaelangelo could see what possibilities lay in that piece of marble! God can take a life that sin has ruined and make it a masterpiece for His glory

H&R Block Million Dollar Giveaway

A recent promotion by H. R. Block Inc. offered walk-in customers a chance to win a drawing for a million dollars. Glen and Gloria Sims of Sewell, New Jersey, won the drawing, but they refused to believe it when an H. R. Block representative phoned them with the good news. After several additional contacts by both mail and phone, the Sims still thought it was all just a scam, and usually hung up the phone or trashed the special notices.

Some weeks later, H. R. Block called one more time to let the Sims know the deadline for accepting the million-dollar prize was nearing and that the story of their refusal to accept the prize would appear on an upcoming NBC "Today Show."

At that point, Mr. Sims decided to investigate further. A few days later he appeared on the "Today Show" to tell America that he and his wife had finally gone to H. R. Block to claim the million-dollar prize. Mr. Sims' final words were: "From the time this has been going on, H. R. Block explained to us they really wanted a happy ending to all this, and they were ecstatic that we finally accepted the prize." God wants a similar ending as he offers salvation to every unbeliever.

No Longer an Enemy, but a Friend

In the days of the American Revolution there lived in Ephrata, Pennsylvania, a Baptist pastor by the name of Peter Miller. He was a man who enjoyed the friendship of George Washington. In that same city there lived another man named Michael Whitman, who was an ungodly scoundrel, who did everything in his power to obstruct and oppose the work of the pastor. On one occasion, Michael Whitman was involved in an act of treason against the government of the United States. He was arrested and taken to Philadelphia some seventy miles away, to appear before General Washington. When the news reached Peter Miller that this man, his enemy, was appearing on trial for his life before General Washington, Peter Miller walked the long seventy miles to Philadelphia to appeal for the life of this man. He was admitted to the presence of Washington because of his friendship, and when he came in he began without delay to speak for the life of Michael Whitman. Washington listened to him and heard his story through, and then said, "No, Peter, I cannot give you the life of your friend," Peter Miller said, "My friend! My friend! This man is not my friend."

he is the bitterest enemy that I have!" Washington said, "What! You mean to say that you have walked seventy miles through the dust and the heat of the road to appeal for the life of your enemy? Well, that puts the matter in a different light. I'll give you, then, the life of your enemy." And Peter Miller put his arm around the shoulders of Michael Whitman and led him out of the very shadow of death, back to his own home, no longer his enemy, but a friend.

That is what the Lord Jesus has done for us. When we were enemies, when we were yet without strength when we were helpless, when we were opposed to God, fighting him every way that we could, rebelling against his precepts, living our own self-centered lives without any regard for his rights, using his good resources and all that he makes available for our own self-centered purposes - while we were enemies Christ died for us!

The Bigger Fool

There was a king who had all his world could afford. The thing he loved most, however, was to laugh. Once while being entertained a jester came along wishing to join in the festival of activities and also wished to perform for him. His opportunity came and he put the best comical show together he had ever done and the king never laughed so hard.

Once the activity was all over the king wanted to hire this jester to be his personal jester. Once hired the king in humor handed him a small stick and said, "You are the most foolish man alive. When you find someone more foolish than you, then you give them this stick," and the king laughed heartily. After many years had passed by the king lay sick on his deathbed ready to go at any moment. He called for his jester for he wanted to laugh one more time before he died. When the jester was through he asked to speak to the king personally.

Once alone with the king the jester asked, "King where are you going?" The king responded, "on a far journey." The jester asked again, "and how do you plan to get there?" Again the king responded, "I don't know." Then the jester pulled the stick from his back pocket and handed it to the king. The king was stunned and asked why he had given him the stick. The jester replied, "King today I have found a more foolish man than I. For you see, I only trifled with the things of life, but you have trifled with things of eternity!"

The Testimony of Mel Trotter

"I was there when it happened, January 19, 1897, 10 minutes past 9, Central time, Pacific Garden Mission, Chicago, Illinois, USA." Mel Trotter's response when asked how he knew he was saved.

Mel Trotter's father was a drunkard who owned a saloon. His son followed in his footsteps, becoming an alcoholic before he was twenty. His mother was a godly woman, but Mel followed his father's example. Trotter married, and he and his wife had a baby, but his appetite for drink continued. He would go weeks at a time without a drink, but then he would go on drunken binges again. Once he "drank up" the family horse and buggy, leaving them without any means of transportation. He returned home from a ten-day drinking spree to find his only child dead in his wife's arms. Bitter and broken, he left home and went to Chicago. During the brutal winter he was reduced to selling his own shoes to finance his drinking. Finally even the saloons kicked him out. On his way to Lake Michigan, intending to drown himself, he passed by the Pacific Garden Rescue Mission.

He was pulled inside and sat slumped through the testimony of Harry Monroe, a converted alcoholic then superintendent of the mission. At the invitation, Trotter went forward and accepted Christ as his Saviour. Mel and his wife moved to Chicago, and he spent nearly every night working at the mission. With Monroe he traveled to area churches seeking support. In 1900 a new rescue mission was established in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Trotter was asked to come and lead the new work. The Lord prospered the work there, and it grew and expanded until facilities were purchased which could handle 750 men. One of Trotter's greatest victories was when the saloon next door to the mission was forced to close for lack of business. Trotter carried a burden for rescue missions in other cities as well. He helped found more than 100 other rescue missions during his life.

It was not unusual for Trotter to be asked to fill in for R. A. Torrey or Billy Sunday in one of their revival campaigns. The power of his personal testimony gave great weight to his preaching. Ill health

the last few years of his life. He suffered from cancer which required repeated surgeries. He last preached at his mission in Grand Rapids in January 1940 for the 40th anniversary celebration of that great work. His favorite verse was II Corinthians 5:17, and God truly made him a new creature.

Take My Good Name

French writer Henri Barbusse (1874-1935) tells of a conversation overheard in a dugout full of wounded men during the First World War. One of them who knows he has only moments to live says to another man, "Listen, Dominic, you've led a bad life. Everywhere you are wanted by the police. But there are no convictions against me. My name is clear, so, here, take my wallet, take my papers, my identity, my good name, my life and quickly, hand me your papers that I may carry all your crimes away with me in death."

Jesus makes a similar offer this morning. In the reading from Acts of the Apostles, Peter describes what happened regarding Jesus, how he was unfairly judged, sentenced to a cruel death, then – beyond expectation – came back. He commissioned Peter and the other apostles to transmit the astonishing offer, "Everyone who believes in him will receive forgiveness of sins through his name." (Acts 10:43)

I Put the Man Together First

Dr. Truett got her a drink, and then he said, "Honey, leave Grandfather alone. I am busy. I have to prepare for Sunday and I need to be alone." So he happened to think—there was a jigsaw puzzle of a map of the world in his office. Dr. Truett got the box that contained the puzzle, and he said, "Honey, do you like jigsaw puzzles?"

She nodded her head. He asked, "Would you like to put a jigsaw puzzle together?" She said she would. Dr. Truett put her in the outer office, gave her the jigsaw puzzle, the map of the world. He thought, "That will take care of a five-year-old for awhile." Five minutes passed, and she said, "Granddaddy, I am through with the puzzle, and I want a drink."

"You're through?" said her grandfather. "Yes, I am through" she replied. Dr. Truett said, "How could it be that you could get the world all fixed up? You do not know where all the countries are." He walked to the outer office, and sure enough, every country was in place. She had taken hundreds of pieces and put it perfectly together in five minutes. Dr. Truett said, "How did you do it?"

She said, "It was easy, Granddaddy. On the back side was a picture of a man's face. I didn't work on the world. I worked on the man. When I got the man right, the world took care of itself."

Just Say John 3:16 and They Will Let You In

In the city of Chicago, one cold, dark night, a blizzard was setting in. A little boy was selling newspapers on the corner, the people were in and out of the cold. The little boy was so cold that he wasn't trying to sell many papers. He walked up to a policeman and said, "Mister, you wouldn't happen to know where a poor boy could find a warm place to sleep tonight would you?"

"You see, I sleep in a box up around the corner there and down the alley and it's awful cold in there, this night. Sure would be nice to have a warm place to stay." The policeman looked down at the little boy and said, "You go down the street to that big white house and you knock on the door. When they come out the door you just say John 3:16 and they will let you in."

So he did. He walked up the steps to the door, and knocked on the door and a lady answered. He looked up and said, "John 3:16." The lady said "Come on in, son." She took him in and she sat him down in a splint-bottom rocker in front of a great big old fireplace and she went off. He sat there for a while, and thought to himself "John 3:16 – don't understand it, but it sure makes a cold boy warm."

Later, she came back and asked him "Are you hungry?" He said, "Well, just a little. I haven't eaten a couple of days and I guess I could stand a little bit o' food."

The lady took him in the kitchen and sat him down to a table full of wonderful food. He ate and ate until he couldn't eat any more. Then he thought to himself "John 3:16... Boy, I sure don't understand it, but it sure makes a hungry boy full."

She took him upstairs to a bathroom to a huge bathtub filled with warm water and he sat there and soaked for a while. As he soaked, he thought to himself, "John 3:16 – I sure don't understand it, but it sure makes a dirty boy clean. You know, I've not had a bath, a real bath, in my whole life. The only bath I ever

had was when I stood in front of that big old fire hydrant as they flushed it out."

The lady came in and got him, and took him to a room and tucked him into a big old feather bed and pulled the covers up around his neck and kissed him goodnight and turned out the lights. As he laid in the darkness and looked out the window at the snow coming down on that cold night he thought to himself "John 3:16 - I don't understand it, but it sure makes a tired boy rested."

The next morning she came back up and took him down again to that same big table full of food. After he ate she took him back to that same big old split bottom rocker in front of the fireplace and she took an old Bible and sat down in front of him and she looked up at him and she asked, "Do you understand John 3:16?"

He said, "No, Ma'am, I don't. The first time I ever heard it was last night when the policeman told me to use it." She opened the Bible to John 3:16, and began to explain to him about Jesus. Right there in front of that big old fireplace he gave his heart and life to Jesus. He sat there and thought, "John 3:16 - I don't understand it, but it sure makes a lost boy feel safe."

Friend, I have to confess I don't understand it either, how God would be willing to send His Son for me, and how Jesus would agree to do such a thing. It sure does make life worth living.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whosoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3:16)

The Million Dollar Shot

According to writers Kent McDill and Melissa Isaacson, Don Calhoun worked for five dollars an hour at an office supply store in Bloomington, Illinois. He had attended two Chicago Bulls basketball games in his life, and now he was going to his third. When he strolled into Chicago Stadium, a woman who worked for the Bulls organization walked up to him and told him they were selecting him to take part in a promotional event during the game called the Million Dollar Shot.

The Shot came after a time-out in the third quarter. If Calhoun could shoot a basket standing seventy-nine feet away that means he had to stand behind the free throw line on the opposite end of the court and throw the ball three quarters of the length of the court-he would win one million dollars. Calhoun played basketball at the Bloomington YMCA but he had never tried a shot like this before. He took the basketball in his hands and looked over at Michael Jordan and the rest of the Bulls. He could see they were pulling for him.

Calhoun stepped to the line and let fly. As soon as the basketball left his hand, coach Phil Jackson said "It's good." Indeed, the ball went through the basket in a swish. The stadium crowd went wild. Calhoun rushed into the arms of Michael Jordan, and the Bulls players crowded around slapping him on the back.

When Don Calhoun went home that night, he had only two dollars in his wallet, but he would receive fifty thousand dollars a year for the next twenty years of his life. Sometimes one action, one decision, one moment can change everything for you. So it is when you choose to receive Christ into your life.

Jesus Turned My Beer Into Furniture

In his book on Galatians, W.A. Criswell tells the story of a man who was a drunk. Alcohol had devastated his life and family. He lived in the gutter and in the filth of the bar life. His children were hungry. Soon they came and repossessed what little furniture the poor family had. There they were, living in a hollowed out house without food or furniture. The bank was threatening to come and take away the house because they were behind on the payments. Then, something wonderful happened. In the gracious providence of God, the man heard the gospel and was gloriously saved.

He gave his heart to God. He got his old job back, the furniture was returned and the mortgage payments were caught up. The family had food, and the dirty children were cleaned up and dressed nicely. One day an old friend of the converted man came and ridiculed him about his new-found faith. He asked if the new Christian believed the miracles of the Bible. The man answered that he did. He then asked if he believed Jesus turned water into wine. The man answered that he did. Then the old drinking buddy asked, "How do you believe in stuff like that?"

The new Christian smiled warmly and replied, "I am no theologian, and cannot explain all the mystery of the Bible. But I know that Jesus turned my beer into furniture; He turned my whiskey into

payments; he turned my drunkenness into well fed children; and, that is good enough for me!"

The Uncashed Check

One day a lawyer stepped out of his office into a back alley in a large city and saw a homeless man lay on the street. He began talking to the man and in compassion he wrote him a check for \$100.00. He told man to get a warm meal, and a warm shower and spend the night at a motel. The next day when he came to work he found the man still there laying in the street.

The lawyer asked the homeless man what he did with the money that he gave him. The homeless man replied "i went down to the bank and looked in and there were all these people in nice dresses and suits i knew by them looking at me that they would never cash this check." The lawyer responded "sir, they w not cash the check based on your appearance the only thing that matters when you hand them the check signature at the bottom and with my signature is telling them that there is money to back the check up" don't have to get good enough or clean enough to come to God we come to Him on the merit of Christ Jesus

Real Gold and Real Gems go hand in Hand

During 1977 literally millions of people lined up at museums in different cities across the United States to view the treasures from the tomb of King Tutankhamen of Egypt. A story appeared shortly after in a Chicago newspaper. It seems that Ali Hassan, curator of the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, discovered that some of the jewels found in the tomb were not genuine. They were nothing but glass! The question was raised, how could this fact go undetected for so many years? Here's the answer given by Mr. Hassan: "I were blinded by the gold. One just assumes that real gold and real gems go hand-in-hand. This is a case where they don't.

Associating with genuine believers doesn't make you a genuine believer. You must personally a Christ for salvation.

Andrew Jackson's Rejected Pardon

While Andrew Jackson was President of the United States, a man named George Wilson was given a court trial and condemned to die. President Jackson offered to pardon him but Wilson refused the pardon. Prison authorities, the Attorney General of the United States, and others earnestly endeavored to convince him to accept the pardon. They tried to impress upon him that it would not only spare his life, but that if he did not accept the pardon, it would be an insult to the President. Still he refused. The Attorney General consulted the Supreme Court, asking whether legal authorities could not force the man to receive the pardon. The court ruled that the pardon was merely a printed piece of paper until the man accepted it. George Wilson rejected the pardon and it remained just a piece of paper. When a man refuses God's pardon, he not only refuses to spare his own soul, but he insults God.

He came to Cause a Commotion and Now He is the Pastor

The Pastor of The Nazareth Baptist Church is a man named Fuad Sakanini. He was an Arab who was converted to Christ as a teenager. He told about his conversion experience. He and his brother went to church one night when they were teens to cause a disturbance. They sat down near the back and observed the service for a few minutes. Fuad's brother asked, "When are we going to create a commotion?" Fuad motioned for him to wait. As the singing, praying and finally the preaching of the Word of God began, Fuad fell under conviction. The young man who entered the church to disturb it, was disturbed by the Holy Spirit. He went forward on the invitation and was gloriously saved. Years later he became pastor of the church he once sought to humiliate!

The Song of the Redeemed

A preacher was called to the bedside of a man who was seriously ill. After a few words of greeting, the minister asked, "My friend, are you prepared to meet God if you don't recover from this sickness?" "If so," was the reply, "I've always given generously to worthy causes, and I've been a good father and a faithful husband." "But my dear friend, that will never get you to Heaven!" "Oh, but I have many other good works to my credit," protested the man.

The preacher realized he needed to puncture the balloon of this sinner's self-righteousness, so he changed his line of questioning. "Tell me," he said. "What do you think people do There?" "Well, the

occupied with the things of God, and I guess they sing a lot!" "Ah," said the preacher, "I'm glad you mentioned that." Opening his Bible to Revelation 5, he pointed out that the song of the redeemed was about Jesus and His wondrous atonement. "Notice, there's not one word about the saint's accomplishments," explained the minister. "Nothing you've told me fits into this picture. You've talked about what you have done, but the inhabitants of Glory speak only of what Christ has done!" Suddenly man saw the folly of trusting in his own goodness. Looking to the Lord for salvation, he found peace in believing.

They Won't Make Catalina, All Come Short

The book "My Favorite Illustration" contains an article by J. Vernon McGee, which refers to "the game of jumping to Catalina Island." Of course, it's ridiculous to think that anyone could jump the 25 miles from the Santa Monica pier to Catalina Island. The one who leaps the farthest gets just as wet as the person who barely clears the end of the pier. But McGee was making a point. In his homespun way he said, "Now, up to the present, nobody has made it...I see some people that I'm sure could outjump me. But I'll tell you this,...(they) won't make Catalina. All come short."

We may be able to look at someone else and think we are a better person, but we all have fallen short of God's glory.

The Four Calls

The Spirit came in CHILDHOOD, And pleaded, "Let me in."

But oh! the door was bolted By thoughtlessness and sin,
"I am too young," the child replied, "I will not yield today.

There's time enough tomorrow." The Spirit went away.

Again He came and pleaded, In YOUTH'S bright happy hour.

He came, but heard no answer, For lured by Satan's power,
The youth lay dreaming then, And saying, "Not today;
Nor till I've tried earth's pleasures." The Spirit went away.

Again He called in mercy, In MANHOOD'S vigorous prime.

But still He found no welcome, The merchant had no time,
No time for true repentance, No time to think or pray.
And so, repulsed and saddened, The Spirit went away.

Once more He called and waited, The man was OLD and ill.

He scarcely heard the whisper, His heart was cold and still.
"Go leave me; when I need Thee I'll call for thee," he cried.
Then sinking on his pillow, WITHOUT A HOPE, he died.

Marble Souvenirs from the Acropolis

Tourists throughout the centuries have visited the famous Acropolis, the ancient religious citadel in Athens. Thousands of sightseers from all over the world have picked up marble chunks as souvenirs. A question arises when one considers how many people have been to the famous Greek hilltop. Why hasn't the supply of pieces been exhausted long ago due to the many tourists taking pieces of the marble home with them? The answer is quite simple. Every few months a truckload of marble fragments from a quarry miles away is scattered around the whole Acropolis area. So tourists go home happy with what they think are authentic pieces of ancient history, actually the tourists are carrying away useless, worthless pieces of marble.

Don't leave this morning with a worthless experience. You can leave with the real thing. Jesus can forgive you and save you once and for all.

I Did My Part for More Than 30 Years

In his book "Illustrations of Bible Truth", H. A. Ironside included the story of a new convert who

his testimony during a church service. With a smile on his face and joy in his heart, the man related how he had been delivered from a life of sin. He gave the Lord all the glory, saying nothing about any of his own merits or what he had done to deserve the blessings of redemption.

The person in charge, who was very legalistic, didn't fully appreciate the reality of salvation by grace through faith alone, apart from human works. So he responded to the young man's comments by saying, "You seem to indicate that God did everything when He saved you. Didn't you do your part before God did His?" The new Christian jumped to his feet and said, "Oh, yes, I did. For more than 30 years I ran away from God as fast as my sins could carry me. That was my part. But God took out after me and ran me down. That was His part." Commenting on this testimony, Ironside wrote, "It was well put and tells a story that every redeemed sinner understands."

Satan

The Devil's Gameplan

There is a fable told about Satan and his angels. Satan asked them, "How can we destroy the souls of men?" One said, "I will tell them there is no God." Satan answered, "That will never do because creation testifies to a Creator and man innately knows there is a God." A second said, "I will tell them there is no heaven." Satan replied, "No, that won't work either. Since Jesus was raised from the dead, men believe in heaven." A third said, "I will tell them there is no hell." Satan responded, "Your plan will not work because Jesus made it plain there is a hell." A fourth said, "I will tell them that there is no hurry to make their life right with God." Satan cried out, "That will do it...!"

Napoleon's Map

After his defeat at Waterloo, Napoleon was exiled to the island of Sicily. History says that as time and age took their toll on the little Emperor, he would stand looking at a great map of Europe. On that map, there was a red circle around that place where he suffered his ultimate defeat. Napoleon would tap his finger on that red dot and say, "If it were not for that one red spot, I would be the Emperor of all Europe!"

I can imagine the devil with a map of time before him as he taps on a red spot called Calvary and says, "If it were not for that red spot called Calvary, I would be the king of the world!" Friends, Jesus won the victory.

Flowers Instead of Weeds

A famous Danish sculptor went to Rome to produce his works of art because choice marble was available there. When he finished, he put his masterpieces in crates, using hay and straw to protect the shipping. Then he hurried back to Denmark. The day his treasures arrived, he was away on business. A servant uncrating the statues, his resentful servants deliberately scattered the packing material over his well-kept garden, hoping the weeds which were lodged in the chaff would take root in the fertile soil. Exotic plants native to Rome sprang up instead, and today they are some of Copenhagen's most beautiful flowers.

The Devil tried to destroy mankind with sin but his plan introduced us to the rose of Sharon, The Lord Jesus Christ.

A Mistake that Caused a National Calamity

December 7, 1941, a man sat in front of a radar screen on one of the out islands in Hawaii. Suddenly, he saw something appear on the radar screen which alarmed him. He observed numerous dots appear which denoted incoming planes. He radioed a lieutenant who was the duty officer on that Sunday morning. He informed the lieutenant of his discovery. The lieutenant passed it off with a causal remark. Planes we expected from California so the radar had probably just picked them up. The soldier was told to simply forget it! The lieutenant could not have made a bigger or more costly mistake. Those dots on the radar screen represented over 350 enemy war planes approaching Pearl Harbor. The cost of that neglectful act is a page of history. America lost 8 of her greatest battle ships. Six of our important airfields were demolished. All of the American planes were destroyed. Over 2,400 men lost their lives because of one lieutenant's neglect!

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking he may devour:" (1 Peter 5:8)

Second Coming

I'll Just Keep my Desk Clean all the Time

The story is told about a man who visited a one-room country school. As he was leaving, he promised the children that he would come again. But he did not indicate when. He also said that when he returned would give a prize to the student who had the cleanest desk. After he left, one of the girls, who was noted for her cluttered desk, announced that she was going to win the award. Her schoolmates laughed at her "Your desk is a mess!" they said. Mary responded, "From now on, I'm going to clean it out every Monday morning." "Suppose the man comes on Friday?" someone asked. Mary quickly answered. "That's no problem. I'll clean it out every morning." "But what if he comes at the end of the day?" another pupil questioned. Mary was silent for a moment. Then her face lit up. "I know what I'll do! I'll just keep my desk clean all the time!"

The Secret to Moody's Success

The great preacher F. B. Meyer once asked D. L. Moody, "What is the secret of your success?" Moody replied, "For many years I have never given an address without the consciousness that the Lord may call me before I have finished." This may well explain the intensity of his service and the zeal of his ministry for Christ.

Service

Grandma Knows How to Cook

Little Johnny and his family were having dinner at his Grandmother's house. Everyone was seated around the table as the food was being served. When Little Johnny received his plate he started eating away. "Johnny, wait until we say our prayer."

"I don't have to." The boy replied. "Of course, you do," his mother insisted. "We always say a prayer before eating at our house." "That's at our house," Johnny explained. "But this is Grandma's house, and she knows how to cook!"

Some people have God given talents...Some people have God's anointing and little talent...God's anointing supercedes natural talent.

I Never Lost The Wonder of it All

"Gypsy" Smith was saved as a boy in a Gypsy camp through the ministry of Dwight L. Moody and Ira Sankey. Smith grew up and the Lord used him mightily as a preacher of the gospel in Europe and the United States. In the latter years of his life, someone said to him: "Gypsy, I heard you preach . . . over fifty years ago - my, how you blessed my heart then. I have never forgotten it - but again tonight, how my heart was warmed and thrilled! Gypsy, tell me - what's the secret? How have you been able to preach all these years to all these people and remain the same?" Gypsy Smith answered, "Sir, I have never lost the wonder of it all." The key to consistent Christian Living and Service is to never lose sight of the fact that a high and Mighty King had mercy on a poor wretched sinner like you.

The Story of Second Lieutenant Hiroo Onoda

Second Lieutenant Hiroo Onoda (Onoda Hiro; born March 19, 1922) is a former Japanese army intelligence officer trained by the Nakano School who was stationed on Lubang Island in the Philippines. He was there when it was reclaimed by the Allies in February 1945, towards the conclusion of World War II. Most of the Japanese troops were slain or captured by Allied forces. Onoda and several other men, however, hid in the dense jungle.

Onoda continued his campaign, initially living in the mountains with three fellow soldiers, Akatsu, Shimada, and Kozuka. One of his comrades, Akatsu, eventually surrendered to Filipino forces, and the two were killed in gun battles with local forces—one in 1954, the other in 1972—leaving Onoda alone in

the mountains. For 29 years, he refused to surrender, dismissing every attempt to convince him that was over as a ruse. In 1959, Onoda was declared legally dead in Japan.

Found by a Japanese student, Norio Suzuki, Onoda still refused to accept that the war was over until he received orders to lay down his arms from his superior officer. Suzuki offered his help, and returned Japan with photographs of himself and Onoda as proof of their encounter. In 1974 the Japanese government located Onoda's commanding officer, Major Taniguchi, who had since become a bookseller. He flew to Lubang and informed Onoda of the defeat of Japan in WWII and ordered him to lay down his arms. Lieutenant Onoda emerged from the jungle 29 years after the end of World War II, and accepted the commanding officer's order of surrender in his dress uniform and sword, with his Arisaka Type 99 rifle in operating condition, 500 rounds of ammunition and several hand grenades.

With God's help we must refuse to quit the good fight of faith until we meet our commanding officer to face and hear Him say "well done"

Take as Much as You Would Like

A city dweller moved to a farm and bought a cow. Shortly after he did, the cow went dry. When he reported this fact to a neighbor farmer, the farmer expressed surprise. The city man said he was surprised too. "I can't understand it either, for if ever a person was considerate of an animal, I was of that cow. If I didn't need any milk, I didn't milk her. If I only needed a quart, I only took a quart." The farmer tried to explain that the only way to keep milk flowing is not to take as little as possible from the cow, but to take as much as possible. Is that not also true of the Christian life? To experience the joy and fulfillment of the Christian life You don't have to call on God only when troubles arise you can experience a continuous, frequent walk with Him.

What Are You Doing to Decorate Your Heavenly Home

In the early 1860's, Sarah Dunn paused to admire her work as she prepared an elaborate decoration for her family home in Waterloo, Iowa. It seemed that she heard an audible voice from God: "What are you doing to decorate your heavenly home?" Thoughts of perishing souls marching to an eternity without Christ flooded Sarah's mind.

In time Sarah Dunn moved to Chicago, and God laid it on her heart to open a mission Sunday School at State and 23rd Streets. It was here that she met and married Colonel George Clarke in 1873. Col. Clarke dealt in real estate until God gave him the same desire as his wife: To begin a rescue mission to minister the Gospel of Christ.

On September 15, 1877, the Clarkes opened a ministry in a tiny storefront at 386 South Clark Street in the very heart of the devil's territory. Seating capacity was about 40. A potbellied stove kept out the Chicago chill, and kerosene lamps supplied flickering light. Heartwarming Bible verses graced the walls, speaking eloquently of God's love.

In 1880 Colonel Clarke found larger quarters, at what is now 67 East Van Buren Street, in a building vacated by the notorious Pacific Beer Garden. Later, Dwight L. Moody, fresh from evangelistic meetings in England, suggested that the Clarkes drop out the word Beer and add the word Mission, and call it the Pacific Garden Mission.

W.A. Criswell's Trembling Hands

In a few days, a very few days it will be forty-nine years since I stood in this pulpit. I preached from I Corinthians 1:18: "Christ, the power of God." And, as I stood here, and opened the Bible to deliver the message, my hands trembled—I was so ashamed—I tried my best to steady my hands, and I could not. As I held the Word of God, my hands trembled as I preached that morning. The pulpit committee met the following week, and Paul Danna, who was vice-president of the First National Bank, said to the pulpit committee, "Did you see that young man as he stood there with the Bible in his hand and his hands trembled? Did you see that?" And Paul Danna, who had been so much committed to another man coming here as pastor of the church, Paul Danna said to the committee, "That young man has a reverence for the Word of God. His hands trembled as he held it." And, Paul Danna said, "I am for him." And, they called me as pastor of the church. How remarkable and unusual that God takes the weaknesses of our human flesh

uses them to magnify His glorious and incomparable name. - W.A. Criswell

Where are the Engineers

Dr. J.B. Gambrel tells an amusing story from General Stonewall Jackson's famous valley campaign. Jackson's army found itself on one side of a river when it needed to be on the other side. After telling his engineers to plan and build a bridge so the army could cross, he called his wagon master in to tell him that it was urgent the wagon train cross the river as soon as possible. The wagon master started gathering a logs, rocks and fence rails he could find and built a bridge. Long before day light General Jackson was told by his wagon master all the wagons and artillery had crossed the river. General Jackson asked where are the engineers and what are they doing? The wagon master's only reply was that they were in their tent drawing up plans for a bridge. Many people are planning on serving God, but that is all they do. Plan! It's time to engage.

A Man Just Can't Sit Here All of His Life

In 1982, Larry Walters of Southern California, satisfied a lifelong dream to try his own unique method of flying. He went to a Navy Surplus store and purchased 42 weather balloons and numerous tanks of helium. He then took a lawn chair and equipped it with padding, loaded it with supplies like lunch, a CB radio, and a BB gun, with which he proposed to pop balloons, one at a time, in order to get himself back to Earth.

Walters theorized he could rise as much as a few hundred feet, and that he was all set. He was wrong. Walters had anchored the chair to the bumper of his jeep with several ropes. Upon cutting the first rope, the inflated balloons' upwards drag was so strong, it snapped the remaining ties, and his chair shot into the air. And kept on going. Walters glasses fell off in the launch.

At times, the chair reached 16,000 feet, where it was very cold. Walters attempted to bring himself back down, but after popping a few balloons, he dropped his gun, and was literally trapped in airspace, where he was reported to air traffic controllers by the startled pilots of both TWA and Delta planes.

After several hours, temperature and time took care of his problem, and brought the chair down in Imperial Beach, California, where it tangled in power lines and caused a large blackout. When asked why? he responded "a man can't just sit here all of his life."

The Devil Doesn't Have a Day off

We need recreation and rest or we will experience melt down. I am reminded of the story from the life of a preacher who was told by a member, "I tried to reach you yesterday and you were nowhere to be found." The preacher replied, "Yesterday was my day off." The church member said, "Day off! The Devil doesn't take a day off!" The preacher replied, "No, and if I didn't take a day off I would act just like him. It is true that we need our resting time.

The Faithfulness of John Stephen Akhwari

At 7 p.m. on October 20, 1968, a few thousand spectators remained in the Mexico City Olympic Stadium. It was almost dark. The last of the marathon runners were stumbling across the finish line. Finally the spectators heard the wail of sirens on police cars. As eyes turned to the gate, a lone runner wearing the colors of Tanzania staggered into the stadium. His name was John Stephen Akhwari. He was the last contestant to finish the 26-mile contest. His leg had been injured in a fall and was bloodied and crudely bandaged. He hobbled the final lap around the track. The spectators rose and applauded him as though he were the winner.

After he had crossed the finish line, someone asked him why he had not quit. He replied simply, "My country did not send me 7,000 miles to start the race. They sent me 7,000 miles to finish it." Not all heroes receive medals. Yet those who faithfully live for Christ, as the apostle Paul did, know that some day they will receive a crown of righteousness.

Gary Cooper Didn't Want the Part

Gary Cooper was offered an acting part many years ago. He turned it down after reading the script so that the movie would be a flop and he wanted nothing to do with it. Clark Gable accepted the part of Rhett Butler in Gone With The Wind. The rest is history. The same can happen to a person who thinks that some

task in the church or kingdom is too small.

There is no insignificant role in the church when you are serving the Lord. if we will be faithful small things, God will make us ruler over many.

Daniel Webster: The Twice Would be President

There was a man who wanted to be president of the United States. He was brilliant and popular. He was an attorney with a lot of connections. He ran for the nomination of his party and did well but fell short of the nomination. The man who was nominated was William Henry Harrison who went on to be elected president. Harrison realized that Webster was smart and popular so he offered him the second spot on the ticket. He would make Webster his vice-president. Webster said no to the offer. He was filled with pride and said he had no intention of being second on the ticket. Harrison became president and shortly afterward died while in office. The Vice-president became president. The man who would be president had missed an opportunity, but never mind - he would try again. The man who would be president ran again for the office but once again he fell short of the mark. This time the nomination went to Zachary Taylor, who was elected president. Taylor also offered the Vice-presidency to this would be candidate. Once again the offer was rejected with the remark that the candidate had no intention of being buried before he was actually dead. Remarkably, Taylor also died while in office. The Vice-president became president. The man who would be president missed a second opportunity. The man who would be president was Daniel Webster and if you know anything about history you know that he was never elected president at all. Two times Webster missed his chance because he was too proud to accept second place. He wanted to be somebody rather than settle for somebody.

Gentle Loafers Turned Vicious

What a terrible sight M. R. DeHaan was that morning! His right eye was swollen shut, his cheek was puffed up as though he had an orange in his mouth, his upper lip was four times its normal size, and he itched all over. The reason? He had been attacked by a bunch of loafers. His beehive was full of honey, literally crowding out the bees. There were thousands of them and they clustered on the outside of the hive. They were idle because there was no room for additional honey. Having nothing to do, they just loafed around the entrance looking for trouble. He recognized the situation and hastily brought an extra section to give the bees a chance to do more work. As he removed the cover to place it on the top, pandemonium broke out.

This swarm had always been gentle, so he didn't bother to wear a veil or gloves. Before he could say "scat," he was attacked, and the result - a face like a circus clown! Why had this gentle colony become vicious? It was because they were idle.

As long as they were busy, they never bothered him; but having nothing to do, they were looking for trouble. They had become loafers. Some Christians fall into this category. They don't know what to do with their leisure hours. Instead of keeping busy studying God's Word, spending time in prayer, visiting the sick and witnessing to the lost, they get into trouble. And like the bees, they attack the people who are trying to help them.

He Died With a Spoon in His Hand

"On Monday he lunched with a Housing Committee,

With statistics and stew he was filled.

Then he dashed to a tea on "Crime in our City,"

And dined with a Church Ladies' Guild.

On Tuesday he went to a Babies' Week Lunch,

And a tea on "Good Citizenship;"

At dinner he talked to the Trade Union bunch,

(There wasn't a date he dared skip).

On Wednesday he managed two annual dinners,

One at noon and the other at night;

On Thursday a luncheon on "Bootleg Sinners,"
And a dinner on "War: Is It Right?"

"World Problems We Face" was his Friday noon date,
(A luncheon address, as you guessed)
And he wielded a fork while a man
From New York Spoke that evening on "Social Unrest."

On Saturday noon he fell in a swoon,
Missed a talk on the youth of our land.
Poor thing, he was through! He never came to.
He died with a spoon in his hand.

Sin

Eskimo Wolf Hunters

According to tradition, this is how an Eskimo hunter kills a wolf. First, the Eskimo coats his knife blade with animal blood and allows it to freeze. He then adds layer after layer of blood until the blade is completely concealed by the frozen blood. Next, the hunter fixes his knife in the ground with the blade up. When a wolf follows his sensitive nose to the source of the scent and discovers the bait, he licks it, tasting the fresh frozen blood. He begins to lick faster, more and more vigorously, lapping the blade until the keen edge is bare. Feverishly now, harder and harder, the wolf licks the blade in the cold Arctic night. His craving for blood becomes so great that the wolf does not notice the razor-sharp sting of the naked blade on his tongue. Nor does he recognize the instant when his insatiable thirst is being satisfied by his own warm blood. His carnivorous appetite continues to crave more until in the morning light, the wolf is found dead on the snow! There is pleasure in sin for a season, but all seasons come to an end. Sin when it is finished brings forth death.

Boiled Frog

They say that if you put a frog into a pot of boiling water, it will leap out right away to escape the danger. But, if you put a frog in a kettle that is filled with water that is cool and pleasant, and then you gradually heat the kettle until it starts boiling, the frog will not become aware of the threat until it is too late. The frog's survival instincts are geared towards detecting sudden changes.

This is how the Devil uses sin in our lives, as a progression. usually we can't even tell how far we've drifted until it's too late.

Have You Guys Seen my Goat

Two guys are walking through the woods and come across this big deep hole. "Wow...that looks deep." "Sure does... toss a few pebbles in there and see how deep it is." They pick up a few pebbles and throw them in and wait... no noise.

"Jeeez. That is REALLY deep... here.. throw one of these great big rocks down there. Those should make a noise." They pick up a couple football-sized rocks and toss them into the hole and wait... and wait. Nothing. They look at each other in amazement. One gets a determined look on his face and says, "Hey...over here in the weeds, there's a railroad tie. Help me carry it over here. When we toss THAT sucker in, it's GOTTA make some noise."

The two drag the heavy tie over to the hole and heave it in. Not a sound comes from the hole. Suddenly, out of the nearby woods, a goat appears, running like the wind. It rushes toward the two men, then right past them, running as fast as it's legs will carry it. Suddenly it leaps in the air and into the hole. The two men are astonished with what they've just seen...

Then, out of the woods comes a farmer who spots the men and ambles over. "Hey... you two guys know my goat out here?" "You bet we did! Craziest thing I ever seen. It came running like crazy and just

into this hole!" "Nah", says the farmer, "That couldn't have been MY goat. My goat was tied to a rancie." Be Careful What You Allow Yourself to Get Tied To!

I Bite Them Instead

A young woman who was worried about her habit of biting her fingernails was advised by a friend to take up yoga. She did, and soon her fingernails were growing normally. Her friend asked her if yoga had totally cured her nervousness."No," she replied, "but now I can reach my toe-nails so I bite them instead."

A Backslidden Hymn Writer

Robert Robinson was an English clergyman who lived in the 18th century. Not only was he a gifted pastor and preacher he was also a highly gifted poet and hymn writer. However, after many years in the pastorate his faith began to drift. He left the ministry and finished up in France, indulging himself in sin.

One night he was riding in a carriage with a Parisian socialite who had recently been converted to Christ. She was interested in his opinion on some poetry she was reading: Come thou Fount of every blessing, I thank thee for a merciful receipt. Teach me to sing thy grace, Streams of mercy never failing, Call for hymns of loudest praise.

When she looked up from her reading the socialite noticed Robinson was crying. "What do I think of it?" he asked in a broken voice. "I wrote it. But now I've drifted away from him and can't find my way back."

"But don't you see" the woman said gently, "The way back is written right here in the third line of your poem: Streams of mercy never ceasing. Those streams are flowing even here in Paris tonight." That night Robinson recommitted his life to Christ.

No Other Word for Sin, but Sin

A man came to his preacher one day and asked that the minister to quit speaking of sin so often. He suggested that the preacher might use the words, "mistake, error, human frailty," in place of the word sin. The preacher had some poison in the building used to kill rats. He pulled it from a closet and said, "Sir, would you propose that I change the skull and crossbones on this jar of poison and put on it a label which reads, "Harmless," or, "Wintergreen." The visiting layman answered, "Why, no, that is poison. To mislabel it might lead some unsuspecting person to ingest it and die." "Exactly," said the preacher, "The devil has led our generation to take the danger label off sin and paint it as something acceptable and millions are only to end up in an eternal hell." Friend, we must beware of the incremental peril for the wanderer.

The More You Try to Wash it, The Messier it Becomes

Spurgeon told of a missionary who visited a primitive hut and became nauseated by the filthy floor on which he had to sit. He suggested to his host that they scrub the dirty surface with soap and water, but the man replied, "The floor is just clay - packed down and dry. Add water and it turns to mud. The more you try to wash it, the worse the mess becomes!" Yes, the hut needed something besides an earthen floor. So it is with the human heart. It is hard and dirty, and nothing will help it. Man needs a new heart. He must be born again from above!

Slightly Soiled, Greatly Reduced in Price

Two theological students were walking along a street in the Whitechapel district of London, a section where old and used clothing is sold. "What a fitting illustration all this makes!" said one of the students as he pointed to a suit of clothes hanging on a rack by a window. A sign on it read: SLIGHTLY SOILED - GREATLY REDUCED IN PRICE. "That's it exactly," he continued.

"We get soiled by gazing at a vulgar picture, reading a coarse book, or allowing ourselves a little indulgence in dishonest or lustful thoughts; and so when the time comes for our character to be appraised we are greatly reduced in value. Our purity, our joy, and our strength is gone. We are just part and parcel of the general, shopworn stock of the world."

Courtesy of SIN

Following the terrible Mexico City earthquake of 1985, live satellite coverage carried the news of Mexico's anguish to a watching world. A pastor was sitting in front of his television set stunned by the extent of the damage. Mountains of broken concrete filled the screen. Rescue workers dug frantically. The world raged. Smoke and dust filled the air. Then suddenly in the lower left-hand corner of the screen appeared the words:

words "Courtesy of SIN."

The letters S-I-N actually stood for Spanish International Network. Actually, however, SIN (in transgressions against God) are at the root of all sorrow, suffering and death.

One Drop of Oil

The Audubon Society on several occasions has called attention to the senseless slaughter of thousands of Atlantic sea birds due to the careless spillage of oil from oceangoing ships. The smallest amount of the substance will mat the feathers, destroying their insulating properties and interfere with the normal function of the wings in flight. Tests have proven that a drop of oil no larger than a quarter will work its way through the plumage of a bird to cause slow but certain death from exposure and starvation. Lust, when it is conceived bringeth forth sin. Sin when it is finished bringeth forth death.

The Problem is the Dirt on the Inside

A young boy asked his mother if he could help her wash the windows. She welcomed his offer and told him to begin with the one in the kitchen because it was the dirtiest. He went outside and worked diligently until he thought it was clean. Then with a dry cloth he rubbed until his arms were tired, but the pane of glass still had many smudges. Frustrated, he called his mother and asked her what was wrong. Looking at what he had done, she said with a smile, "Why, you have been spending all your time washing the glass out! What's wrong is that the dirt is on the inside!" The boy went into the house, and soon his efforts made the window clean and sparkling.

Sorrow

I've Been Shot in the Back of the Head and I'm Holding My Brains in

A woman in Arkansas was sitting in her car in a parking lot last year when she heard a loud bang and then felt a sharp pain in the back of her head. She was holding her hands behind her head when someone walked by and asked, "Are you OK?" The woman answered, "I've been shot in the head, and I'm holding my brains in."

Well, it wasn't her brains. It was dough. A Pillsbury biscuit canister had exploded in the back seat, apparently from the heat, making a loud explosion and shooting the dough into the back of the woman's head. Sometimes we tend to overreact to things and make them bigger than they really are.

The Plimsoll Mark

Many years ago the British Parliament passed a law requiring that a series of marks be painted on the hulls of merchant ships. They consisted of several lines one above the other. The top one was called the "Plimsoll mark" or "load line." It indicated the maximum depth the vessel could be submerged in the water without endangering it in a storm. The practice of putting these markings on large ships was introduced by Parliament by one of its members, a reformer by the name of Samuel Plimsoll. Because the legislation he proposed prevented many disasters at sea and saved thousands of lives, he became known as the sailor's friend. "In God's sight each of us has an unseen 'Plimsoll mark.' He will never place more on us than we can bear."

Soul Winning

As You Will

There was an old hermit living once in the mountains of Virginia. He was a wise old man, gifted with that rare insight which some men, though uneducated in the schools, acquire through close contact with nature and the God of the Garden. The young boys of the village laughed at the old patriarch. "I know how we can fool him," one said. "I'll take a live bird and hold it in my hand and ask him what it is. When he answers, I'll ask, 'Is it alive or dead?' If he says it's dead I'll let it fly away; if he says it's alive I'll crush it." So they went and found him at the door of his hut. Old man, I have a question for you. What is it I hold in my hand?" "Well, my son, it looks like a bird you have caught." "Right. Now, tell me, is it alive or dead?" The old man fixed his eyes on him until the boy could bear it no longer. "It is as you will, my son."

Will your Loved ones Have a Chance to Accept Christ? Will Your Neighbors Have a Chance to I the Gospel? As You Will!

D.L. Moody and The Mount of Transfiguration

Witnessing Blunt common sense always characterized Mr. Moody. Once a man rose in one of his meetings to give his experience. "I have been for five years on the Mount of Transfiguration," he said. Instantly Mr. Moody interrupted him by the sharp question, "How many souls did you lead to Christ last year?" "Well, I don't know," answered the surprised man. "Have you led any?" then came sternly from the preacher.

"I-ah-don't know that I have," said the man. "Then," snapped Mr. Moody, still more sternly, "we don't want that kind of mountaintop experience. When a man gets so high that he can't reach down and save sinners, there is something wrong."

Heinz 267

Almost everyone has heard of Henry J. Heinz whose "57 varieties" of pickles have distinguished his name. One day after an evangelistic service the speaker turned to him and said, "You are a believer, but all your energy why aren't you up and at it for the Lord?" Heinz went home in anger. That night he could sleep, however, and at 4 o'clock in the morning he prayed that God would use him to lead others to the Savior.

A day or so later at a meeting of bank presidents, he turned to the man next to him and told him of his joy in knowing Jesus. His friend looked at him in surprise and said, "Because I knew you were a Christian I've wondered many times why you never spoke to me about salvation." That gentleman became the first of 267 converts. People of different varieties, from all walks of life that Mr. Heinz eventually won to Christ.

Did Any of You Put Gas in My Car

A motorist drove into a gas station and asked for ten dollars worth of gas. Efficiently, three attendants hopped to work - cleaning the windshield, checking his tires, and so on. The motorist paid his bill and left. Several minutes later he returned and asked, "Did any of you put the gas in my car?" The three attendants huddled together, then confessed nobody had.

Many churches are filled with people who could certainly be applauded for their efforts, however, lose sight of the main purpose which is winning souls, all of the work is in vain.

Suffering

I Can See You and That's all that Matters

One night a house caught fire and a young boy was forced to flee to the roof. The father stood on the ground below with outstretched arms, calling to his son, "Jump! I'll catch you." He knew the boy had to jump to save his life. All the boy could see, however, was flame, smoke, and blackness. As can be imagined, he was afraid to leave the roof. His father kept yelling: "Jump! I will catch you." But the boy protested, "Daddy, I can't see you." The father replied, "But I can see you and that's all that matters."

When it is hard to see God amid life's circumstances, know that God can see you and that's a matter!

We Saw Your Smoke Signals

The only survivor of a shipwreck was washed up on a small, uninhabited island. He prayed feverishly for God to rescue him, and every day he scanned the horizon for help, but none seemed forthcoming. Exhausted, he eventually managed to build a little hut out of driftwood to protect him from the elements in which to store his few possessions. But then one day, after scavenging for food, he arrived home to find his little hut in flames, the smoke rolling up to the sky. The worst had happened; everything was lost. He was stunned with grief and anger. "God, how could you do this to me!" he cried. Early the next day, however, he was awakened by the sound of a ship that was approaching the island. It had come to rescue him. "How did you know I was here?" asked the weary man of his rescuers. "We saw your smoke signal," they replied. Many times the worst of circumstances are the threshold to our best of days.

This is Good

There is a story about a king in Africa who had a close friend that he grew up with. The friend had a habit of looking at every situation that ever occurred in his life (positive or negative) and remarking, "I is good!"

One day the king and his friend were out on a hunting expedition. The friend would load and prepare the guns for the king. The friend had apparently done something wrong in preparing one of the guns, for taking the gun from his friend, the king fired it and his thumb was blown off. Examining the situation the friend remarked as usual, "This is good!" To which the king replied, "No, this is NOT good!" and proceeded to send his friend to jail.

About a year later, the king was hunting in an area that he should have known to stay clear of. Cannibals captured him and took them to their village. They tied his hands, stacked some wood, set up a stake and bound him to the stake.

As they came near to set fire to the wood, they noticed that the king was missing a thumb. Being superstitious, they never ate anyone that was less than whole. So untying the king, they sent him on his way. As he returned home, he was reminded of the event that had taken his thumb and felt remorse for his treatment of his friend. He went immediately to the jail to speak with his friend. "You were right" he said, "it was good that my thumb was blown off." And he proceeded to tell the friend all that had just happened. "And so I am very sorry for sending you to jail for so long. It was bad for me to do this." "No," his friend replied, "this is good!"

"What do you mean, "this is good!" How could it be good that I sent my friend to jail for a year. I had not been in jail, I would have been with you."

The Father's Voice through the Keyhole

When the famous author Robert Louis Stevenson was a little child, he accidentally locked himself in a room and couldn't get out. As darkness came on, he became terror-stricken. When his father was unable to open the door, he sent for a locksmith; but while he waited, he talked to his son through the keyhole. Hearing his dad's soothing conversation and knowing he was there was all young Robert needed. The Voice of God and the presence of God are always to our avail when we go through dark times.

Surrender

The Two Statues

Bruce Larson, in *BELIEVE AND BELONG*, tells how he helped people struggling to surrender their lives to Christ: "For many years I worked in New York City and counseled at my office any number of people who were wrestling with this yes-or-no decision. Often I would suggest they walk with me from my office down to the RCA Building on Fifth Avenue. In the entrance of that building is a gigantic statue of Atlas, a beautifully-proportioned man who, with all his muscles straining, is holding the world upon his shoulders. There he is, the most powerfully-built man in the world, and he can barely stand up under the burden. 'Now that's one way to live,' I would point out to my companion, 'trying to carry the world on your shoulders. But now come across the street with me.' 'On the other side of Fifth Avenue is Saint Patrick's Cathedral, and there behind the high altar is a little shrine of the boy Jesus, perhaps eight or nine years old, and with no effort he is holding the world in one hand. My point was illustrated graphically."

"We have a choice. We can carry the world on our shoulders, or we can say, 'I give up, Lord; here is my life. I give you my world, the whole world.'"

A Pumpkin Patch and an Oak Tree

A gentleman, lying in the shade of an oak tree, was gazing on a pumpkin vine with its large swelling fruit. Suddenly he looked into the oak tree, and on seeing an acorn, said, "Had I been the Creator, I would have hung the pumpkin upon the tall oak. It's more suitable to bear it." Just then an acorn fell on his face. "Had that been a pumpkin," he thought, "it not only would have been unwise but also unmerciful." God's ways are always better than our ways

I Wrote a Check for the Whole Amount

A multi millionaire was on his death bed. His three good friends were at his bedside. Since he knew it wouldn't be long before he passed on he began telling his friends how he wanted his funeral arrangements handled. Then he handed each one of them a duffle bag containing \$250,000 each and told them that he wanted to make sure that he had enough money for the after life and told each one of them to place the bag with the money in the coffin when he died. The day came when he passed away and each one of them placed their bag in the coffin. Several years latter the friends were gathered around talking.

One confessed that he only put \$10,000 - The other confessed he put \$20,000 - The other said it looked like he was the only honest one in the bunch because he had wrote his friend a check for the whole amount and placed it in the coffin. Don't be the one who tries to find ways around giving God everything

Two Words: No and Lord

A young woman who was greatly troubled went to a Scottish preacher, asking how to handle a decision that seemed to contradict the will of God. The minister took out a slip of paper and wrote two words on it. Then he handed it to her with the request that she sit down for 10 minutes, ponder the words, cross out one of them, and bring the slip back to him. The woman sat down and looked at the slip. It had two words on it, "No" and "Lord." Which should she cross out? It did not take her long to see that if she said no, she could not say Lord, and if she wanted to call Christ Lord, she could not say no. If He is really Lord, We must turn over all our rights, saying, "Yes, Lord!" to any circumstance.

Temptation

Sad Truths about Temptation

It was F.B. Meyer, I believe, who once said that when we see a brother or sister in sin, there are two things we do not know: First, we do not know how hard he or she tried not to sin. And second, we do not know the power of the forces that assailed him or her. We also do not know what we would have done in the same circumstances. Stephen Brown, Christianity Today, April 5, 1993, p. 17.

Spiritual Challenge

A recent survey of Discipleship Journal readers ranked areas of greatest spiritual challenge to them:

1. Materialism.
2. Pride.
3. Self-centeredness.
4. Laziness.
5. (Tie) Anger/Bitterness.
5. (Tie) Sexual lust.
7. Envy.
8. Gluttony.
9. Lying.

Survey respondents noted temptations were more potent when they had neglected their time with God (81 percent) and when they were physically tired (57 percent). Resisting temptation was accomplished through prayer (84 percent), avoiding compromising situations (76 percent), Bible study (66 percent), and being accountable to someone (52 percent). Discipleship Journal, November / December, 1992.

We can supplement our accountability to others by reading slowly through literature designed to challenge our Christian maturity. Consider, as an example, these questions related to sexual purity that I read carefully as I read Kent Hughes' Liberating Ministry from the Success Syndrome:

1. Are we being desensitized by the present evil world? Do things that once shocked us now pass by with little notice? Have our sexual ethics slackened?
2. Where do our minds wander when we have no duties to perform?
3. What are we reading? Are there books or magazines or files in our libraries that we want else to see?

4. What are we renting at the local video stores? How many hours do we spend watching TV? How many adulteries did we watch last week? How many murders? How many did we watch with our children?

5. How many chapters of the Bible did we read last week?

..... Paul Borthwick, *Leading the Way*, Navpress, 1989, p. 120-121.

Tempted to Go to the Rear

Historian Shelby Foote tells of a soldier who was wounded at the battle of Shiloh during the American Civil War and was ordered to go to the rear. The fighting was fierce and within minutes he returned to his commanding officer. "Captain, give me a gun!" he shouted. "This fight ain't got any rear!"

The Toad's Cookies

Toad baked some cookies. "These cookies smell very good," said Toad. He ate one. "And they taste better," he said. Toad ran to Frog's house. "Frog, Frog," cried Toad, "taste these cookies that I have made."

Frog ate one of the cookies, "These are the best cookies I have ever eaten!" said Frog. Frog and Toad ate many cookies, one after another. "You know, Toad," said Frog, with his mouth full, "I think we should stop eating. We will soon be sick."

"You are right," said Toad. "Let us eat one last cookie, and then we will stop." Frog and Toad ate one last cookie. There were many cookies left in the bowl. "Frog," said Toad, "let us eat one very last cookie and then we will stop." Frog and Toad ate one very last cookie.

"We must stop eating!" cried Toad as he ate another. "Yes," said Frog, reaching for a cookie, "we need willpower." "What is willpower?" asked Toad. "Willpower is trying hard not to do something you really want to do," said Frog.

"You mean like trying hard not to eat all these cookies?" asked Toad. "Right," said Frog. Frog put the cookies in a box. "There," he said. "Now we will not eat any more cookies."

"But we can open the box," said Toad.

"That is true," said Frog. Frog tied some string around the box. "There," he said. "Now we will not eat any more cookies." "But we can cut the string and open the box," said Toad.

"That is true," said Frog. Frog got a ladder. He put the box up on a high shelf. "There," said Frog. "Now we will not eat any more cookies." "But we can climb the ladder and take the box down from the shelf and then cut the string and open the box," said Toad.

"That is true," said Frog. Frog climbed the ladder and took the box down from the shelf. He cut the string and opened the box. Frog took the box outside. He shouted in a loud voice. "Hey, birds, here are cookies." Birds came from everywhere. They picked up all the cookies in their beaks and flew away.

"Now we have no more cookies to eat," said Toad sadly. "Not even one." "Yes," said Frog, "but we have lots and lots of willpower." "You may keep it all, Frog," said Toad. "I am going home now to bake a new batch of cookies."

Dancing in the Dew

In the Australian bush country grows a little plant called the "sundew." It has a slender stem and tiny round leaves fringed with hairs that glisten with bright drops of liquid as delicate as fine dew. Woe to the insect, however, that dares to dance on it. Although its attractive clusters of red, white, and pink blossoms are harmless, the leaves are deadly. The shiny moisture on each leaf is sticky and will imprison any bug that touches it. As an insect struggles to free itself, the vibration causes the leaves to close tightly around it. This innocent-looking plant then feeds on its victim.

What Is Temptation?

What is temptation? Seduction to evil, solicitation to wrong. It stands distinguished from trial thus: trial tests, seeks to discover the man's moral qualities or character; but temptation persuades to evil, deludes him, it may ruin. The one means to undeceive, the other to deceive. The one aims at the man's good, making him conscious of his true moral self; but the other at his evil, leading him more or less unconsciously into sin. God tries; Satan tempts.

Wondering Eyes

While my wife and I were shopping at a mall kiosk, a shapely young woman in a short, form-fitting dress strolled by. My eyes followed her. Without looking up from the item she was examining, my wife asked, "Was it worth the trouble you're in?"

Integrity Challenged

In China's later Han era, there lived a politician called Yang Zhen, a man known for his upright character. After Yang Zhen was made a provincial governor, one of his earlier patrons, Wang Mi, paid him an unexpected visit. As they talked over old times, Wang Mi brought out a large gold cup and presented it to Yang Zhen. Yang Zhen refused to accept it, but Wang Mi persisted, saying, "There's no one here tonight but you and me, so no one will know."

"You say that no one will know," Yang Zhen replied, "but that is not true. Heaven will know, and you and I will know too." Wang Mi was ashamed, and backed down. Subsequently Yang Zhen's integrity won increasing recognition, and he rose to a high post in the central government.

Human nature is weak, and we tend to yield to temptation when we think nobody can see us. In fact, there was no police force, many people would not hesitate to steal. This is not to say that when we do something bad, we feel no compunction at all, just that man is weak and prone to yield to temptation. But even if nobody witnesses our sins, and not a soul knows of them, we cannot hide the truth from the eyes of our conscience. In the end, what is important is not that other people know, but that we ourselves know. When Yang Zhen told Wang Mi that "Heaven will know," he meant that the gods would know what he had done: in other words, his own conscience.

A person who sins neither in thought nor deed, and is fair and just, gains enormous courage and strength. As a leader, you need courage born of integrity in order to be capable of powerful leadership. To achieve this courage, you must search your heart, and make sure that your conscience is clear and your behavior beyond reproach.

No Intruder Alarm

In June 1989 a 19-year-old German named Mathias Rust created quite a stir when he flew a Cessna 172 airplane more than 400 miles into Soviet airspace. Rust's five-hour trip ended when he landed his plane in the Kremlin in Moscow. Soviet officials then scrambled to find out how a teenage could slip past their air defenses. Apparently radar had picked up the craft, but it was presumed to be a Soviet plane and no attempt was made to identify it. Later, air force jets twice flew around the intruding Cessna, but air defense commanders showed "intolerable unconcern and indecision about cutting short the flight of the violating plane without resorting to combat means," the investigation concluded.

The Battle of Temptation

"You may have to fight a battle more than once to win it." - Margaret Thatcher.

Flee Temptation

"There are several good protections against temptation, but the surest is cowardice." - Mark Twain

The Power of Temptation

John Piper says that sin (lust for example) "gets its power by persuading me to believe that I will be happy if I follow it. The power of all temptation is the prospect that it will make me happier."

The Danger of Temptation

Children grow up with teddy bears and often figure that since the toys are cuddly, the real things might also be so. In 1990 two boys scaled the fence at the Bronx Zoo in New York City and went into the polar bear compound. The next day they were found dead. Your pet sin can kill!

Grace Over Temptation

A scene from Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress portrays Interpreter bringing Christian to a wall where fire is blazing from a grate. A man is trying to douse the fire with water. Then Interpreter shows Christian the other side of the wall, where another man is secretly pouring oil on the fire to keep it ablaze. Interpreter says, "You saw the man standing behind the wall to maintain the fire, teaching you that it is hard for the tempter to see how this work of grace is maintained in the soul." Satan tries to quench faith, but Christ keeps it alive - Pilgrim's Progress.

The Temptations of Jesus

As the Union Pacific Railroad was being constructed, an elaborate trestle bridge was built across a canyon in the West. Wanting to test the bridge, the builder loaded a train with enough extra cars and equipment to double its normal payload. The train was then driven to the middle of the bridge, where it stayed an entire day. One worker asked, "Are you trying to break this bridge?" "No," the builder replied "I'm trying to prove that the bridge won't break." In the same way, the temptations Jesus faced weren't designed to see if He would sin, but to prove that He couldn't.

Dealing with Temptation

What settings are you in when you fall? Avoid them. What props do you have that support your sin? Eliminate them. What people are you usually with? Avoid them. There are two equally damning lies Satan wants us to believe: 1) Just once won't hurt. 2) Now that you have ruined your life, you are beyond God's use, and might as well enjoy sinning.

Saying NO!!

"Learn to say no. It will be of more use to you than to be able to read Latin." - Charles Spurgeon

Avoiding Temptation

On the TV show "Hee Haw," Doc Campbell is confronted by a patient who says he broke his arm in places. The doc replies, "Well then, stay out of them places!"

He may have something there. We cannot regularly put ourselves in the face of temptation and not be affected. When faced with the problem of temptation, we need to take the good doctor's advice and "stay out of them places."

Suppressing Temptation

"It is easier to suppress the first desire than to satisfy all that follow it." - Benjamin Franklin

The Fire of Temptation

"Satan will seldom come to a Christian with a gross temptation. A green log and a candle may be safely left together, but a few shavings, some small sticks and then larger, and you may bring the green log to ashes." - John Newton.

How Does Temptation Find Us

When you flee temptation, be sure you don't leave a forwarding address.

Resisting Temptation

Reports the DENVER POST: "Like many sheep ranchers in the West, Lexy Fowler has tried just about everything to stop crafty coyotes from killing her sheep. She has used odor sprays, electric fences, and 'scare-coyotes.' She has slept with her lambs during the summer and has placed battery-operated radios near them. She has corralled them at night, herded them at day. But the southern Montana rancher has lost several lambs - fifty last year alone. 'Then she discovered the llama - the aggressive, funny-looking, afraid-of-nothing llama...' Llamas don't appear to be afraid of anything,' she said. 'When they see something they put their head up and walk straight toward it. That is aggressive behavior as far as the coyote is concerned, and they won't have anything to do with that... Coyotes are opportunists, and llamas take the opportunity away.'"

Apparently llamas know the truth of what James writes: "Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you" (4:7). The moment we sense his attack through temptation is the moment we should face it and deal with it for what it is.

Temptation is the Line of Least Resistance

The thing that makes men and rivers crooked is following the line of least resistance.

Trapped

Men who trap animals in Africa for zoos in America say that one of the hardest animals to catch is the ringtailed monkey. For the Zulus of that continent, however, it's simple. They've been catching this aggressive little animal with ease for years. The method the Zulus use is based on knowledge of the animal. Their trap is nothing more than a melon growing on a vine. The seeds of this melon are a favorite of the monkey.

Knowing this, the Zulus simply cut a hole in the melon, just large enough for the monkey to insert its head into.

hand to reach the seeds inside. The monkey will stick his hand in, grab as many seeds as he can, then start to withdraw it. This he cannot do. His fist is now larger than the hole. The monkey will pull and tug, scream and fight the melon for hours. But he can't get free of the trap unless he gives up the seeds, which he refuses to do. Meanwhile, the Zulus sneak up and nab him.

What Tries a Man

"Fire tries Iron, and temptation tries a just man." - Thomas A. Kempis.

Temptation Tests Our Virtue

"Where there is no temptation, there can be little claim to virtue." - C. Swindoll, *Sanctity of Life*, 1990, p. 51.

Temptation Breached the Wall

The Great Wall of China is a gigantic structure which cost an immense amount of money and labor. When it was finished, it appeared impregnable. But the enemy breached it. Not by breaking it down or going around it. They did it by bribing the gatekeepers.

Expecting Temptation

Some people fall into temptation, but a great many make plans for disaster ahead of time. "Son," ordered a father, "Don't swim in that canal." "OK, Dad," he answered. But he came home carrying a wet bathing suit that evening.

"Where have you been?" demanded the father. "Swimming in the canal," answered the boy. "Did I tell you not to swim there?" asked the father. "Yes, Sir," answered the boy.

"Why did you?" he asked. "Well, Dad," he explained, "I had my bathing suit with me and I couldn't resist the temptation." "Why did you take your bathing suit with you?" he questioned. "So I'd be prepared to swim, in case I was tempted," he replied.

Too many of us expect to sin and excite sin. The remedy for such dangerous action is found in Roman 13:14, "But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof." Whenever we play with temptation, it is easy to drift into great danger. A woman was bathing in the Gulf of Mexico. She was enjoying the comfort of relaxing on an inflated cushion that kept her afloat. When she realized that she had been swept about a half mile out from the beach, she began to scream, but no one heard her. A coast guard craft found her five miles from the place where she first entered the water. She did not see her danger until she was beyond her own strength and ability. - C. Swindoll, *One Step Forward*, p. 8

Temptation Will Cost You...

Ronald Meredith, in his book, "Hurryin' Big for Little Reasons," describes one quiet night in early spring: Suddenly out of the night came the sound of wild geese flying. I ran to the house and breathless announced the excitement I felt. What is to compare with wild geese across the moon? It might have been there except for the sight of our tame mallards on the pond. They heard the wild call they had once known. The honking out of the night sent little arrows of prompting deep into their wild yesterdays. Their wing fluttered a feeble response. The urge to fly - to take their place in the sky for which God made them - was sounding in their feathered breasts, but they never raised from the water. The matter had been settled ago. The corn of the barnyard was too tempting! Now their desire to fly only made them uncomfortable. Temptation is always enjoyed at the price of losing the capacity for flight.

The Snake Bite of Temptation

Iron Eyes Cody is a native American actor who once did a TV spot for the Keep America Beautiful campaign. He was an Indian drifting alone in a canoe. As he saw how our waters are being polluted, a single tear rolled down his cheek, telling the whole story. This powerful public service commercial still shows on TV screens after 17 years.

In 1988 Cody repeated an old Indian legend in *Guideposts* magazine. Here it is: Many years ago, Indian youths would go away in solitude to prepare for manhood. One such youth hiked into a beautiful valley, green with trees, bright with flowers. There he fasted. But on the third day, as he looked up at the surrounding mountains, he noticed one tall rugged peak, capped with dazzling snow. I will test myself against that mountain, he thought. He put on his buffalo-hide shirt, threw his blanket over his shoulder

set off to climb the peak. When he reached the top he stood on the rim of the world. He could see forever and his heart swelled with pride. Then he heard a rustle at his feet, and looking down, he saw a snake. Before he could move, the snake spoke.

"I am about to die," said the snake. "It is too cold for me up here and I am freezing. There is no food and I am starving. Put me under your shirt and take me down to the valley." "No," said the youth. "I am forewarned. I know your kind. You are a rattlesnake. If I pick you up, you will bite, and your bite will kill me."

"Not so," said the snake. "I will treat you differently. If you do this for me, you will be special. I will not harm you." The youth resisted awhile, but this was a very persuasive snake with beautiful markings. At last the youth tucked it under his shirt and carried it down to the valley. There he laid it gently on the grass, when suddenly the snake coiled, rattled, and leapt, biting him on the leg.

"But you promised..." cried the youth. "You knew what I was when you picked me up." said the snake as it slithered away."

Testimony

If My Daddy's Dreaming Please Don't Wake Him Up

A man was giving his testimony at one of those old Salvation Army open-air street meetings. As he was testifying, a heckler in the crowd yelled, "Why don't you shut up and sit down? You're just dreaming."

Immediately that heckler felt a tug on his coat. He looked down to see a little girl, who said. "Sir, may I speak to you? That man who is talking up there is my daddy. Daddy used to be a drunkard. He used to spend all of the money he made on whiskey. My mother was very sad and would cry most of the time."

"Sometimes when my daddy would come home, he would hit my mother. I didn't have shoes or a nice dress to wear to school. But look at my shoes. And see this pretty dress? My daddy bought these for me. But the little girl wasn't through with that heckler yet. "See my mother over there? She's the one with the bright smile on her face. She's happy now. She sings even when she's doing the ironing."

Then the little girl said, "Mister, if my daddy is dreaming, please don't wake him up. Do you have a Testimony of a Changed Life Since Jesus Came into Your Heart?"

He Wouldn't Sell His Name

Mark Cuban, owner of the NBA's Dallas Mavericks, recently offered WGN Chicago Radio sports-talk host David Kaplan \$50,000 to change his name legally to "Dallas Maverick." When Kaplan politely declined, Cuban sweetened the offer. Cuban would pay Kaplan \$100,000 and donate \$100,000 to Kaplan's favorite charity if he took the name for one year.

After some soul searching, and being bombarded by e-mails from listeners who said he was crazy to turn down the money, Kaplan held firm and told Cuban no. Kaplan explained: "I'd be saying I'd do anything for money, and that bothers me. My name is my birthright. I'd like to preserve my integrity and credibility." Good Name is Rather to be Chosen Than Great Riches!

Thanksgiving

The Complaining Monk

Brother John entered the 'Monastery of Silence' and the Chief Priest said, "Brother, this is a silent monastery, you are welcome here as long as you like, but you may not speak until I direct you to do so." Brother John lived in the monastery for a full year before the Chief Priest said to him: "Brother John, you have been here a year now, you may speak two words." Brother John said, "Hard Bed." "I'm sorry to hear that" the Chief Priest said. "We will get you a better bed." The next year, Brother John was called by the Chief Priest. "You may say another two words Brother John." "Cold Food." said Brother John, and the Chief Priest assured him that the food would be better in the future. On his third anniversary at the monastery the Chief Priest again called Brother John into his office. "Two words you may say today." "I Quit." said Brother John. "It is probably best." said the Chief Priest. "All you have done since you got here was

complain."

I'm Thankful I'm not a Turkey

In a Sunday School class one Sunday, before thanksgiving, the teacher asked the children to share some of the things for which they were thankful. One little girl raised her hand and said "I'm thankful that I will get to spend this holiday with a wonderful family, baking, carving, and eating a wonderful turkey." Another little boy shot his hand into the air. When the teacher called upon him, she asked, "Well, Billy, for what are you thankful?" The little fellow replied, "I am thankful that I am not a turkey."

Matthew Henry Robbed

Gratitude can help you cope with life's problems. "Matthew Henry, the well-known Bible commentator, was once robbed by thieves who took all of his money. Opening his diary later that evening, Henry wrote 'Let me be thankful, first because I was never robbed before; second, because although they took my purse, they didn't take my life; third, because although they took my all, it wasn't much. And fourth because it was I who was robbed, not I who robbed.'"

Wisdom

Doing the Same Stuff and Expecting Something Different

Sir Astley Cooper, on visiting Paris, was asked by the chief surgeon how many times he had performed a certain wonderful feat of surgery. He replied that he had performed the operation thirteen times.

"Ah, but, monsieur, I have done it one hundred and sixty times. How many times did you save the life?" continued the curious Frenchman, after he had looked into the blank amazement of Sir Astley's face.

"I," said the Englishman, "saved eleven out of the thirteen. How many did you save out of one hundred and sixty?" "Ah, monsieur, I lost them all, but the operation was very brilliant!"

Of how many popular ministries might the same verdict be given! Souls are not saved, but the preaching is very brilliant. Thousands are attracted and operated on by the rhetorician's art, but what if he should say to his admirers, "I lost them all, but the sermons were very brilliant!" – Charles Haddon Spurgeon
The Quotable Spurgeon

Witnessing

He Should Have Said Something

A man walks into a pet shop to buy his mother a birthday present. He selects a beautiful parrot. Two weeks later, he calls his mom. "How's the bird I got you?" "Oh, it was delicious," she replied. Her son, in disbelief, says, "What?? You ate that parrot? He cost me \$600.00 and could speak six languages!" "Well, she replied, "he should have said something!" As Christians, God has called us to be witnesses. Say Something!

All is Forgiven, I Love You

Ernest Hemmingway wrote a story about a father and son. They had a strained relationship and the father wanted to make things right with his son. He took out an ad in the newspaper and wrote, "Please meet me in front of the newspaper office in the morning, all is forgiven, I love you." The next morning 80 men named Paco showed up in front of that newspaper office.

The world is full of people who would gladly accept God's forgiveness if only someone would deliver the message.

Conclusion to the Matter of Sermon Illustrations

"A farmer went out to sow his seed" (Jesus: Luke 8:5).

C.H. Spurgeon likens illustrations to windows in a house and states that every room, or main division should have at least one (Lectures to my Students). Illustrations can illuminate a sermon and support its application.

I- The Uses of Illustrations - **Sermon Illustrations, if used appropriately, can be an effective way to connect your listeners with your message.** W.E. Sangster says that illustrations have seven uses:

- A) They make the message clear - ***Illustrations should give light on dark points (Matt.7:14-23).***
- B) They make the truth impressive - ***You can gain the interest and attention of all ages by using illustrations.***
- C) They make preaching interesting - ***Illustrations can give life to a sermon. Sometimes the explanation of a biblical custom or idiom can be rewarding (1 Peter 1:13).***
- D) They ease the congregation - ***They enable the mind to relax and then reapply itself to the message being heard.***
- E) They make sermons memorable - ***Any method that helps the mind to grasp and retain truth is worth using.*** Consider Paul's picture of a burnt-out city (1 Cor. 3:10-15).
- F) They are persuasive - ***Stories can be used to clarify thought, touch the emotions and challenge the will.*** Illustrations can be used when making an appeal.
- G) They make repetition possible - ***without being boring. A good sermonizer knows the art of recapitulation and review.***

II- The Types of Illustration - **The significance and importance of sermon illustration is indicated by the statement, "Imagination rules our lives".** But sermon illustration includes more than just stories. Consider the following forms of illustration:

- A) Figures of speech - ***Languages are rich in shades of meaning, similes, synonyms, musical sounds,*** and so on. As John Stott says: "We can talk of God 'breaking through our defences' or the Holy Spirit 'rising open' our closed minds to new truth" (I Believe in Preaching). We can paint mental pictures by the words we use. So, study the use of words. Be aware of the richness adverbs and adjectives can bring to speech.
- B) Anecdotes - ***people of all ages love a good story. Anecdotes are short stories perhaps drawn from*** observation and experience - either your own or someone else's. Paul uses his own testimony in 22:2-21 and 26:2-29.
- C) Allegory - ***This is a story describing one thing in order to explain or teach something else. The Song of Solomon*** may be seen as an allegory of Yahweh and his Wife (Israel) or of Christ and his Church (the Church: see Eph. 5:23-27). John Bunyan used allegory to great effect in his Pilgrim's Progress.
- D) Analogy - ***Jesus used analogy when he spoke of himself as the Door and the Good Shepherd (John 10).*** The parables of Jesus make use of nature and everyday experience. Emulate the Master prince of preachers.
- E) Parables - ***A story or comparison may teach or illustrate a point. The prophet Nathan's use of the*** parable featuring the rich man who took the poor man's ewe lamb is powerful (see 2 Sam.12:3-9). Notice the three parables of lost things in Luke 15.
- F) Fables - ***Fables about animals, birds and trees can be used with effect. See Judges 9:8-15; 2 Kings 14:9; Ezek. 17:1-24.*** Could we utilize any of Aesop's fables in our sermons?

III. The Sources of Illustration - **Some wise person said: "One picture is worth a thousand words".** This being so, collect and use them. Here are some sources:

- A) The Bible - *Let the Bible illustrate its own truths. Bear in mind that today's generation is unacquainted with the Bible and its stories. So use them! Recall and apply the teaching and example of the Lord Jesus. But be careful not to over-elaborate Bible stories. They are generally simple.*
- B) Observation - *W.E. Sangster advises the preacher to go through life with a trawling eye. Your own illustrations will be the best. So, keep a notebook - make a habit of capturing illustrative material.*
- C) Bibliographies - *Use biographies. Stories with human interest are the best. Draw from your own experience - but avoid ostentation.*
- D) Imagination - *Preaching should be adventurous. Use your imagination. You can invent stories, and use them honestly by prefacing them with the word 'suppose'.*
- E) Conversation - *Talk with people. Stories will come from sharing. Visiting people at home or in hospital will supply lots of interesting stories. Pastoral visitation will suggest subjects for preachers.*
- F) Reading - *Books are a rich source of sermon illustration. Newspapers can keep us in touch with local and world news. Read widely, and use your notebook to create an index of subjects which reappear in the pages in the books you have read.*
- G) Radio, Television and the Web - *Television dominates people's thinking. Use illustrations from the media. But use these sparingly and keep a good taste. You don't want to leave the impression that you spend most of your time watching TV! Make Phil.4:8 your benchmark for personal viewing and sermon content. Use a good search engine to surf the world wide web. There are now hundreds of Christian web sites which will serve you as a Bible student and preacher.*

IV. The Limits of Illustrations - Any Illustration has its limits and dangers. Here are some pearls of good advice.

- A) Don't mix your metaphors - *The best metaphors to use are those found in the text of the Bible. Be careful not to neutralize those figures of speech and rather, depend on them.*
- B) Don't use too many stories. - *This will limit the most important element of the sermon, the content.* The body should be whole biblical exposition and application.
- C) Don't be self-centered. - *An illustration with "I-strain" is just as offensive to the hearer as a one-sided conversation. Hearers need to be able to insert themselves in the story for the illustration to apply.*
- D) Don't use illustrations that need explaining. - *Illustrations that need illustrations are too much trouble and probably will not work.*
- E) Don't be dishonest with facts. - *To say "...this happened to me..." when you heard another preacher tell the story is dishonest. I have heard one story about a mentally retarded soul winner from two preachers and I still don't know who told it first. (Credibility is shot!).*
- F) Don't build sermons around illustrations. - *Any point of a sermon can only be "supported" by an illustration. The point must be made by Scripture. The Word of God has a mighty power not equalled by any other thing.*
- G) Don't major on humor - *It can be said that preachers can amuse congregations to death. A.W. Tozer* said: "Most of America is laughing their way to Hell...". Preach preacher preach!!



“Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.” **(1 Thes. 5:17-18)**

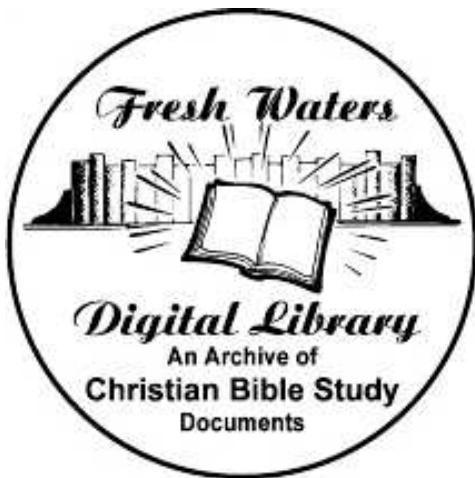


Dr. Terry Wayne Preslar (1947-)

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Psalms 107:2 & Romans 12:1-2

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