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December 01  
THE RESCUE  
Bill Griffin  
1995

With all the rain we have received in the Southeastern portion of the United States during the spring and summer of 1994, I have noticed some people searching along the highways and checking out the lumber yards looking for some "gopher wood." For some strange reason, there seems to also be a renewed interest in the unit of measurement "cubit." I have not seen any type of gathering of animals in pairs but I will be keeping an eye out for this strange phenomenon, just in case. If I see them gathering, I will be looking for the person who seems to have accumulated the most gopher wood.

Just as God cared for those who favored him in the time of Noah, God still cares for those today who place their trust in Him. Just consider the following story:

*During the floods in South Georgia in 1994, there is the story of one man who found his home being covered with water. As he looked out his upstairs window, a boat from the civil defense came by. "Sir, the water is still rising and more rain is expected. Get in the boat and we will take you to safety," they said. "No sir! God's going to take care of me," he replied. A short time later, two neighbors in a rowboat came by to find him up on the*

*roof hanging on to the chimney to get away from the water. "Get in the boat with us, and we will take you to safety," they said.*

*He replied, "No way! The Lord will take care of me."*

*The two continued to row and were soon gone from his sight.*

*Later the same day, just before sundown, a rescue helicopter noticed the man standing on the chimney. They hovered overhead and lowered a rope with a life ring and told him to place it around him and they would air lift him to safety.*

*"No sir! God is going to take care of me," he shouted above the roar of the helicopter.*

*Well, the man drowned in the flood and when he arrived in heaven, he said to God, "Lord, you let me down. You said you would take care of me and now I am embarrassed."*

*"You dummy," said the Lord. "I sent you two boats and a helicopter."*

We need to learn to accept God's gifts wherever they may be found. What may appear ordinary to us, or taken for granted, may be a gracious God working through someone to provide his Providential care.

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December 02  
THE STUD  
Bill Griffin

Each of us need to be careful of what we ask of God. Our prayers should be specific but in such a manner to make our petitions known. We also need to be more concerned praying for others than we are for ourselves. So many times our prayer requests are selfish even though we may not think so.

*Consider the story of two young men who were in an auto accident. They were killed and went to stand before the Lord. The Lord advised them that they were prematurely taken away and it would be two weeks before their place could be finished. He offered both of the young men an opportunity to return to earth as anything they wanted to be for the two weeks. Well, to be granted your heart's desire on earth was overwhelming to the two young men. God asked the first man, "What do you wish to be?"*

*"I have always wanted to soar high above the earth in flight" replied the young man. "I think I would like to be an eagle for the two weeks."*

*Immediately he was removed from the presence of the Lord and the other man.*

*"And what can I grant for you?", the Lord asked.*

*"Lord, I have always been the weakling type on earth. The one everyone made fun of and picked on. The one who had acne and could never get the pretty girls to even talk to me. I think I would like to return to earth as a stud."*

*He, too, immediately left the presence of the Lord.*

*When the two weeks were completed, the Lord called an angel and asked him to return to earth to gather in the two young men.*

*The angel said, "Lord, I know where to find the first young man because I can see him from here, flying over the Grand Canyon with his wings spread wide. He is truly enjoying his flight. But I can not determine the location of the second young man. Lord, where is he?"*

*The Lord replied, "You will find him as a two by four stud in a plaster wall in Charlotte, North Carolina."*

Be careful what you ask of the Lord.

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December 03  
THROUGH THE CROSS  
Bill Griffin  
1995

I heard Pastor Chuck Swindol make a statement the other day that grabbed me when he made it. He said, "The way to heaven is through the cross." When he said that, my mind saw a barrier between man and heaven with just one door. Not a standard rectangular door. This door was shaped like a

cross. It was THE cross. I thought of the time when my boys were small and some of their first toys were the large 'shape' blocks; Squares, circles, diamonds, Xs, rectangles, etc. These were made to fit in a slot of the same size and shape. If it was not the exact shape, it did not

go. No matter how much my boys pried, pushed, or beat on the blocks, they would not go in a different slot.

I perceived the doorway to heaven as such. If we are following any religion shaped different than the gospel of the cross, we are not going to fit and be allowed to pass through. Today, self appointed messiahs, prophets, gurus, and other non Christian religious leaders gain a following from Christians as well as the troubled people of the world. These false prophets promise success, personal power, love, understanding, and even the potential to become gods.

We need to be careful to discern these cults by asking: "Does the leader believe that God is holy and sovereign?" "Does the leader believe the Creator is separate from His creation?" "Does the leader teach that Jesus, God's Son, died for sinners?" "Does the leader teach that the Bible is the inspired Word of God?"

Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father, except by me". There is only one narrow path leading to the door. Just as the cross is narrow, the way and the passage is the same. Does your belief and religion fit the shape of the Cross or are you following another shape?

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December 04  
TRAPPED  
Bill Griffin  
1995

Have you ever thought about who you really are? Y. O. U. You are a spirit, with a soul, living in a body. The three were created by the Creator to be one in unity, not being able to tell where one part stops and another part begins. The Bible speaks of the three parts of man when it talks about the Word being able to "divide apart the body, soul, and spirit, the bone and the marrow, even to the discerning of the heart." Can you see how closely knit each part of your being is to the other?

When sin entered the world of man, the body became a trap. Instead of being eternally healthy as God intended, it became subject to sin and its consequences. The body has become subject to decay, rot, pain, disease, and eventually death. It was never intended to be this way. As each step of the creation process was completed, God said, "It is good." God did not create anything that was not good.

If you feel trapped, you are! But thank God, there is a way to escape, if only temporarily now. Let your spirit go. Let it be free. Look at the Apostle John. They exiled him to the Isle of Patmos. They trapped his body there but he just took a little stroll through the heavenlies. He was visited by the Savior. He visited the throne

room of the Father. He glimpsed eternity. He was carried by the Spirit. If we allow our spirit to be free, we too, can glimpse those things John saw. We too, can enter into His presence. We can feel Him reach out to pick us up, to take our hand. We will be able to hear Him say "Fear not", when we are afraid.

Paul also took a little stroll. He refers to the time he was stoned and left "for dead" at Lystra. He says he was carried "into the third heaven." That is why he could tell us, "*the ear has not heard, nor the eye seen, the things that God has in store for us.*"

Just as John and Paul were able to escape the trap of the fleshly body, you too, can have a temporary respite if you will only allow your spirit to be free. Our final freedom will be a while yet in coming, but know that it will come. Christ is undertaking the largest construction project ever undertaken even at this moment. He is preparing a mansion and a city, not built by human hands, and He has promised:

*"Where I am, there ye shall be also...John 14:3"*

Now, for a moment, close your eyes, relax, and let your spirit take a little trip without the weight of your earthly body. Let it be free!

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December 05  
TREASURES  
Bill Griffin  
1995

Have you ever thought about visiting a sick friend or acquaintance and the talked yourself out of going because of either time or distance? Do you ever thing about sending a card to someone just as a gesture of friendship or a way of saying hello? Visits and cards take time and effort but they usually boost morale tremendously for the recipient. Think of this story sometimes when you talk yourself out of doing things for someone else.

My grandfather was what you would call a junk dealer. I know you have heard the expression "one man's junk is another man's treasure." Well my granddad had to be rich in his own thinking. Junk items were scattered all through the woods and in sheds around his house outside of Ellijay. He has caused many hearts to stop temporarily and lots of folks to lose their religion in his collection of items. Many times he would slam on the brakes in his old truck because he had noticed something shiny lying in the ditch or some object on the side of the road. Tires would squall behind us.

Cars sideways in the road. Our breath taken away. Cringed, waiting for the collision. Seat covers rearranged. He would be oblivious to all these happenings as he calmly stepped from the truck in the middle of the road to investigate each one. Broken bottles. Beer cans. Rags. All had to be investigated.

My favorite is a piggy bank and an explanation. The Bible says we are to lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven. Well, how do we do that? Take the piggy bank for example. If you waited until you had five dollars before you put any money into the bank, you might never put any in. But by saving pennies day by day -- your treasures accumulate. Penny by penny by penny will eventually reach that five dollars that you might never have had otherwise. So it is with laying up treasures in heaven -- it is by the constant doing of little things for the glory of God and the good of other people that we lay up heavenly treasures.

December 06  
TRUTH FROM THE HEART  
Bill Griffin  
1995

If you were to conduct a survey in which you asked ten people to answer the question "What is truth?", you would probably come up with ten different answers. To some people, truth involves saying the right words. Others might indicate that "anything goes" in what you say as long as no one gets hurt.

*Comedian Jerry Clower tells about his cousin who came running into the house one day yelling: "Lion in the yard... there's a lion in the yard!"*

*When his daddy looked out the door, the neighbor's collie dog was standing in the yard. Now the neighbor had taken a set of sheep shears and cut the dog's hair. All the hair the dog had left was a tuft on the end of his tail and a mane around his neck. The father jumped all over the boy about his lying. "I done told ya about yer lying. Now ya go upstairs and pray about it. Don't ya come down until ya git an answer from the Lord."*

*About a half an hour later, the boy came back downstairs and his father*

*asked, "Did ya git an answer from the Lord? Do ya have peace in yer heart?"*

*The boy replied, "Yes daddy, I do. The Lord spoke to me! He told me that the first time He saw that dog, He thought it was a lion too!"*

Truth is more precious than most people realize. It has been said that those who seek greatness need only seek truth to find both. In other words, truth is the main ingredient in the recipe for a life of greatness. The writer of Psalm 15 suggested there is more to truth than just true words.

"He whose walk is blameless and who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from his heart." [Psalm 15:2]

The person who is seeking to live a life of holiness is one whose truth comes from the heart instead of the mouth.

Having truth in one's heart has a lot to do with sincerity -living an "actions speak louder than words" lifestyle. True words are important and valuable, but they carry more weight when they are backed by true actions.

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December 07  
UNDER GOD'S WINGS  
Bill Griffin  
1995

As youngsters, we were fascinated by newly hatched chickens. Every year, we had one or two setting hens with a new brood. We did not keep them in a pen but allowed them to run loose in the woods and briars near the house.

If you started walking toward them, the mother hen would spread out her wings and all the little biddies would scamper under them. All that could then be seen would be the tiny pairs of feet. We knew not to get too close.

This worked well as long as you and the mama hen knew each other was coming but if you made the mistake of rounding the corner of the house and finding yourself in 'amongst' them, you were going to get a flogging. Every one of us at one time or another found the mama hen all up around

our head and shoulders, flapping her wings, pecking, and kicking with the feet trying to protect her young ones. Some of the worst whippings I got was by some little old hen. They could put you in a dead run in a hurry. Fight my brother or sister; no problem. Fight that hen; no way!

Ever wonder how it must feel to be covered by big, warm, fluffy wings? Protected. Comforted. Our Heavenly Father longs to cover you with His powerful wings. "The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust.[Ruth 2:12]"

Isn't it wonderful that there is always room under the Father's wings!

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December 08  
USING YOUR GIFT  
Bill Griffin  
1995

As a member of a Special Forces team in the Army, I was expected to give myself, body and soul, to the success of the team. Simply being a living body was not adequate. Active participation was required.

Each member of the twelve man team had a specific job to do for the team. If any member failed to meet his responsibilities, it could mean failure, capture, or sometimes death to some or all team members. Chaos would have been the result if each member suddenly wanted to do the part of another member. We were all cross-trained to some degree, but not as an expert. Each member had to exercise the training they had received to ensure the proper function of the team.

Just as the team Captain expected my full involvement, so I believe that God wants me to develop and to use the talents and gifts that he has given to me. God does not intend for us to be spectators. He created and saved us for a purpose. He equipped us for the ministry. When we

became a new creature in Christ, God gave to each of us a special capacity through which to minister to other people.

1 Peter 4:10 describes this new gift endowed to all believers.

"As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."

These capacities of gifts refer to divine skills and abilities given through the Holy Spirit to every believer for service to Christ's Church.

They are not given for an emotional "high" or for the sake of the spectacular. The gifts vary from one believer to another and are given to complement each other so the various ministries of the Church can be accomplished. They were given to suit God's purpose, not ours. They were not given to define our value as persons. They are for the good of all!

Do you know what gift God has bestowed upon you? Have you tried to find out what gift you have for the ministry? As Paul told Timothy to

"stir up the gift within him", I exhort everyone to "stir up your gift", that you may find your purpose in God's plan.

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December 09  
WARFARE  
Bill Griffin  
1995

When I was in the Army, we were issued all the equipment the Army felt was necessary to preserve life and limb. We all melded together in similar military gear: helmets, backpacks, gas masks to repel chemicals, an M-1 rifle, a bayonet, and later, a 45 caliber pistol and a small semi-automatic weapon. Many other weapons of warfare were also at our disposal. Bazookas, rocket launchers, grenade launchers, automatic machine guns and much more. We were equipped to handle whatever the enemy might confront us with. Attired for battle, we were risk-takers, ready to storm beaches, scale cliffs, or cut our way through the jungle.

The turf you walk every day is just as dangerous. Satan hurls insults, defies God, and challenges you to a fight. But God furnishes your personal gear -- a spiritual wardrobe described in Ephesians 6:11-17...

[11] Put on the whole armor of God that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. [12] For we wrestle not against flesh and

blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. [13] Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. [14] Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with

truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; [15] And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; [16] Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. [17] And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:

When sin tarnishes the helmet, dulls the sword, or loosens the breastplate, we feel scarred in the skirmishes. But we are to always remember, Christ has already been victorious, and we share the victory with Him. Christ's victory has freed risk-takers from Satan's tyranny.

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December 10  
WHAT ARE YOU FEELING THIS MORNING?  
Bill Griffin  
1995

During the past nine days, our attention has been glued to the search for two missing children in Union, S.C. When the story first broke, our hearts went out to this mother and the children. People of all faiths were praying for their safe return. The town, community, state, and nation were drawn together in love and concern.

What happened? Overnight, these same loving and praying people become vindictive, judgmental, and accusing. The news media broadcast from outside the courthouse showed people ready to become a mob. Blacks were upset because a black man had been portrayed as a car-napper. They felt used. Understandable. Everyone, especially young children were beginning to fear anyone black. Whites were ready to take the law into their own hands if they would just let the "bitch" out.

I realize that we as humans are geared by our emotions. What happened was atrocious. It is bad enough when grown-ups kill each other but tragic because these two were innocent children who had no way of protecting themselves. The mom they trusted for their every need betrayed them.

Each of us should be appalled by the sinful act, but we should also remember that even as a murderess, this woman is a soul created by the same creator that made you and me. We should

express thanks because "except for the grace of God, there go I."

We can think of many different ways to dole out the same type punishment she gave. She will receive man's law and justice I feel sure, but there is one waiting whose justice can not be avoided. As easy as God can deal justice, He can also deal mercy. He has told us many times that He does not delight in losing souls to Satan. He waits patiently for "whosoever will" to turn to Him. Do you know the good part? NO ONE WILL BE DENIED!

There is nothing witty to say about this situation. Our hearts are touched. If there is any consolation at all, it is the fact that these two children do not have to go through this world and the direction it is taking.

Isaiah 57 gives us our only explanation: "The righteous perisheth, and No man layeth it to heart; and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come." He shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness."

"TO BE ABSENT FROM THE BODY IS TO BE HOME WITH THE LORD"

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December 11  
WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO MAKE A FOOL?  
Bill Griffin  
1995

A tall tale:

*One day, my cousin Pete was laying by a patch of corn. [For city folks, that is the last time it is plowed or hoe'd before the final harvest.] He had throwed some whipporwill peas down in the water furrow, where that old spring toothed harrow would roll the peas around. They*

*would come up and create a fall harvest of peas.  
A fellow came driving up in a brand new 53 Mercury. He jumped out and said, "Hey, boy."  
Pete said, "You talkin' to me?"  
He said, "Yeah."  
Pete said, "Whoa, Della. What you want, city fellow?"*

He said, "These rows you plowing here, they sure are crooked."  
Pete said, "You can grow just as much corn on a crooked row as you can on a straight one."  
The fellow said, "Well, the corn sure is yellow."  
Pete replied, "We planted yellow corn."  
The man retorted, "Well, there ain't very much between you and a fool, is there?"  
"Nothing but a fence", Pete replied.

We need to be careful when we call someone else a fool. Christ pronounced one of the strongest warnings in the Bible on those who called others 'fools'.

Matt 5:22 ... But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the

judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

Just because someone does not think or dress or act as we do, does not make them a fool. I know some very book smart people that have no common sense at all and some others that have a lot of common sense but not many book smarts. It is not necessarily our learned knowledge that makes us smart, but how well we use what we have learned to live and communicate with others.

My Grandmother taught me something a long time ago about wisdom. She said: "It is better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to speak up and remove all doubt."

Wise words to live by I think.

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December 12  
WHAT IF...IF ONLY  
Bill Griffin  
1995

Most of us spend a lot of our time dwelling on the 'what if' and 'if only' questions that wander through our minds. What if our children move away? What if our sons or daughters make a mistake in marriage? If only I had done differently then .... These are dangerous questions to ponder. We must accept what we are and offer it to God. It is time to put away those empty words "what if" and "if only" and go on with the Lord.

When my oldest son was injured in a motorcycle accident a few years ago, these thoughts started to plague my mind as he lay in the hospital in intensive care. "What if he dies?" "What if he is crippled and in a wheel chair for the rest of his life?" What if he can never work again?" "If only we had not let him buy a motorcycle." "What if....If only....!" I had to stop this type thinking and trust in the Lord as He had told me to do.

*"Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough troubles of its own."...Matthew 6:34.*

Yesterday is past. It's time to go on. Today is here and I can not control what God has put in motion. Tomorrow is not here yet, it is still in God's hands. I can do nothing about it either. God can remove the "if only" and "what ifs" from our mind and replace them with positive and blessed thoughts. We must do all that we can, but we must trust God to do what we can not.

I did not put one stitch or cast on my son. I did not heal a single cut or burn. I did not replace old scraped and burned flesh with new flesh. I did not knit his cracked vertebrae. I did not mend his cracked skull. I realized just how helpless I really am in light of God's power. God did it all. Through the hands of the surgeons He had gifted with medical knowledge and through His divine power, which alone can mend the flesh and bone of His creation.

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December 13  
WHEN JESUS WALKS BY  
Bill Griffin  
1995

Have you ever felt that God was nowhere to be found when you needed Him? In your moment of grief or despair, do you feel He has left you all alone and feel you must handle your problems by yourself?

Twice in the New Testament we see indications that the Lord was present with His followers in times of stress and questioning and yet He planned to pass them by without stopping. This seems contrary to everything we know about the Lord, but when we look at the passages closely, we can gain an understanding why He started to pass them by and why He may pass us by today when we are in the same circumstances.

The first passage is in the book of Mark and follows one of the most spectacular miracles ever performed.

MARK 6:35-52 --

[35] By this time it was already late in the day, so the disciples came to him. "This is a remote place," they said, "and it's already very late. [36] Send them away, that they may go into the country round about, and into the villages, and buy themselves bread: for they have nothing to eat." [37] He answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they said unto him, Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, and give them to eat? [38] He saith unto them, how

many loaves have ye? Go and see. And when they knew, they say, five, and two fishes. [39] And he commanded them to make all sit down by companies upon the green grass. [40] And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties. [41] And when he had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and brake the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided he among them all. [42] And they did all eat, and were filled. [43] And they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments, and of the fishes. [44] And they that did eat of the loaves were about five thousand men. [45] And straightway he constrained his disciples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side unto Bethsaida, while he sent away the people. [46] And when he had sent them away, he departed into a mountain to pray. [47] And when evening was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and he alone on the land. [48] And he saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them: and about the fourth watch of the night he cometh unto them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them. [49] But when they saw him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out: [50] For they all saw him, and were troubled. And immediately he talked with them, and saith unto

them, Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid. [51] And he went up unto them into the ship; and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered. [52] For they considered not the miracle of the loaves: for their heart was hardened.

Why would the Lord Jesus purposely walk on by His disciples? The disciples were in the midst of the storm on the sea, rowing against the wind because their sails were of no use. Storms were prone to come up suddenly on the Sea of Galilee but these were seamen, fishermen familiar with these waters, yet here they were struggling, fighting for their very lives and the Bible tells us that Jesus was about to walk on by them. Does Jesus do the same today when Christians are struggling with trials and tribulations in their lives? I think so. Why would we be any different than those men who walked and talked with Him in person every day for three years?

To understand why Jesus would think about passing them by, we must look back to the event which had just happened. One of the most spectacular miracles recorded in the Word of God had just taken place but pause for a moment and look at the disciples reaction during and after the miracle.

[First], they understood only in the material sense. They did show concern for the people because they asked the Lord to send them away to look for food. When the Lord told them to feed the people, their concern was with the cost of the food [eight months wages]. They gave no thought to what God could do, only in what they were physically and materially able to do. God is not limited by our abilities, only our obedience.

[Second], instead of looking on their own for a way to feed the multitudes, Jesus had to direct them to see how much food they could find. We operate so much in the same manner today. Instead of looking in faith and doing in faith, we want to wait and ask God to do something. Sometimes it is up to us to just go ahead and do, not to wait upon someone else. Jesus never told us to "pray to God and the mountain would be removed, He said 'speak' to the mountain and it would be removed. Do you wonder why there were '12' baskets full of food left over? Think there was one for each disciple to remind them of what God could do with a little faith? Can you imagine their faces when they gathered the baskets from the five thousand people and each of them had a basket full and they only started with five loaves and two fishes?

[Third], we have to look at both verses 45 and 52 together. We see something of the probable disgust of our Lord in the disciples because when the meal was over, He 'immediately' made the disciples get in the ship by themselves and depart ahead of Him.

The disciples had been with Him for some time now observing His works of miracles and His teachings but how soon they forgot. Do we not soon forget even today when the Lord does something good in our lives or teaches us something from His word? We should not be too harsh on these disciples. They were with Him in person, true, but they only had Him for a little while. We have had His teachings for two thousand years now and we do not show any more faith than they did. I believe today we see no miracles from Christ because we do not expect them and we do not look for them. We look for answers to our problems from the known things around us in the world (Doctors, Education, Money, and Material Things). The disciples were definitely not looking for a miracle, only an answer to physical hunger using physical means. Even after the miracle, we see in verse 52 something of the

heart of the disciples at that particular time; "they had not understood about the loaves; 'their hearts were hardened'". They were spiritually insensitive to the truth concerning the deity of Christ that His miracles continued to demonstrate.

The second time we see a reference to Jesus walking on by His followers is noted in the book of Luke when the two followers were on their way to Emmaus.

LUKE 24:25-32 -- [25] Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: [26] Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? [27] And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. [28] And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further. [29] But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them. [30] And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. [31] And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight. [32] And they said one to another; Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?

As these two followers walked along the dusty road to Emmaus in the twilight, Christ joined them on the road. They were wrapped up in their grief and disappointment and therefore the Lord did not allow Himself to be recognized. Just as these two were blinded in their emotions, we too, are blinded to Christ when we allow our own emotions to cloud our relationship with Him. Too many times we forget God when things are going badly for us and this is the time we should be seeking Him the most. He hears the crying of our souls. He is acquainted with our grief. Did not He [God] Himself just go through a time of grief when His only Son was placed on a cross and had to die that we might have life? The Bible tells us that we have no temptations or trials facing us that our Lord has not already faced. In this knowledge we should realize that He is adequate for our grief.

Jesus fussed at these two because they were 'slow in heart to believe all that the prophets had spoken'. Remember the other occasion was because their hearts were hardened. Jesus does not look at us externally but internally. Truly from the heart is where we worship our God.

If we allow hardened hearts or personal emotions to cloud our relationship with Jesus Christ, we will be left alone to handle them as Jesus passes us by. We do not have to be passed by the Master.

There are some things we must do to prevent Christ from passing us by. Jesus did not force Himself into the boat nor did He force Himself on the two on the road. In both instances, Christ did initiate the contact with the followers. HE CAME TO THEM. Just as God came looking for Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, He has continued to look for those who would turn their hearts to him in repentance and faith. No one comes to Christ unless the Father draws him. What a comfort we have in knowing that God still seeks us for a personal relationship.

From the mountain top He saw the disciples in the boat in the middle of the sea and came to them walking on the water. He came to the two supernaturally on the road and joined in their walk. God is not limited in His ability to see us when we are in trouble. Space and distance mean nothing to the One who created them. Notice in

both instances though, He did not truly reveal Himself to His followers until they INVITED Him into their presence. If the disciples in the boat had not cried out to Him, I believe He would truly have walked on by and allowed them to ride out the storm in their own strength and abilities as they did when they were fishermen.

The two on the road were burning in their hearts as Christ used their beloved scriptures of the prophets to reveal Himself to them. As He prepared to walk farther, they begged Him to stay with them and as He broke the bread and blessed it, they had their spiritual eyes opened and recognized Him.

As Christ reveals Himself to us, we have a responsibility. As the two on the road to Emmaus returned immediately to Jerusalem and spread the

good news, we are to spread the good news of Christ as we come in contact with other people. We are to be a witness for Christ. John 15:8 tells us "Herein is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciple." People will know we belong to Christ if we are bearing fruit.

What would have happened if those in the boat and those on the road had not invited Christ into their lives? I truly believe Christ would have walked on by.

DON'T LET CHRIST PASS YOU BY BECAUSE OF A HARDENED OR A DISBELIEVING HEART. HE IS WAITING FOR THAT INVITATION FROM YOU. PREPARE YOUR HEART NOW TO ALLOW HIM TO ENTER AND THEN INVITE HIM IN. WHEN YOU DO, YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR TROUBLED SOUL AND A PEACE THAT PASSES ALL UNDERSTANDING.

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December 14  
WHO IS MY REAL BOSS?  
Bill Griffin  
1995

Many of us who are employed by Ma Bell are working in atmospheres highly charged and stressful. Most of us started years ago feeling we would be secure and could look forward to retirement in about thirty years. We never imagined the possibility of being laid off or forced out of the company. We feel angry, powerless, and hurt that the company does not appreciate our loyalty and hard work enough to make our positions secure.

How can we stay encouraged, have a sense of peace, and actually enjoy our work in the midst of job situations like these? How can we keep the pressures of our work from negatively affecting us or our families?

More and more, workers are finding that the simple "self-help" formulas of secular corporate training are impotent. The real solution to stress does not come from the workers themselves. The principles of living life with joy are found in Jesus Christ. Only he offers a compelling reason for going to work each day. Only he can empower us to live above our circumstances. Only he is the source of lasting joy and happiness. Listen to the advice He gave His disciples in John 16:33...

These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

Imagine that you are asked to come to work one hour early tomorrow morning. You come to the

office in the dark, wondering about the meeting, and there in the doorway is a figure waiting for you. As you come to the door, he opens it for you. You step inside and you realize that the person is Jesus Christ! Now, imagine, if he should say something to you about your work, what would he say?

First, I believe that he would tell you that your work really matters to him. You are part of a complex network of people meeting the physical and emotional needs of others. When you go to work, you are to do his work. You were created to be his co-worker for his glory.

Second, I believe that he would tell you that he wants you to see him as your real boss. This means that you are to be conscious that he is with you each day. Keep this thought: "God may meet you today where you least expect it." Your motivation is to please him and to serve him. Our work is a gift from God to bring glory to him. We are not in control of our careers or of the success of our companies. In fact, most of the factors of our successes are completely outside our control. Interest rates rise and fall without our input. Market conditions change all the time. We are not the masters of our world. Whether we win or lose at work, God will always love us.

Third, I believe that Jesus would tell you that you can trust the results of your work to God. This is possible when we understand that he is in control of every event in our lives. It allows us to trust him with our careers.

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December 15  
DO YOU SEE CHRIST IN CHRISTMAS?  
Bill Griffin  
12/15/1998

As the Christmas season swings into full bloom, some thoughts have been running through my head for the last few days and I thought I would just jot them down.

Have you ever given thought to how much the birth of Christ and His death had in common? Think about it.

He came into the world in a cave [stable].  
He was buried in a cave [sepulcher] at His death.

- He was born in someone else's stable.
- He was buried in a borrowed tomb.

Mankind bore Him into the stable.  
Mankind laid Him in the tomb.

- He was wrapped in swaddling clothes at birth.
- He was wrapped in a linen shroud in death.

No one was prepared for His appearing at birth even though it had been prophesied.

No one understood Him and His death and it too was foretold.

- His birth announcement was not to the royalty but to the lowly [shepherds].
- His first resurrection appearance was not to the priests or the disciples but to the women.

HE WAS LORD IN THE STABLE.  
HE WAS LORD IN THE TOMB.

We did not make Him Lord. He was Lord already! He came to the lowly, the downtrodden, the poor, the sick, and the sinner [who would admit his sin]. He broke the barriers between races and sexes and sects. No one group could lay total claim to Him. He came to: "preach good news to the poor, proclaim freedom for the prisoners, recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor". Luke 4:18-19. We need to remember this

when we think of the season and of others. When your patience wears thin with the pushing and shoving and the traffic frays your last nerve, remember, He came when He was least expected. I think He shows up when we least expect it even today. That hungry person we passed by; that child smiling at Santa; That person who was kind enough to stop and allow us into traffic. Think about it. Do you see Christ in those around you? You should. He's there.

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December 16  
HOLY SPIRIT FOREVER  
Bill Griffin  
1995

The Holy Spirit is given to every believer -- not just for a limited time, as in the Old Testament, but forever. If He were to leave us for one moment, we would be in deep trouble.

*Walter Knight tells the story about a little boy who had recently received Christ. "Daddy, how can I believe in the Holy Spirit when I have never seen Him?" "I'll show you how," said his father, who was an electrician. Later the boy went with his father to the power plant where he was shown the generators. "This is where the power comes from to heat our stove and to give us light. We cannot see the power, but it is in that machine and in the power lines," said the father. "I believe in electricity," said the boy. "Of course, you do," said his father, "but you don't believe in it because you*

*see it. You believe in it because you see what it can do. Likewise you can believe in the Holy Spirit because you see what He does in people's lives when they are surrendered to Christ and possess His power."*

By faith we all accept the fact that we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God. He is there to give us special power to do the will of Christ. He is there to give us strength in the moment of temptation. He is there to guide us through all the difficult times we will face as a Christian.

*John 14:16-17...says 'And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.'*

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December 17  
HOSPITALITY  
Bill Griffin  
1995

What is hospitality? Hospitality is a welcome. The Greek word means "love to strangers." The Biblical basis for hospitality appears in Romans 15:7...

*"Welcome and receive one another, then, even as Christ has welcomed and received you, for the glory of God."*

God meant our homes to be places of refreshment and encouragement of people. That means much more than what we see in magazines where the homes are expensively decorated, the perfectly groomed hostess provides gourmet menus and well-behaved, clean children play angelically in the corner. In real life that doesn't happen, and hospitality is more than that.

True hospitality looks at people and their needs: physical, emotional, mental and spiritual. True hospitality attempts not to impress, but to serve.

Though Jesus had no home of His own during His public ministry, He demonstrated the heartbeat of hospitality -- a welcoming spirit

toward people of different social, cultural, religious and racial backgrounds.

Romans 12:13 says simply, "Practice hospitality."

The verse does not say: Practice hospitality if you have a model home, if you are a great cook, if you have just cleaned the house, if you feel well-rested or if you have finished all your decorating projects.

Hospitality is not everything, but God does specialize in taking simple things and turning them into something great by His power and might.

When God wanted to redeem mankind from sin, He came to earth as a tiny baby, born of a young unknown virgin woman. When Jesus wanted to feed thousands, He took two fish and five loaves given by a little boy. When Christ returned to heaven, He left only a small band of followers to spread His message -- and we are here today as followers to open our hearts and homes to Him and the people He brings across our paths.

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December 18  
LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE  
Bill Griffin  
02-01-97

Have you ever watched and just observed those who claim to be Christians. How we proudly wear our pins, patches, or bumper stickers but our lives may not reflect what we are trying to say.

Take for instance the driver with the bumper sticker 'God Loves You' who would not let other drivers out onto the busy freeway. His actions declared, 'But not me'.

Or the driver who sports the sticker, 'Jesus Is The Way', but blows the horn at anyone who happens to be in their way. Their actions say 'But get out of mine'.

Rudeness and impatience will dim any message we are trying to say to the world about Christ. In fact it may totally destroy it.

Just as bad as our negative actions are to our witness, good deeds that call attention to

our selves and not Christ are just as destructive.

Just as the headlights on our cars shine out to focus on the road, we too, are to direct

people's attention beyond ourselves and to our Heavenly Father.

*Matt 5:16 ... Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*

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December 19  
\$20 Worth of Priceless Advice  
Author: unknown

A well-known speaker started off his seminar by holding up a \$20 bill. In the room of 200, he asked, "Who would like this \$20 bill?" Hands started going up.

He said, "I am going to give this \$20 to one of you but first, let me do this." He proceeded to crumple the dollar bill up. He then asked, "Who still wants it?" Still the hands were up in the air.

"Well," he replied, "What if I do this?" And he dropped it on the ground and started to grind it into the floor with his shoe. He picked it up, now crumpled and dirty. "Now who still wants it?" Still the hands went into the air.

"My friends, you have all learned a very valuable lesson. No matter what I did to the

money, you still wanted it because it did not decrease in value. It was still worth \$20."

"Many times in our lives, we are dropped, crumpled and ground into the dirt by the decisions we make and the circumstances that come our way. We feel as though we are worthless. But no matter what has happened or what will happen, you will never lose your value: dirty or clean crumpled or finely creased, you are still priceless to those who love you. The worth of our lives comes not in what we do or who we know, but by WHO WE ARE. You are special - Don't ever forget it. Count your Blessings, not your problems."

A cheerful heart is good medicine... (Prov 17:22a)

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December 20  
A PUMPKIN  
Author: unknown

Never looked at it like this before --  
A woman was asked by a co-worker, "What is it like to be a Christian?"

The co-worker replied, "It is like being a pumpkin. God picks you from the patch, brings you in, and washes all the dirt off of you. Then he cuts off the top and scoops out all the yucky

stuff. He removes the seeds of doubt, hate, greed, etc., and then He carves you a new smiling face and puts His light inside of you to shine for the entire world to see."

I liked this enough to send it to all the pumpkins in my patch...

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December 21  
ANVIL TIME  
Max Lucado

Have you ever been on an anvil? God's anvil? Melted down. Formless. Undone. Placed on the anvil for ... reshaping? (A few rough edges too many.) Discipline? ("A good father disciplines.") Testing? (But why so hard?) I know. I've been on it. It's rough. It's a spiritual slump, a famine. The fire goes out. Although the fire may flame for a moment, it soon disappears. We drift downward. Downward into the valley of question, the lowland of discouragement. Motivation wanes. Desire is distant. Responsibilities are depressing. Passion? It slips out the door. Enthusiasm? Are you kidding?

Anvil time. It can be caused by a death, breakup, going broke, going prayerless. The light switch is flipped off and the room darkens. "All the thoughtful words of help and hope have all been nicely said. But I'm still hurting, wondering . . ."

On the anvil. Brought face-to-face with God out of the utter realization that we have nowhere

else to go. Jesus in the garden. Peter with a tear-streaked face. David after Bathsheba. Elijah and the "still, small voice." Paul, blind in Damascus.

I hope you're not on the anvil. (Unless you need to be, and if so, I hope you are.) Anvil time is not to be avoided; it's to be experienced. Although the tunnel is dark, it does go through the mountain. Anvil time reminds us of who we are and who God is. We shouldn't try to escape it. To escape it would be to escape God. God sees our life from beginning to end. He may lead us through a storm at age thirty so we can endure a hurricane at age sixty. An instrument is useful only if it's in the right shape. A dull ax or a bent screwdriver needs attention, and so do we. A good blacksmith keeps his tools in shape. So does God. Should God place you on his anvil, be thankful. It means he thinks you're still worth reshaping.

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December 22  
SEED SOWERS  
Bill Griffin  
1996

One of Jesus' parables about the Kingdom of God is that the Kingdom is like a man who casts seed upon the ground. Then the seed sprouts up and grows, and he does not know how it grew. The earth produces the crops, first, the blade, then the head, then the mature grain. And when the crop is ready, he uses his sickle to harvest it.

Jesus says that the growth comes when the seed is planted. The farmer does not know how. I don't think we are supposed to know how the

Kingdom grows. Christian service can not be reduced to charts or easy step programs.

It is a mystery how God works through faithful people who are obedient to his call. I think the Kingdom comes without our being able to define it, which is contrary to all the best management principles our society has to offer.

The best we can do is what the man in the parable did -- HE SCATTERED THE SEED. He is the person who lives faithfully and who knows that it

will be God, not man, who brings about the change. We have a job to do. We must work for righteousness and justice in our society. It is for us to scatter the seed, and when the time comes, we put the sickle in for the harvest. But it is God, not a preacher or teacher, who will produce the Kingdom of God in our midst.

*We should be like a pastor who once preached a sermon on the triumphant entry of Christ into*

*Jerusalem. As He came riding in on the donkey, the crowds began cheering, yelling, and applauding. The pastor thought, "I wonder if that donkey thought those crowds were cheering for him. Every pastor and Christian worker should say, 'All I am is the donkey upon whose shoulders Jesus rides.' "*

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December 23  
GOD'S CREATIVITY  
MAX LUCADO

Imagine God's creativity. Of all we don't know about the creation, there is one thing we do know -- He did it with a smile. He must've had a blast, painting the stripes on the zebra, hanging the stars in the sky, putting gold in the sunset. What creativity! Stretching the neck of the giraffe. Putting the giggle in the hyena.

What a time He had. Like a whistling carpenter in his workshop, He loved every bit of it. He poured himself into His work. So intent was His creativity that He took a day off at the end of the week just to rest.

Applause now would be premature. The divine Artist has yet to unveil His greatest creation.

As the story unfolds, a devil of a snake feeds man a line and an apple, and gullible Adam swallows them both. This one act of rebellion sets in motion a dramatic and erratic courtship between God and man. Though the characters and scenes change, the scenario repeats itself endlessly. God, still the compassionate Creator, woos his creation. Man, the creation, alternately reaches out in repentance and runs in rebellion.

It is within this simple script that God's creativity flourishes. Just wait until you read what He does to get his creation to listen to him!

For example: A ninety-year old woman gets pregnant. A woman turns to salt. A flood blankets the earth. A bush burns (but does not burn up!)

The Red Sea splits in two. The walls of Jericho fall. The sky rains fire. A donkey speaks.

Talk about special effects! But these acts, be they ever ingenious, still couldn't compare with what was to come.

As beautiful as the act of incarnation was, it was not the zenith. Like a master painter God reserved his masterpiece until the end. All the earlier acts of love had been leading to this one. The angels hushed and the heavens paused to witness the finale. God unveils the canvas and the ultimate act of creative compassion is revealed.

God on a cross.

The Creator being sacrificed for the creation.

God convincing man once and for all that forgiveness still follows failure.

We don't know what went through the mind of the Creator while He hung on the cross. We do know, however, what he said.

**"It is finished."....John 19:30**

The mission was finished. All that the master painter needed to do was done and was done in splendor. His creation could now come home.

And the great Creator went home.

(He's not resting though. Word has it that his tireless hands are preparing a city so glorious that even the angels get goose-bumps upon seeing it. Considering what he has done so far, that is one creation I plan to see.)

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December 24  
LOOKING FOR SANTA  
Bill Griffin  
1995

The time of year children look for most is soon to be upon us. Christmas! That time for Santa Claus! Most of the world has forgotten the true meaning and now only look forward to what kind of gifts they will receive or give.

I was no different as a kid. Even though I knew it would not be much, I knew Santa Claus would come to our house. My mom managed to scrape or save enough money to buy the four of us a small toy. If it was only a dime, it was still special because Santa brought it. We were like all kids. We tried to stay up, watching and listening for him. We would be snuggled up under the cover and wide awake. We listened to every night noise. Leaves or twigs hitting the tin roof sounded just like reindeer feet to us. The creaking of the night; and far away sounds of traffic. The juices were flowing too much to go

to sleep right away but soon, sleep did manage to sneak up on us.

Someone finally told me last year there was no Santa. What a bummer. Now I have another to look for. No bummer here. There will be no doubt about why He is here. He will be coming for me. God's plan will be coming to completion. Titus 2:13 describes that one my heart desires to see....

"Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ."

What a glorious day that will be when our wait is over and we see Him face to face. Look for Him all the time -- for that day when He returns to 'snatch away' His bride. Just as Santa comes like a thief in the night, so will the Son of Man. Be ready.

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December 25  
Christmas Thought From Teri Simmons  
Colorado Springs, Colorado

Isaiah 9:6  
For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given,  
and the government will be on his shoulders.

And he will be called  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Praise God for His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. For some reason I feel overwhelmed today by my Saviors' Love and all He has done for us. Jesus Christ is the very reason that Johnny and I celebrate Christmas. It is the day set aside to signify His humble entrance into this world to be a living sacrifice for each of us so that we could one day spend eternity with Him in Heaven. Johnny and I praise Him, for He alone is worthy of all glory, honor and praise.

God has truly blessed us. He is our Savior, our Strength, our Comforter, our Healer, our Best Friend, our Father. We have been blessed with comfort and material things, yes. But more importantly, He gives us His Peace in these troubled times.

There is a longing in my spirit to draw closer to Him. To learn more of Him, to spend more time in prayer and fellowship with Him. I pray that He will ignite a passion in me for Him that will only grow bigger and brighter with each and every day. I pray that He will enable me to see others through His eyes. To love others with His Love. The longer I journey with my Savior, the more I want to know Him. The more I want to be like Him. The more I want to be His Light in the darkness. I want to have a faith that is unmovable and grounded firmly in Him and who He is. I pray that He will bring me to a point where I am completely surrendered to Him. Emptied of self and full of Him. I long to be a reflection of His Love. I long to extend to others the Grace and Mercy that He has extended to me. It's not about me. It's about Jesus.

I pray that out of His glorious riches He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. [Ephesians 3:16-19]

I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which He has called you, the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints, and His incomparably great power for us who believe. [Ephesians 1:18-19a]

None of us know what tomorrow will bring. But if you know the Savior you have the assurance of knowing that He will never leave or forsake you. He will always meet your needs and be your strength in times of weakness. His strength is made perfect in our weakness.

May the blessings of His abounding Grace, Mercy and unconditional Love be yours this Christmas. And in the coming New Year let our hearts not be troubled by the chaos and confusion that surrounds us. For He is the Rock of our Salvation. I pray we will all draw near to Him. He promises when we do He will draw near to us.

He desires more than anything to have a personal relationship with each of us. It's not about religion. It's about having an intimate personal relationship with the One who created you and loves you. He knows us better than we know ourselves. He knows the very number of hairs on our heads. He placed the moon and the stars in the sky. He created everything. He created you and I in His image. And He longs to pour out His Love to us and through us.

I don't always understand my Lord, for His ways are not my ways. His thoughts are higher than my thoughts. But I know He Loves me so much that He gave His only Son for me. No amount of money can buy that kind of Love. May my life and yours be a gift of Praise to Him. May this coming New Year finds us sold out for Him. To share with a human race that is consumed with fear and trembling, anxiety, stress and hopelessness that our God reigns. Jesus is Alive. Death has lost its victory and the grave has been denied. (Words from a Praise song...I don't know who wrote it, but I carry it in my heart and stand on its proclamation.)

Johnny and I love each of you. You have all blessed us. We pray that we have been a blessing to you as well. Our prayer is that we are and would continue to be a reflection of Christ's Love. His light in the darkness. His Hope where there is no Hope.

May you be touched with a new wonder at His Love and the Gift of Himself that He gave to this world this Christmas Season and in the coming New Year.

All our Love and Prayers,  
In Christ,  
Johnny and Teri

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December 26  
It's All About Perspective  
(Author Unknown)

I am Thankful for:

For the husband who complains when his dinner is not on time...  
Because he is home with me, not with someone else.

For the teenager who is complaining about doing dishes...  
Because that means she is at home & not on the streets.

For the taxes that I pay...  
Because it means that I am employed.

For the mess to clean after a party...  
Because it means that I have been surrounded by friends.

For the clothes that fit a little too snug...  
Because it means I have enough to eat.

For my shadow that watches me work...  
Because it means I am out in the sunshine.

For a lawn that needs mowing, windows that need cleaning, and gutters that need fixing...  
Because it means I have a home.

For all the complaining I hear about the government...  
Because it means that we have freedom of speech.

For the parking spot I find at the far end of the parking lot...  
Because it means I am capable of walking and that I have been blessed with transportation.

For my huge heating bill...  
Because it means I am warm.

For the lady behind me in church that sings off  
key...  
Because it means that I can hear.

For the pile of laundry and ironing...  
Because it means I have clothes to wear.

For weariness and aching muscles at the end of  
the day...  
Because it means I have been capable of working  
hard.

For the alarm that goes off in the early morning  
hours...  
Because it means that I am alive.

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December 27  
INDESCRIBABLE GIFT  
Bill Griffin  
1995

At Christmas we realize that the most appreciated gifts are those based on love, not price. As we examine the Scriptures, we see how much God loved the human race and he evidenced this love in his supreme Gift. John said,.

"God so loved the world [the inhabitants of the earth], that he gave his only begotten Son . . . "

It was through the incarnation of Jesus Christ that God's love and miraculous gift were made manifest to the human race. God's gift of his Son was of indescribable value to him -- his Son in whom he was well pleased. But that gift is also of indescribable value to us. God's gift provides eternal salvation for those receiving Christ. Those trusting him as personal Savior are free from the guilt, penalty and power of sin.

But like other gifts, God's gift must be accepted before it is of any benefit. A child can

know about a gift purchased by his parents, but "knowing" is not the same as "having." The child must receive the gift from the parents before he can say that the gift is his.

God's gift is not an inanimate object. His Son is a living Person. We must personally accept him as Savior before we can say that God's gift is ours. We must place our faith in Christ as our personal redeemer so that we can say with the hymn writer, "I am his, and he is mine."

Having accepted a gift, the first response of the receiver should be one of gratitude, an expression of thanks. As the Apostle Paul thought about God's gift, he was moved to write the words:

*"Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!" 2 Corinthians 9:15*

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December 28  
OBITUARY FOR COMMON SENSE  
Author: Unknown

Today we mourn the passing of a beloved old friend by the name of Common Sense who has been with us for many years.

No one knows for sure how old he was since his birth records were long ago lost in bureaucratic red tape.

He will be remembered as having cultivated such value lessons as knowing when to come in out of the rain, why the early bird gets the worm and that life isn't always fair.

Common Sense lived by simple, sound financial policies (don't spend more than you earn) and reliable parenting strategies (adults, not kids, are in charge).

His health began to rapidly deteriorate when well intentioned but overbearing regulations were set in place.

Reports of a six-year-old boy charged with sexual harassment for kissing a classmate; teens suspended from school for using mouthwash after lunch; and a teacher fired for reprimanding an unruly student, only worsened his condition.

It declined even further when schools were

required to get parental consent to administer aspirin to a student; but, could not inform the parents when a student became pregnant and wanted to have an abortion.

Finally, Common sense lost the will to live as the Ten Commandments became contraband; churches became businesses; and criminals received better treatment than their victims.

Common Sense finally gave up the ghost after a woman failed to realize that a steaming cup of coffee was hot, she spilled a bit in her lap, and was awarded a huge settlement

Common Sense was preceded in death by his parents, Truth and Trust, his wife, Discretion; his daughter, Responsibility; and his son, Reason.

He is survived by two stepbrothers; My Rights and Ima Whiner.

Not many attended his funeral because so few realized he was gone.

If you still know him pass this on, if not join the majority and do nothing.

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December 29  
THE AUCTION  
Author: unknown

The upstate NY man was rich in almost every way. His estate was worth millions. He owned houses, land, antiques and cattle. But though on the outside he had it all, he was very unhappy on the inside. His wife was growing old, and the couple was childless. He had always wanted a little boy to carry on the family legacy. Miraculously, his wife became pregnant in her later years, and she gave birth to a little boy. The boy was severely handicapped, but the man loved him with his whole heart. When the boy was

five, his mom died. The dad drew closer to his special son. At age 13, the boy's birth defects cost him his life and the father died soon after from a broken heart.

The estate was auctioned before hundreds of bidders. The first item offered was a painting of the boy. No one bid. They waited like vultures for the riches. Finally, the poor housemaid, who helped raise the boy, offered \$5 for the picture and easily took the bid.

To everyone's shock, the auctioneer ripped a hand written will from the back of the picture. This is what it said:

"To the person who thinks enough of my son to buy this painting, to this person I give my entire estate."

The auction was over. The greedy crowd walked away in shock and dismay. How many of us have sought after what we thought were true riches

only to find out later that our Father (God in Heaven) was prepared to give us His entire estate if we had only sought after His Son (Lord and Savior Jesus Christ).

Food for thought:

SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND HIS  
RIGHTEOUSNESS  
AND ALL THESE THINGS SHALL BE ADDED TO YOU.

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December 30  
ONE SOLITARY LIFE

He was born in an obscure village.

He worked in a carpenter shop until He was thirty.

He then became an itinerant preacher.

He never held an office.

He never had a family or owned a house.

He didn't go to college.

He had No credentials but himself.

He was only thirty-three when the public turned against him.

His friends ran away.

He was turned over to his enemies  
and went through the mockery of a trial.

He was nailed to a cross between two thieves.

While he was dying, his executioners gambled for his clothing,  
the only property he had on earth.

He was laid in a borrowed grave.

Nineteen centuries have come and gone,  
and today he is the central figure of the human race.

All the armies that ever marched,  
all the navies that ever sailed,  
all the parliaments that ever sat,  
and all the kings that ever reigned  
have not affected the life of man  
on this earth as much as that

ONE

SOLITARY LIFE.

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December 31  
NEW YEARS RESOLUTIONS  
Bill Griffin  
1995

Soon another year will become part of history. The new year of 1996 pushes itself onto the stage of our lives. Many people will begin to make resolutions. For some it will be to stop smoking, some to lose weight. For some it will be to stop drinking. Most people make resolutions to quit drinking on the morning after the big New Years Blow-out. I know. I made the same resolution many times. Every January 1st, I woke up knowing I had something to look forward to: feeling better some time during the day.

Most of the resolutions are forgotten by the end of the day, and surely by the end of the week. Resolutions are like repenting. We feel sorry we have done the things, we want to turn from them, but we just do not want to be that committed. We do not turn from anything by tapering off. We only fool ourselves.

We do not fool God when it comes to repenting though. He knows our hearts. He is not interested in lip service. Shallow promises like those concerning New Years Resolutions hold No tack with Him. God demands authentic repentance. Such does not begin when we merely "turn over a new leaf," make great promises, obey a new law or enter into some type of "bargain" with God. True

repentance begins when we acknowledge our sinfulness with a deep spiritual conviction that leads to a new life in Christ. This is why God heard the repentant sinner but rejected the Pharisee in Luke 18:9-14.

We learn not to live in the old things of life, but to obey from the heart the doctrine of the Gospel. We become rebels to sin, not rebels to God. I could never have given up smoking and drinking without admitting to God that I had a problem. When I did admit it, God was true to His promises. I gave him the half smoked pack of cigarettes and the half empty bottle on the same day many years ago. I never looked back because I trusted Him to give me something to take their place. He did. Himself. The physical desire for a cigarette or a drink is still there sometimes, but I remember how it was before, and I walk on.

There is no bargain with God. The only bargain with Him was to serve Him if He would save me. I can not work for my salvation but I can work as a result of it. I never want to tack anything on to God's free gift of eternal life. "For God so loved [me] that He gave His only Son." Try repeating those words for yourself with your name in the sentence.

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**MAY GOD BLESS YOU AS YOU BEGIN A NEW YEAR  
IN ALL YOUR THOUGHTS THIS YEAR, ACKNOWLEDGE HIM  
AND HE WILL DIRECT YOUR PATHS**