
August 01
DRUNK AND DRIVING
Bill Griffin
1995

As Christians, we should limit our actions so that others will not be detracted from the central message of Christ. For the modern-day Christian, that might mean modifying our dress or manner of speech. It might mean choosing not to participate in an activity that is lawful but that affects our witness. We must learn to view others as Christ views them, not as adulterers, blasphemers, or troublemakers, but as children who need to be brought back into fellowship with the Father. When we are serious about witnessing, we become reconcilers.

A TRUE STORY:

A minister received a call that his family had been hit by a drunk driver. His wife and two young children were in the hospital intensive care unit. At the hospital the doctors told him that his wife had many internal injuries and they were not sure they could save her. The little boy was seriously hurt and they were not sure they could save him either. The little girl was already on life support.

The minister felt anger, numbness and shock. Why would God allow this to happen? After four days the doctors told the minister they couldn't save his little girl. They removed the life support equipment and she died. A few days later he received word that his wife would be OK and their little boy was brain-damaged but would probably live.

In the midst of all of the minister's pain, a man came into the hospital's intensive care waiting room. He began to tell the minister why he was there. He had gotten drunk and hit a family with his automobile. He was there to find out how they were. The minister took out his New Testament and led the man to Jesus Christ.

It would have been easier to hurl blame than to forgive, to condemn rather than to see the man's desperate need for God.

"Happy are those who show mercy to others; God will show mercy to them!"...Matthew 5:7.

August 02
DWELLING IN SAFETY
Bill Griffin
1995

The alarm goes off at 5:00 a.m. I try to get body and soul together to face another day. It's always so bleak in the early morning. If I turn on the "News", it makes things seem worse. "Another Shooting Leaves One Man Dead, Two Wounded".

I must always lock my car doors at night. And I'd better call the locksmith today to put that dead-bolt lock on my door.

"Cost Of Living Up 8% In Last Six Months". Perhaps I should begin looking in the Classifieds for a part-time extra job. I could take in some typing to supplement my income. Thank heaven I have my own word processor!

"High Speed Chase Ends In Fatal Crash." An innocent motorist was killed. It really would be safer for me to take the bus to work.

Depression darkens the mind. "It's all so hard". "What's the use?" I think.

Suddenly, I sense the motion of others in the room. The dog begins to stir because he knows it is almost time for his morning trip to get the paper and the treat he always gets upon returning. The cat begins to "meow". She wants to be petted. She is also hungry and ready to go out the opposite door from the dog. They may be old and share the house, but the yard is private domain.

Suddenly, a new thought comes. Am I not something like these animals? If I came to Jesus with love and trust, would He do less for me than I would do for them? Does He not gently lay His hands on me and keep me safely in His care?

But whoso harkeneth unto Me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil....Proverbs 1:33

August 03
EARTHEN VESSELS
Bill Griffin
1995

We never had running water in the house. No inside bathroom. No washer or dryer. The dishwasher had names and used cloth rags for agitators and spraying. One day each week, we had to carry enough water from the spring to fill the wash tubs and the black iron pot. The iron pot was one that was quite common for the day and area. After heating the water in the pot [outside.. with an open fire built around it], the clothes were then put in the pot and stirred, poked, and scrubbed.

You haven't lived until you have gotten into a fight with a brother or sister, stumbled into the fire and pot, and kicked the pot over the bank, and watched the water and clothes scatter. It is no wonder my mother went around mumbling a lot. "Whad'ya say mom?"

The Bible says that God's great treasure is contained in common pots.

2 Corinthians 4:7..."Yet we who have this spiritual treasure are like common clay pots, in order to show that the supreme power belongs to God, not to us."

I've never wanted to be a pot. But God's reasoning is simple. If we were gorgeous cut glass or polished brass, we'd get the attention. But common clay permits it's contents to get the attention.

God's wonderful treasure is the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. It is the sum total of revelation and redemption. It is the good news that Jesus died for us. And guess who God has entrusted with

this message? US! It has been given to the likes of you and me!

Maybe you know a clay pot; an older Christian who is a wonderful bearer of the good news. When they stand to speak, listeners receive negative impressions. Their clothing is out of

style. Their hair is wispy and drab. No makeup. Voice cracked and strained. But when they give their Christian testimony, people quit noticing them. Jesus shines through. They're a common clay pot holding the gospel of Jesus Christ for others to see.

August 04
ENCODED FOOLISHNESS
Bill Griffin
1995

During my two and a half years in the Army Special Forces, I was a radio operator. I was the communications link for the team in the field and the base head quarters. Sometimes, our communication was with voice, but most of the time, I was involved with Morse Code. Morse code is a series of dots and dashes if you see it on paper, but when sent electronically, it is a series of coded 'dits' and 'dahs'.

Without being trained in Morse code, there was no way to understand what you were hearing. "Dit dit dit, dah dah dah, dit dit dit." [S O S]. To make it even more complicated, the words being sent were encrypted or encoded into five letter groups. My job was to encode, send, receive a reply, and decode. Only the decoded message was important to the brass, but I had to figure out the dits and dahs in between.

God's Word is something like this Morse code. 1 Cor 2:14 tells us:

But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Just as the others in my group could not understand what was going on without an interpreter, man can not understand God's Word unless there is one to teach them. Man in his natural condition only thinks of the things of God as foolishness, but when man has turned to God, the Spirit is bound to lead him in ALL TRUTH. This is the Comforter, the Teacher, the Convictor that Christ promised when He departed.

Is God's Word foolishness to you or are you allowing the Spirit to lead you into the richest understanding that you could ever experience?

August 05
ENCOURAGED FAITH GROWS
Bill Griffin
1995

As faith is encouraged and grows in love, it reaches out to embrace others. Life can be a series of events in which faith may be encouraged or forced to grow as disappointments, misfortunes and sorrows come along. This mature kind of faith will then reach out in love beyond self to help others bear their burdens. It is a kind of circle: the love received from God eventually finds its end in praise and thanksgiving back to the Maker and Sustainer of all things. Along the journey, love touches and affects family, friends, co-workers, casual acquaintances. When I am changed by God's great love and compassion, I must pass it along. His love, then, is received and reflected to those with whom I come in contact.

The love I receive and return to God needs to be guarded and nurtured. I need strong, steady encouragement from the Word and from fellow believers to continue in His love. I know that time spent alone in prayer helps build strong ties to the Father's heart. This kind of communion restores what was depleted, uplifts now and arms me for the future.

I have to exercise care to guard against love's enemies. Bitterness, resentment -- emotions that bring forth actions that cause love

to flee. When bitterness takes root, it causes trouble and may hurt many people. Bitterness in one area of our life invariably stains all areas; then it reaches out to hurt other people. Bitterness can be passed from one generation to the next. The only cleanser for this bitterness is God's pure, cleansing love, which is available for the asking.

But God's love sometimes makes me frustrated. I know that what He has planned for my life is the best possible design, but my impatience makes me take shortcuts to speed up God's timetable. Long periods of waiting for answers to prayer have sometimes made me try to accomplish the desired results myself.

This reminds me of times I try to take shortcuts in my workshop. I begin to think I know better than the pattern and measure and saw as I see fit. It is only when the pieces do not fit that I tongue-lash myself for being an idiot and thinking I know more than the experienced wood-crafters who wrote the instructions.

Time and money has been wasted just to try to save a little time. Now I'm learning to pay closer attention to God's instructions for my life.

August 06
ETERNITY IN MAN'S HEART
BILL GRIFFIN
1995

One of the ladies in our study group asked me a question that many ask - "How will God deal with natives that have never heard the gospel?" I had to dig out the books to research this item but here it is from two different versions of the Bible. God has placed the desire to know Him in every heart and only God knows when a person has accepted Him as the True God.

Ecc1 3:11... He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.
Ecc1 3:11... He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that No man

can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end.

God's works are well done; there are order, harmony, and beauty in them all. Even the caterpillar is a finished beauty in all the changes through which it passes, when its structure is properly examined, and the end kept in view in which each change is to issue. Nothing of this kind can be said of the works of man. The most finished works of art are bungling jobs, when compared with the meanest operation of nature.

"The world in their heart"... That hidden time -- the period beyond the present -- eternity. The proper translation of this clause is the following: "Also that eternity hath he placed in their heart, without which man could not find out the work which God hath made from

the commencement to the end." God has deeply rooted the idea of eternity in every human heart, and every considerate man sees that all the operations of God refer to that endless duration. And it is only in eternity that man will be able to discover what God has designed by the various works He has formed.

Man is not merely a creature of time; there is within him that which transcends time; man has "forever". He seeks to stand back from the time-process and discern the plan and pattern of the whole. But he is too deeply immersed in it to succeed; the end and the beginning elude him. The tension between Today and Forever in the life of man cannot be completely resolved. Yet man can find Forever in Today by gratefully accepting the gifts of God and doing His commandments.

August 07
EXCUSES
AND HOW TO WITNESS TO THEM
Bill Griffin
1995

Everyone's greatest need is to accept Christ as Savior. Jesus is our example in witnessing. After meeting the felt needs of people, He led them to an awareness of Himself. Look at two examples.

The woman sought love in adulterous relationships (John 8:3-11). After meeting her need for acceptance, Jesus met the most important one: "Go, but do not sin again."

Zacchaeus's short body housed a small esteem. Jesus' kind treatment dissolved Zacchaeus's inferiority. In response to Jesus' love, he confessed his sin (Luke 19:1-10).

Jesus met two people, Nicodemus and a thief, whose felt needs and spiritual needs were one and the same. Nicodemus needed answers relating to eternal life. The thief needed mercy. Occasionally a person will initiate a witnessing encounter with "How can I be saved?" Usually, however, we first must meet a felt need. In a sense we earn the right to be heard.

Suppose you know of the insecurity felt by a non-Christian co-worker who lost their job. If you quoted John 3:16, they might interrupt, "He loves the world but what about me?"

First minister to their insecurity. Listen to them. Accompany them to the unemployment agency. Then they will listen to you say, "Jesus can be the strength in your struggle. Let me tell you about Him."

An ATHEIST'S excuse is "God does not exist."

Try to discover the cause for the position. Reasons may be the influence of unbelievers, worldliness, or behavior of Christians. Then, share facts and Scriptures:

The order and design of the universe argues the existence of a Creator (Psalm 19:1-4; Rom. 1:19-20). God communicated Himself in human form (Heb. 1:1-2).

Your testimony to a changed life can be the most compelling illustration that God exists (Psalm 102:2).

A PROCRASTINATOR'S excuse is "Not now -- later."" A procrastinator may comment on your appealing testimony, yet add, "I don't want to rush into a decision."

The devil, knowing that a procrastinator would not say a bold NO! to Christ, whispers, "Say, 'Not yet.'"

Share these facts and Scriptures about: Uncertainty of life (Prov. 27:1; James 4:13-17) Hardened hearts (Heb. 3:7-8)

Conclude your testimony by saying, "Every delay makes the decision more difficult." Or, "Waiting wastes valuable time with the Lord." The MORALIST'S excuse is "I'll live the best I can and hope for the best."

After explaining the plan of salvation (emphasizing John 3:1-21), add these facts and Scriptures:

One sin mars goodness (James 2:10).

A view of self through God's eyes eliminates pride (John 14:6).

Christ came to save all sinners (Luke 19:10)

God wants to save even the worst sinner. Moses murdered a man and David committed adultery, yet God forgave them when they repented (2 Peter 3:9).

Whoever asks may be saved (Rom. 10:13).

Conclude by saying, "If sinners are lost, it is because they refuse God's forgiveness" (John 5:40, 6:37).

When witnessing to people with difficult excuses, remember to: Stress Jesus' love for all people;

Never argue;

Listen to the felt need;

Stay on the subject;

Trust the Holy Spirit to use your words as the days pass;

Weep;

And

pray!

This Life Without Christ
emptiness filled with dissatisfying, external props;

aimlessness, fear of death;
false solace dependent on power, possessions, prestige; loneliness;
lack of self-control

This Life in Christ

having a faithful friend, Jesus;
filled with complete satisfaction
by the Holy Spirit;

significant meaning and direction;
peace;
power to avoid temptation;
eternal life in God's presence

Witnessing makes us salt in a corrupt society. We do make a difference in behavior and morals. Witnessing generates an unusual spiritual

fervor and a perennial revival. Witnessing means fellowship with Christ. He is always about His

Father's business. When we are committed to His same purpose, we never leave His side.

August 08
EXILED KING
Bill Griffin
1995

For the past few months, our news has been dominated by the unrest and upheaval in Haiti. The officially elected president of the country is in exile. Those in power have been abusing the people of that country with their power. Anyone disagreeing with their policies were killed if they could not escape the island. Economic sanctions have caused wide-spread hunger. Electricity has been cut off to all but the ruling powers. Cars sit by the side of the road because there is No gasoline to power them. Thousands have fled the country to escape the persecution and problems caused by these sanctions.

Christians live in a world similar to this situation. Our King, Christ, is a king in exile. Those who follow Him are often looked upon with derision. To be identified with Him here and now entails "losing face" and some persecution. Satan is temporarily in control of Earth. Even Christ called him the "Prince of this world." He wreaks havoc on the citizens of this world. Deceit, evil, lawlessness. Those are the handiwork of Satan. He, too, has No compassion

for the people of earth, only for himself and his demons. His purpose is the same as the rulers of Haiti; to destroy the will and purpose of the exiled ruler.

Help for Haiti is being provided by United Nations troops [mostly American]. The deposed rulers are being removed from power. Soon the people of Haiti will again live in peace and safety hopefully. The people are looking forward to the return of their exiled President.

We, too, await the return of our exiled King. Paul states it well in *Romans 8:18-19*...*"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God"*.

If we should be called upon to suffer all our lives, it would not be long compared to eternity. We are in the position of heirs to a large estate who gladly endure a few days of suffering and doing without with the hope that we shall soon come into our fabulous inheritance.

August 09
FAITH AND COMMITMENT
Bill Griffin

1995

I found this story and thought I would share it with you since it gives a very powerful demonstration of what true faith is and a good explanation of how we use our faith.

The following letter was found in a baking powder can wired to the handle of an old pump that offered the only hope of drinking water on a very long and seldom-used trail across the Amargosa Desert:

"This pump is all right as of June 1932. I put a new sucker washer into it and it ought to last five years. But the washer dries out and the pump has got to be primed. Under the white rock I buried a bottle of water, out of the sun and cork end up. There's enough water in it to prime the pump, but not if you drink some first. Pour about one fourth and let her soak to wet the leather. Then pour in the rest medium fast and pump like crazy. You'll git water. The well has never run dry. Have faith. When you git watered up, fill the bottle and put it back like you found it for the next feller. (signed) Desert Pete

"P. S. Don't go drinking up the water first. Prime the pump with it and you'll git all you can hold."

Nowhere have the principles of faith been more clearly set forth. What a person would do coming along that trail, half dead from lack of water and with an empty canteen, would reveal much about his faith. Faith is not so much an academic subject for discussion or a theological term from the Bible, as it is something on which our very life hinges.

As reflected in this story faith is evidently composed of three ingredients.

First, there must be an object. It is impossible just "to have faith." If you were a

lonely traveler coming down that parched desert trail, you would have to trust in an unknown person named Desert Pete to keep from drinking the bottle of buried water. This would not be easy. He is a person you do not know. There is a great deal of evidence he is telling the truth, but there is No guarantee that he is not a practical joker or a lunatic. So, the first ingredient of faith is trust in someone or something, based on evidence but not infallible proof.

Second, there is a risk. Faith is always costly. If you were walking down that trail without water, there would be nothing more precious to you in all the world than a bottle of water. Desert Pete tells you that if you drink any part of that bottle of water he has left, you won't get any from the pump. So, it seems necessary to risk the very stuff on which your life may depend to get a safe and sufficient amount. Faith is always expensive.

Third, there is work. Some people have mistakenly interpreted faith as a substitute for work. Faith is not laziness. Desert Pete reminds us that after we trust and risk, we have to pump hard!

Everyone uses faith daily. We must trust our partners in marriage or in business although sometimes that trust is misplaced. In business, money and reputation are risked; in marriage, your whole life. For success, both a business and a marriage require a tremendous amount of work and consecration by both parties.

SO MUCH FOR FAITH. BUT WHAT ABOUT CHRISTIAN FAITH? THE INGREDIENTS ARE THE SAME.

First of all, one has to have faith in God and especially in the way God has revealed Himself to man in the person of Jesus Christ. It is not faith in a principle but faith in a person - the Person!

Second, there is commitment that involves risk. Anything approaching a total commitment always has specific and immediate

implications that involve risk. It may mean asking forgiveness of another, making a specific restitution, beginning to tithe, or changing jobs. The more we commit of ourselves to God in very specific terms, the better we can know Him and His plan for our lives.

Third, there is hard work. After one has had faith in God and tried to commit his life to Him, then comes the hard work. Some people have interpreted the Christian faith as just a matter of hard work. This leads to a kind of living which may be religious, but is not necessarily Christian. Christian faith is more than hard work for Christ and His Kingdom. But I have never known an effective Christian who was lazy.

In the Bible, Abraham has been called the Father of the Faithful. Because of his faith in God he left his home in Ur of the Chaldees. By faith he gave up the known and the familiar for the unknown and unfamiliar. He committed his life and his family and all of his possessions to the leadership of God, who called him to a new life in a new land. To find that new land and the new life required years of hard work. Many of the men and women of faith in the Bible have had similar experiences.

In the new Testament, we read about the call to commitment which Jesus extended to the first disciples and we find, first of all, that it was (and still is) a person-to-person call. They were not called to believe a doctrine, practice an ethic, or worship in a prescribed way. Rather, they were called to trust Jesus and follow Him.

The original call was not to people who could be considered "spiritual types," those who naturally enjoy prayer, meditation, and the esthetics of worship. Instead, Jesus called men who were virile, earthy, and ordinary. We might have expected Him to call people with "time on their hands" -- the rich, the unemployed, or the retired -- but instead He called middle-class businessmen with vested interests. Certainly our Lord calls people with a spiritual bent, but He is No respecter of persons. Men and women from every walk of life who are willing to respond are called.

How odd, too, that no time limit was implied in that original call. Jesus merely asked four fishermen to follow Him. Did they interpret this as an invitation for that day, or for a week, or possibly for several years? When they left their businesses, their friends, their familiar surroundings, and even their families to follow Jesus Christ, they could not have known it was to be a lifetime call.

In the New Testament the message seems clear that the new life offered by Jesus Christ begins when we repent and believe by FAITH.

**LOVE THAT GOES UPWARD IS WORSHIP;
LOVE THAT GOES OUTWARD IS AFFECTION;
LOVE THAT STOOPS IS GRACE.
THANK GOD FOR HIS GRACE THAT STOOPS TO EACH OF US
AS SINNERS !!**

August 10
FALSE SPIRITS
Bill Griffin
1995

A local newspaper reported a story about a girl who was leaving a friend's house when a man called to her from his car. He called her by name, and told her that her parents had been involved in an accident. He told her that he had been sent to take the girl to the hospital. Although she was shaken by the man's report, the girl had the presence of mind to ask him some questions, which revealed that his report was false. She ran away before the man could grab her. Asking those few questions may have saved her life.

When we are confronted by a teaching attributed to God, we need to ask questions to see if it is true. The Bible says:

"Don't always believe everything you hear just because someone says it is a message from God: test it first to see if it really is. For there are many false teachers around. [1 John 4:1]

One question we need to ask is: "What does this teaching say about Jesus?" Anyone who denies that Jesus Christ became fully human is a false teacher.

We have the Bible and the Holy Spirit as guides to measure the truth of teachings about Christ.

August 11
FASHIONABLE
Bill Griffin
1995

When I was a boy, I wanted to be fashionable just like the other kids. Since I was the oldest of the family, I did get new clothes sometimes. Everything was not hand-me-down, even though there were some from cousins and other folks who just wanted to clean out their closets. It was difficult to be fashionable in hand-me-downs or clothes so big that you knew you had to grow into them.

I remember once getting a pair of olive-drab pants, which struck me as a bit too large, but my mom explained that the style that season was for the crotch to hang half way to the knees. At that age, 14, I was a slave to fashion, so I instantly snapped up the pants. I knew at the very worst I would grow into the trousers, provided I reached a height of six-foot-six and a weight of 250 pounds. Furthermore, there was plenty of room in the crotch to carry a sweater or a sack lunch if

you want it. Of course mom then had to shorten the legs for me.

When I cinched up the pant's size forty waist to fit my twenty-inch body, the excess billowed out toward my feet. The pleats, bulging fabric, short pant legs, and sagging crotch all combined to give me the appearance of being deformed, but that was all right. Gross deformity defined the Ellijay look.

I even got a pair of boots once. Supposed to be paratrooper jump boots but I doubt it now. They did look pretty nifty though. "They'll keep your ankles from bending," I was told. Sure enough they did. My ankles couldn't bend sideways or back and forth. As a result I had to walk stump-legged and flat footed. Similar to Frankenstein's walk. Young children fled from me. Dogs slunk away with their tails between

their legs and their barks stuck in their throats.

The Ellijay look was chic for its time but alas I had to move on. Maybe the boots did it. Who knows? Somehow I found myself in the Army, wearing paratrooper jump boots but that is another story for another time.

As you try to be fashionable, remember that God called you just the way you are. God is not interested in how we look on the outside. He cares for the condition of our heart. Recall the words of Christ as He chastised those who tried

to be fashionable on the outside but whose hearts were blackened.

Matt 23:27-28... "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness."

August 12
FARMING
Bill Griffin
1995

Back about 1981, a friend of mine bought himself an old tractor. We had to take a trip to the eastern end of the state to haul it back to Kings Mountain. Big old thing. Heavy. I thought we were going to have to get out and push the pick-up and trailer over some of the hills. We did have quite an experience on that trip.

Now, we could not just let the tractor sit. He and I decided we would grow us a garden. We had to leave work in Gastonia and travel to his place in Kings Mountain each evening. We plowed the land, laid off the rows, planted the seed, and then waited in anxious expectation. We knew that soon, we would have all the fresh vegetables we wanted to preserve and to eat. But.... in the meantime, when the seedlings came up, so did the weeds. We had to continually plow between the rows and sometimes even had to use the 6 foot plow, a common garden variety 'hoe'. I had forgotten why I ran from the farm I grew up on, but it all quickly returned. WORKKKKKK!

To make matters worse, we planted and cultivated what was to be a crop of corn. Neither of us ever got a single ear from the field. The raccoons stripped every ear as it began to ripen; pulled the stalks over and ate it right there in the garden. If we could have caught them, we would have had barbecued coon in lieu of corn.

Then came the harvesting. Whewwww! The vegetables waited for no one. When they were ripe, they were ready to be picked. We had planted so many lima beans, we pulled up the plants so we could take them back under a shade tree to pick the beans. We liked to have killed ourselves. I thought work was for a mule, and even he turns his tail to it. We could not escape.

Even with the hard work, the coons, and the harvesting though, it was worth it when the canning and freezing was completed and we knew we had vegetables for the coming winter.

Just as we had to be patient with the weather, the planting, the cultivating, and the harvesting, we need to be patient for another harvest that is to come. Look at James 5:7-8.... *"Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near."*

Christ and His angels await the command from God the Father to put in the cycle and harvest His bride from the earth. Will you be preserved for the wedding feast or will you be cast out and burned as stubble?

August 13
FATHER, FORGIVE THEM
Bill Griffin
1995

There is a story of a general in the Napoleonic wars. One evening just at dusk, followed by a single gigantic hussar who was his personal aide, the general was riding across a battlefield in Spain. Dead and dying soldiers were everywhere, and from one badly-wounded Spaniard came a pitiful cry for water.

The general stopped, dismounted, and held a canteen to his enemy's lips. As he did so the man whipped out a concealed pistol and fired it in his benefactor's face. Incredibly, the bullet missed, passing through the general's hat. The

hussar, enraged, unsheathed his saber, but the general stopped him.

"Give him a drink anyway," he said.

Think of this little story sometimes when you feel that you have been wronged or taken advantage of. To forgive someone who has clearly and unmistakably tried to hurt you is probably the most difficult of all spiritual disciplines. But Christ said we must do it. Not just once. Not seven times. But seventy times seventy. He modeled that very request from the cross when He cried: **"Father, forgive them..."**

August 14
FEED MY SHEEP
Bill Griffin
1995

We never had sheep when I was a boy but I know something of feeding and caring for the animals. The old mule, the chickens, and the pigs waited daily for someone to feed them.

I learned some valuable lessons from the farm. The animals were totally dependent on the feeder. Without the food, the mule did not have the strength to be a beast of burden. The chickens would have been scrawny. We liked the

idea of fat drumsticks in the pan. We even tried to cross our chickens with caterpillars once trying to get more drumsticks per chicken. Never quite got it perfected though. The chickens kept eating the caterpillars. We depended on having a fat pig for the fall to keep us through the winter.

It was not an easy chore to raise the feed during the summer and then have to get up

early in the morning to feed the animals before going off to school. It was only when the end results were measured that we could see the rewards of our labor. Christ told Peter to "Feed My Sheep." The principle is the same. The sheep, (Christians) depend on being fed and tended to become mature in Christ. The chore was not easy for Peter either. Persecution. Stoning. Outcasts from their Jewish families. No property. Arrested. Whipped. Made a public spectacle to satisfy the whims of some man called an Emperor.

In spite of all the labors, Peter did tend the sheep of the Lord even at the cost of his own life. Peter finally realized how he had been chosen specifically by Christ. When he was about

to lose his life, Peter declared, "Not as my Lord was crucified, I am not worthy." Peter was then crucified upside down on a Roman cross just outside Rome.

Restoration was finally complete. The disciple who had denied and failed the Lord had indeed fed His sheep. Such is the miracle of forgiveness and grace available through Christ. Peter was finally able to see the results of his labors.

Can you hear the Lord asking, "My child, do you love me?" If you do, then join Peter and countless others like him who have gone on to feed the Lord's sheep.

August 15
FIRE IN THE TONGUE
Bill Griffin
1995

The old house where I grew up was just across a ridge from the city dump. A perpetual fire burned there all the time due to the continual dumping and the chemical combustion that took place occasionally.

One day, the wind decided to help the fire go visiting, across the dirt road and into the woods. An accident, but a woods fire just the same. These woods were behind our house though, with nothing between. As the fire burned in the scrubby pines and undergrowth, my entire family was there beating on the fire with anything they could find. Shovels, hoes, brooms, old pieces of rug...anything.

After all the stomping and flailing, help from the county fire truck, and passers-by, the fire was eventually brought under control and put out before it reached any homes.

There is a kind of speaking that is also accidental and just as destructive as the fire. The tongue is very powerful because of the destruction our words can bring. Like the bit in a horse's mouth or the rudder on a ship, our words can direct other lives. The way I use my tongue affects me in the home, what I say there, how I say it. It affects children and parents, husbands and wives, because we talk to one

another. It touches me where I work, because I talk there. The use of our tongues brings us into the whole question of Christian living and holiness. It touches everyone, everything, all the time, everywhere. How many people have had the beginnings of a feeling for Christ destroyed because of the words on my tongue?

James 3:3-8...Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.

August 16
FISHERMEN
Bill Griffin
1995

I used to love to fish. Almost every week end, I would find some way to talk myself out of doing chores around the house and make my way to the lake or river.

When I lived in Atlanta, I had a special friend who also loved to fish. He and I would plan fishing trips to the swamps of South Georgia. We would load our jon boat either in or on top of a vehicle on Thursday, drive to work on Friday morning, get off on Friday afternoon and drive all night to get to Ludiwici, Georgia. That would give us just enough time to get into a camping area about ten miles out in the "outback". We would get the jon boat off the top of our old car or out of the back of the station wagon and have it at the edge of the water, ready for the sun to come up.

Depending on the mosquito crop, we would try to get maybe an hour or two of sleep before daylight. Sometimes it was rough. The skeeters in the car or tent were larger than we were. I have even heard a couple of them talk about: "reckon we ought to eat them here or carry them off before the big ones come?" Some have even been mistaken for wild turkeys.

After a weekend of constant fishing, wearing the same clothes, and eating from a can, we would return home tired, swollen from mosquito bites, and smelly. No one wanted to be within a block of us. We could convince ourselves how much fun we had and would immediately be planning when we could go again. Unless you are a fisherman, you can not understand the thinking for such behavior.

Peter, James, John, and Andrew were fishermen like that. What impressed Christ to invest the future of the kingdom of God in them? Perhaps it was their capacity for commitment in the face of hardship. Catching fish required faithfulness, innovation, seriousness, and heart. With such qualities, these men had what it takes to catch men for God. However, Jesus can take persons who occasionally fish and enable them to become "fishers of men."

"And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men. -- Mark 1:17.

August 17
FOLLOWING DIRECTIONS
Bill Griffin
1995

A few years ago, I snuck up on a bad case of the flu and, of course, I had to go to the doctor. He gave me a shot and some pills, telling me to take four of them every two hours. When I got home and looked at those four pills to take at one time, I decided that was too much medicine. I figured if I just took two pills every four hours, I would be fine. Soon I did begin to feel somewhat better. As the days drug on though, I could not shake all the symptoms of the flu. I didn't feel all that bad, but I was not cured. I went back to the doctor. I told him my opinions about taking so much medicine. He was disgusted with me.

"If you had followed my directions, that much medication would have killed those germs. You are

just making them mad and giving them a chance to build up immunity against the pills. I can't help you, if you won't trust me and follow my directions exactly!"

We must also give ourselves to our Lord and Master completely, holding nothing back, if we would have the most joyous, successful life, the life God means for us. God wants us to trust ourselves to Him, body, mind and soul. When we fully dedicate ourselves to Him, then we reap the full, joyous benefits of God's love and blessing.

*Prov 3:6... In all thy ways
acknowledge him, and he shall
direct thy paths.*

August 18
FOR WHOM WILL YOU SACRIFICE?
Bill Griffin
1995

There is a story of the farm animals who decided to get together and furnish a special breakfast for the farmer one morning. The chicken was quick to volunteer, "I'll furnish the eggs." The cow jumped right in with, "I'll furnish the milk". Both of them then looked at the pig for his contribution.

As you can see, there was not much of a sacrifice on behalf of the cow or the chicken but it was going to cost the pig dearly. It is also worth mentioning that they wanted to name their sacrifice, not what the farmer may have wanted. What if he had wanted steak or fried chicken?

What and for whom would you be willing to sacrifice?

Most of us would sacrifice for our families and quite often, we do. We sacrifice time and energy in their early years to cart them to sports, piano, dancing, church activities, and a multitude of other things. We sacrifice financially to send them to college.

We would sacrifice for our parents. Many people sacrifice daily or monthly trying to lend support to them in their waning years.

We would sacrifice for our spouses. We have walked through good times and bad times together, experiencing the highs and the lows that accompany family living.

Surely I would be willing to sacrifice to my Lord. Or would I? Sacrificing for Him means to

become involved in His ministry. It requires me to be a witness. Not just a silent, see my life, type witness, but to be vocal, to declare the works of Him who sacrificed for me. I must also become involved with those who are hurting, suffering, and wondering what life is all about. I must join Him in being broken-hearted for His people. Sacrificing for Him also involves giving. Am I willing to give up a part of what I feel I have earned, to give it back to Him?

Sometimes we sing the song, (Jesus Paid It All)

"Jesus paid it all;

All to Him I owe.

Sin had left a crimson stain.

He washed it white as snow."

Jesus died voluntarily. He stated: "The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life -- only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again".

He had the power to change the circumstances but He chose not to do so. He knew it was time to die.

No one else has ever given his life in my behalf. But He did! One sacrificed for all! That includes you and me.

August 19
FORTRESS
Bill Griffin
1995

As the Spirit of God attempts to communicate His truth to us, He runs up against our "wall", our overall mental attitude, our natural mind-set. For some its prejudice. With others, it's limited thinking or a negative mentality. Whatever it is, it is a huge mental barrier that resists divine input just as firmly as a massive stone wall once resisted the invading troops. We all have our fortresses. And occasionally we get downright obnoxious as we operate under the control of our "walled fortress."

A tramp discovered that one day when he was looking for a handout in a picturesque old English village. Hungry almost to the point of fainting, he stopped by a pub bearing the classic name, 'Inn of St. George and the Dragon'.

"Please, ma'am, could you spare me a bite to eat?" he asked the lady who answered his knock at the kitchen door.

"A bite to eat?" she growled. "For a sorry, No-good bum -- a foul-smelling beggar? No!" she snapped as she almost slammed the door on his hand.

Halfway down the lane the tramp stopped, turned around, and eyed the words, 'St George and the Dragon'. He went back and knocked again on the kitchen door.

"Now what do you want?" the woman asked angrily.

"Well, ma'am, if St. George is in, may I speak with him this time?"

August 20
FREEDOM
Bill Griffin
1995

Reconciliation costs. A price must be paid. It is the reconciler who settles the account. To be reconciled with God means that God's attitude toward us will be changed from one of displeasure to one of acceptance. The cost of restoring us to fellowship was the death of the Reconciler. Jesus, who was perfect and pure, became our sin that he might bring us to God. Romans 5:8-10 states:

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God; through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

Here is the very heart of the Gospel.

"Come out, you don't need to be afraid any

longer. There is peace between us. You will not be harmed or punished, but welcomed and accepted."

After World War II there were numerous reports of Japanese soldiers holed up in caves on the Island of Guam. Leaflets were dropped proclaiming the end of the war, but still some soldiers refused to come out of hiding. Shoichi Yokoi lived in a cave for 28 years as a self-imposed hermit. He had seen the pamphlets proclaiming the end of the war, but he was afraid he would be executed if he came out of hiding. Finally two hunters convinced him not to be afraid and they led him to freedom.

Like Shoichi Yokoi, many of us prefer to live in our self-imposed prisons. We endure a living death rather than accept God's grace and walk to freedom.

August 21
FRIENDS
Bill Griffin
1995

Most of us make quite a few friends as we go through life. Friends are important. They make the good times a little better and the bad times a little easier. It's nice to have friends.

Those we can call dear friends are a treasure. I have one in Ellijay that I have kept in touch with since high school. I have another that I met 30 years ago when we worked at the same work center in Atlanta. I have kept in touch with him for more than thirty years now. I have one closer that I spend time with as the occasion warrants. When I am with either of these, the time flies because we can just be ourselves.

Real friends, those who really know you and care about you, are harder to come by than just casual friends. Real friends hurt when you hurt and are happy when you are happy. You allow real friends to know who you really are. You don't put up fronts or put on masks to try to impress them. You let them know your hopes, your

dreams, your frustrations. They may know you even better than your parents or siblings. It really takes courage to let another human being know you like that. If you can develop even a handful of real friends in a lifetime, you will be blessed.

We do have one who is a real Friend. The Lord knows your innermost being. He knows your every thought. He knows your strengths and your weaknesses.

Psalm 139:1 says... "O Lord, Thou has searched me and known me."

No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you. [John 15:15]

And He loves you -- faults and all.

August 22
FROM ONE SEED
Bill Griffin
1995

It always amazed me when we were planting fields in the spring how one seed could produce so much. It is amazing how the life of many seeds are hidden in the fiber of just one, and it must die before it can produce.

Later in the spring and early summer, we would see the first sprouts and then the blooms, the promise of a harvest.

Joseph of Arimathea lay the seed of our salvation, Jesus, in a burial place. There in the earth, just like those seedlings, God split the seed to produce eternal life! One dead seed, exploding by the power of God, split its earth tomb to rise in a new life.

A field is a witness to the work of God Who brings life out of death, gives it a new form, and produces a harvest.

One morning, the women attested to a similar yet more momentous experience, "He is risen" (Matt. 28:6). Those who trust the resurrection bury sins in His tomb and rise to a new life in Christ. We are prepared for a future day when we will see the Lord seated on a white cloud, holding a sickle "because the time to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is ripe" (Rev. 14:14-16).

August 23
GATHERED TOGETHER
Bill Griffin
1995

Do you remember many of the old wives tales or expressions from your youth? I can still remember a few. One I remember distinctly is from my great-grand-mother. When we used to stay at her house, we had a habit of taking sticks and playing with the fire in the fireplace. She would scold us and tell us: "Don't play in the fire, it'll make you wet the bed!"

I think sometimes we did it just for spite or to see if it really worked. Maybe it did, because I can remember a few of those nights when I would wake up cussing my brother Fred.

One thing about the fireplace though. As bedtime neared, we would let the fire begin to die out by spreading the coals away from each other. As children with curiosities, we would

poke at it until it would flare up if we pushed the coals together again. Granny would just make us scatter them all again.

God's people are like those coals. We 'turn on' with the encouragement and help of each other. But we 'turn off' and tend to grow cold when we don't have fellowship with others of His people. Remember this thought on the next Sunday you feel tired and do not want to get up or attend church. God knows we need one another. Like a single coal, if we are removed from the fire, we 'go out'. We are warm when we keep close to our brothers and sisters and cold when we are apart from them.

FOR WHERE TWO OR THREE ARE
GATHERED TOGETHER...MATTHEW 18:20

August 24
GETTING CLEANED UP
Bill Griffin
1995

*You may fool all the people some of the time;
You can even fool some of the people all the time;*

But you can't fool all the people all the time.

Abraham Lincoln

Not long ago there was a story of a movie director who was looking for a derelict to play a key scene. After a long search, he found just the man in a slum area of Los Angeles.

By the time he appeared on the set, the derelict had bathed, shaved and changed clothes. He had done everything he could to make himself look presentable, not realizing that his efforts

made him unusable for the part for which the director needed him.

My friends, we make the same mistake as the derelict when we put up a false front, either to your fellow man or to God. God already knows your faults; all He wants is for us to come to Him, just as we are.

Like the derelict that tried to clean himself up before coming to the director, we try within ourselves to clean up our act before coming to God. It's like getting cleaned up to take a bath, or cleaning the house before the maid gets there so she will not see all the dirt.

August 25
GLADNESS IN GOD'S HOUSE
Bill Griffin
1995

As John heard her voice rousing him out of the bed on Sunday morning, he responded in protest: "I'm not going to church this morning. They don't like me at that church. The teachers have it in for me. The congregation is not nice to me. I'm not going!"

She calmly answered, "John, you have to go."

"Give me two good reasons," he replied.

"First, we always go to church on Sunday. Second, you are the pastor of the church. You have to go."

Many today look for every excuse to avoid participating in worship. Such an attitude is based on misunderstanding of what worship is all about.

The purpose of worship is not to meet with other Christians but to meet with God.

The motivation for worship is not that others will get to know us better, but that we will get to know God better.

That is why we should be glad like the psalmist when we attend the house of the Lord.

"I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord." [Psalm 122:1]

An opportunity to meet personally with the president of our country would not be dismissed with trifling excuses. Instead, we would rearrange our schedule to meet with such an important person. How much more important to meet personally with God.

August 26
GOD'S ARTWORK
Bill Griffin
1995

There are many types of craftsmanship that require delicate and intricate handling and skills. Glassblowing. Hand made pottery. Woodworking. Skills are needed to create beautiful works. Many hours may be involved by the craftsman to finish a masterpiece. It may take only a second for a careless shopper or unattended children to brush against a shelf, causing several pieces to fall to the floor and shatter.

The Church, in much the same way, is a delicate work of art by Christ. He created and

crafted it to help His followers complete the task He had given them. The faithfulness and good works of many followers have added to the beauty of the church since its creation. But the beauty can be quickly marred by a few sharp words or misguided deeds from a careless believer.

"If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple"... I Corinthians 3:17.

Just like pieces of the craftsman's art, every member is important to the strength and

beauty of the church. Each one has a special function, according to the gifts and talents

possessed. Each one adds to the beauty.

August 27
GOD'S CREATION
Bill Griffin
1995

When I am troubled or distressed, I seek out a time and place to be alone with God. My place is outside at night if I can. I can gaze into the heavens, see the stars and the moon, and know there is a creator. I also can know that He hears me when I lift my voice to Him in praise. I can not help but think of the song;

"Oh, Lord my God, When I in awesome wonder,
Consider all the worlds thy hands have made..."

One of the greatest acts of God is his creation of the universe. The prophet Isaiah admonished his people to look beyond their suffering in Babylonian captivity to the creation. The term 'create' occurs more often in Isaiah than in any other Old Testament book. This word refers exclusively to divine activity.

"Lift your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these?" [Isaiah 40:26]

The destruction of the Temple and the captivity of Jerusalem had shook the faith of the people of Israel. They had placed their faith and trust in the Temple and the city to save them. They had lost sight of God. During exile and

hardships, they complained that God had little concern for them. We are the very same three thousand years later. In trying times our eyes tend to see only the difficulties surrounding us. We do not see God. We need to learn to lift our eyes beyond our own situation and see the unchanging reality of God's creation.

In his deepest pain, Job was not sure whether God carried out justice, and if he did, why the innocent suffered. When God appeared to Job [in a whirlwind, nature itself], God pointed him to the wonders of His creation and helped him to sense again His power and care.

When Abraham doubted and complained because he still had no son as God had promised, God took him outside and said, "Look at the heavens and count the stars." God fulfilled His promise in His timing. Abraham became a great nation. When Jesus told His disciples not to worry about the future, He pointed to the birds in the air and the lilies of the field. Not one of God's creations falls outside His knowing and caring.

August 28
GOD'S GOODNESS
Bill Griffin
1995

This story is told of an unbeliever who spent his time delivering lectures on why he did not believe in God. After one particular lecture he called for questions from the audience.

An older man in the crowd stood up and made his way to the front, where he began peeling an orange. Growing impatient, the unbelieving lecturer called for the man to ask his question.

Calmly the man began to eat the orange. Turning to the lecturer as the last piece of orange was eaten, the man asked, "Was this orange a sweet one?"

Angrily the lecturer replied, "How can I know that unless I had tasted it myself?"

The man responded, "How can you know anything about Christ if you have never tried Him?"

We need to think about God's goodness. How has He been good to you today?

Psalms 34:8 says: "O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him."

August 29
GOD DESIRES OUR PRAISE
Bill Griffin
1995

God wants our praise! Psalm 113 bears this out as it opens and closes with praise.

[1] Praise ye the LORD. Praise, O ye servants of the LORD, praise the name of the LORD. [2] Blessed be the name of the LORD from this time forth and for evermore. [3] From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same the LORD's name is to be praised. [4] The LORD is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens. [5] Who is like unto the LORD our God, who dwelleth on high, [6] Who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth! [7] He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill; [8] That he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people. [9] He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children. Praise ye the LORD.

Its lofty themes of God thrill the saint and humble the sinner, focusing on His name, His glory, and His power. This Psalm is used to open the Passover meal that recalls Israel's deliverance from Egypt. In the first Passover, God exalted His name when He executed judgment

against all the gods of Egypt, showing Himself the one true God. He demonstrated His glory while leading the children of Israel to safety. He unleashed His power by dividing the Red Sea and destroying the army.

Verses one through three focus on His name, that which makes God unique. He commanded the Israelites not to take His name in vain, to count it as nothing. Yet profanity and vulgarity dominate our world. Some cannot write, talk, or sing unless they swear. These verses ought to convict us, to motivate us to hold His name dear and worthy of praise.

His glory fills the heavens; He rules in this world. In Jewish thinking, prayer recognizes God as King of the universe. This thought appears in verse five where the word dwelleth means enthroned. He watches the goings on of men; nothing escapes His eye. The Scriptures declare that every idle word and every deed will be judged. "This IS my Father's world," and we should live as unto Him because He is watching!

The Psalm concludes with His power. He has power to lift the poor and needy and to turn barrenness into motherhood. My God, how great Thou art!

"For of Him, and through Him, and to Him,
are all things: to Whom be glory forever.

Amen" (Rom. 11:36).

August 30
GOD HAS ADOPTED US
Bill Griffin
1995

God is a personal Being, and so must have a personal love. He cannot be satisfied with a garden or wilderness. Personal love demands personal love, and so God said, "Let us make man in our image." He created man that man might respond to His love. Man was made in the image of God. He came from the hand of God, but he broke away from God. However, it still stands that it was for love that God created man; and I believe that there is still something that ties man back to God. I know that the sinner is not the child of God, but the sinner is the creature of God with an intuition that relates him to God.

To assist sinful man in finding his way back to Him, God furnished a way through His Son, Jesus Christ. When we accept Him as the payment for the penalty of our sins, we are brought into

the family of God. God has not only adopted us, but we are His by birth: we have been born into His kingdom.

My boys were as much mine when they were a day old as they are now at ages 25 and 23. They were my sons, although it did not appear what they would be when they attained manhood. They were mine, although they had to go through life's trial like everyone else.

The children of God are not perfect, but we are perfectly His children.

Rom 8:15-16.. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

August 31
GOD HASN'T CHANGED!
Bill Griffin
1995

Christians should never forget that our God never changes. He is the same, yesterday, today, and forever. Man's standards frequently change, but God's standards NEVER change. Many things that were frowned upon a few years ago as being improper, indecent, immoral and sinful are now "accepted," even by most professed Christians, as being right and proper.

What caused the change? Has wrong become right? Has evil become virtue? Has a curse become a blessing? Has sin become righteousness? Has God changed His Mind about what makes up right or wrong, good, or evil?

The Degeneracy of Man

Not at all. The only change that has taken place is the degeneracy of man. As "religion" has become popular; as the world has joined the church; as the church has compromised Christ's standards for the ways of the unbelieving world, the rank and file professed Christian has reached the place where there is little discernment between good and bad, right and wrong, sin and righteousness.

As Christians, we should apply Romans 12:1-2 to our hearts and lives:

Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

A New Creature -- In Christ!

And I Cor. 10:31:

"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

Therein lies the TRUE TEST of Christian standards of conduct. We have been saved by the blood. We have been bought with the price -- the precious blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We are His. We no longer belong to ourselves; we no longer belong to the world; we no longer belong to the devil. We have experienced THE NEW BIRTH in Christ.

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is A NEW CREATURE; old things are passed away; behold, ALL THINGS are become NEW" -- II Cor. 5:17.

Often we hear people say, "I am a Christian, and I do so and so."

Embrace God's Standards!

Yes, it is possible to be a Christian -- to be saved by the BLOOD -- and yet be a "babe" in Christ -- or -- to be a carnal, worldly Christian, wasting precious days and months and years -with a negative testimony, an aimless walk and a fruitless life.

God help us to solve every problem; to answer every question -- not by the standards set by the unbelieving world around us, but by the standards of our God, as set forth in His Holy Word.