

PRAYER

LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN



Pray without ceasing

1 THESSALONIANS 5:17

July 2008, VOL. 51 NO. 1

Thoughts on Godly Prayer

“Pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17).

When I was growing up, I wondered how this could possibly be done. How can people go about their daily lives constantly in prayer? How can they get anything else done?

Now I sometimes wonder how I can get anything else done without continually praying.

This exhortation of the Apostle Paul to the Thessalonians serves as a reminder to make use of the lifeline we have with our God—without ceasing! Is there any situation too big or too small for God?

Perhaps you are struggling with a health issue or with raising teenagers, with job insecurities or peer relations, with debt, with a relentless sin or an abusive relationship. Not only does God promise to hear your prayers with regard to such things; He promises to give the best possible remedy for the situation.

In our weakness and short-sightedness, we don’t always know what the best possible outcome is. What a comfort to know that God does! The plea “Thy will be done” should not be viewed as a reluctant concession but as a wonderful confession that indeed “God knows best.”

“Brethren, pray for us” (1 Thess. 5:25).

How often in our prayer lives do we focus only on our problems? Just as St. Paul sought the prayers of his fellow Christians in Thessalonica, likewise our brethren seek our help in praying for them.

We can be certain that as sin and its effects plague our daily lives, those around us have the same burdens. “Pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” (Jms. 5:16).

We will also want to remember in prayer those who have not yet come to

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Editor: Paul Fleischer, 1741 E. 22nd Street, Cheyenne, WY 82001-4138, E-Mail to paulgf@qwestoffice.net; Assistant Editor: Paul R. Koch; Artists: John Fox, Matthew Schaser; Staff: Theodore Barthels, David Bernthal, Wayne Eichstadt, Warren Fanning, Daniel Fleischer, Joel Fleischer, David Fuerstenau, Mark Gullerud, Roland H. Gurgel, John Klatt, Paul Krause, Joseph Lau, Paul D. Nolting, Nathan Pfeiffer, David Reim, Peter Reim, Andrew Schaller, Michael Schierenbeck.

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know Jesus as their Savior, fledgling Christians new to the faith, and even those who might be our enemies. “Pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you” (Mt. 5:44b).

Oftentimes situations in life seem beyond our abilities to help—natural disasters, war, deadly disease. Prayer is one thing that can be done which will make a difference.

“Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine?” (Lk. 17:17)

Don’t forget to say “Thank You.”

Even though our Lord faithfully sees us through the problems that each day brings, how often do we forget to thank Him? How often are we like the

nine healed lepers, so eager to “get on with our lives” that we forget to whom our life belongs?

“Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever” (Ps. 107:1).

Let us pray: Dear Heavenly Father, lead us to have an ongoing communication with You throughout each day. As we pray, help us to put the needs of others foremost in our minds. Teach us to say “Thank You” for all the help You daily and graciously provide us. We ask this all for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

—Prof. Joseph Lau
Eau Claire, Wisconsin



JESUS—THE PERFECT MEDIATOR

When a person is taken hostage, the police will often employ a mediator to negotiate the release of the hostage.

When we were held hostage under the oppression of the Law on account of sin and death, God also employed a Mediator—the Man, Christ Jesus, as it is written, “Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men...For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time” (1 Tim. 2:1-6).

As the One who paid the ransom for sin, offering up Himself for man’s sins, Christ is the perfect Mediator between God and man. But our Mediator is not

a negotiator; He need not negotiate for our release. The door to our prison house has been opened and there is communication between God and man through Christ Jesus.

Because Christ is our Go-Between, we can be certain of our salvation. Having paid for our sins on the cross, the Mediator rose bodily from the grave. The resurrected Jesus said to His disciples, “Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have” (Lk. 24:38f).

Then the risen Savior ascended bodily into heaven, where He sits in power at the right hand of the heavenly Father. Therefore “If anyone sins we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world” (1 Jn. 2:1f).

Having made the satisfactory sacrifice for our sins, our Mediator speaks in our behalf. Christ testifies before His Father that we are not to be held guilty by virtue of the redemption that He won for all people. So we can believe with all certainty that our heavenly Father forgives all our sins for Jesus' sake.

The Apostle Paul writes: "It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercessions for us" (Rom. 8:34). The Mediator lives and reigns, true God and true Man, to carry our prayers before the Father.

Time Is Running Out...

And we can be certain that our Father in heaven will answer our prayers according to His will, as Paul also writes, "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32)

Certain that our prayers are heard and answered as the Lord sees fit—and knowing that "God our Savior...desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth"—let us also pray for all people, knowing that this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior.

God indeed desires that all be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. But time is running out.

I have often been told by senior citizens that time passes more quickly as one grows older. I have found that to be true. When I was a child, the time until Christmas passed slowly. Now, however, I find myself wondering where all the time went.



Where has the time gone? More importantly, where is the time going? How long will it be before we are celebrating the Second Coming of our Lord and Savior? Only God knows. But one thing is certain, as St. Paul writes, "Now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand" (Rom. 13:11).

For believers that day means resurrection and eternal life. At Christ's first coming He came humbly as a Man to suffer and die. At His Second Coming He will come in glory to judge the living and the dead—to resurrect some to eternal life and some to eternal punishment. And Christ will return (as we were recently reminded on Ascension Day).

This is why our intercessory prayers are so important. Saving faith in Christ cannot be worked in the heart without the Holy Spirit bringing the saving gospel.

Therefore, let us pray for all people—for their earthly welfare, but especially that the gospel may be proclaimed unto all. Let us be praying that faith may be worked through that gospel.

Our desire, and thus our prayer, is

that the Mediator Jesus would open up communication between God and every sinner. All have been ransomed and by the gospel they are put in touch with the Mediator; they are assured that no human negotiations are necessary, for Christ has paid for all their

sins. “This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

—*Pastor Joel Fleischer*
Marquette, Michigan



Christian Citizenship—

Rahab: Traitor or Patriot?

You’ve heard the opinions, even the debates, on the news programs.

What constitutes patriotism? What entails being a loyal and honorable citizen of one’s own country? To exercise the right to vote? Surely! To obey the laws of the land? Of course! But is it honorable to trample one’s own flag in the mud; to travel to foreign climes to denounce your government; to give aid and comfort to those seeking to harm and destroy you? Where does free speech end and treasonous activity begin?

I don’t know if Rahab would ever suggest that she knew all the answers. She was one remarkable character, but how you see her depends mainly on your own perspective and worldview. Was she an honorable citizen of Jericho? Hmm, she was a prostitute. And while modern-day Jerichos might wink at her profession, her fellow citizens may not have been so approving of her. She also lied to the authorities when it was known that foreign spies were in her city. Furthermore, she hid the two Israelites on her roof, sent her fellow citizens on a wild goose chase after them in the wrong direction, and then helped her city’s enemies escape!

By most any standard, ancient or

modern, her behavior was not cut from the cloth of patriotism but from treasonous mischief. From Jericho’s point of view, can it not be concluded that Rahab was not an honorable lady, not a supporting citizen, not a loyal patriot?

But the Lord God Himself judged Rahab in an altogether different light. Hebrews 11 (v. 31) lists her as one of the Bible’s great heroes of faith, for she “received the spies with peace.” So also James gives no endorsement of her former profession but describes her as one who believed God’s Word and acted on it. “Was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them another way” (2:25)?

Christ’s Kingdom

There is wicked Jericho and other assorted world kingdoms, and then there is the kingdom of God—Christ’s kingdom. In this world the Christian is a member of both but can give his undivided devotion and loyalty to only one.

It is obvious that Rahab was a member of that second kingdom. While her unbelieving countrymen were melting with fear at the approaching and avenging army of Israel, Rahab was

quite prepared to cast her lot with the true God and His people.

We are not told how she came to receive God's gift of faith. Perhaps travelers related not only the Lord's mighty deeds for Israel but also His gracious promises made to faithful Abraham, his descendants, and all nations.

Even then God's wonderful works were not hid in a corner. By whatever means God used to win her heart, she heard and was enlisted, proving her faith to be genuine by her works.

So, patriot or traitor? Jericho was destroyed—and would have voted traitor, but God hung the portrait of this citizen on His heroic wall of fame.

In faith and hope Rahab hung a scarlet rope from her house before the walls of Jericho came crashing down. Here we remember that the early church associated that rope with the red, cleansing blood of Christ. Yes, she was a gross sinner, but roped to the promised Christ, she had forgiveness of her sins and a whole new and changed life ahead of her.

For God had plans for this citizen. Her later marriage to one of Israel's tribal leaders made her an ancestor of Jesse, then of David, and ultimately of the very Christ of whose kingdom she



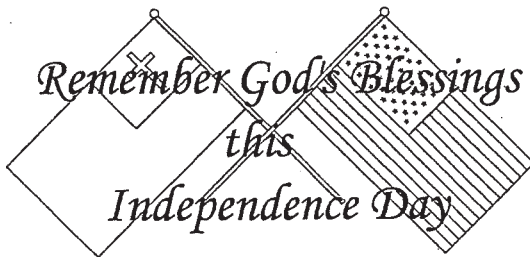
was a member.

What would citizen Rahab have us know?

Grab on to the scarlet rope of Christ's blood and righteousness and never, ever let go, for it alone is your forgiveness, life, and salvation. While others perish, Christ alone will save and bless. Love your country as you can, but remember you are only a pilgrim and stranger here; keep your eyes on the triumphant armies of God and His far better country. Live and act like a Christian citizen, which ultimately means serving Him first in righteousness, innocence, and joy.

"My reputation might be mud among those of wicked Jericho," Rahab might say, "but among God's people I am honored and blessed."

—Pastor David Fuerstenau
Ketchikan, Alaska



"Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people He has chosen as His inheritance."

(Psalm 88:12)

Studies in First Timothy—

“This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work...” (1 Tim. 3:1),

Chapter 2:1-7

Pray For All People

This July, Christians in America join with many of her other citizens in celebrating the freedoms that we enjoy in this country.

Very likely the apostle Paul would have marveled at where we are in the political realm. He came from a culture (Jewish) that purported to let God rule the land and saw the rulers as more or less divinely appointed, but very seldom did God receive His due from them, nor did they always rule in the best interests of the people. Church and State were very much mingled, but that did not mean that God’s wishes were faithfully implemented.

The apostle also operated in a pagan culture (Roman) in which he preached the gospel of Christ and fostered the establishment and growth of Christian congregations. Here the Christian church had no recognition, no influence in government, and could be no more certain of government protection than was Jesus under Pontius Pilate. From the state’s point of view, the church was completely irrelevant, and there was no interest whatever in seeing the Christian God’s wishes implemented.

This comes up as Paul advises the young pastor Timothy, who is to organize the church in Ephesus and to instruct the Christians there in God’s will.

In the section before us, Paul

exhorts Timothy “that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men.”

Timothy and the Christians under his care were to pray for all people. Although the mission of the church is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and His work of reconciling men to God—therefore, a fully spiritual mission—Christians are taught to look beyond the confines of their own congregations to see the needs of the people of the world. We are to consider the needs of our fellowmen when those needs become apparent in our own community, our nation, or in other parts of the world.

Time and again we hear of wars, human violence, and natural disasters that destroy the lives of many people. All this happens under the eye of a powerful and gracious God—a God we have come to know and trust (thanks be to Jesus!). And it is our place now, as children of God, to appeal to Him in behalf of others—many others—who need His help.

We approach our God with supplications—earnest appeals for help for people who find themselves impacted by tragic events. We approach Him with prayers, thoughtfully framing our

requests to God about the afflictions we see people encounter every day.

We come with intercessions—exercising our priesthood as believers to ask the Lord to be merciful to our neighbors, fellow citizens, and the impoverished masses. And we lift up our voices and prayers in thanksgivings toward the God who is pleased to give more than He is asked.

Paul writes that Christians are to pray, in particular, for “kings and all who are in authority.”

Church/State Issues

This is where Church/State issues properly cross paths. Those citizens of a given land—if they also are citizens of a heavenly land through faith in the Savior Jesus Christ—can exercise their best citizenship by praying about their earthly leaders before the Heavenly Throne; they can also effectively practice their faith by asking God to draw forth certain qualities in our government and leaders.

The qualities we would most like to see are those that make for genuine peace and security in the land. Though my governor, president, or king may or may not share my Christian faith, I can still pray that the Lord God would support him insofar as he seeks to foster a safe, just, and prosperous society.

Paul even explains our goal—our “agenda,” if you will—for these prayers: “...so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.”

Ahhh—there you have it. We’re just praying for an easier time of it here on this Earth; is that it?

Well no, not really. “This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved



and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” It is neither our agenda nor the government’s that we are concerned about. It is God’s agenda, and His will is clear: He wants all men to come into contact with the gospel, believe it, and be saved.

And although He can exercise His gracious will under many harsh and forbidding circumstances, He makes it clear that we can and should use our relative peace and freedom to live out our faith in the interest of our fellowmen; we are to use our earthly opportunities in this world to bring eternal peace to others in Jesus’ name. For “there is one God, and one mediator between God and men—the Man, Christ Jesus.” Jesus Christ gave Himself for all; He served to win their forgiveness, to reconcile them to their Creator, justifying them before the Judge of all men.

Now is the time of grace for this world. His salvation will be “testified in due time”—made evident when He comes at the last day to judge all. For this reason Paul was appointed a preacher and an apostle to the Gentiles in faith and truth.

For the same reason we also are where we are in life in order to let people around us know His salvation. Let us pray for the peace of our land and for the success of the Word.

—Pastor Peter Reim
Loveland, Colorado

Sixth in a series—

“Savoring the Spirit-fruit” *Faithfulness*

We have an idiom in our American language—we use it when a son takes to pitching a baseball similar to the way his dad did or when a daughter’s laugh brings memories of her mother’s. We say, “The apple doesn’t fall far from the tree.” Perhaps you have seen this happen in your own family—that some physical action or ability was handed down through the genes.

But such apples don’t always fall close to the tree, either; it is not a given that parental traits will be mirrored in their offspring. When it comes to physical matters, that is our experience anyway.

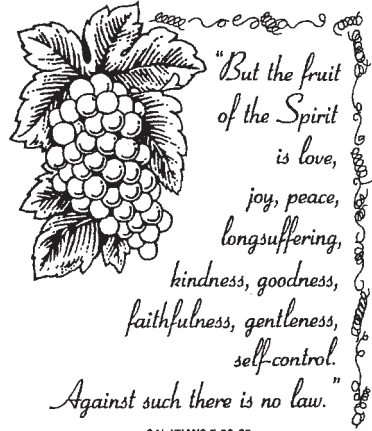
What about in the spiritual realm? Does “Spirit-fruit” fall “far from the tree”?

Just a brief glance at the Spirit-fruit already discussed reveals an obvious answer. Any and all fruit produced in connection with the Spirit clearly reflects a characteristic of God Himself!

This month’s fruit—“faithfulness”—is no different. To be faithful means to be conscientious, to be firm in one’s adherence to promises—the promises to which God holds Himself.

In fact, Paul wrote, “God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Cor. 1:9).

And as God has made us part of His fellowship/family through faith in His Son, as Peter wrote, there “have been given to us exceedingly great and pre-



vious promises...” (2 Pet. 1:4).

And just what those promises are to which God is faithful, Paul adds, “I thank my God always...that you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you, so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 1:4-8).

God has also proven Himself to be faithful in the area of helping His believing children to escape temptation: “[He] will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it” (1 Cor. 10:13).

In every area God has shown Himself to be faithful—every promise fulfilled; every blessing given; every temptation answered.

It is this “faithfulness” which also forms as Spirit-fruit in the lives of Christians. This fruit matures as we carefully and conscientiously make use of what the Lord has left in our care.

Where we find Jesus speaking of being ready for His unexpected return (Matthew 24), we hear Him praise the “faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season.” Jesus says, “Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods” (vv. 44-47).

His Word, His blessings, His gifts—whatever God has entrusted to us as

His stewards—He would have us put to use for His glory. He would have us “hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end” (Heb. 3:14).

Such is the Spirit-fruit which we desire in our own lives. God help us to be faithful! And thanks be to Him that, as we confess our failures, “He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 Jn. 1:9).

—Pastor Paul Krause
Clarkston, Washington



Sixth in a series on the life of

Samson



Reconstruction in Iraq: support for the greater work of God

See Judges 14 & 15 (selected verses referenced)

You have heard it said (and perhaps been inclined to believe it) that history repeats itself. At least some facets of the history of God’s people seem to be reflected onto the TV screen as CNN brings us its daily report on the current war.

Centuries before Jesus was born, Israel was pushed around by a tough neighbor—not from the east but from the west—Philistia along the coast of the Mediterranean, ancient history’s version of Iraq. At that time Israel was God’s special, favorite people, and God had a good reason to keep them such until the time was ripe and He could send forth His Son to a people prepared for Messiah.

No similarity with today’s nation of Israel, of course, although today’s Zionists think the Israelis are still God’s special breed of humanity and that Palestine is still God’s backyard.

Yet a small part of Israel’s history shines through into our world today with a message for us. It was another wartime, not with Scud missiles and Patriot anti-missiles, but the more basic style of warfare: the tough guy beats up on the weaker guy with a club or jawbone of an ass. And nobody was tougher than Samson. You may think it unlikely that one man could be a desert shield for the whole country, but he was, and he was even a desert storm when he got riled up and the Spirit of the Lord gave him superior power.

He started off with a skirmish at

Ashkelon, where he downed thirty enemy troopers; next he had a plan to demolish their food supply. Perhaps you recall that Samson somehow managed to get 300 foxes/jackals tied together in pairs by their bushy tails and torched them, so they ran crazed through the wheat fields and “burned up both the shocked grain plus the standing grain (not yet cut) as well as the vineyards and olive groves” (Judg. 15:4-5). In another age, it would be said that he torched their oil fields to turn their land into scorched earth.

The Philistines retaliated by torching Samson’s ex-wife and her family; which, as things go in war, called for a counter-attack, “so he attacked them hip and thigh with a great slaughter.” No body count is recorded.

God At Work!

They, of course, rallied in force, and Samson’s people tried to avoid further damage to their green earth by asking Samson to surrender, which he did—just long enough to be dragged clear of his own border and then—“Then the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him; and the ropes that were on his arms became like flax that is burned with fire, and his bonds broke loose from his hands. He found a fresh jawbone of a donkey, reached out and took it, and killed a thousand men with it”

(16:14-15). Apparently that did enough damage to their elite guard so that they backed off. But for the next twenty years this sort of thing happened over and over again as Samson, the Jewish desert shield, enforced an uneasy peace in the border lands.

God made use of that one person, awful in his anger and unbeatable in combat, to keep Philistia on edge, very careful about how they treated God’s people. God used an imperfect and selfish mortal as a tool to provide support for a much mightier work of God. That’s why Samson was important and valuable. His life was a support mechanism for that greater work of God—the quiet and soul-sustaining work going on back home. Samson was a protective desert shield for those Jewish villages where synagogue worship could be held, where parents could raise their families with less fear for their lives, so Scripture could be studied at leisure, and that the prophets could teach at their schools, revealing God’s love for humans otherwise lost.

God lets strong nations go to war to defend the weak, to avenge aggression, and to demand even a grudging respect for the other country’s feelings and interests. God can allow one unholy nation (or alliance of unholy nations) to be of some use at keeping another unholy nation from messing up the



“Days Inn” outside of LaCrosse, Wis. was site of the April 18-20, 2008, Women’s Retreat. Some 90 ladies attended. Group Pictures were taken. This group was all from one congregation: Berea, Inver Grove Heights, Minn. (cf. p. 14)

world worse than need be—perhaps so that when it is all over, Christian people can get into Islamic lands again and bring the real God and His Son Jesus to those who know Him not. It is even possible that our military personnel (as many of them as are Christian) in their contact with nationals may help bring Jesus as Savior into hearts that now know only the false god Allah.

Or perhaps during the reconstruction of their cities and oil production facilities, God will give Christian engineers, teachers, and business persons opportunity to serve Him by bringing the Word of Life to Iraq. God used Samson for such external good to his

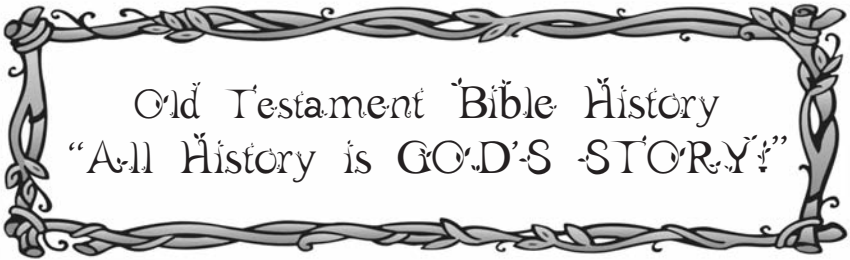
world in that way, and history can repeat itself, you know. Lord, have mercy!

Spread, oh, spread, thou mighty Word,
Spread the kingdom of the Lord,
Wheresoe'er His breath has giv'n
Life to beings meant for heav'n.

Tell of our Redeemer's love,
Who forever doth remove
By His holy sacrifice
All the guilt that on us lies.

Lord of Harvest, let there be
Joy and strength to work for Thee
Till the nations far and near
See Thy light and learn Thy fear. (TLH
#507:1,3,6)
Amen!

—Paul R. Koch
(first used as a chapel talk at ILC, Eau Claire)



Old Testament Bible History
"All History is GOD'S STORY!"

No. 2 in Series: Genesis 2

Man and Paradise

God reveals the day-to-day account of creation in Genesis chapter 1. He then “resets” the narrative and returns to the sixth day to give more detail concerning the crown jewel of His creative work—man and woman. As the beginnings (“genesis”) of the world’s existence continue, more foundation stones are put into place upon which the course of history—God’s Story—would be built.

Foundation: Human Life

To create the first human being,

God formed a dirt-man out of the ground. God Himself breathed into this dirt-man the “breath of life” and that man became a living soul. This living, breathing soul was created in God’s image—holy and righteous, enjoying a perfect relationship with his Creator.

The creation of man forms a foundation stone for understanding the value of human life and the separation that exists between mankind and the animals. God brought the animals into existence by just saying, “Let there be.”

But God formed man and He Himself breathed life into this creature who was to have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air (cf. Gen. 1:26ff).

God continues to fashion new human life. Though now He accomplishes it through natural reproduction, it is no less His handiwork. “Your hands have made me and fashioned me, an intricate unity” (Job 10:8).

A fundamental foundation stone in the course of His-Story is the truth that God fashions us and gives us life.

Understanding the nature of human life gives understanding to death as well. God created man by breathing life into a body made of dust. At death God separates the “breath of life” from the body. “Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it” (Eccl. 12:7).

Foundation: God’s Goodness

God prepared a wonderful home for the crown of His creation. The Garden of Eden was filled with every tree that was pleasant to the sight and good for food, and a river ran through the garden to water it. God provided sumptuously for mankind.

God planted two unique trees in the middle of the garden—the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Through the placement of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil God created an ongoing opportunity for mankind to demonstrate his love for God. God told Adam, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat” (Gen. 2:16f).

In other words, God said, “Adam, look around! All of these trees filled

“...These foundation stones underlie the course of God’s Story. They are the foundation of life, the definition of marriage, and the recognition of God’s gracious providence.”

with pleasure for the eye and the stomach are yours to enjoy. Freely eat to your heart’s content from all of them. They are yours. I prepared them and planted them for you and for your descendants! Just look at them all! And there is just this one tree—and only one—from which you cannot eat. Show your love to Me, your Creator, by abstaining from just this one.”

The placement of the tree of knowledge of good and evil was not “setting them up to fail,” as some might suppose. Rather, the rich abundance of God’s garden was to be the daily reminder of God’s love and goodness in the relationship that mankind shared with God; and the tree of knowledge of good and evil was mankind’s opportunity to exercise his side of the relationship to God. It was indeed a blessed opportunity in the midst of God’s paradise!

Foundation: Marriage

God had daily declared that His creation was “good,” but suddenly—before the sixth day drew to a close—God said, “It is not good that man should be alone” (Gen. 2:18). It was not good in the sense that at that point God’s creation of mankind was still incomplete.

Therefore God declared that He would create a helper for the man—a suitable counterpart to Adam that would complete the design and plan for

God's creation of human beings.

God brought all of the animals to Adam, and Adam named them. During this process Adam saw that there were male and female sheep, male and female bears, male and female robins—male and female counterparts to make perfectly matched sets of every animal, but no match was found for him! He was now ready to see and receive God's next gift.

God put Adam into a deep sleep and took a portion of Adam's side and made that into Adam's helper. Adam immediately recognized this creation as his counterpart, the female of mankind, and he named her "woman" because she came out of man (cf. Gen. 2:23).

In this way God created marriage and defined it as a man leaving his father and mother and being joined to his female wife.

This foundation block of His-Story is widely challenged and ignored.

Marriage is under attack by those who advocate that sex before marriage is "dating" and that living together before marriage is a "trial run" to test compatibility. Too often gone is the understanding that the sexual relationship is God's gift given within marriage as defined by its creation.

Marriage is under attack by those who view divorce as an option and who use it as an "out" when they grow tired of a spouse. Too often marriage is entered lightly without a true understanding of its significance, its responsibility, and its commitment.

Marriage is under attack by those who wish to redefine it so as to include homosexuality—this in spite of God's clear will as defined by His creation.

The beauty of the beginnings of His-Story in Paradise is that there was no sin. The first home was perfect. There was no need for repair, no need for improvement; all was provided and supplied, and the work of tending it was only joy.

The first marriage was likewise perfect. There were no quarrels, no disputes, no failings on the part of either spouse.

These foundation stones underlie the course of God's Story. They are the foundation of life, the definition of marriage, and the recognition of God's gracious providence.

God established these foundation stones in the beginning of the world, and they still stand today as each new page of God's Story unfolds.

—Pastor Wayne Eichstadt
Mankato, Minnesota



Another group of ladies at the LaCrosse Women's Retreat. Retreat focus was on spiritual, physical, and emotional health, with "...You will restore me and let me live" (Isaiah 38:16) as theme.

The Word From Immanuel

*Chapel Talks to the student body of Immanuel
Lutheran College, Eau Claire, Wisconsin*

To our young readers - This is for you!

The Original GPS

This year I was spared one of the tasks that typically precedes the departure of the Tour Choir; namely, contacting host pastors and asking for directions to their churches. I had been informed that the bus driver owned a GPS (Global Positioning System).

I had not had much exposure to that technology, but I was interested in seeing what it could do. So I boarded the bus with some backup maps and a “we’ll see” attitude.

Well, I did see. And I was very impressed.

Every day the driver would simply enter the address of the day’s destination, and the GPS system always came through. A female voice—without the slightest hint of travel fatigue or road rage—would gently and confidently tell us such things as “exit in 600 feet” or “merge left to I-35.” And with remarkable precision! She knew the roads of America like the back of her invisible hand.

A marvel of modern technology? Yes. A brand new concept? No. For there has been in place from the beginning of time an even more remarkable GPS. Ever since God created humans, they have been on the move from the present to the future. And ever since God created humans, He has been pro-

viding all the direction needed, with pinpoint accuracy. In Psalm 32 He assures us, “I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye” (32:8).

As I understand it, that which enables a Global Positioning System to do its work is the interaction of satellites miles and miles up in the sky. Such satellites keep track of a vehicle on the ground as well as a person’s destination and show exactly how one gets to the desired place.

Even more amazing, however, is the working of the One who fills the heavens. For the Lord keeps track of every single one of us while keeping an eye on the greatest of all destinations—paradise!—and He tells us exactly how to get there.

Trouble is, there’s another guiding force at work who also keeps track of us, with deadly intentions. And all people, by nature, are ready receptors of his directives. He is the devil, and every human ear is born in tune with his destructive signals. After all, His is the easy road, the avenue slickly paved with all the allurements of a fallen world. Jesus explained, “wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it” (Mt. 7:13).



Its days may be limited...On a fine summer day, “Reim Hall” stands on the campus footprint marked for the new ILC Academic Center.

In His great mercy, however, the Lord beamed into the darkness of our hearts the saving signal from heaven: His Word. “I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you shall go. I will guide you with My eye.” His deep desire is to bring us to the very greatest of blessings: eternal life! He wants us to be with Him forever. And since He is the only one who knows how to get from here to Him, He has provided us with the precise directions for reaching Him in our heavenly home...without which directions we would never be able to find Him.

It’s different when it comes to the finding of simple street addresses on Earth. That can be achieved through a hit-or-miss approach. Even without a GPS or road map, if a person drives around a city long enough, it’s likely that a certain street will be found.

But it doesn’t work that way on route to realms eternal. Nobody can just stumble into God’s kingdom. All of our natural inclinations lead us only away from God, to darkness and death. We need the beam of the divine Word. And how wonderfully that Word does guide!

First of all, it directs us away from all spiritual dead-ends. And there are many. It is a dead-end to believe that we sin-

ners can achieve, through our own efforts, the righteousness required for eternal life. It is a dead-end to believe that we can atone for our countless sins by means of personal sacrifice or repayment. It is a dead-end to believe that all religious roads lead to the same place.

Only God’s Plan of Salvation (the original GPS) gives the guidance necessary to reach eternal life.

Jesus Is The Way!

And the directions couldn’t be simpler: Turn to Jesus. He is “the narrow gate” which leads to life, found only by a few. He is the Way, the only way, by which we can come to the Father.

God’s Plan of Salvation is perfect. Since we couldn’t possibly bring about all that is necessary for sinners to become saints, God sent His Son to become our sin in order that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. The roadblock of our iniquity was insurmountable for any mere mortal. It could be removed only by the atoning death and victorious rising of the Christ. He was “delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification” (Rom. 4:25).

Psalm 32 begins with a clear proclamation of the way by which a person

reaches the glorious goal, as well as the joy that accompanies that way: “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity” (Ps. 32:1-2a).

The road to eternal life is a free-way—a way free of all spiritual debt, a way that no longer takes a toll. For Christ paid for our sin in full and secured forgiveness for every transgression.

That doesn’t mean that the road of faith is free of bumps. The devil still does his best to put obstacles in our way. “Narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life,” says the Lord” (Mt. 7:14).

But the one who has shown us the simple route to eternal life also provides all necessary guidance for maneuvering through these earthly days. He is the one who provides light at the end of life’s tunnels and guides us when perplexed. Sometimes He brings us to a halt. Sometimes He lets

us go. Sometimes He allows us to proceed cautiously. But at all times He directs our lives in ways that ultimately serve the supreme goal of bringing us safely through the gates of paradise.

It was interesting to discover how reliant I became on that faceless voice of the GPS. As we would approach a new area, I found myself asking the bus driver, “What does she say?”

How much more shouldn’t we approach a new day with ears attentively tuned to the voice from heaven as it speaks to us in the Scriptures. The heavenly GPS (God’s Plan of Salvation) presents the wonderfully simple route to glory: faith in Jesus. And His Word provides all the directives we need for our daily walk on earth.

His is the Word which never leads astray, loses its way, or leaves us stranded. His is the Word which knows exactly where we are, where we need to be, and how to get there.

So stay tuned...to that Word.

—Prof. John Reim



Conclusion of article from p. 24—

good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Mt. 5:16) Instead of trying to fit in with the world headed to hell (literally!), let us do and say things which let the light of our faith shine! Let your “Facebook” or “MySpace” page reflect your love for Jesus that all may learn that He is most important to you! Use words and actions which bring glory to your heavenly Father who loved you so much that to save you He was willing to sacrifice His beloved Son!

Once again, these sites CAN be used for good and God-pleasing purposes. Let us seek to do so! Let us seek

to let the light of our faith shine at all times—including on “Facebook” and “MySpace.” Let us show the world that while we are in it (we live here), we are not of it but are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own special people!

“Oh, magnify the LORD with me, And let us exalt His name together” (Ps. 34:3).

Editor’s Note: *This article is adapted from one written by Pastor Nathan Pfeiffer, Prince of Peace, Hecla, S.Dak., for his church bulletin. We thank him for allowing us to give the worthy material wider dissemination.*

ISLAM — The View From Here

In checking former volumes for articles of interest for our *Spokesman's* 50th anniversary, we came upon Prof. Mike Sydow's article from our May 1980 (Vol. 22, No. 11) issue and are choosing to reprint it. While at it, we add some thoughts of our own.

This writer, though hardly an expert on *Islam*, has been forced by recent world events to become—as many of our readers too, I suspect—more than a casual observer of the advance of the “religious, legal, political, economic and military” components of Islam.

We are motivated in this particularly because of our holy call to be Christ's/Christianity's witnesses to the world (Great Commission, Matthew 28:18-20). To be better witnesses, it is incumbent upon us to learn the basics of what the Islamic religion involves/teaches.

Early this spring we attended a Seminar in our city called “Islam and Christianity—Why the Tension?” The speaker—Dr. Adam Francisco, Professor of Historic Theology at Concordia Seminary (LCMS), Fort Wayne, Ind.—has made Islam his special field. Since he reads and speaks Arabic with ease and is knowledgeable about its history and theology, the Doctor is on demand as a speaker and translator, even receiving overtures to work as a consultant in his field of expertise for our nation's State Department.

Hearing this Seminar presentation from a distinctly Christian worldview, we can say that what Prof. Sydow wrote in 1980 about Muslim beliefs holds true today (even as it has for

centuries). Founded by Mohammed in 622 A.D. (year “zero” in Muslim history) and grounded on the “holy book” of the Quran (Koran) supposedly revealed to Mohammed, the religion of Islam does not change; the Koran, however, is supplemented by the “Hadith,” statements subsequently revealed to Islamic “prophets” about how to live, act, and behave as did their “prophet” Mohammed.

In his three-hour morning session the speaker presented—as objectively as possible, for a robed, turbaned Muslim gentleman was in attendance—the origin and history of Islam. Most interesting to us was what was said about the Crusades of the 11th, 12th, and 13th centuries. “Revisionist history” often tries to present the distortion that “Christians [were] trying to rid the world of Muslims.” Rather, we were told, the facts were that Moslem Turks had been persecuting Jews in the Holy Land, and the latter asked the Pope for help to liberate them.

Our accompanying reprinted article refers to the “five pillars” of Islam, with a possible “sixth pillar...the jihad.” The Seminar leader put it like this: “Jihad is not just a sixth pillar, it is the whole thing!” “Jihad,” we were told, means “to struggle in the path of God...it can refer to an inner struggle versus sin, but mostly to a struggle to expand Islamic expansionist ideology.”

As the presenter enlarged upon these things, this particular attendee's long-held opinion was supported—namely, that the Islamic religion is not the peace-loving religion many

would pass it off to be. Right from the start, we were told, Mohammed's violent caravan raids—originally undertaken “for sustenance”—soon “took on religious significance.” Mohammed's farewell sermon (632 A.D.) encouraged followers to “fight and pursue the world until it confesses there is no god but Allah...Jihad is perpetual and compulsory until the day of judgment.”

Islamic Theology

Having treated the historical foundations of Islam, our Islamic expert devoted the afternoon session (which the Muslim guest chose to miss—“boycott?”) to Islamic theology.

Prof. Sydow's 1980 theological assessments were (and remain) “right on.” Yet allow a few quotations/observations from the Seminar leader's 2008 presentation. He specifically pointed out what witnesses to the Christian faith will want to know and “begin with” when the Spirit opens the door for a religious discussion with a Muslim or Muslim sympathizer.

It was pointed out that the “great chasm” between Islam and Christianity is primarily the radical difference between the two in regard to the Christian themes of “law and gospel,” “sin and grace.”

For example, Islam teaches that “anything that happens is the will of Allah—total fatalism. Rather than a merciful or just god, Allah is presented as capricious [whimsical, flighty, unpredictable].”

Together with this, we were told, Islam's adherents are “right no matter what they do—there is no *Anfechtung* [awareness of sin-guilt before a holy God], whether individually or collec-

tively.” Islam teaches no “original sin.”

In other words, who needs to worry about accountability before God? Who needs a Savior? By “living the Muslim faith” to the best of one's ability, or offering self as a martyr (“martyrdom”—there is no “suicide” to Muslims; it is forbidden!), one gains “salvation.”

So, basic to the challenge of witnessing to Muslims is understanding that Islam “rejects the heart and soul of Christianity—that Jesus was crucified for the sins of the world!” Yet, it was impressed on the Seminar audience that a Christian should “start with (biblical) history...that Christ was put to death on a cross. And why did Christ die? SIN! Teach the law of God and mankind's inability to keep the law before a holy God.” In a word, dear Christians, let our witness to Muslims be “Christocentric”!

It made national news; perhaps you read of it. In October, 2007, a Muslim document titled *A Common Word Between Us and You* stressed the need for peace between members of the Christian and Islamic faiths. *A Common Word* highlighted the idea that both the Quran and the Bible teach that man is to love God and one's neighbor.

Guess what? Before long “more than 300 Christian leaders and theologians” responded positively. Their response was titled “Loving God and Neighbor Together: A Christian Response to ‘A Common Word Between Us and You.’”

The above-named speaker at the Seminar we attended closed his presentation by decrying this “appeasement” gesture on the part of so many prominent “Christian” leaders (includ-

ing, he said, a couple of his Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod colleagues, whom he chose not to identify).

What the audience was told is that, since the only thing the two faiths have in common is the “monotheism” of God, if the appeasers/compromisers have their way, what lies ahead is a “monotheistic Islamic Christianity” that is void of Christ!

The Triune God in heaven have

mercy until Jesus returns in glory to take His redeemed to Himself. Till then...

“Stand up!—Stand Up for Jesus!

The strife will not be long;
This day the noise of battle,

The next, the victor’s song.

To him that overcometh

A crown of life shall be;

He with the King of Glory

Shall reign eternally. (TLH #451:4)

—*Pastor Paul Fleischer*
Cheyenne, Wyoming



What Do Muslims Believe?*

Is it extravagant to claim that the gospel of forgiveness of sins through faith in Jesus Christ is unique among the religions of the world? The Bible speaks abundantly of justification by faith without the deeds of the Law (cf. Romans 3:28, and others). This doctrine is a distinguishing feature of Christianity. The teaching of the living God is a message of atonement through the blood of Jesus Christ. All other religion has its foundation in the good works of human beings—the deeds of the Law—to achieve whatever they suggest as “salvation.”

Through years of Bible study this proposition regarding the unique character of Christianity has been stated as self-evident in contrast to anything and everything proposed as true religion by others. It is interesting to explore other world religions to find that they in fact do teach a salvation by good works.

Mohammed

Some six centuries after the birth of Jesus Christ, there arose a man whose religious teaching is presently [1980] followed by three-quarters of a billion

people of the world. This man was Mohammed. He was born in A. D. 570 in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. His father died before he was born. Mohammed was an orphan at the age of six. After a two-year stay with his grandfather, Abd al Muttalib, he spent the rest of his childhood with a poor uncle, Abu Talib. During his early years Mohammed was exposed to a variety of religious debates, coming into contact with both Judaism and Christianity while in Mecca. He preferred their monotheism to the prevailing pagan polytheism of the Arab tribes.

When Mohammed was twenty-five years old, he married a wealthy widow named Khadijah, who was fifteen years his senior. This proved to be significant in the later success of his movement, since now he had financial security and a great deal of time for meditation, preaching, and dictation (Mohammed was illiterate). His preaching met with opposition in

*The original had “Moslems”; we understand that its followers prefer the “Muslim” designation, and thus have changed the word throughout this article.—Ed.

Mecca, forcing him to “flee” to Medina, where his movement gathered strength. This is the famous *Hegira* of A.D. 622, the birthday of the Islamic faith. In A.D. 630 Mohammed returned to Mecca with An army of 10,000 of the faithful and took the city in a bloodless victory. While there he purged the Kaaba—a shrine built earlier in connection with a black stone from heaven (meteorite)—of its pagan rites and consecrated it for use by his followers. Mohammed died A.D. 632 in Mecca.

Islam

The name of Mohammed’s new religion was *Islam*. The followers are Moslems (Muslims). They disdain being known as Mohammedans, or their religion as Mohammedanism, since they do not worship Mohammed. *Islam* means “submission to God.” A Muslim is one who is submissive to God. But which “God” are they talking about?

The *Koran* (meaning “recitation”), which is the “Bible” of the Muslims, describes Allah (the Arab word for “God”) as almighty, omniscient, merciful, and so on, resembling many Biblical descriptions. Mohammed evidently borrowed many of his concepts of the deity from the Jews and Christians. But his descriptions ultimately were his own. For him there was no Trinity in God. Jesus was regarded as just another prophet in a line of twenty-five culminating in Mohammed. The Arab claimed to be the last of the prophets. His revelations superseded all others.

It would be erroneous to assume that *Islam* the world over is agreed on all its teachings. Events in Iran have

brought to our attention the Sunnites, Shi’ites, and Sufis, three of the many Muslim groups. The Islamic faith is accepted by people of many nations, speaking a variety of languages, living primarily along the north coast of Africa, in the Middle East, southern Russia, to Bangladesh. [A couple decades later it is clear that adherents of Islam have successfully made their way into most European countries.-Ed] Their national diversity has generated a variety of different Islamic practices. However, in spite of these differences, all recognize five pillars of faith from the universally accepted *Koran*:

1) The *shahadah*, or profession of the faith. All Muslims accept and recite daily, “There is no god but Allah, and Mohammed is the Messenger of Allah.”

2) The five daily prayers while facing Mecca including *rakah* (bowing).

3) The giving of alms, including a 2 1/2% tax for the poor.

4) Fasting during the daylight hours of the lunar month Ramadan.

5) The *hajj*, or pilgrimage which all Muslims must try to make to Mecca at least once in their lifetime.

Some Muslims have argued that there is a sixth pillar of faith, the *jihad*. We commonly know it as a “holy war.” It actually refers to any form of striving for the faith, from inner struggles for purification to spreading *Islam* by any means.

When Muslims control the political structure of a nation as in Iran today, they seek to establish the *Shari’a*, the Islamic code of civil justice. In it are laws concerning abstaining from gambling, alcohol, and eating pork. The rite of circumcision is common for Muslim males. And with Islamic

teaching come the *purdah* (the curtain that screens women from the sight of men), separate quarters and classrooms for men and women, body length clothes on women and, of course, the veil. Many believed that women didn't have souls. However, Mohammed himself did not foster the *purdah*. His teaching actually improved the lot of women in Arab countries, elevating them from chattel to having certain rights though considerably less than male privileges). Polygamy was limited by Mohammed to four wives at a time.

Islam Teaches Salvation by Good Works

Muslims claim Abraham as their father through Hagar's son Ishmael. The object of their hope is a resurrection from the dead and eternal reward in a heaven which is described as a well-watered place in contrast to the desert regions where *Islam* flourishes. Yet for all its similarities to and touchstones with Judaism (especially) and Christianity, *Islam* errs in its basic concept of God and its teaching that eternal security is based on the good works of the faith. The *Koran* teaches:

"But those who believe and do good works Allah will lead into gardens under which rivers are flowing; they will be adorned with bracelets of gold and with pearls, and their garments will be of silk."

"Fear the fire prepared for unbelievers; its fuel are men and stone. Proclaim glad tidings for those who believe and do good works that they will have gardens under which rivers are flowing..."

"Those who believe and do good works are the best of creatures" (quot-

ed from *Religions in Four Dimensions* by Walter Kaufmann, p. 188).

The faith spoken of by Mohammed is a "general faith" in the existence of a god who is creator and judge. It is not a faith in the living God of the Bible, since Mohammed explicitly denied the Trinity. For Muslims the *Koran* is a legalistic code outlining those good works according to which they assume they will earn heaven. There is no room for redemption and expiation in Islamic thinking. Hence, the Allah, or god, of *Islam* is the wrong god, for those who do "not abide in the teaching of Christ, (do) not have God" (2 John 9).

Muslim teaching does not deal properly with the nature of sin, the total devastation which rebellion against God produces. Implicit in any system of good works is their possibility, generally resulting from some innate goodness in mankind. The Scriptures rejected that possibility, describing human sinfulness as a predicament so staining our nature as to render us dead in the presence of almighty God. The only possibility of rescue must lie with God Himself. He sent His Son into our history to pay the ransom price for sin-lost human beings. That price was His death. The resurrection of Jesus establishes the living value of His sacrifice—pardon for our sins. The invitation of God to believe in this Son of His carries with it the power to create such a faith. Thus our God gives life to what which, as far as He is concerned, was dead in trespasses and sins (cf. Ephesians 2). Christian faith is specific—trust in Christ who died for a particular human problem and who draws men to Himself through the preaching of the Gospel.

Our Confessions

The *Book of Concord*, which embodies the confessions of the Lutheran Church, mentions *Islam* in five places. In the *Augsburg Confession* (Art. I), the Lutherans confessed that God is Triune, one true God, who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and condemned “All heresies which have sprung up against this article, as the...Mohammedans...” Article III of the *Apology* observes the essential flaw in *Islam*. “Human wisdom gazes at the Law and seeks in it justification...just as the Pharisees, philosophers, Mahometans.” The same is expressed later in Article XV of the same confession, “For the kingdom of Antichrist is a new service of God, devised by human authority rejecting Christ, just as the kingdom of Mahomet has services and works through which it wishes to be justified before God...” [Also in the] *Apology*, Article XXVII, “It is a most pernicious error to hold that evangelical perfection lies in human traditions. For thus the monks even of the Mohammedans would be able to boast

that they have evangelical perfection.” And finally, in the *Smalcald Articles* (VIII), Luther writes against the enthusiasts, who seek revelation apart from the means of grace, “...in a word, enthusiasm inheres in Adam and his children from the beginning to the end of the world, having been implanted and infused into them by the old dragon, and is the origin, power, and strength of all heresy, especially of that of the Papacy and Mahomet. Therefore, we ought and must constantly maintain this point, that God does not wish to deal with us otherwise than through the Word and the Sacraments...It is the devil himself whatsoever is extolled as Spirit without the Word and Sacraments.”

Mohammed committed idolatry in his teaching about Allah; he had the wrong god. “All the gods of the nations are idols, but the LORD made the heavens” (Ps. 96:5).

—Pastor Michael Sydow authored this article; retiring this year, he has been professor at ILC, Eau Claire, since 1996.



For our Parents and Kids: On “Social Networking” Sites

If you could tell the world something about yourself, what would you want them to know? What sort of pictures would you use or would you want shown? What kind of words would you use?

Most if not all of our junior high, high school, and college-aged members know a great deal about “Social Networking” websites and probably

have their own page. Sites such as “MySpace” and “Facebook” are used by millions of people the world over. It is a great way to meet new people from around the world and keep in touch with friends at a distance. It is also a way to let your friends know what is going on in your life by posting pictures and writing blogs (online journals).

But like most everything in this world, what can be used for good purposes the devil loves to twist for sinful, wicked purposes. While you can meet nice people with mutual interests, there are also evil people with evil intentions that may be trying to meet you. And you have no real way of knowing those intentions.

There are good reasons to be on guard!

Since I activated a “Facebook” account last year, I have enjoyed being able to “network” with my friends who live far away (even in India!). I found out quickly and easily that one of my friends had gotten engaged and another had gone to school overseas. We are even putting together a “Facebook” page for our upcoming seminar.

At the same time it has been extremely sad to see some (not all!) of the things my fellow Christians have posted. Whether it was vulgar and offensive language or suggestive pictures—it is sad to see what some Christians are telling others about themselves. These are things one would expect to see of non-believers, not followers of Christ! The shame is not merely that sins were committed, but that a Christian would want to publicize such sins!

Again, if you could tell or show the world something about yourself—what would it be? Would your choice of words and choice of pictures reflect the love you have for Jesus, or would your choices make your Savior and other Christians sad to see them?

Thus ALL of our parents MUST be aware of their children’s activity on such sites and steer them away from all things that are spiritually harmful. Ask them about the ways they or others use

their “Facebook” or “MySpace” page. Request to see their page or have the password to check up on it.

Christians are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. If we lose our saltiness and blend in with the flavor of this world, what good are we? If we hide the light of our Savior and our faith, we are doing nothing to help people who are on a path headed for destruction. Even scarier, if other weaker Christians see and hear us doing such things, the impression will be left that such behavior is okay, and thus WE may be the cause of leading them into sin. “Woe!” to such a person, as Jesus proclaims.

Instead, Christ Jesus exhorts His followers: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your

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