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July 01  
A MOTHER'S LOVE  
Bill Griffin  
1995

One of my favorite illustrations of God's love is the love between a mother and a newborn child.

After we were married in 1964, my wife and I wanted to be proud parents. (Little did we know what we were getting into.) Between 1964 and 1968, Sarah became pregnant twice but lost both babies before the terms were complete. We were heart broken and decided to wait and try later.

We changed locations, Sarah quit work, and in 1969 became pregnant again. Healthy as a horse - wanted watermelons in the middle of the winter time. She would wake me in the middle of the night and try her best to get me to drive across Atlanta to the Farmer's Market to see if they by chance had a watermelon. She ate enough oranges to personally finance one orange grove in Florida or California.

When December finally arrived, Sarah went into labor. Off we went from Conyers, Ga. to Atlanta, Georgia Baptist Hospital, 45 minutes away. Nope! False alarm! Go back home and wait. Next day; same scenario, to the hospital, back home. The third trip was in the wee hours of the

morning and when we arrived, I told the nurses we had come to stay. For almost six hours, Sarah was in labor, induced, before the glad moment arrived. It's a boy!

The process of birth is a whole chain of miracles, but one thing amazes me. No matter how long Sarah, the mother was in labor, no matter how much she suffered, the first thing she wanted to see and hold was the baby itself, the very thing that had caused her so much pain. A new mother loves her child instinctively. She wants more than anything to take it in her arms and hold it to her breast.

It's difficult to imagine a love so strong. But God's love is even stronger. We are His children, and He loves us unconditionally. No matter how much sorrow we cause Him, No matter what our weaknesses, He waits for us with arms outstretched. And best of all, He waits forever.

*Can a woman forget the infant at her breast, or a loving mother the child of her womb? even these forget, yet will I not forget you....Isaiah 49:15*

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July 02  
ACTORS  
Bill Griffin  
1995

We had to use a lot of imagination when I was growing up. There were No 'kids next door', only a sister and a brother. My cousins lived about a quarter of a mile away but we did not have the freedom to just roam over to their house any time we wanted. Only if mom went could we go. Many times, our imaginations carried us into the world of 'Cowboys and Indians', or maybe 'G. I. Wars', even to playing 'House' if my sister got tired and invoked her privilege to select the next activity. A stick, cut about as tall as we were, became a horse or a sword or a rifle, what ever our imagination needed. Other sticks became guns, knives, tomahawks, etc. We could occupy ourselves for hours in a make believe world - a world of "acting".

This usually went pretty good until someone discovered how to split the stick, put a flat rock inside the split, and then use string or leather to tie the split back tight. The next scene was usually a 'skulling' with the tomahawk. Cowboys and Indians were finished for that day. The fight took up most of the rest of it. Maybe

that is why my hair continues to recede. I may have been partially scalped!

Jesus talked a lot about acting. He did not use the word 'actor' though. He used the Greek word, 'hypocrite' which translates, 'actor'. We act out things that are not part of our heart. We become actors on the stage of life, and people don't see into our heart. They only see the outside. Think about it. Why do you go to church? To see friends? Family? A status thing? Because it is right? If you are not going to worship and praise the Lord as Psalm 100 directs, then you are possibly acting out another scene on the stage.

*"Worship the Lord with gladness: come before Him with joyful songs .... Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise; give thanks to Him and praise His name."*

Are you acting like a Christian but you have never committed your life to Him? Is there No room in your heart because Christ doesn't live there? Only you can see your heart, and if you are not sure of your relationship to Christ, you can make sure right now.

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July 03  
ADVERSITY  
Bill Griffin  
1995

Have you ever felt that everything that could go wrong has gone wrong? Are you living in a time like that at the present? I know most of us at Southern Bell are wondering what is in the future for us. Myself included. With re-engineering and downsizing, the family unit we once knew is No longer with us. Now our company is beyond being loyal to its employees and is looking only at profits and losses. I realize we have to compete or we will be out of business but there must be another way without disrupting lives in the fashion that is being undertaken.

As we face the adversities in life, the pressures, and the anxieties, they will make us

or break us. We do not mature without adversity. The purest spring water must go through the most solid rock to be pure spring water. An oyster does not produce a pearl without being irritated by a grain of sand. A butterfly is unable to fly if you cut its cocoon to help it out. A diamond is produced only after years of squeezing on a lump of coal. Each of these has to be built in its own strength and in its own time. The same is true of us. We have no choice but to take what we are given and move ahead. We need to learn as the Apostle Paul, how to live with the adversity coming at us day by day.

[3] Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; [4] perseverance, character; and character, hope. [5] And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

[Rom 5:3-5]

I can not offer anyone more than God Himself has already offered. I can only tell you what I believe in my heart. God has taken care of me for 51 years. I don't believe He has brought me this far just to let me down.

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July 04  
INDEPENDENCE DAY  
Bill Griffin  
6/22/99

Soon our country will honor the day set aside to celebrate our day of independence. July 4<sup>th</sup>. There were many battles fought to gain this independence for a struggling group of pilgrims in a new country. They had fled to escape the very things that had now caught up with them in the new land. Not only did they have to battle a new land and its hardships, high taxes, and tyranny, but they had to find a way to cut loose the claims of England to her very existence. The cost for both sides was expensive with the cost of many lives. Even so, on July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1776, the Declaration of Independence declared our freedom 'once and for all'. We would no longer be an enslaved nation again. Many battles have had to be fought since this declaration to maintain our freedom, but we are still free. We have not been able to rest at any time and think that all would be okay in peace. Even today, our country is ever vigilant of the policies and minds of foreign nations.

There is another freedom that parallels this one in many ways, only it is older than the freedom of this country. It is the freedom of our souls. There have been battles from the beginning of time to enslave the human soul into bondage to Satan and sin. We see these battles constantly in the Scriptures of the Old Testament and the Gospels of the New. We see in the Old Testament God's battle plans for atonement. God set up a procedure in the days of Moses whereby man's sin could be temporarily atoned. Sacrifices of animal blood were required on the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant 'once a year' and could only be

applied by the High Priest after a ritual of purification and cleansing.

Heb 9:7... But into the second [Holy of Holies] went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people:

Another part of this atonement procedure was the choosing of two goats; one to be sacrificed; and one to have hands placed on its head symbolizing the sins of Israel and was to be taken into the wilderness and released.

Lev 16:10... But the goat, on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat, shall be presented alive before the LORD, to make an atonement with him, and to let him go for a scapegoat into the wilderness.

There was only one thing wrong with this goat deal though. It kept coming back! Notice 'once a year'. The people were never completely free from the bonds of sin. The battle kept raging.

On Nisan 14, God established a day of freedom from the battle with sin. On that day, His Son was placed on a cross to shed His blood as the final payment. As He cried just prior to death, 'IT IS FINISHED', God's battle plan drew to a close. No more war! Jesus has won!

Heb 9:12... Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

Oh, we still have battles of our own making in our daily lives and we will have until the ultimate completion of God's Master Plan. We can take comfort in the fact though that even if I loose a small battle here, I can not lose the war.

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July 05  
ARE DISASTERS GOD'S JUDGMENT?  
Bill Griffin  
1995

I was an unwilling participant in Hurricane Hugo when it came through Gastonia in 1989. It came anyway. Surprised a lot of folks who had fled to Charlotte to escape the coast. It took a lot of hard work from a lot of people to clean up the mess.

Just when Hugo died down, along came Hurricane Andrew in Miami. I was part of the restoration team there and witnessed the devastation it left behind.

In 1993, I was sent to Birmingham on company business. I stopped in Ragland, Alabama, 30 miles east of Birmingham to visit briefly with my wife's aunt and uncle. While I was there, a tornado struck less than two miles away and destroyed a valley filled with homes and businesses. Her uncle and I went to the area to see if we could help but could not get through. The police had already blocked the main roads since it came right through the downtown area. I left and traveled on to Birmingham to another relative's just in time to get into the worst hail storm I have ever seen. Tangerine size. Beating on the house and on my poor old car

sitting in the driveway. In south Birmingham where I was going to be checking into a motel, another tornado struck a shopping center about a mile away.

Whew! I thought it was after me!

Floods. Hurricanes. Earthquakes. What did Earth and nature do to warrant this judgment from God? Are natural disasters God's judgment?

Disasters are not God's intervening with a vendetta in the affairs of particularly sinful people; disasters are part of the tragic impact of sin that humankind has endured since Adam. Nature did nothing to deserve disaster, but because man lives upon her Earth, she is reaping the results of man's sin. We live in a world fallen from the peace and presence of God, a world full of turmoil, agony and chaos. The wonder is not that there are disasters - but that there are so few. That this world is still a place of such beauty and inspiration is testimony to God's enduring grace.

Does God inflict tragedy for Christian growth? I suggest that while God is not the

author of trouble in our lives, He does meet us in our troubles. God said in Isaiah 43:2,

*"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned."*

Notice that the verse does not say, "IF you pass through the waters," and, "IF you walk

through the fire," but WHEN. In the midst of suffering, we have the promise that God will be with us. Comforting. Encouraging.

We see then that God uses tragedy to draw us closer to Him, but we misunderstand and suggest that He inflicts tragedy upon us. God's work is one of multiplying grace, not one of exacting punishment.

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July 06  
ASSURANCE OF SALVATION  
Bill Griffin  
1995

SCRIPTURES FOR THOSE WHO WISH TO KNOW THE ASSURANCE OF THEIR SALVATION.

1. I JOHN 5:13  
I WRITE THESE THINGS TO YOU WHO BELIEVE IN THE NAME OF THE SON OF GOD SO THAT YOU MAY KNOW THAT YOU HAVE ETERNAL LIFE.
2. JOHN 1:12  
YET TO ALL WHO RECEIVED HIM, TO THOSE WHO BELIEVED IN HIS NAME, HE GAVE THE RIGHT TO BECOME CHILDREN OF GOD.
3. JOHN 3:36  
WHOEVER BELIEVES IN THE SON HAS ETERNAL LIFE, BUT WHOEVER REJECTS THE SON WILL NOT SEE LIFE, FOR GOD'S WRATH REMAINS ON HIM.
4. JOHN 5:24  
I TELL YOU THE TRUTH, WHOEVER HEARS MY WORD AND BELIEVES HIM WHO SENT ME HAS ETERNAL LIFE AND WILL NOT BE CONDEMNED; HE HAS CROSSED OVER FROM DEATH TO LIFE.
5. ACTS 13:39  
THROUGH HIM EVERYONE WHO BELIEVES IS JUSTIFIED FROM EVERYTHING YOU COULD NOT BE JUSTIFIED FROM BY THE LAW OF MOSES.
6. I JOHN 5:11-12

- AND THIS IS THE TESTIMONY: GOD HAS GIVEN US ETERNAL LIFE, AND THIS LIFE IS IN HIS SON. HE WHO HAS THE SON HAS LIFE; HE WHO DOES NOT HAVE THE SON OF GOD DOES NOT HAVE LIFE.
7. JOHN 8:12  
WHEN JESUS SPOKE AGAIN TO THE PEOPLE, HE SAID "I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD. WHOEVER FOLLOWS ME WILL NEVER WALK IN DARKNESS, BUT WILL HAVE THE LIGHT OF LIFE."
  8. ISA. 55:7  
LET THE WICKED FORSAKE HIS WAY AND THE EVIL MAN HIS THOUGHTS. LET HIM TURN TO THE LORD, AND HE WILL HAVE MERCY ON HIM, AND TO OUR GOD, FOR HE WILL FREELY PARDON.
  9. I JOHN 2:1-2  
MY DEAR CHILDREN, I WRITE THIS TO YOU SO THAT YOU WILL NOT SIN. BUT IF ANYBODY DOES SIN, WE HAVE ONE WHO SPEAKS TO THE FATHER IN OUR DEFENSE--JESUS CHRIST, THE RIGHTEOUS WON. HE IS THE ATONING SACRIFICE FOR OUR SINS, AND NOT ONLY FOR OURS BUT ALSO FOR THE SINS OF THE WHOLE WORLD.
  10. ROMANS 8:16  
THE SPIRIT HIMSELF BEARS WITNESS WITH OUR SPIRIT THAT WE ARE CHILDREN OF GOD.

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July 07  
BEING POOR  
Bill Griffin  
1995

I have never had to think about what it was like to be rich. I grew up poor. Every day we thanked the Good Lord for our poverty, we were having so much fun. The problem was we had more poverty than we knew what to do with. Several times I suggested to the Lord that he take some of ours and distribute it among our neighbors, so they could enjoy it, too. But poverty back then was sort of like squash; it was so abundant you couldn't give it away.

Boring TV? We didn't have TV when I was a kid. It was just beginning to come on the market but with our abundance of poverty, we had no place to put it. We didn't know what we were missing, and later, when we found out what we had missed, we weren't disappointed.

Toys? What were those? I guess my favorite toy was dirt. I spent a lot of time playing in the dirt. Our house was built on the side of a bank [not the First National] with the lower end about six feet off the ground. The area under the house was an ideal place for a youngster to play in the dirt. All I had to do was make sure that I didn't interfere with some snake's turf. Usually, our old dog would spend enough time under the house that he kept the snakes driven out. Sometimes, we just found the dog under the house. The snake won that round. We just had to find another old dog to replace him. I built roads and tunnels and towns out of dirt. Any small block of wood became whatever my imagination wanted it to be.

Our toys were sorta like the power robots of today. With just a twist or turning it backwards, it became an entirely new toy. Sticks were good. While others were building sand castles at the beach, I'd populate the dirt towns with stick people and build stick forts around them. Sometimes I'd burn down the forts and massacre all the little stick people. That was a lot of fun.

The dirt was nice. Didn't require batteries. No assembly required. I never had to stay up most of the night trying to put it together. If dirt was in Christmas catalogs, they would probably sell tons of it.

We threw dirt. There was always a good supply of dirt clods around and you could throw the dirt clod at something and it would explode into dust just like a cannon shell or a hand grenade. Sometimes my brother Fred and I would play war with our cousins and throw the dirt clods at each other. If you got hit with a dirt clod, you were supposed to fall down, but if you smacked a kid in the body he would claim the direct hit by the cannon shell had only wounded him. If you hit someone in the head with the clod, they usually fell down right away without a lot of argument. So you always aimed for the head.

Once my cousin Pete hit me in the face with a clay clod, even though those weapons had been outlawed. I still wish I had reported him for that crime.

**NO! That is not what happened to my face!**

BLENDING  
Bill Griffin  
1995

I'm pretty good at blending in. Most of the time I was in school, I disguised myself as an empty chair on the back row of classrooms. I got so good at it that occasionally I was marked absent when I was there. On the rare occasions when I thought I knew the answer to a question, I would shoot my hand straight up in the air. The startled teacher would nod in the direction of my chair, and I would give a wrong answer. Even a wrong answer would be worth some points, though, because any response at all from an empty chair impresses most teachers. Sometimes I would flunk a course, but my chair would pass with a D-minus. Maybe that is why all my teachers thought I would grow up to be an astronaut. I took up space in school.

The Holy Spirit does a good job of blending also. Christ described Him well in John 3:8...  
"The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."  
Most of us want to live our lives by putting God on our program or telling Him how we want to live. Look at the verse again. The Greek word 'pneuma', used here, means both wind and spirit. The Spirit moves as HE pleases, not how we want Him to move. He blends into our lives if we let Him. We can not tell Him how or when to move. We need to learn to listen to the Spirit as we listen to the wind. Let Him move and move with Him, not against Him.

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July 09  
BLIND SIDED  
Bill Griffin  
1995

When I first started playing football in High School, only a very select few helmets had face masks. Most were just high impact plastic to cover the top, back, and sides of the head. The nose and face had a way of sticking out and was the objective of many an elbow from an opposing player. I had never played organized football so I had to learn everything from scratch.

I was playing on the defensive side one day and when the ball was snapped, I raced around the 'fat boy' who I thought was blocking me. ""SUCKER"" It was one of those plays where this guy let me by and another guy pulling out was to block me. He did. My nose was the first thing across the line of scrimmage and I did not see him coming. He fore-armed me across the nose. OWWWWEEEEEE! Stunned! BLIND SIDED! I didn't care who had the ball or where he went. About fifty yards down the field when the play was over, everyone looked around at the dummy standing back up the field. I was in a different world. Tears. Many! Streaming from my eyes. Breath. Hard to come by! Nothing takes the starch out of someone like a swift lick to the nose.

When the coach got the bleeding stopped, I continued to practice for the day. By the time I had walked the two miles home, I could hardly

breath. My mom packed me up and back to town we went, to the Doc. After poking around, (I know it didn't hurt him at all), he explained that my nose was broken. The sad part? Nothing to do but suffer. There is no splint or cast for the nose. Not even so much as cotton stuffing. He did say the swelling would go down and my nose should stay in the center of my face.

Have you ever been blind sided? Sometimes Satan blind sides us.

e creates situations which try our faith. His purpose is the same as the football play. To confuse us, to keep us from God's purpose in our life. What do you do when you are blind sided? Stand as I did and let everything go on without you? We need to react, even hurt, to escape the block of Satan and find our Lord. As I continued to play, I learned to recognize those type plays and avoid or lessen the impact by how I reacted. We need to continue to live in God's Word to become mature enough to fend off the blocks Satan attempts on our lives. We need to reach the point that when Satan blind sides us, we can live as the Psalmist in 55:22....

*'Cast your cares on the Lord and He will sustain you; He will never let the righteous fall.'*

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July 10  
BOUND BY SIN  
Bill Griffin  
1995

A few years ago, Johnny Cash came out with a song which touched special chords in my own life. That song was, "A Boy Named Sue." I could emphasize with the boy in the song. My parents named me Francis. It did not matter the spelling, most young boys associated this as a girl's name. It was also a time when a very popular mule was making movies. You guessed it! "Francis, The Talking Mule." It was fight or leave school a coward. Over the years, I have become a devout coward, but not in those younger days. As the song goes: "Some girl would giggle, and I would get red; some guy would laugh and I would bust his head." I do not remember a single year of grammar [1-8] school that I did not find myself in numerous fights on the playground. Some did not wait until the playground, they happened in the classroom. I don't think I made it through a grade without a paddling from the teacher or the principle.

Most of the fights only lasted for a few licks. Pretty soon, we would find ourselves in a bear-hug on the ground or floor. It seemed that was the sensible thing. This way, we could call it a draw. If either of us released our grip, we would have to go to fisticuffs again.

Sin is like that in our lives. It has a strangle hold on us. It never wants to let go. Sometimes sin grips us with surprising suddenness. Sometimes it is subtle. We become so comfortable with our sin that it easily goes with us wherever we go. No matter how much we struggle, we can't break free. That is why the prophet Isaiah could say in 5:18....

"You are doomed! You are unable to break free from your sins."

If you are bound in your sins with what seems like No way out, remember there is one who can free you. Christ, is like the strong armed teachers who used to break up my fights. He can

pull you from the clutches of sin, but only if you will let Him.

If you are needing relief, call upon Him. He hears. He cares.

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July 11  
BRETHREN  
Bill Griffin  
1995

The thought of a pop quiz used to make me nervous when I was in school. I didn't know enough to study and pass, let alone have an unannounced test. I studied for three days to take a urine test when I found out I had to take one to play football.

Let me give you a pop test. You will not receive a grade for this one-question test, so most of your fear should be gone. Here is the question:

What is the most common name for Christians used in the New Testament? [1] Christian; [2] disciple; [3] saint; [4] believer; [5] brethren.

If you chose the last answer, give yourself an "A." The word "brethren" occurs more than the other names in the New Testament. The frequent appearance of the word reminds us that a primary

emphasis in being a Christian is that of our having membership in the family of God.

A wounded soldier on a battlefield was approached by a military chaplain. As the chaplain knelt beside the man, the wounded soldier remarked, "I don't belong to your church," to which the chaplain responded, "Yes, but you belong to my God."

We belong to each other as Christians. We are family because we all belong to the same God.

That is what 1 Corinthians 12:13 means...

"For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body -- whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free -- and we were all given the one Spirit to drink."

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July 12  
BROTHERS  
Bill Griffin  
1995

The Bible's main emphasis is the reconciliation of men and women to God. But there is also another concern. That men and women should be reconciled to each other. Children to their parents. Brothers and sisters to each other. Friends to friends. We see this type of reconciliation in Genesis 33:4:

Esau ran to meet Jacob and embraced him; he threw his arms around his neck and kissed him. And they wept.

A natural result of God's reconciliation of us ought to be that we know how to be reconciled to each other.

My parents separated when I was about 8 or 9 and then finally divorced when I was 10. It was a bitter divorce. My father ran off with another woman. I did not understand all that was going on. I had what my mother told me. That was hate. I grew up hating my father for the most part. I seldom saw him. If he came to town, he would go to my aunt's house and maybe my mom would let us walk over to her house to see him. He did make an effort to see us and maybe bring us some type of toy for Christmas. That was it.

I was fifteen before I began to know my father. He had moved back to South Carolina from Louisville, Ky. He gave me an old 1949 Ford car.

I had to get my Grandfather to take me to get it. I was not old enough to drive alone, so someone else had to drive it home for me. I was about as proud as a peacock. I had a car. The first. My mother never owned a car but she did know how to drive. My car became our family car. The Griffin's were now living in high cotton. It's a good thing gas was 21 cents a gallon. It was a struggle to keep two or three gallons of gas in it so we could go back and forth to town.

It was through this old car though, that I began to travel back and forth to S. C. When I was sixteen and got my license, I would take off by myself. I began to know the father I had missed. I learned that he was not harboring any hatred. He had long ago learned to live with my mother's hatred of him. It did not come easy, but my hatred eventually left me too. My father became one of my best friends before he finally gave in to the strokes that took his life.

Is there someone in your life who needs to feel your forgiveness? If not your own forgiveness, then just your being reconciled to them? You will never know the real joy and peace God has for you as long as you harbor resentment or hatred for a brother or sister.

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July 13  
BY HIS OWN BLOOD  
Bill Griffin  
1995

"Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." [Hebrews 9:12]

God wrote His own spiritual laws, so couldn't He have decided on an easier way to redeem man? Many people, including me, have wrestled with that question. There was No other way.

Sin -- any sin -- is doing things our way, not God's. And the only penalty broad enough to cover all our sins is death.

Adam was created sinless. Thus, it was sinless man that plunged mankind into sin where

he became sinful. Sacrificial goats and calves weren't responsible for sin, so their blood couldn't redeem us. Only the death of a sinless man could restore the human race. (See 1 Cor. 15:22)

Jesus was sinless. His blood alone was able to hide our sin. As man had sinned by choice, so the sacrifice also had to be made voluntarily. Jesus willingly gave His life. Through His power He restored it. With that same power He can restore us and secure our lives through all eternity.

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July 14

CALLED FOR A REASON  
Bill Griffin  
1995

Jesus does not call us without a purpose.  
Look at Mark 3:14.....

"And He ordained twelve, that they should be with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach."

There were two reasons Christ called the first disciples and these reasons still apply today.

[1] He wanted them to be with Him. He wanted communion with His creation. From the Garden of Eden when God walked with Adam, until today, God is still seeking communion with His people. He is willing and ready to walk with any one who will seek His companionship.

[2] He wanted them to be a part of His mission. He wanted them to spread the "Good News", the "Gospel". He knew their service would grow out of their relationship with Him.

If our service is to be effective, it must be the result of an intimate love relationship with Jesus.

Most of us have to learn from others. When I started work with Ma Bell, I rode with experienced installers so that I could learn how to do the job. You probably had to sit with or ride with someone on

your jobs also. Before Jesus sends us out, He longs for us to spend time with Him and learn from Him.

When I first met my wife 31 years ago, I did not know her. As we began to build a relationship, I learned. It was only by spending time with her and talking with her that our relationship grew. If neither of us had said anything else or seen each other after the first meeting, the relationship would have died. Now, after 30 years of marriage, I think she can read my mind sometimes. She seems to know when I am going to do or say something before I do it. That's why I just wait and let her tell me what to do when.

Honey do's. The job jar. The relationship had to grow through the bad times as well as the good times. We have had our share of both and I feel we grew closer as a result of sharing both.

To be with Jesus is to learn Him, not about Him. We get to know His grace toward sinners, His compassion toward the hurting, His love for all mankind. The more we are with Him, the more we should become like Him. Out of this communion comes our service to others.

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July 15  
CALLED TO DELIVER  
Bill Griffin  
1995

When you order something by mail, you expect it to be delivered to you. After all, the catalog said "We deliver." But who actually comes to your door with the delivery? Is it the company president? No, the company uses various delivery services.

God promised to deliver the Israelites when they were captives in Egypt. He involved Himself in their rescue through a human delivery service -- Moses.

"Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring forth my people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt.[Exodus 3:1-10]

Before Moses knew what God wanted him to do, he presented himself to God as a usable servant. That's when Moses learned that God wanted to use him to deliver the Israelites from bondage.

God wants to deliver people today from the various prisons their souls have entered. Does God have a "delivery service" call waiting for you? Think of persons you know who are trapped by such awful things as loneliness, alcohol, drugs, depression, aimlessness, and life as an unbeliever. You can be used by God to bring your needy friends and others from their bondage and into a relationship with the Lord.

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July 16  
CASH ONLY  
Bill Griffin  
1995

About ten years ago, I was sent to Miami to be part of a task force team to determine the computer systems for the Construction OPCC offices. I gathered up a sack full of money and off I went. I did not take credit cards with me because I made it a habit not to carry one. (That way, I do not buy now and cry later when the bill comes due). I planned to pay cash for everything.

Little did I know that some businesses do not consider you a person unless you have a major credit card on your person at all times. When I arrived in Miami, I went to the Hertz car rental counter where I had made reservations. OH BOY! They typed in all the information, looked at my driver's license, and then wanted a major credit card. Now get this picture. Here I am with a fist full of dollars, a Bell I.D. card, drivers license, gasoline cards, but no Visa or Master Charge. People were lined up behind me waiting on their turn. They would not take my money. No matter how I tried to convince them, they would only take the money if I guaranteed it with a credit card. I guess I could have handed them a stolen card and gotten anything I wanted.

The car rental clerk finally went through a scenario of calling back to Gastonia to verify my

employment, and, calling information in Gastonia to see if F. W. Griffin was really listed with a phone at the address I had given. [At my expense] Red faced, aggravated, tired, and hungry, I finally put up a \$500 cash deposit and headed toward the bus that would take me to the car lot. I think I heard the crowd cheering when I finally left.

I can picture people at another counter one day. At that time, people will be trying to convince God that He should let them into heaven for various and sundry reasons. This time though, there will be no calls made back to earth to verify who or what you are. Everything about you will be known already. God is going to ask only one question relevant to the situation. "What did you do with my son Jesus?" All the other methods of payment in the world will not get you past the gates of heaven. There is only one accepted method. The blood. Without the blood of Christ as a covering, no one will enter. Not Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Catholic, Jew, Muslim, or any other. Only Blood Bought. Only those belonging to Christ because He purchased them and they accepted that purchase.

"Salvation is found in No one else, for there is No other name under heaven given to men by

which we must be saved." Acts 4:12

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July 17  
CHILDLIKE EXPECTANCY  
Bill Griffin  
1995

Expectancy is like breathing to a child. Each day holds all the elements of a big adventure:  
He will find a penny ...  
    a violet...  
        a four-leaf clover...  
            He will ride an elephant ...  
                discover buried treasures ...  
            be invited by an astronaut to help explore the moon ...  
And more days than not, delightful things do happen, simply because he expects them to. No, not usually the precise stuff of his dreams, but many a dream's first cousin.

"Except you be as little children," Jesus reminded us, the kingdom can't come.  
We can't receive the wonderful things God has in store for us unless we believe in them!  
I do believe in miracles; they are always happening to me. And I know that for anyone who will watch for them and be expectant enough to work for them, they will happen too. Big miracles or little daily miracles that are often overlooked. The secret behind having a miracle happen to you is simply to be open and ready to receive.  
EXPECT A MIRACLE TODAY!

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July 18  
CHILDREN OF FREEDOM  
Bill Griffin  
1995

I did not choose my family, neither did you. Your family may be rich or poor, but you had No choice in determining who would be your parents. Most of us even have some skeletons in the closet who do not have the good sense to stay there.  
There were 11 children in the two families of my mother and father. I had two brothers, one sister, one stepbrother, one stepsister, three half-brothers, and two half-sisters. We grew up in different house-holds with various and differing interests. Those in my mother's house had nothing but poverty while those growing up in my dad's house seemed to want for nothing.  
My closet of skeletons include divorces, drugs, alcohol, prison for theft, and prison for murder. None of us are immune. Sin respects no one, person or family.  
I did have one choice in life though regarding a family. This family I was able to

choose. This is God's family. God gives each of us the freedom to make this choice. He does not force anyone to accept Christ as Savior and Lord. He freely offers eternal life with this choice. It was mine to accept or reject.  
When I chose Christ, I automatically became a child of God. This means I am entitled to an inheritance with Christ. A heavenly home. A new city.  
As a child of God, I am also freed from the bondage of sin.  
Galatians 4:31..."so then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free."  
I was given a new nature. This does not mean that I will never make another mistake. I do. But God will help me to learn to make the right choices. And he will forgive me for making the wrong ones.

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July 19  
CHOICES  
Bill Griffin  
1995

Isn't it great that we live in a world that is abundant with choices? We can choose our friends, our church, our recreation, our career, our dating partners, and whom we will marry. How fortunate we are! We start our day choosing between Special K or Apple Jacks, eggs and toast, and a glass of juice on the run. The day is filled with choices.  
Our choices can become quite difficult at times - especially when they are between right and wrong. What books we read, what movies we

watch, what places we go, what we put in our bodies, and how we treat others are choices to make. Our choices not only show our "fear of the Lord," which in its true meaning is the beginning of wisdom [Psalms 111:10], they prove to Him that we want a close fellowship with him and want to give Him control of every part of our life. He delights in our righteousness and is waiting to share His love with us.  
The lord favors those who fear him, Those who wait for His lovingkindness. [Psalm 147:11]

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July 20  
CHRIST'S AMBASSADORS  
Bill Griffin  
1995

Do we as Christians dare dream of the difference it would make in our world if each of us fulfilled the duties that are incumbent upon us as Christ's Ambassadors? Do we dare become so totally involved in our ambassadorial duties that our primary focus would be on accomplishing the goals of spreading the Gospel worldwide rather than on our differences? Many lost people depend on our answers.  
As we consider the task of spreading the Gospel, Paul gives us a good example in II Corinthians 5. Paul lists four motives which

should control the life of an ambassador for Christ:  
CONFIDENCE OF ETERNAL LIFE (II COR. 5:1-8)  
The "building" to which Paul refers in these verses is not the abiding place Christ is preparing for believers (John 14:1). It is the glorified body that will be ours when Christ returns. (I Cor.15:50)... "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

How do we know we have this glorious future? We have the earnest of the Spirit as shown in II Cor. 5:5. This means in everyday terms that the down payment has already been made which assures us that the rest of the blessing will be ours at a later date.

DESIRE TO PLEASE CHRIST (II COR. 5:9-13)

Paul's desire to please Christ was motivated by more than hope for the future. He sought to please Christ every day, to be acceptable to Him, to please Him. Paul had a full awareness of and a healthy appreciation for the fact that all believers would some day be judged at Christ's Judgment Seat.

(I Cor. 3:10-15)... But if any man buildeth on the foundation gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, stubble; each man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it is revealed in fire; and the fire itself shall prove each man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work shall abide which he built thereon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as through fire.

Knowing that his works would at that day be revealed and tested, Paul possessed a perpetual desire to please Christ in all he did. The word "appear" in II Cor. 5:10 means more than "stand" or "show up". It contains the idea of being revealed. There will be nothing hidden at that judgment. Our character and works will be shown for what they are. That is why it is important for our lives to be open and honest before God and each other.

CONSTRAINT OF LOVE (II COR. 5:14-17)

The controlling force in the life and ministry of Paul was the love of Christ. The Apostle was so overwhelmed by Christ's love for him that to serve and honor Christ became for him a consuming passion. Paul accurately perceived that Christ died for the following reasons:

[1] "that we might live through Him" (I John 4:9)

[2] "that we might live with Him" (I Thes. 5:10)

[3] "that we might live for him" (II Cor. 5:15)

There can be No selfishness in the heart of a Christian who understands the love of Christ.

Believers at Corinth were comparing Paul with other teachers and using carnal judgment instead of spiritual discernment. They were forgetting that the Christian life is a new creation with new values and motives. They were also judging Christ after the flesh -- as a great Teacher or worthy Example.

A COMMISSION FROM GOD (II COR. 5:18-21)

God had paid the price for sin through His Son's death at Calvary. Sinners could now come into the presence of Holy God because Christ had borne those sins in His own body at Calvary and had died in their place. And God had raised His Son up and had given Him a name that is above every name. What a tremendous privilege was Paul's and is ours to bear this message as ambassadors of Christ.

**1. AMBASSADORS ARE CHOSEN**

Christ had chosen Paul to be His representative to lost mankind. Thus Paul's message and mission came from Christ, not himself. His task was to represent Christ, not himself. His goal was to please Christ, not himself. He would not fail the One who had chosen and commissioned him.

**2. AMBASSADORS ARE PROTECTED**

An ambassador is a citizen of the kingdom or nation he represents. His needs are provided and his protection is guaranteed by that kingdom or nation. Thus, Paul's needs and protection were supplied by Christ. Why? Because he was a citizen of heaven and had been chosen by the King of Kings to represent Him.

**3. AMBASSADORS ARE CALLED HOME BEFORE WAR IS DECLARED**

God has not yet declared war on our wicked world, but one day He will. There is coming a day of wrath but God's ambassadors, will not go through the tribulation. (1 Thes. 1:10)... "and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, who delivereth us from the wrath to come. In the meantime God, through Christ, is reconciling the world unto Himself. He is willing to save all who will trust and follow His Son. Every Christian as God's ambassador is commissioned to bear that message. "As my Father hath sent me, so send I you," declares Jesus in John 20:21.

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July 21  
COME HOME  
Bill Griffin  
1995

When I left work yesterday, I had one of the worst headaches I have had in a long time. As I tried to find a way to hold my head that didn't hurt, I thought about all the aches and pains our physical bodies must endure here on earth. When I thought about it, I realized that once we have reached heaven, we will no longer be troubled or inhibited by physical or bodily limitations.

Once there was a widow and her son who lived in a miserable attic. Years before, she had married against her parent's wishes and had gone with her husband to live in a foreign land.

He had proved irresponsible and unfaithful, and after a few years he died without having made any provision for her and the child. It was with the utmost difficulty that she managed to scrape together the bare necessities of life.

The happiest times in the child's life were those when the mother took him in her arms and told him about her father's house in the old country. She told him of the grassy lawn, the noble trees, the wild flowers, the lovely pictures, and the delicious meals.

*The child had never seen his grandfather's home, but to him it was the most beautiful place in all the world. He longed for the time when he would go there to live.*

*One day the postman knocked at the attic door. The mother recognized the handwriting on the letter he brought and with trembling fingers broke the seal. There was a check and a slip of paper with just two words: "Come home."*

Some day a similar experience will be ours -- an experience shared by all who know Christ. We do not know when the call will come. It may be when we are in the midst of our work. It may be after weeks or months of illness. But some day a loving hand will be laid upon our shoulder and this brief message will be given: "Come home."

All who know Christ personally need not be afraid to die. Death to the Christian is "going home." Then will the words of 1 Cor. 15:53-54 be fulfilled:

*For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable and the mortal with*

immortality, then the saying that is written will  
come true: "Death has been swallowed up in

victory."

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July 22  
COMPARISONS  
Bill Griffin  
1995

By comparing ourselves with others, we conclude that we're not so bad after all. We pride ourselves on going to church on Sunday. We try to obey the Ten Commandments. We pay our bills on time, try to be good neighbors, and may even be active in civic affairs. Comparing ourselves to those who are given to gross immorality, indecent lifestyles, rape, and murder, we award ourselves a good rating. You see, by comparing "apples with apples," as it were, we appear to be quite acceptable.

But when we are judged by God's standards, it's quite a different story. When we compare ourselves to the One who is absolute perfection, we recognize at once our complete unworthiness. We respond like Isaiah, who, after he had seen "the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up," exclaimed,  
"Woe is me! For I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips,...for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts" (Isaiah 6:5).  
GOD'S HOLINESS CALLS FOR OUR HUMILITY.

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July 23  
COVERED BY CHRIST  
Bill Griffin  
1995

I love to read and hear stories about the mighty power of God and how He is working in peoples lives. There are so many times He does wondrous things in our lives and we pass them off as coincidence or luck. I have started trying to look for God in each circumstance and then to thank Him for the way He handled it. Here is one of those stories I would like to share with you.

*A few years ago in China, two Christian missionaries were undergoing bitter persecution. One night as they were getting ready to retire they heard the sound of voices outside the compound. They lifted the blinds to find their home surrounded with belligerent men who had gathered there to terminate the couple's ministry.*

*The missionary husband and wife, realizing that God was their only refuge, dropped on their knees and prayed for those who would harm them, and reminded God that He had promised to be with them until the very end.*

*When they arose from their knees, they noticed that the crowd was dispersing, and the excited murmuring of the departing mob indicated that something unusual had happened. The missionaries thanked God for answered prayer and retired. The next morning as the sun cast its rays upon the compound, a native Christian came to the door and begged an audience with them.*

*"Do you know why the mob did not kill you last night?" he asked.*

*"Our God answered prayer," replied the missionary.*

*"Yes," said the native man. "When you were on your knees last night, four creatures like angels, dressed in robes of white, appeared, and one stood at each corner of your house. The mob trembled and fled, and we Christians who stood helpless in the crowd knew that once more God had intervened.*

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July 24  
CRISIS PRAYERS  
Bill Griffin  
1995

Do you ever feel a twinge of guilt when you realize that you pray the hardest only in the face of crisis. We wait until we are faced with a crisis before we enlist the aid of others in prayer when in fact we should be soliciting prayer partners constantly.

When everything is going good, we are prone to pray the reverent prayers, King James style.... "Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name....". But when things are going haywire, we may slide across the floor on our knees, slam up against the bed, close our eyes tightly and cry: "GODDDDDDD!!!!"

I appreciate the fact that others feel free to call upon me for prayer, even if I do find myself feeling guilty.

I have come to realize though, that I am not alone in this matter though. Even Christ prayed harder when faced with a crisis. Look at Luke 22:44...**And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly....** In Gethsemane, His human agony showed through. Not only for Himself but for the people He loved in spite of their rejection.

It seems very human to neglect the power of prayer until we are brought face to face with some emergency. Surely our Heavenly Father understands; but we should be praying daily for Him to forgive our neglect and to give us guidance daily to meet our human problems.

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July 25  
CROWNS  
Bill Griffin  
1995

We have often been taught of the rewards awaiting a Christian when we reach Heaven.

► Isaiah 3:10... Tell the righteous it will be well with them, for they will enjoy

the fruit of their deeds.

► Isaiah 40:10... See, the Sovereign LORD comes with power, and his arm rules for him. See, his reward is with him, and his

recompense accompanies him.

- ▶ Matt 10:32... "Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven.
- ▶ Matt 25:34... "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.'
- ▶ Mark 10:21... Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."
- ▶ Luke 6:35... But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.
- ▶ Romans 2:10... but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.
- ▶ 1 Cor 3:8... The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor.
- ▶ Heb 10:34... You sympathized with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possession.
- ▶ Heb 10:36... You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised.
- ▶ Heb 11:26... He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.
- ▶ Heb 12:28... Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe,
- ▶ 1 Pet 3:9... Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.
- ▶ Rev 2:10... Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.
- ▶ Rev 2:17... He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it.
- ▶ Rev 22:12... "Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.

I can not understand all that God has for me because the Scriptures do not describe everything. They do, however, give me enough information to know that some of these rewards are called "crowns". I also understand that these crowns will be granted to the Christian at the Bema Judgment Seat of Christ.

#### THE CROWN OF LIFE

In Revelation 2:10 God promises: "Be faithful until death, and I will give you a crown of life."

This crown is promised to all those who have gone through tribulations, including martyrdom for Christ. Even when the Christian appears to lose in this world, those who do not renounce their faith in Christ will be honored in Heaven forever.

#### THE CROWN OF GLORY

We are instructed in I Peter 5:1-4... "The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed. Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by constraint, but willingly... And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive a Crown of Glory that does not fade away".

Those who have served Christ on earth as elders in the Church and pastors will be rewarded for their countless hours and resources often given thanklessly.

#### THE CROWN OF REJOICING

We are told in I Thessalonians 2:19... "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?"

If a Christian chooses to be silent to those around him about his faith in Christ, then we must draw one of three possible conclusions:

- (1) He does not truly believe that the friend that continues as an unrepentant sinner will spend eternity in Hell. Or
- (2) He believes this, but does not love his friend enough to risk the loss of his friendship by telling him the truth about our eternal destiny. Or
- (3) He believes in his salvation through Jesus Christ but has received so little teaching about the reality of Heaven or Hell that he hesitates to venture into discussions about these eternal matters.

I feel that the third conclusion is the reason so many do not share their faith today. They do not feel they know how to share their faith or do not know enough about Heaven or Hell to share these realities with others.

Just as people are rewarded today when they do extraordinary deeds such as saving someone from a life threatening situation here on earth, those who do share their faith are promised a special reward in Heaven.

#### THE CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

We find in II Timothy 4:8... "Finally there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only, but also to all who have loved His appearing."

This crown is awaiting all those who are longing for the return of Christ. Too often today we are so caught up in worldly problems that we have lost sight of the truth that Christ is going to return soon to set up His Kingdom. We are told repeatedly throughout the New Testament to be watchful for the return of the Lord. This appearing will be imminent and we are told to occupy until He comes. We must plan as if we have a hundred years until He returns but live as though He will return before the next morning.

#### THE INCORRUPTIBLE CROWN

We find in I Corinthians 9:25... "And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown."

This crown is for all those who are victorious in the daily struggle waged in our

lives. The Bible tells us to "put on the whole armor of God" to be prepared for spiritual warfare.

God is concerned with our lives and our spiritual struggles and promises to reward us with the crowns we have earned when Christ returns for His Church. Christ encourages us to strive for the best in our spiritual life and that we will become an overcomer. Honors and rewards will be given to those who follow the commands of Christ.

"Behold, I come quickly! Hold fast what you have, that No one may take your crown. He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out No more. I will write on him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the New

Jerusalem, which comes down out of Heaven from My God: and I will write upon him My new name. He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (Rev. 3:11-13)

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it. (Rev 2:17)

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July 26  
DARE  
Bill Griffin  
1995

When we were children, my brother, sister, and I, would engage in games requiring daring moves from each other. When we finally got second-hand bikes, we would try to out-do each other on the dirt and gravel road that went by our house. [Mostly dirt, little gravel, many ruts] Fred and I would try to show off by speeding up and then sliding sideways. Then we would dare Barbara to follow. Almost daily she and my female cousins braved a sideways bike slide in the gravel or dirt. A double-dog-dare often resulted in a flurry of dust and pebbles, as well as skinned knees, bruises, and twisted handle bars.

I must admit though, that even though we were daring the girls, Fred and I had our share of skinned spots. We kept the bark knocked off ourselves, just daring each other.

We hear another 'dare you' whispering to us today. Satan smirks, "I dare you to witness." He intimidates us. He wants us to be afraid.

We should not be intimidated. The Lord has clothed us to meet and resist, to face and defy all of Satan's dares to withhold a good word for Jesus. Ephesians 6:18-20 tells us.... 18 *Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching there unto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; 19 And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, 20 For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.*

Prayer seams together our battle garments. One thread is boldness to speak when tempted to be timid. Another is inspiration to recognize the critical moment when the Holy Spirit opens an unsaved heart to a good word. Still another thread is knowing what to say.

Accept the dare. Step out boldly today and say a good word for Jesus. He is saying them for you before God the Father as Satan accuses.

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July 27  
DIAMONDS  
Bill Griffin  
1995

We have all heard the expression, "Diamonds are a girl's best friend", but have you ever really thought about what a diamond is?

Diamonds come in all sizes. They are all beautiful and with a wide range of designs. The wonderful thing about small diamonds is that the magic of a large diamond is duplicated in beautiful miniature. Little windows full of light. What a description of the true Christian!

The true beauty can never be revealed until a diamond is cut and faceted by the expert. Each facet must be cut at precisely the right angle to bring out the fire and sparkle that nature hid there. That is why it takes a special person to be a diamond cutter, to know just how to cut.

Most diamonds have a tinge of color which adds warmth; in many cases it is so slight only the expert can find it. The total harmonious effect is what you see. Only the expert can find it ... like the God Who made me and knows me through and through.

All diamonds, whatever their individual characteristics, are precious and unique and every faceted gem catches the light. Each one of us is precious and unique and God loves every one of us.

May God help each of us today to be a little window full of His Light.

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July 28  
DIVERTED  
Bill Griffin  
1995

There is a story told of two old men who had been out on an all night drinking spree. As they staggered home, they got diverted down a railroad track. After a time of walking, one old fellow says, "Wow! I'm s-sure tired. Ain't we never going t'git t'the bottom of these here stairs?" The other old geezster replies: "It ain't these stairs that b-bother me. It's these

here l-low banisters that're gittin' me down."

Our lives can become diverted just like these two if we are not careful. If we take in the ways of the world, we become diverted to its directions. If we take in the things of the Spirit, we follow Him. The Bible tells us to:

*"be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit."*[Eph. 5:18].

The world offers us those things that look good, feel good, smell good, and taste good. Our body was given the senses that we might communicate in the world, but too often we allow the senses to be our guide and not our heart. We

need to learn to listen to the Holy Spirit, let Him lead, and then we can control the appetites of the body.

To whom are you listening today?

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July 29  
DIVINE POWER  
Bill Griffin  
1995

How can wrongs be forgiven, and how can offenses be forgotten, and how can objectives be pursued day in and day out without quitting. It's divine power. God promises that He will pour His power into us (Phil. 4:13) and supply all we need if we will simply operate under His full control. By His power, we can give ourselves away again and again and again. And we won't fear the outcome. We won't even feel slighted when we don't get the same treatment in return. Servants don't "keep score." Dale Galloway tells a story in "Dream a New Dream" that beautifully illustrates this point.

*Little Chad was a shy, quiet young fellow. One day he came home and told his mother, he'd like to make a valentine for everyone in his class. Her heart sank. She thought, "I wish he wouldn't do that!" because she had watched the children when they walked home from school. Her Chad was always behind them. They laughed and hung on to each other and talked to each other. But Chad was never included. Nevertheless, she decided she would go along with her son. So she purchased the paper and glue and crayons. For three whole weeks, night after night, Chad painstakingly made thirty-five valentines.*

*Valentine's Day dawned, and Chad was beside himself with excitement! He carefully stacked them up, put them in a bag, and bolted out the door. His mom decided to bake him his favorite cookies*

*and serve them up warm and nice with a cool glass of milk when he came home from school. She just knew he would be disappointed...maybe that would ease the pain a little. It hurt her to think that he wouldn't get many valentines -- maybe none at all.*

*That afternoon she had the cookies and milk on the table. When she heard the children outside she looked out the window. Sure enough here they came, laughing and having the best time. And, as always, there was Chad in the rear. He walked a little faster than usual. She fully expected him to burst into tears as soon as he got inside. His arms were empty, she noticed, and when the door opened she choked back the tears. "Mommy has some warm cookies and milk for you."*

*But he hardly heard her words. He just marched right on by, his face aglow, and all he could say was: "Not a one...not a one."*

*Her heart sank.*

*And then he added, "I didn't forget a one, not a single one!"*

So it is when God is in control of the servant's mind. We realize as never before that life's greatest joy is to give His love away -- a thought that brings to mind the saying:

It isn't a song until it's sung.

It isn't a bell until it's rung.

It isn't love until it's given away!

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July 30  
DOES GOD CARE  
Bill Griffin  
1995

Recently two men were hanged for possession of drugs in a country where capital punishment has been invoked for such crimes. Imagine what these men might have felt had another man rushed in just before the nooses were placed around their necks and offered to take their place, freeing them to go home to their families. What an incredible joy and sense of relief would have come over those condemned men.

God has done precisely that for us. He cared so much for us that even while we were yet sinners and still rebellious, He sent His only Son to die in our place, suffering the penalty that rightly was ours. And God keeps on giving. He meets our daily physical needs. He delivers us from evil when we stay close to Him. And there is never a time when we are separated from His care and concern. How could there be? His Son died for

us. Can you think of a better reason why God would care for us?

A refuge is a place which is safely out of harm's way. A fortress is a fortified building that is virtually impenetrable by conventional means.

Martin Luther wrote that wonderful hymn which says,

*"A mighty fortress is our God;  
a bulwark never failing.  
Our helper He amidst the flood;  
of mortal ills prevailing."*

What a statement about the magnificent power and protection of God!

I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge  
and my fortress: my God; in Him will I trust.  
Psalm 91:2

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July 31  
DON'T ABUSE YOUR FREEDOM  
Bill Griffin  
1995

Many people do not know how to handle freedom. When Abraham Lincoln abolished slavery in 1861, there was an entire race of people who were suddenly thrown into a dilemma. What were they to do now? They had been told everything to do for

so long, they could not just suddenly take care of themselves. That is why so many remained on the plantations or in service. They had no other place to go. No ship waiting in the harbor to

return them to their motherland as it had been on the voyage to this country.

Many of today's criminals return to prison because they can not handle the freedom. They become repeat offenders. I had a friend in Ellijay that was this way. He went to prison when he was 17 and would never be out for more than a few months before he was back. It was a habitual lifestyle for him. It was the same type of life that eventually lead to his death; murdered and his body dumped in the river.

Some victims of abuse amaze me by going right back to the abuser. If they do eventually get rid of one, they have a tendency to look on the same trash heaps and find another one.

Not having experienced freedom, one does not know how to act. Our freedom from sin is the

same. Our freedom from the laws of the Israelites does not give us liberty to act without bounds. We are not free to do as we wish. Occasionally, believers think that because their eternal life is assured, they can do as they want. Our salvation is not an excuse to live sinfully. It begins a new life of freedom and loving service.

*Gal 5:13-15... For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.*

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