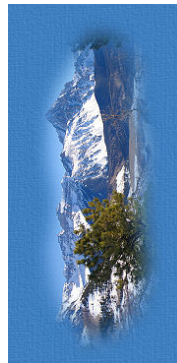


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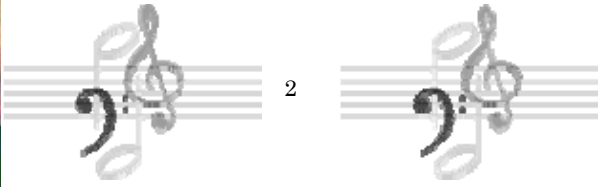
Volume 18, Issue 1 January 2009

The PASTOR' S PEN



Hello Believers,
We find ourselves at yet another mile marker in the journey of life. In our Western culture's calendar, we mark the passing of time and designate January 1st as the advent of a new year. As we turn the page to the year 2009, another attempt by man to mark time, it is worth noting that January 1st is an arbitrary commencement for a new year. Indeed, even today, other cultures employ different calendars and observe a different New Year's day. In the history of our Judeo-Christian heritage we find the New Year beginning on varying dates.

The Bible designates Nisan, which it calls Abib (Exodus 12:2), as the first month of the year. At the same time, the season of the fall Festival of Tabernacles (Sukkoth), is called "the end of the year" (Exodus 23:16). Josephus, in the 1st century, states that God instructed Moses to appoint Nisan as the first month for the festivals... the commencement of the year for everything relating to divine worship, for the civil New Year... selling and buying and other ordinary affairs, he preserved the ancient order which held that the year began with Tishri." So a multiplicity of new years for different pur-



The Quester

one's proclivity to ignore their basic needs, to admit where they are wrong. Often it goes back to that pivotal principle you expressed: 'There is a way that seems right unto a man, but it ends in death' (Proverbs 16: 25)—in pain and frustration, in sorrow and disappointment."

"I remember when I wrote that; I had examined many roads in my quest for understanding life. . . . And most of those led to nowhere. In fact, some of them were dangerous."

"But when one finds the right Way, it leads to a fulfilled Life. As I have emphasized: 'I am the Way.' To find me will result in restful living instead of so much turmoil. 'Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly' (Matthew 11:28-30, Msg)."

Jesus continued to instruct Solomon. He wanted his understanding to include the spiritual realities of life—not just the physical world around them. He wanted Solomon to see the silver lining in the dark clouds; try to retrieve something good out of a bad situation. He so wanted him to laugh and love and live, to enjoy 'the unforced rhythms of grace,' to 'learn to live freely and lightly.'

So as the brightness of the day evolved into long shadows, Jesus took Solomon step by step to a point where he was less inclined to put his trust in himself, or in material things. Solomon's growth had been arrested by living in the shadows of his own selfish world. It was time for him to walk in the sunshine of the Spirit. It would take discipline, right choices.

Jesus was hopeful that this would happen. This encounter wasn't over. ■



All together now—applause for God! Sing songs to the tune of his glory, set glory to the rhythms of his praise.

—Psalms 66:1–2 (MSG)

I will praise you, Lord, with all my heart; I will tell of all the marvelous things you have done. I will be filled with joy because of you. I will sing praises to

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The Quester

10

By Jerry McClenagan
Continued from Dec. '08
newsletter



This serialization of a forthcoming book, THE QUESTER, is creative nonfiction based upon my research into the writings of Solomon and the words and life of Jesus. I use not only the traditional KJV, NKJV and NIV, but have relied heavily on *The Message* to give a contemporary flavor to the ancient proverbs of Solomon as well as the NT quotes by and about Christ.

SCENE THIRTEEN

See the way God does things and fall into line. Don't fight the facts of nature . . . Tackle every task that comes along, and if you fear God you can expect his blessing. —Solomon (Eccl. 7:13, 18, LB)

Arriving at a quiet place . . . he said: 'You're blessed when you're at the end of your rope. With less of you there is more of God and his rule.' —Jesus (Matt. 5:3, Msg)

"Ah, what a beautiful morning, my dear Solomon. As your father wrote, 'The heavens declare the glory of God' (Psalm 8:1a, KJV). We stand on this mountain and invite all mankind—wherever they are, whoever they are—to worship and praise God, as we discussed last night. It is the only true respite from the pressures of life."

Solomon sighed deeply, nodding. "Yes," he said, "'In my search for wisdom I observed all that was going on everywhere across the earth—ceaseless activity, day and night' (Ecc. 8:16, LB).

"You know how I have struggled with frustration: 'I said to myself, 'Come now, be merry; enjoy yourself to the full.'" But I found that this, too, was futile. For it is silly to be laughing all the time; what good does it do?' It seemed to me that 'laughter cannot mask a heavy heart. When the laughter ends, the grief remains' (Prov. 14:13, LB). It is almost always true, isn't it, that 'a happy face means a glad heart; a sad face means a breaking heart' (Prov. 15:13, LB)?"

Jesus smiled and said, "Sometimes the laughter is superficial; that kind cannot eradicate sorrow. But sincere laughter can provide a balm for the broken spirit in time. And genuine laughter can give relief and relaxation. And 'a relaxed attitude lengthens a man's life; . . .' (Proverbs 14:30a, LB)—as you have written."

"I have struggled with this in my cynical viewpoint of life, Master, even though I wrote that a positive frame of mind can do a lot for a person: 'When a man is gloomy, everything seems to go wrong; when he is cheerful, everything seems right!' (Prov. 15:15, LB)."

Jesus laid a hand on Solomon's shoulder. "Indeed you have struggled in this way. I'm showing you the Way to change that, the Truth about yourself and life, the way to abundant Life. And I confirm what I inspired you to write, that it is certainly easier if good things can be observed along the way: 'Pleasant sights and good reports give happiness and health' (Proverbs 15:30, LB). But I must point out that the far deeper problem is

Prayer Requests

3



" . . . The prayer of faith shall save the sick and the Lord shall raise him up; . . . Pray for one another that you may be healed."
— James 5:15-16.

Sheri Bartlett: Julia McKinney's daughter, having serious health problems.

Amber & Dylan Clark: Grandchildren of Betty Clark, cerebral palsy. Amber has been diagnosed with shingles.

Vickie Crevoi: Sister of Linda Booth, Chronic Progressive MS.

Bob Fink: Larry Lyles' daughter's father-in-law, prostate cancer which has metastasized to the bone, undergoing chemo.

Sherry Evans: Niece of Jerry McClenagan & Glennis McAlister, is now home, very weak, but gradually gaining weight.

Paul Flatt: James Bailey's brother-in-law, suffered a heart attack. He is undergoing alternative treatments.

Velvet Green: Suffers from schizophrenia.

Bobbie Gatson: Mother of Velvet Green, nerve and back problems making it difficult for her to walk.

Je Keishalyn Henley: Daughter of Velvet and Gary Green, is incarcerated and having health problems. Pray for an early release.

Benny Ray Hicks: Betty Clark's daughter's brother-in-law, diagnosed with leukemia.

Anna Law: In need of a kidney transplant.

Dollie Meil: She is suffering with cerebral palsy. She has been moved to The MacKenzie House, 8609 Boston Ave. #139, Lubbock, TX 79423, 806 744-7387.

Ted Rankin: He is having further difficulty with mobility and weakness. Tests show he has increased brain lesions, indicating MS.

Kathryn Scott: Friend of the Baileys; severe MS, losing use of arms and swallowing ability.

Wilson Stewart: Diagnosed with prostate cancer, numbness and difficulty swallowing.

Jeanne Vincent: C.B. & Darrell Sehorn's sister, breast cancer which has metastasized to the bone.

Ron Vorheis: Is suffering from macular degeneration, heart arrhythmia & severe digestive problems; including pancreatic inflammation and diverticulitis.

IF YOU HAVE UPDATES OR NEW REQUESTS PLEASE INFORM THE EDITOR. jerrydalemc@sbcglobal.net

4 Celebrations

Birthdays:

Helen Kennedy 01/01
 Virginia Sellers 01/02
 Francis Carlson 01/04
 Rudolph Rankin 01/15
 Norma Hamilton 01/25
 Roy Carlson 01/31

Anniversaries:

Linda & Darrell Sehorn 01/06

GraceRhythms

Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the **unforced rhythms of grace.** ~ Jesus. Matt 11:28-30 (MSG)

SELF-DISCIPLINE IS AN INTRINSIC PART OF GRACE. Dr. John MacArthur shares some thoughts with us on this point—all good advice for 2009.

‘This is what I am working at all the time, with all the strength that God gives me.’
 Col 1:28 (Phillips NT)

As a Christian, learn to cultivate self-discipline. Here are some practical ways to reach that objective:

Start small. In your home, for example, begin the house cleaning in the main bedroom. When that discipline is established, extend it to the rest of your home.

Be punctual. Make it a habit to be on time.

Deal with difficult tasks first. If you do the hardest jobs first, you will not leave them undone.

Be organized. Instead of merely reacting to circumstances, plan your day and your work.

Be grateful for correction. Don't shun constructive criticism; welcome it as a means for self-improvement.

Practice self-denial. This can begin in simple ways—substitute a healthy snack for junk food. Discipline in the physical realm carries over into the spiritual realm.

Take on responsibilities. Welcoming a new opportunity forces you to be organized.

These may seem insignificant, but they can be good practice in becoming a better servant of Christ.

~ Taken from ‘Truth for Today,’ pg. 204

*Mr. Meant-to has a comrade,
 And his name is Didn't Do;
 Have you ever chanced to meet them:
 Did they ever call on you?
 These two fellows live together
 In the house of Never-Win,
 And I'm told that it is haunted
 By the ghost of Might-Have-Been.
 ~ Author Unknown*

I shall correct errors where shown to be errors, and I shall adopt new views as fast as they shall appear to be true views.
 ~ Abraham Lincoln

A BAG OF TOOLS

Isn't it strange
 That princes and kings,
 And clowns that caper
 In sawdust rings,
 And common people
 Like you and me
 Are builders for eternity?

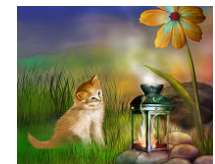
Each is given a bag of tools,
 A shapeless mass,
 A book of rules;
 And each must make—
 Ere life is flown—
 A stumbling block
 Or a steppingstone.
 ~ R. L. Sharpe

ASPIRATION From 'The Three Best Things' by Henry Van Dyke

Let me but live my life from year to year,
 With forward face and unreluctant soul;
 Not hurrying to, nor turning from, the goal;
 Not mourning for the things that disappear
 In the dim past, nor holding back in fear
 From what the future veils; but with a whole
 And happy heart that pays its toll
 To Youth and Age, and travels on with cheer.

So let the way wind up the hill or down,
 O'er rough or smooth, the journey will be joy:
 Still seeking what I sought when but a boy,
 New friendship, high adventure, and a crown,
 My heart will keep the courage of the quest,
 And hope the road's last turn will be the best.

Trust in the Lord, and do good; Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness. 4 Delight yourself also in the Lord, And He shall give you the desires of your heart. 5 Commit your way to the Lord, Trust also in Him, And He shall bring it to pass. 6 He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, And your justice as the noonday. 7 Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him; Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, Because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass. 8 Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; Do not





Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life. Prov 4:23 (NIV)

'So take a fresh grip on life and brace your trembling limbs. Don't wander away from the path but forge steadily onward. On the right path the limping foot recovers strength and does not collapse.' (Heb 12:10, Phillips NT)

WHAT A BUMMER! As in bum knee, propped up to relieve some of the pain. Of course, it helps me do my part in helping my wife vacuum; she can clean under my feet.

What a way to begin a new year. But much better than many people, who would be happy to trade problems with me.

The author of Hebrews gives us a metaphor

for launching another year: "the limping foot" or ankle or knee. All of us limp through life one way or another. So the advice is to make the most of any and every bum situation. Don't exacerbate your problems, but stay on the best possible path to recover strength and not collapse. That is the appropriate advice.

So as we enter a new year we should forge steadily onward in the path God has set before us. It takes prayer, fellowship with our brethren in Christ, and the ministry of the Word to brace our trembling limbs.

I pray that you and yours will be able to take a fresh grip on life in 2009.

altitude to spare when suddenly they hit the water. The plane had been flown right into the

| cont pg 8 >

|cont. from pg. 5 > ocean. All aboard were killed.

What caused the tragedy? As the aircraft was being serviced and cleaned, a simple piece of tape had been stuck over the hole or tube that gives the instruments readings for altitude, etc. That was standard procedure, but, of course, the tape should have been removed. It wasn't, and scores of people lost their lives.

The real problem was that the pilots, seasoned veterans quite accustomed to and comfortable with flying across the ocean in the dark, suddenly couldn't trust their instruments, and they and their aircraft and passengers were lost because of it.

Our God is absolutely trustworthy. Never a hitch. Never a foul-up. Never a mistake. We can trust him completely.

But, if we take our eyes off of him, we are flying blind, and we're headed for a crash.

A TALE of TAPE, TRAGEDY, and TRUST

I was watching the History Channel awhile back as my attention was hooked and I was reeled in by a program focusing on the reasons for a terrible plane crash. A large airliner (I believe of South or Central American registry) was flown right into the ocean. Everyone on board was killed. Something obviously went terribly wrong. What happened?

The pilots were experienced and capable. The airline had a very respectable safety record.

The producers of the show re-enacted the whole scene from takeoff to crash and beyond. Everything seemed fine, but almost immediately after takeoff, things began to go wrong.

The instruments went haywire. Warning lights and buzzers in several different systems began to go off. To make matters worse, the pilots began to get conflicting information from various instruments. They didn't know which to trust.

Most worrisome of all was the altimeter which was completely crazy. How high were they? They didn't know, but they did indeed know that it was nighttime and they were flying over the ocean.

Of course, they reported an emergency, turned the plane around, and started to head for an emergency landing. They asked the air traffic controller to give them the altitude that his screen showed, and he quickly complied. Unfortunately, neither he nor they realized that the altitude reading he reported was being transmitted from the aircraft's faulty instruments themselves.

The TV show's producers played the chilling tape from the cockpit voice recorder. The tension in the voices was apparent even before the translation rolled across the screen. The pilots were absolutely perplexed. In hindsight, if another aircraft could have been routed to their position, they could have relied on his instruments, but either no one thought of that or there just wasn't enough time.

The pilots thought they were heading toward their emergency landing with plenty of



poses has long been in use. By 200 AD there are identified four new-year dates. The 1st of Nisan is the new year for kings and feasts; the 1st of Elul is the new year for the tithe of cattle... the 1st of Tishri is the new year for years, for the years of release and jubilee years, for the planting and for vegetables; and the 1st of Shevat is the new year for trees according to the schools of Shammai and Hillel. Modern practice follows that Rosh Hashanah, which means "the head of the year", and is celebrated in the month of Tishri, is "the new year for years." This is when the numbered year changes and most Jews today view Tishri as the de facto beginning of the year. I believe the logic for the 1st of Tishri, the now 7th month as the commencement of a new year resides in the fact that it falls in the month of September on our modern calendar, the traditional time of man's creation ensuring that man and woman awoken in a garden ripe with harvest to sustain themselves.

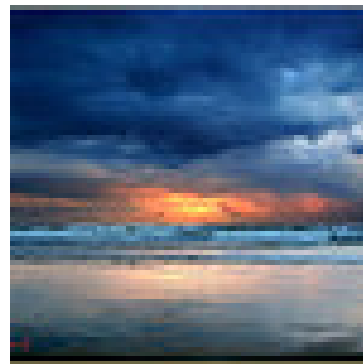
God instructed Moses of a change in the calendar and a New Year date with the establishment of the Holy Days: *Now the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, 2 "This month shall be your beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you."* (Ex 12:1 NKJV) This established

the new year for Israel a couple of weeks prior to the Passover...the truest of new beginnings for mankind.

The traditional custom of "New Year resolutions" is just another opportunity for us to take stock of where we are and where we are going; setting goals and working with God as "co-creators" in the process of becoming. While we know that the time of Passover is the prime time to "examine ourselves" spiritually as the Apostle Paul exhorted in I Cor. 11:28, there is no limit to the opportunities a Christian can employ to evaluate, repent, resolve and commit to the process of becoming....be it spiritual or physical in nature.

So, go ahead, make your resolutions and keep your eyes on He who created & is creating us in this process of becoming!

God Bless You,
Jeff Booth

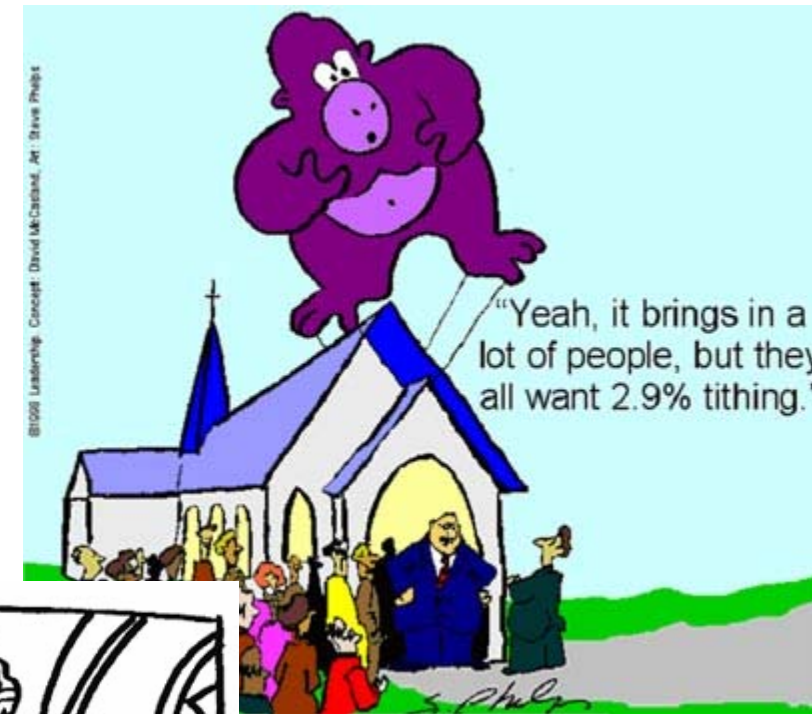


Chuckles

7 A cheerful disposition is good for your health; gloom and doom leave you bone-tired.

Here are the ideas I received to improve last month's cartoon caption ▶

- "We get a lot of visitors with small children wondering if we have a petting zoo."
- "Most comment that I should have no problem keeping it inflated . . . plenty of hot air."
- "When I announced my next sermon title would be 'The King Is Coming' several thought it would be about King Kong."
- "Got lots of Macy's shoppers after Thanksgiving."
- "Got it on Ebay. Thought 'why not, I've tried everything else?'"



"If that's for me, I'm in the middle of a sermon."

