

The Good News

Newsletter - July 2014

A Publication of University Baptist Church, Hattiesburg, MS

The purpose of University Baptist Church is, through guidance of the Holy Spirit, to assemble and worship God, to love and encourage one another, to proclaim the gospel of Christ, to minister to all people, and to live in peace.

In a world where difficult issues remain, University Baptist Church continues its commitment to be a church where “there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male or female, for (we) are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:28)



50 Year Anniversary of Freedom Summer

*I've got the light of freedom
I'm gonna let it shine.
Jesus gave it to me,
I'm gonna let it shine.
Gonna shine all over the Delta,
I'm gonna let it shine.
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.*

Over the last few months I've been nourished by stories from Freedom Summer 1964, when black and white people joined hands across the state of Mississippi to stand for freedom and justice for all people. What has most intrigued me is the central role that faith had in the work of Freedom Summer. Expressions of faith in the Way of Jesus are heard in the electrifying sermons and songs that belted out of the mouth of Fannie Lou Hamer, they are seen in the significant role clergy from the North had in Freedom Summer training and events, and they are witnessed to in testimonies of Hattiesburg residents, like Peggy Jean Connor who testifies to God's love abiding in and through her that long summer. If we're honest, interpretations of the Bible also grounded the faith of those who resisted the work of civil rights, even those who worked violently against Freedom Summer efforts often quoted Scripture to justify their actions (a sober reminder to us about how easily we can twist the stories of Scripture to justify the evil in our hearts and actions).

This summer, we have a tremendous opportunity to pause for a moment and look back into the history of our state and to reflect upon what it means to live our faith. In one sermon, Fannie Lou Hamer said: "People need to be serious about their faith in the Lord; it's all too easy to say, 'Sure, I'm a Christian,' and talk a big game. But if you are putting that claim to the test, where the rubber meets the road, then it's high time to stop talking about being a Christian. You can pray until you faint, but if you're not gonna get up and do something, God is not gonna put it in your lap."

My hope is that through our remembering and through our exploration of key biblical texts that defined the Freedom Summer experience, we will think deeply about our call to put faith into action today.

Journeying Together,

Rusty Edwards
Pastor
University Baptist Church

This Little Light of Mine

This little light of mine
I'm going to let it shine
Oh, this little light of mine
I'm going to let it shine
Hallelujah
This little light of mine
I'm going to let it shine
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine

Ev'ry where I go
I'm going to let it shine
Oh, ev'ry where I go
I'm going to let it shine
Hallelujah
Ev'ry where I go
I'm going to let it shine
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine

All in my house
I'm going to let it shine
Oh, all in my house
I'm going to let it shine
Hallelujah
All in my house
I'm going to let it shine
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine

I'm not going to make it shine
I'm just going to let it shine
I'm not going to make it shine
I'm just going to let it shine
Hallelujah
I'm not going to make it shine
I'm just going to let it shine
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine

Out in the dark
I'm going to let it shine
Oh, out in the dark
I'm going to let it shine
Hallelujah
Out in the dark
I'm going to let it shine
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine

Song: I Love You So

By: Devin Bennett

Date: 5/2014

Chorus x 2

Oh God I love you so, never ever ever will I let you go, now that I found true life in you ...

Oh God I love you so, never ever ever will I let you go, dear Lord I give my all to you ...

Verse One:

Driving through this life I keep the cruise on God speed / For those still lost I keep the lights on high beam / law in the trunk / mercy and grace riding shotgun / ol faithful and True under the hood / and a tank filled with Christ love / this is the good life / I'm not talkin about Kanye / still it's Jesus walks with me but I'm representing Yahweh / like a barber you cleaned me up / I'm in your shadow like a fade / Holy Spirit you keep my head gleamin like I just got it shaved / still unworthy of a halo for I was born a wretched sinner / I just switched teams for the finals / now I'm playing for a winner / now I'm able to march through the madness / I call it the final four / it's me the Christian soldier / and the Trinity of course / Lord Jesus I love you / and I'll never stop reppin ya / stay in the front row to adversity / you can call me the heckler / a renegade to the secular / dear ways of this world I'll never ever be a friend to ya / I'm no longer binded and blinded / this is heavenly minded / it's only through faith I seek till spiritually I find it / iron sharpens iron / and he keeps me on point like twin peaks / I'm out here runnin for the Lord dawg / so welcome to the track meet;

Chorus x 2

Verse Two:

My heart is his home and I'm never home alone / the Kingdom lies within / his love is my throne / his glory is my crown / in his likeness I am found / sounding like Lauryn Hill cause I just want you around / I stay in prayer like a huddle / that's my go to in this scrimmage / My faith is the front line watch me push it to the limit / now I'm soaring the friendly skies / welcome to my salvation / He keeps my soul in the upright and my faith belt fastened / with Jesus as my captain / I'm sittin in first class / in better hands than allstate to help me when I crash / on the stretcher screamin Jesus / speaking truth and shedding light / at the door from all the darkness to the one that gave me life / die hard Christian / Bruce Willis with the gospel / keep love for my enemies and prayers for the hostiles / my spirit stay strapped / eager and ready for his return / no longer afraid of the devil / like Usher I'll let him burn / Nobody knows when he's coming / but faithfully I'll be waiting / heart filled with joy looking forward to the celebration / you can find me sippin holy wine / toasting to my Lord and Savior in the last days / I'm at the marriage supper of the Lamb with my new spirit leanin sideways;

Chorus x 2

Verse Three:

It's high seas like Noah / treadin water through the flood / the hate wanna drown me / thank God my life jackets made of love / Lord why they persecute me / some even wanna do me / all the ignorance and hate / it's like they never knew me / the stakes is high / in this life that we livin in / thats why I'm investing in the spirit / stackin up the dividends / mercy, grace and faith / that love from the Lord / that eternity retirement plan that money can't afford / signed, sealed, delivered / Jesus I'm yours / for you have filled my heart with wonder / your my cherie amour / You keep my heart humble and my spirit in the clouds / right outside the gates of heaven / where my future is found / I'm pledging my life to his will / putting a down payment on my stone / one day I will sit on it and eat fresh manna by the throne / with my feet in the river of life / singing there's no place like home / all the love without hate / joy without pain / reunited with my family / helping the angels sing praise / songs of glory to the Lords love and salvation / just as it was written back in the revelation / all hail the King / the alpha and omega/ my eternal treasure / I'll be loving you Lord from now until forever;

Chorus x 4

Song: I Love You So

By: Devin Bennett

Date: 5/2014

Don't Let the Storm In
Mark 4:39

Have you ever thought about the fact that a boat can be surrounded by water, sailing though a vast ocean for miles in every direction, but it's not any problem unless the boat starts taking on the water? If the boat starts allowing the ocean to come inside before long it will sink. The same principle is true in life. You can have trouble all around you: stress, frustration and worry. But the good news is, just like the boat, you don't have to allow what's on the outside to get on the inside.

When difficult times come, you don't have to be overwhelmed by the waves of worry and fear. What should you do? Follow the example of Jesus! When he was in the midst of the storm, he stood up and spoke to the storm. Always remember, no matter what storm may come against you, the greater one lives on the inside of you. Turn to him and walk in his power. Don't let the storm in.

-Sherwood B. and friend L.N.
Parchman, DR

On the inside looking out

You don't want to see what I see, it's a sight, no doubt
Look through my eyes, it's hell on the inside looking out
I see all shapes and sizes, different color faces
Old and young, from different places
Some come educated, others straight thugs from the hood
Most are bad, few are good
Razor wire, concrete and steel, reality and fate
No love, no mercy, struggling to rehabilitate
The weak are prey and the strong don't always survive
No guarantee for a tomorrow. No promise to stay alive
On knees, prostrating or with a simple nod
Seeking deliverance, forgiveness, peace from their God
Look into my eyes and see what it's all about
Don't be the next, on the inside looking out.

-Jerry Lester
Mississippi, DR

Do We Know the Value of a Life?

1Peter 2:17: Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the King

Looking at the evil that is going around in this world today, there are many people who do not know the value of a life. We as believers know just how important the value of a life means to the Lord Jesus Christ and to us as well. We should tell everyone that we meet to value to lives of others by honoring them and showing them love, just as our Heavenly Father showed us when He sent his son Jesus to die for our sins and the sins of the world. We also need to tell them to value the lives of others by recognizing that each human being is a creation of God's love. We need to tell the people of this world that if they despise others, it not only offends them, but it also offends the Lord.

The devil and his demons want us to despise others and wants us not to care who gets hurt by what we say or do. The devil and his demons want us to treat others harsh and disrespectful too. We need to show the love that the Lord has put into our hearts, souls and minds by honoring all. So when the devil comes to us and tells us that we should despise others, lets tell him that when we despise others it is dishonoring God and we are not going to do that. We will show love to them instead.

In Jesus' name we pray, Amen and Amen.

-Stephen P
Parchman DR

**Please note that this piece was written in February, 2002. Due to mistreatment by prison officials and doctors, Stephen has suffered multiple strokes and has a bleeding aneurysm. This has impaired his movements, vision, memory, speech and diminished his mental capacity. I am pleased to say that he is a strong Christian brother and proud that we have a few of his writings pre-abuse.*

-Roger

Listen to God

*I hear you in the wind as you come gusting through my window
Partaking in my dreams as I rest my head upon my pillow
-I'm listening-*

*I hear you in the pattering beats of my compulsing heart
With each day ending and a new one's start
-I'm listening-*

*I hear you in the chirping birds nestling in the trees
Enjoying the beautiful sunshine and the cool, summer breeze
-I'm listening-*

*I hear you in the laughter as children enjoy themselves playing
And at night before bed on their knees, before God praying
-I'm listening-*

*I hear you in the sermons as the pastors preach your Heavenly word
And the choirs hymn the sweetest melodies your ear have ever heard
-I'm listening-*

*I hear you in everything and I listen very intently
Waiting patiently to talk to you and give myself genuinely.
-I'm listening-*

-Justin H. Underwood
Parchman, DR

Listen to God

And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart—Jeremiah 29:13

The warfare against self is the greatest battle that was ever fought. We all struggle every day because deep inside we all refuse to yield some desire. In giving ourselves to God, we must necessarily give up all that separates us from Him. Too many of us give half ourselves to God and the other half to the world.

“Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple” - Luke 14:33 The life of selfish ease and the freedom from responsibility is the idol of others. The main problem in today’s world is that we all find every reason other than ourselves for our faults.

To redeem ourselves from our conflicts and convictions, we must face infinite humiliation and self-abasement so that we can be partakers of the blessings of God’s grace. For this very reason, we cannot fully realize the depths of our ignorance and misery from which we have been saved by the mercy and glory of the LORD. God does not require us to give up anything that is for our best interest to retain. In all the he does, he has our well being in view. The less we see to esteem in ourselves, the more we shall see to esteem in the infinite purity and loveliness of our savior. The more our sense of need drives us to him and to the word of god, the more he will reveal himself in power. The closer we become to Jesus, the more faulty we will appear in our own eyes, and that will allow our souls to be transformed by the grace of Christ. If we will but listen and stop over talking and over analyzing everything and everybody, God’s created works will teach us precious lessons of obedience and trust.

Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.—I Corinthians 2:9

-Justin H. Underwood
Parchman, DR

POH-COH

As many of the readers of this newsletter may know, I am a lifelong “nut” about most all things connected to aviation. I hold a private pilot certificate and was an air traffic controller in the army, along with being a fight operations sergeant. Over the years I’ve come to realize that being a good pilot and being a good Christian involves many similar attributes.

Let me explain the letters at the heading of this piece.. Aviation is full of abbreviations. POH stands for pilot’s operation handbook. That is a manual that comes with all certified aircrafts. I’ve taken the liberty of assigning COH to the manual for Christian, i.e. the Bible: Christian operating handbook.

Both of the above books give us the parameters in which we must operate in order to reach our goal safely. We, being fallable humans, often violate the guidance in these books, but to so puts our aircraft, any passenger in it, our souls, and those who look to us for spiritual guidance in mortal danger. If you are a Christian pilot, you could endanger both at the same time. Lt’s take the POH for, say a Cessna 182. It will give you speeds to never exceed , speeds at which to operate various flap settings and stall speeds. It also lists maximum take off weights and has chars on where those weights must be distributed. The POH also gives procedures to be followed in emergencies.

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POH-COH cont.

Now, think about the COH. Doesn't it provide much the same information? It gives, through examples of Christians in the past, certain parameters to operate within. It also provides info on what to do in spiritual emergencies or when not all goes according to plan. In the vein of "plans", there's a quote attributed to Shakespeare that goes something like, "the best laid plans of mice and men often go astray." As pilots, we get a weather forecast tailored to the needs of aviation. However, no matter what the forecast may say, you have to deal with what you see through your windshield. Christians have a plan of salvation. We are taught that Jesus came so that we may have life more abundantly. A nice plan. But before we experience fully that more abundant life, there are going to be storms we see through our "windshield of life" and those be dealt with. The COH give guidance in doing that and just as a pilot should be in a constant state of training and learning from their first flight, so should Christians from their moment of acceptance as Christ their Savior.

Back to the POH for a moment. The numbers and other information contained in it are the result of thousands of hours of testing long before the aircraft is certified. Highly trained test pilots have taken the airplane to its limits and beyond, to arrive at those safe operating figures. Exceed those numbers and you have now become a test pilot, trained or not. Test pilots wear parachutes for a reason. The average non-military or non-aerobatic pilot does not.

The COH is a compilation, done over hundreds of years of what God (the ultimate designer of people and people who build airplanes) has determined are safe operating parameters for his followers. Exceed them and no amount of training or parachutes can save you if you refuse to return to "safe flight", i.e. repentance and forgiveness.

There are old pilots and bold pilots, but very few old, bold pilots. There are times when boldness may be called for, as pilots and Christians, but you'll usually find what appears bold to many is simply taking calculated risks that have been well planned. I, personally, have never flown an airplane upside down 50 ft. above the runway. Don't plan to either. I, as a Christian, have not planned on going to an Islamic republic and starting a church, but there are those who are called to do both of the things above. They get special training and in the end, take calculated risks.

The COH contains one very important provision that the POH does not—unless the pilot is a Christian too. The COH promises eternal life, the more abundant life, to those who adhere to its guidance. The POH just promises a safe conclusion your flight. The eternal life part is up to you, be you a pilot, a preacher, a teacher, or just an everyday citizen.

Accident reports on aviation disasters are filled with examples of pilots allowing relatively minor problems to balloon into full-fledged emergencies. The often become so distracted by minor stuff that they forget to simply fly the airplane. How many times have you seen otherwise good Christians become so distracted by what someone said, or what they eat or wear, they forgot the basic tenets of Christianity: peace, love, forgiveness and service of our LORD?

One final thought. A pilot is forbidden by rules to operate an aircraft in an unsafe manner. We, as Christians should also avoid doing anything unsafe that threatens our, or other's salvation.

Richard J.
Parchman, DR

The Impurities of Life

Define worth I say. Only one definition comes close to the true meaning of that word—Jesus Christ. Belief or unbelief lies within the chamber of the beholder's heart. To say one believes without believing is no belief at all. It is within the heart that the true colors can be found. As we strive to ride the road of destiny, only one factor matters: Do you believe? God's plan for the rider of destiny is along the King's Highway. One can still be riddled with questions on the way. It is for God to know, and enveloped and immersed in this true knowledge, the rider can simply choose to obey. The mission is to conquer and to attain the goal, so put your blinders on and, spurning questions, "Let us ride."

As a holy soldier of Jesus Christ, I travel the King's Highway in search of heaven's express elevator. My journey is one of solitude, society has made it so; nevertheless, solace is my close companion and comrade. To the fearful, death drums loudly, but the fearless grow in strength and might, a strength born from Life..

The government is fond of expressing itself to the nation in Biblical terminology: Liberty and Justice for all. The death penalty, however, remains on the books in many states in the Union. On Judgment Day, it will become apparent that capital punishment is nothing but murder, so how can the state be anything other than what it calls me? As though armed for war, the state demands payment, and by lethal injection, it exacts it, calling the outcome, ironically, justice rather than murder. There are no accidents or coincidences in divine Providence, only God's will and accomplishments. Accept it or decline it; after all, the rider chooses to ride or not. As for me, my wretchedness reveals the truth that my fate lies on the State's disassembly line. Whether or not I am worthy of what is yet to come, I strive for God with blinders on. Death's teeth may gnash at me, but I keep my eyes on the goal—Jesus Christ.

Whether one is weak or strong, faith in God builds whatever strength is in a man. Fools try to say differently. To the eye empty of faith, the house of joy is vacant, but to the prudent eye, the house is full: memories of mother, father, brothers and sisters come from long ago, but in Jesus, they are alive. O what a glorious reunion for the rider who believes. This is the truth: there is life after death, and only through death will one truly live, so "Let us ride."

In the cocoon of this life, with mortal death as the portal to eternal life, the impurities of this life emerge. With His faithful, holy hammer and with skill and loving purpose, God gently lays me on His anvil, and with grace, begins to trim the rough edges. Each stroke of the hammer comes with pure love, and my faith tells me that this is not done in vain. His purpose is valid, filled with truth and mercy. I wonder that God should trouble to refine me with such sore suffering; I am not worthy, but praise be to God for suffering me these many years and glory be to Jesus who suffered for me. With stroke after stroke, the impurities of my life emerge. With my brokenness comes the birth of my new life in Jesus Christ. What has been meant to be in order that what now is might be attained. If the past were altered, would today's outcome be the same?

The solution to life's problems lies within a hidden treasure awaiting release by faith. Every possible issue is covered by the blood shed on the cross, and is to be found within the Bible. The warrior of my faith is the defender of my soul. He says: Come to me. I shall be in you and we shall live. My conclusion is that death is, for the rider who believes, the death of death and the beginning of life yet to come.

A gladiator's sword must be without imperfection. When forged, any impurities must be eliminated. I am such an instrument, being formed and fashioned for durability and strength, for faith and for victory unto eternal life and for the glory of God. In the refining of my soul and by the Maker's mark made upon me by my baptism, I know that one day, everlasting life will be mine. We must persevere by faith, despite the bitterness of this life. As St. Paul wrote: life's struggles now are not worthy to be compared to the glory yet to come.

The hammer and the anvil are at rest. God's finished product has been thoroughly purged by way of submission. Along the Highway, thorns and thistles may lurk, but God's angels will guide me safely through. Are you game? Let us ride!

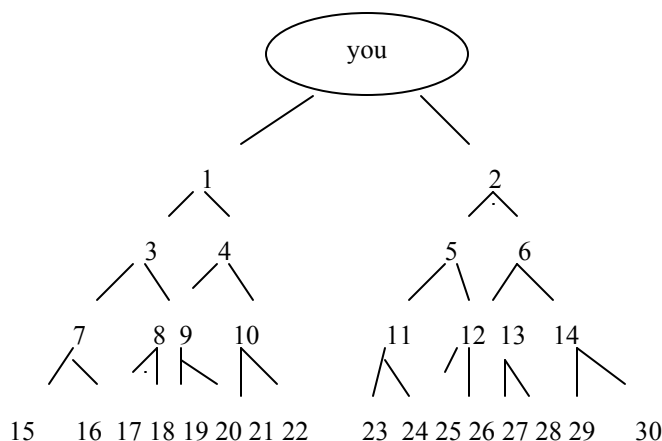
-David Cox
Parchman, DR

Be Kind

Mother Teresa once said, “Kind words can be short and easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless.” Have any of you every considered the distance that a kind word or loving gesture can travel? I agree with Mother Teresa. Completely.

Take any normal, everyday encounter and imagine the possibilities a kind word could have. Let’s see... how about a cashier in a busy store, or any store for that matter. The line is long and the customers are all in a hurry and their frustration only serves to intensify the cashiers anxiety. It’s your turn in line. If the cashier locks up and sees an understanding smile and hears a few kind encouraging words, I promise you will have changed their day. They in turn will be kind to another person and then another, until your single act of kindness, a smile and a word, has touched many lives. Or, the prisoners reading this decide to be gracious and kind to another prisoner or a Corrections Officer that may not be used to such kindness. The ripple effect is endless.

Lets think now about being gracious and offering words of kindness, even a smile and hello will do, to everyone we meet throughout our day. I simply can’t count as high as the number of people our words will benefit. It’s the old pyramid model.



And so on....

If everyone has a kind word for two people, then we’ve effectively changed many lives with just those two encounters. This is a mind-blowingly endless. If I am kind to just 2 people and those 2 people are kind to 2 more, then I’ve been kind to 6. 6 turns into 14. You get it. Please keep in mind that the number grows exponentially, very quickly, and is reached by your being kind to just 2 people!! How many interactions do you have everyday? Way more than 2.

This coin has two sides. Apply this same model and logic to harsh words and attitudes and you’ve touched the same number of people with a radically different outcome.

So my friends, *be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.*” Ephesians 4:25-32

-Roger G.
Parchman, DR

A Doubting World

I previously wrote about Ministry Village in Florida, where I was director of the men's rehabilitation center. I would meet the men the very first time, usually right after breakfast. There was a breakfast served for the homeless and I would get everyone seated, then have men in the program serve them. It would help the men in the drug and alcohol program to give back. I did this with true Gospel. I saw people who were addicted to crack, heroin, pills and alcohol change before my eyes. On family I met, the husband and wife were hooked together. Everyone called them the HIV couple and no one would sit with them. I spoke with the women's director and that night when they came in for dinner, we both sat down with them. I came with apple pie and vanilla ice cream. We had coffee and talked. I asked them if they needed clothes. They just stared at me. Then said, "What do you want?" I smiled, *I know a lot of people give lip service, but we just want to help you, if you'll let us*, I told them. I offered to take them to our clothing area. The woman began to cry, telling the women's director how dirty she felt. We got them a motel for a week. Jesus put it in my heart to go to the church board meeting and present this couple's needs to them. This church had a Ministry Village, Pregnancy center, Medical Clinic, Homeless shelter and an Orphanage. They told me if I would head up the project, we would get an apartment ready for them. By the end of the week, I had gotten a check from accounting for a new Queen size bed, and I was able to get people to donate nice furniture, turned on the electricity, water and phone. Everything they could have needed was provided, including the medications they needed.

About a month later, I found them a car and had it all fixed up for them. They were able to rest and eat, and they even came to church with me. On Easter of 1999, they came to church with me, they went up front and spoke to the pastor. They later told me, that for the first time since being diagnosed with HIV, they felt loved. I could not believe the transformation that Jesus had caused in their lives. The key to the whole ordeal was their belief. I only wish that I could have believed and surrendered.

You see, even though God used me to bring those lost to him, God used me to do a lot of good work for those like this couple who were in need, I was still lost. I wrote previously that I decided to leave ministry because I had not stopped drinking in that year where I witnessed Jesus in action and saw God's answer to doubt. If anyone doubts Jesus, I say, don't try Jesus. You do not "try Jesus", you "do Jesus" for 30 days and you will never be the same.

Please look at Jesus. I am on Death Row. I never committed a violent crime in my life, yet alcohol, anger and frustration took its toll. I don't doubt Jesus one bit today. I face death everyday. I am closer to the end, yet I smile everyday because I know. I know, for sure, for sure, Jesus love me. Jesus loved me before I loved him. How about you?

-Timothy Evans
Parchman, DR

Some suggested topics for the Newsletter

Thank you for the continued letters, thoughts, and poems you send in to us each month. We want to know more about who you all are. Story seems to be one of the best ways to get to know who someone really is and so we encourage you all to look at some of these suggested topics to see if any inspiration comes as we seek community with one another. Please know that these are not to restrict your writing; you are certainly welcome to choose to write on another topic or in another form. They are simply some ideas as all writers need somewhere to start. Thank you for your continued contributions to this piece and happy writing!

- Choose a story or a character from the Bible and tell us how it speaks to your life or how you connect to it.
- Make up a short story
- Tell us about a character you've read in a book or watched in a movie that inspires you and why.
- Tell us your favorite song. What is it about this song that draws you to it?
- Write a song or send in a piece of original artwork.