

The Good News

Newsletter - May 2015

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)

Like The Tree

Survey the tree, its branches tall,
And reaching toward the sky -
We too, must be, lifting our hands,
And hearts to God on high.

Survey the limbs, spread out in joy,
And soaking up the sun -
We too, must be, delighting in,
The race that we must run.

Survey the leaves, when rains arrive,
Still peaceful 'neath the weight -
We too, must be, surrendered in,
Each trying, bending state.

So, like the tree, we all must be,
And grounded in the faith -
Each serving He, who made the tree,
Lest life be only waste

An Inspirational Message by: Janette Hooley –submitted by Justin H. Underwood

Achieving Spiritual Growth - Part 2

As I pointed out in my first piece about Achieving Spiritual Growth, it is a process. A friend told me the meaning of "Church", with a capital "C", is that all of us who know and love our Lord Jesus, are members of the one body of Christ, "so true"! God's goal is not salvation, that is just the introduction to God's goal. His desire is that those who are saved become disciples. His will for us as individual believers is that we would become disciples through the process of personal spiritual growth. To grow spiritually as a disciple of Christ means we become like him. As we reflect Jesus in our thoughts and actions and decisions, he will manifest himself greater both in and through us.

Discipleship is that developmental process that progressively brings Christians from spiritual infancy to spiritual maturity so that they are then able to reproduce the process with someone else. The goal of a disciple is to bring all of life under the lordship of Jesus Christ and then help someone else to do the same. Being a follower of Christ is the essence of who you are. That's why you need to understand and cultivate a Kingdom mentality in all that you do. The process by which this is achieved is call spiritual growth.

In the Bible (Acts 19:9), when people came to Jesus Christ and were serious about following him, there was no question about who they were. Those disciples became known even among unbelievers as "People of the Way" because they had chosen to walk a different path in life and they had totally identified themselves with Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God.

In Galatians 6:16, Paul says that if you walk according to the rule of surrender, you will experience the benefits of God. However, when you are merely satisfied with religion and religious activity or even when you have placed your trust in your religious activity just to earn favors with God *then* you got it twisted. Becoming a disciple is a life long process and you will never stop learning.

By Sherwood B.

End of Watch

In law enforcement, and some other para-military organizations, there is a term called "end of watch", or EOW. This denotes when an individual has died or been killed in the line of duty. We have all been placed on this earth to perform some function. How we perform those functions and who we serve while we are on our "watch" is our choice. Make the "choice" as enumerated in the Bible and whenever, or however, our "watch" is ended we will have an eternal watch full of glory ahead of us. The wrong choice leads to the opposite.

An organization may require you to be "on duty" for only a set number of hours each day. Your time off-duty is yours to pretty well do as you wish within certain boundaries. Our life, in contrast, is a full-time tour of duty. When our Lord walked among us, he set forth those boundaries. The scripture tells us to, "Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable unto thee, Oh Lord." It does not say that this admonition is to be followed only on a Sunday or any other day we choose to set aside as a day of worship. Our worship here, as Christians, is a 24 hour a day full-time tour of duty.

As one who has lived almost seven decades and traveled the world, I have seen many people come to the end of their watch, some naturally and others not. I cannot say with certainty that any of those went on to be with our Lord. I can say with certainty that I believe some did because I knew the words of their mouth were acceptable. No one can know the meditations of another's heart.

I do know both of my own, and I am certain that he awaits my arrival whenever my "end of watch" comes, however it may occur. To quibble over the details is best left to those who are equipped to do so. Whatever the outcome, my time on earth will end when he wants it to.

By R.G. Jordan

God Is Good

I am so happy to share how good God has been. He's kept me out of danger; if it weren't for Jesus coming to save us all, we wouldn't be here. I didn't know who the Lord was when I was out selling drugs, but the day I was arrested changed my life, and now I can tell you how good God has been.

My name is Devonta La'shun Coleman. I grew up without a father, and I went through several foster homes until the Lord blessed me with a mother that loves me. I thank God for her everyday. I was out in the world, doing wrong, and it is only by God's grace that I am alive today. Jesus has brought me back from the brink of death. There were many occasions when death was a reality: I was attacked with pipes, I thought my life was over, but God was not done with me yet. I cannot count the many chances Jesus has given me.

To all the young kids out there, I want to tell you, jail is not the place for you to be. If you don't know Jesus, it is time you know how good he is. Try praying this: "I thank you heavenly father for sending your son, to die "on the cross for me. I Thank you Father for sending your son to die on the cross for us. I believe in you, an accept you as my Lord and Savior." When you say this prayer and believe in Jesus, watch how God will change your life!

I hurt the mother that took me in when no one else would. All she tried to do was help me, but I would not let her. Exodus Chapter Twenty tells us to honor our father and mother, regardless of who it is. It does not matter if it is a foster mother or a birth parent. I hurt the mother who took me in when no one else wanted me, and I regret that. Please, honor your father and mother. I hope this reaches out to some, of you and you go home and love your father and mother.

People we need to be right with Jesus, he can change our lives! I am twenty one years, and God has changed mine. I was nowhere without Him. He sent his son to save all of us! He is so good to me his love is all that matters. Sin brought death into the world when Adam and Eve chose to make decisions apart from God, eating from the tree God told them not to, but Jesus has brought life into the world for all of us.

Devonta La'shun Coleman

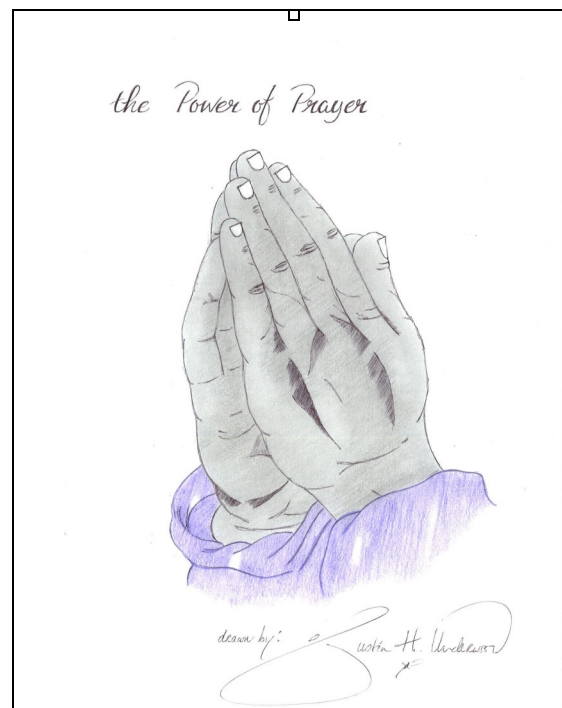
The Power of Prayer

Nobody knows the power of prayer
But somebody must be listening there.
With a friendly ear for the heart that calls,
Somebody who knows when a sparrow falls.

Miracles lie in the power of prayer
Faith that can banish the soul's despair!
Hope that can shine like a holy light,
And brighten the spirit's darkest night.

When earthly help is of no avail,
There is one friend who will never fail!
Just lift your eyes - the answer is there -
For nobody knows the power of prayer!

submitted by: Robert Lee Thomas



LIVING BY FAITH--IT'S A LIFESTYLE

"Endure hardness, as a good Soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Timothy 2:3).

Times of hardness are inevitable. We need to know that. It's true we've been redeemed from the curse, and there is nothing Satan can do to reverse that, but he is going to challenge you on it. So don't be surprised when times get tough. Times will come when you will have to stand strictly by faith, when you'll have to speak and act as though what God says is true even when you can't feel it or see it happening around you. There will be times when everything looks terrible. That's when you must endure hardness as a good Soldier.

So many people hear the word of faith about healing or prosperity and they think, "Hey, I'm going to try that." Then when hard times come, they give up and cave in. Let me warn you--living by faith is not something you try. It's a lifestyle. You do it when it's hard. You do it when it's easy. You do it all the time because you're not doing it to get in on the benefits. You're doing it because you know that faith pleases God (Hebrews 11:6).

Things may get a little tough at times, but I assure you you'll always come out on top if you endure hardness as a good Soldier. If you refuse to faint and fall away, you'll have the victory. The only defeated Christian is the one who quits. So never give up, never faint or fall away. Always keep your faith in God's word and you'll always have the victory.
(Read Numbers 14:1-24.)

By J. Keller

HE WILL NOT LEAVE US

"I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you" (John 14:18).

Becoming followers of Christ, we read that Jesus told his disciples that He will not leave them, and He is saying the same thing to us today as well. The moment we accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior, He becomes the head of our lives to live with us forever and ever.

We as followers of Jesus Christ need to be there for the people that we love when problems come into their lives. When we see people down and out, we as believers need to stand right by their side through all of their trials and never leave them, because Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, will never leave us. The devil and his demons are always telling us when we are facing troubles that Jesus will leave us to face these problems alone. But as true believers and followers of Christ Jesus, we know that Jesus will not leave us nor forsake us. Even though we may feel that Jesus has left us sometimes when things get really hard for us, deep in our hearts, souls, and minds, we know He will never leave us because we trust Him completely.

We can tell the devil and his demons to leave us alone by calling on the name of Jesus Christ and believing in His name. Then the devil and his demons will flee from us. We need to tell everyone that we meet that Jesus will not leave us, that He will be with us through good times and bad times.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen and Amen!

Brother in Christ,
Stephen Elliott Powers

(The following was written by Stephen Powers in 2001. He had two strokes and currently has an aneurysm in his brain. He continues to remain hopeful and faithful to God's Word. God bless!)

Being Positive

I'm not quite sure where I picked up this expression, but it's etched in my mind: "Always hope for the best and prepare for the worst!" So many of us miss out on the blessings and beauties of each day because we're so mentally occupied with where we are, what we have, and who can do something for us. I was told you can't get back yesterday. So why waste any day on anything other than appreciating the blessings that are before you and helping to make someone else's day a blessed one as well?

So many of us are downtrodden and want to see others around us the same way. In today's world, people like that would be called "haters." Don't be a hater; be the one to bless (Matthew 6:43-45). It's not just about you, and the world definitely doesn't evolve around your world. Whether directly or indirectly, what we do every day impacts someone else somewhere at some point, and that someone could be very close to you. God holds us all very dear to His heart and all that call upon His name should hold everyone else dear to their hearts as well because we're all joint-heirs with Christ. (Romans 8:14-17)

So, before we wake up on the wrong side of the bed, how about thinking about doing something positive that will be a blessing to your fellow brothers and sisters. From the Heavens, He watches us and from the Heavens He watches over us.

God bless you Always!

Justin H. Underwood

Being Positive

Carefully weighed; every pound, every ounce,
every kilogram,
Knocked around for many years yet still
I am - Being Positive.
A rebuilt motor in a classic
Chevrolet,
The sunrise watched me rise
another day.
I can see clearly but the rain
still pours,
Soaked but my smile shines through
the glass doors - Being Positive
I stand knowing I stand in a room
full of empty chairs,
My feet are tired but I go on despite
the unawares;
I'm cut from a different cloth cut
differently,
I'm blessed to see you blessed now we're
blessed tremendously.
Today, yesterday, and tomorrow I see
lovely people,
Being positive isn't just a day's drama
but a sequel

by Justin H. Underwood

My Testimony

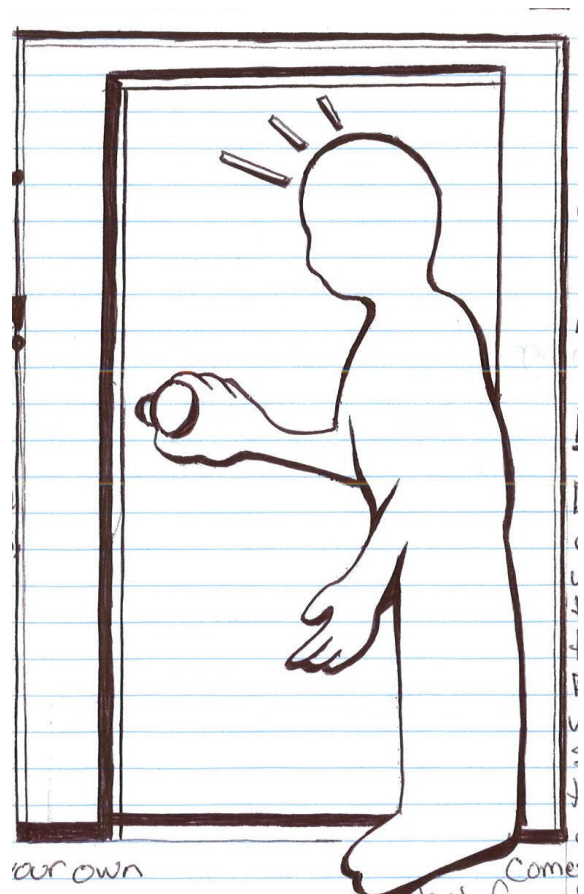
My name is Joseph King, and my life, thoughts, and heart belong to our Lord and savior, Jesus Christ. I am currently in jail for a crime I did not commit, but I believe that this is a wake up call for me. Outside these bars of concrete and steel, I didn't not worship God, or put him first in my life. My life on the outside, was a life of death and a lie. I thought school, being engaged, college life, was cool. I exalted, not God, but a woman who I thought loved me. I put her before God, before my kids, school and even myself. In the end, I did not see, or could not see God. I wanted what I wanted and I felt empty, incomplete. Since coming to jail, I have rededicated my life to Jesus. He showed me that he will always love me, never abandon me, always be supportive—giving me my heart's desires, and putting me on a path to righteousness.

I have met many other believers and God is working through us all to give each other hope—the hope that comes from being led by his Holy Spirit. I am fully convinced that this is the only place God could send me so that I could see him. While I am here, he is using me by his Spirit, to encourage others and lift them up in him, giving God all the glory. I read Ezekiel 18:32 and I repented of my sins, and I now live through our Lord Jesus.

It is very easy to lose hope, doubt, and live in fear, but I scream and call and run to Jesus! He is hope, our joy, our first love, our strength, and eternal life. He could have taken my life while I was in the midst of my sins, living a life of death. Those things I put ahead of God, becoming my own god and was led by my sinful nature. Paul explains our sinful nature and what we must do to overcome it in Romans and Philippians. The Holy Spirit has shown me the error of my ways and I live by the Spirit, letting go of my past and completely submitting to the will of God. My life is his alone to command. There are three things I will never forget: Trust Jesus (Proverbs 3:5-6), Anything I want, ask Jesus for it (John 14:13-14), and Jesus is life and will me life (John 14:6, Jeremiah 29:11-14).

Just like Jonah, we sometimes flee from the Lord, but God's love for us far exceeds our thoughts. And in the midst of our sins, we believe that our life is our own, but it is not—we all belong to Jesus Christ. We are his sheep! I give God the Father all the glory through his son, Jesus, for his word. I give thanks for the saints and their prayers of encouragement and hope. Keep the faith!

Joseph King



Brighter than the Sun

What a glorious day the Lord has made! I truly hope everyone reading this is healthy, happy, and growing in Christ Jesus. Grace to you and peace.

As most of you know, I am being held prisoner in isolation at the Forrest County Sherriff's office. It is only by God's grace and love that I have been able to keep my sanity under the conditions of extreme isolation. God's grace and love! God was merciful to me today and put it on the heart of an officer to let me outside to run. I haven't had this privilege often, only four times now in the four months I've been here. So it is truly a blessing to breathe fresh air, stretch my legs, and raise my heart rate. It's a blessing to feel alive.

The yard here is basically an arena. It's an open octagon with high brick walls on every side. It is half domed with a little shade to be found regardless of the time of day. In a concrete arena, in the blazing Mississippi summer, the shade is a mercy.

I went outside about 4:30pm. The sun had set beyond the dome's horizon, leaving the east side of the arena in full sun. As I'm running laps, I pass from the cool shade into the hot sun. For me the sun seems especially hot. Four months without natural light has left my skin a vampiric shade of white. Every time I would run under the heavy blanket of the sun, I had an irrational fear that I was going to burst into flames. My skin is that pale! I finally stopped, took a few deep breaths, and faced the sun in challenge.

Immediately, my mind was flooded with scripture and overwhelmed. I almost fell to my knees in worship. Revelation 21:22-25 took on new meaning, "I saw no temple in the city of God, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. The nations will walk by its light and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. Its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there."

God created our tiny sun. it's a small star amongst an uncountable number in the universe. We can't, with our natural eyes, even look at it without being blinded. What must the light and glory of our father be like?! I honestly can't get my mind around it. He shines brighter than the stars. I wonder if we will be able to gaze upon Him when His presence lights up the world. We will have new spiritual bodies with spiritual eyes. I can't wait!

Thankfully, I didn't burst into flames today, but I am forever changed as surely as if I had. God bless you all in Christ the light of this world. "for with you is the fountain of life; in your light, we see light." (Psalm 36:9).

Roger Gillett
Forrest Co. Sherriff's Office

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.

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Triple S Challenge

Prison is filled with people from all walks of life. Aside from all the differences in who we are and how we ended up here, there is one thing we all share and that is prison life. Prison life for the most part is a culture that is filled with negativity and violence. Just like society not all people in prison are promoters and followers of this demoralizing culture, which is for many a way of life and all they know. One of the biggest problems, aside from the violence is the use of profanity. Profanity is a problem because it influences the way we are seen and ultimately treated. The fact that it is so prevalent reflects not only how we see ourselves but how we see our fellow man. On any given day at least 75% of the conversations being held are filled with the use of profanity. Given that this is pretty much the norm it comes from both officers and offenders. Truth is told most people who use profanity call it a bad habit. I take from this that most would like to stop, but you know what they say "old habits are hard to break". This is where we come in. There's a philosophy that one of my favorite pastors uses to help people to overcome struggles and to help better themselves. It's called 'Triple S'. The three s's are: struggles, similarities, and strengths. This is how it works. By admitting our own struggles publicly we begin to transparent and by choosing to embrace humility rather than pride, we give others the opportunity to identify with similar struggles of their own. It is through this that we gain strength in sharing a similar struggle to overcome and help someone help us. The fact remains that we share more in common than we like to admit. The sooner we accept this truth the sooner we can help one another. Humility builds character and even though the building begins with self, it doesn't have to end there. So this is my challenge. To everyone reading this who is struggling with profanity or you know someone who is struggling with profanity and would like to better themselves, cut off the sign below and place it in front of door for a year. By doing this you are publicly admitting your flaws, you are professing a desire to better honor God, your brother and yourself. Lastly you are allowing others that share this same struggle to be encouraged in the fact that they are not alone in their struggles. In Mark 12:30-31 Jesus tells us that "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" what better way to show love to your neighbor than self-sacrifice. This is a win for everyone. When we make ourselves available the Lord will use us. This challenge is not limited to us in prison. This sign can easily be placed on anyone's bulletin board, office door, or any place that it can be seen by others. The key words are "I am trying..." This is what we are publicly professing to the world. Letting them know that we are not perfect but we are trying to better honor the Lord in how we speak. I encourage everyone to take the year challenge not only for self, but to help encourage your fellow brother and sister. I also encourage you to pray for strength so that you along with them may endure the change. May the Lord bless and keep all of you. Colossians 3:8 and Romans 12:1-2.

Song of the month: Uncle Reece, Joseph, Job and David

With love in Christ,

Kingdom Kid