



Living the Scriptures

On Sunday we were reminded of the simple, but powerful, description that was made of Ezra. Do you remember what was said of him? We are told that the gracious hand of God was upon Ezra because he *“had set his heart to study the Law of the LORD, and to do it...”* (Ezra 7:10). What an awesome way to be described!

The Bible serves as more than just academic exercise. It is about physical exercise. God’s word is not meant to merely be studied. The word of God is a word that is meant to be lived. We are to give the Bible flesh and blood.

I was reminded of this truth today as I was reading through a few different text and reflecting on Ezra’s description. As Jesus was finishing his famous Sermon on the Mount he closes with these words, *“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and **puts them into practice** is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock”* (Matt. 7:24-25). It is about more than just hearing the words. It is about putting them into practice. We live the word of God. We give it flesh and blood.

James basically says the same thing when he writes, *“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. **Do what it says.** Those who listen to the word but do not do what it says are like people who look at their faces in a mirror and, after looking at themselves, go away and immediately forget what they look like. But those who look intently into the perfect law that gives freedom and continue in it - not forgetting what they heard but **doing it** - they will be blessed in what they do”* (James 1:22-25). Can you imagine looking in a mirror and then immediately forgetting what you look like? Sounds ridiculous, right? I think that is James’ point. It is ridiculous to listen to the word of God and not do it. Again, we live the word of God. We give that word flesh and blood.

This is a great reminder for all of us, especially at the beginning of a new year because so many people use this time to recommit to a more disciplined routine of reading the Bible. My prayer is that we at Elmwood will give the Bible flesh and blood, so that when those in our community see us they will see the text come to life in their midst.

-Gilbert

Celebrating the New Year

In my family New Year’s resolutions were never really encouraged too much. I’m not sure of my parents’ reasoning. My understanding was always that, as Christians, we should always be working on becoming more like Christ, and thus, shouldn’t wait for a particular time to make an effort.

I still think this is true. Everyday should be a day where we struggle against what Paul calls our earthly nature. *“Put to death, therefore whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry”* (Col. 3:5).

However, I have somewhat altered my thoughts on this topic. I do believe that our change should take place each day, but I also see the value in having a designated day for renewed effort. I have come to this conclusion from my experience with lent.

I never observed lent as a child, as it was not part of my tradition, nor the tradition of any in my family. I grew up learning little about lent, only that a couple of my friends from school ate fish every Friday for a certain period of time. Since I never liked seafood, it didn’t seem all that great to me.

Having grown somewhat older though, and having set a couple of Lenten goals for myself over the years, I understand that while our change should be daily, if we do not begin that change at some point it can never become a part of our daily lives. New Year’s resolutions function to give extra drive and energy to our everyday putting to death of our earthly nature. Take advantage of the opportunity!

-Phil



Congratulations!

55th
ANNIVERSARY

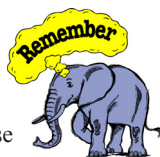


Happy anniversary and God's richest blessings on **Dick and Janice Waterstraat** who will celebrate their 55th wedding anniversary on January 20!



Dear Members of the Elmwood Church of Christ:
Thank you so much for helping me give my son a nice Christmas. Your generosity, kindness, and unconditional friendship flows throughout each person. I appreciate the assistance. God bless.
Sincerely, Diane Jeffries & family

There are a number of "gifts" on the Secret Sister table in the hallway between the front and back buildings. Please check it out—you may have a gift!



December 26, 2010
Class: 114 Worship: 206
Contribution: \$12,834

January 2, 2011
Class: 150 Worship: 254
Contribution: \$8,064.36

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2011 Spiritual Adventure

We have a tradition of printing a weekly article on the back of our newsletter titled, "Spiritual Adventure." To continue this tradition, we need volunteers to write these articles. Please sign up using the yellow attendance on Sunday morning, email us at office@elmwood-church.org or call the church office at 765-447-2874. You will be notified of your scripture assignment well in advance. Thank you.



—Carol Bell



A Note of Thanks

Dear Elmwood Christmas Card Donation Contributors: Cheryl and I were SO thankful to receive your special contribution of \$1216 yesterday in the mail! What a great blessing!!! We cannot thank you enough for your thoughtfulness and generosity!!! We are sharing some of it with Francis

McArthur, a local evangelist from Tarkwa, Ghana (Mom taught him through WBS and helped him to get his diploma as a preacher about 30 years ago from Kumasi Bible College. Since then he has started over 30 congregations in Western Ghana and trained many young preachers.); and also with Emmanuel Charles, evangelist from Gonaive, Haiti. They are both excellent co-workers in the Lord. They will be very thankful also! We praise God for your kindness! Keep growing in the Lord daily and living out His Amazing AGAPE-LOVE! God will bless you with much joy this year as you look to Him in all things from moment to moment. In God's Faithful Love,

Bren & Cheryl White, Operation French World

Focus on the Family Programs

Upcoming *Focus on the Family* programs are heard on local radio, WHPL-FM 89.9 at 2:00 PM Monday-Friday.

- January 6 **Words of Kindness, Source of Healing.** In this inspirational message, speaker and author Florence Littauer describes how words of encouragement can have a powerful impact on a person's life.
- January 7 **Growing Closer With Your Spouse.** Author Jim Burns explains the benefits of spouses having consistent devotional and prayer time together.
- January 10-11 **Rekindling the Romance in Your Marriage.** In a discussion based on his book *Kiss Me Like You Mean it*, David Clarke offers couples practical advice for rekindling romance in their marriage. (Parts 1 & 2)
- January 12-14 **Rising From the Rubble of Haiti.** Dan Woolley shares his compelling story of being trapped under rubble for 65 hours following the catastrophic earthquake that occurred in Haiti on January 12, 2010. (Parts 1, 2 & 3)

ELMWOOD YOUTH ministry

UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday 1.08 Common Ground, 7-10p @ casteel casa
Sunday 1.16 Area-Wide HS Devo, 3-7p @ kokomo
Sunday 1.23 Service Project Sunday, 12n @ church
February 18-20 Winterfest @ Gatlinburg, TN

THINGS PONDERED

Smoother in His Hands

I was blessed to be able to spend New Year's Day with my family in Wilmington, and we decided to enjoy the 70 degree weather by visiting the beach! Per our family tradition, we walked up and down the coastline with our eyes fixed more on the ground in front of us than on the magnificent ocean. That seems strange to a lot of people [and it usually looks a little strange, too!], but I come from a long line of rock collectors, and the beach is our favorite place to comb. I don't know what it is, but I love finding small rocks that have been worn down smooth and frosted by the waves and sand. This trip, the new year had me pondering more than usual about change, the past, the future. I remembered a Nichole Nordeman song about God being a great river in whose depths she lives, and the longer she abides in Him, the smoother she becomes. Reflect on the chorus:

When I close my eyes,
And feel You rushing by,
I know that time brings change,
And change takes time.
And when the sunset comes,
My prayer would be just one:
That You might pick me up and notice that I am
Just a little smoother in Your hand.

Being a rock tossed and tumbled by the ocean [or a river] is not often a gentle process, and anyone who has experienced sand burn knows sand can be painfully gritty. But it's so neat how God uses a tumultuous process of motion to produce something so beautiful. It's the same with shells. They get broken along the journey, and we rarely find whole shells. But the pieces reveal the gorgeous array of colors from the inside of the shells, which are often more brilliant than the outer layers. This what God does for each of us, too. Our lives are certainly going to be filled with difficult times that toss us to and fro, and we will surely experience a broad spectrum of tumultuous emotions. But God promises to bring undeniable good through those very things, and He uses them to form us more into the likeness of His own Son. My prayer is that the end of 2011 will find me and you "just a little smoother in His hand."

Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me [Psalm 51:10].

— danae



Travis, Nicole, Raegan, Clay & Mollie Hutchinson, our new youth and family minister and his family, have arrived and are in the process of getting "settled." They will be living in the Roselawn house (2506 Roselawn Avenue) behind the church building. Greg Sutherlin headed up a group of people who readied the home with lots of hard work and painting. Our special thanks to Greg for that. We hope you will be sure to take time to meet the Hutchinsons and welcome them to our Elmwood family.

Michelle Mullen had emergency surgery last week. She remains in Clarian Arnett Hospital, room 507....**Patty Vice** is home after a lengthy stay at the hospital following difficulties from her chemo treatment....**Annie Crowder** remains in the hospital in Texas...Continue praying for **Steve Critser (room 531, Clarian Arnett Hospital)**, **Haley Gort, Mike Hamilton, Mike Kinsinger, Marceena Miller, Kaden Koebecke** and **Marie DeWoody**.



In the military: **Tim Beghtol** is in Afghanistan....**Josh Martin** and **Matthew Kauffman** are serving in Iraq. **Joe Newman** is in Chicago.

Continue to remember the following people who are homebound or in a nursing care facility: **Dovie Hurst & Dorothy Walters (Creasy Springs Healthcare)**, **Hattie Coffel (Rosewalk Village)**, **Argie Verett (Cumberland Point)**, **Valley Stockton (Regency Place)**, **Henrietta Frampton (Mulberry Lutheran)**, **Willie & Calvin Batts, Phyllis Gray, Carolyn Rigdon, Linda Bilyeu, Vickie Sanders, Janet Achor, Clifford Farner, Jan Lucas, Eugene Zinn, Irene Sims, Charles & Carolyn Moore, Delores Hill, and Wanita White (in Texas with her daughters)**.



January 5, 7 PM....Bible classes for all
January 19, 11:30 AM....Senior Servants meet
February 12, 9 AM....Women's Breakfast
February 25-26....Women's Spring Retreat!
Jackie Halstead, of Lipscomb University is the featured speaker.

Read:
Genesis 20-35; Luke 5-7

2011 Spiritual Adventures

Week 2: January 9-15

The Debt is Paid

The talking heads and politicians are saying we are emerging from one of the worse economic periods since the Great Depression. Certainly it has been bad; whether we are emerging from it could be debated particularly if you are one who lost your home or your job or both. The heart of the problem, of course, was people, usually duped by unscrupulous bankers, buying stuff, mainly houses, without enough money to pay for it. This sort of thing happens all too often. We want things or people or power and we fall for the promise of having them. We sell out for having them for a little while and then the bill comes due and we find we have sacrificed our character and what assets or relationships we did have. Not only do we end up with nothing but we have big debts to pay with no hope of paying them.

Now suppose you hear about someone who is able to bail you out of all of this. What would you do? These are the circumstances of the sinful woman (read 'prostitute') in Luke 7. She has essentially nothing, in part, because of societal elements of that time, and she has no hope of a better future. Jesus can change all that. She knows it; she believes it! Her display at Simon's (the Pharisee) house shows it. "Your sins are forgiven. Your faith has saved you; go in peace." What sweet words! Her debt is paid! Just like that. The power of the Christ comes by grace through faith and wipes our debt away. Ironically, Simon may not be any better off than the sinful woman. His reaction to Jesus is less than overwhelming, particularly in light of all Jesus had to say about the Pharisees.

While the consequences of our greed or lust or pride may take longer to realize, forgiveness comes through Jesus. We no longer have to live with the guilt of our sin. Living to honor Him will free us to rebuild our lives into ones that no longer fall for the kind of temptation that helped bring on the recent economic calamity. But to those who are able, consider all decisions and actions with sober judgment.

-Bill Bell

Weekly Schedule	Elders	World Missions
Sunday Worship 8:00 a.m. Bible Study 9:30 a.m. Worship 10:45 a.m. Life Groups 6:00 p.m.	Bill Bell 463-1139 Joe Mathews 474-8369 Joe Ruhl 463-7012 Rick Swensen 463-6822 Don Vice 471-8653	Kevin Chambers World Christian Broadcasting Anchor Point, Alaska 99536 Loren and Penny Hollingsworth Phuket, Thailand 83000 E-mail: lholly54@yahoo.com
Wednesday Bible Study 7:00 p.m.	Staff Ministers Gilbert Kerrigan 418-3652 Phil Travis 743-0954 Office Sherry Marks, Manager 447-2874 Carol Bell, Secretary 447-2874	Bren and Cheryl White P.O. Box 245 New Market, MD 21774
Our Vision: Knowing Christ, Making Christ Known.		



2501 Elmwood Ave., Lafayette, IN 47904
 (765) 447-2874 (765) 447-0878 FAX
 E-mail: office@elmwood-church.org
 www.elmwood-church.org

Christian Student Center
 PURDUE UNIVERSITY
 115 Waldron Street
 W. Lafayette, IN 47906

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