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November 01  
RESTORED  
Bill Griffin  
1995

As I was growing up in my teen years, I thought I wanted to be an auto mechanic. I figured that was what God had in store for me since all he ever allowed me to be around were junkers. The old car we had, the old trucks of my granddad. I had learned to be pretty proficient at fixing them. They seemed to stay broke most of the time and most of the time, it was on the side of the road somewhere. I worked with my father in his garage for a couple of summers and even went to live with him after high school because I thought that was what I wanted to do.

I found out that the work was hard but there were rewards when you looked at the finished product sometimes. My dad would buy old junkers, [rust buckets], and we would restore them to an acceptable level and resell them. Some of them looked pretty good on the outside but when we started stripping off old paint ... WHEW!

Through years of neglect, rust would have corroded much of the metal on the fenders, doors, and under-panels. Although the outside looked fine, beneath the surface corruption was just waiting to break through. We would have to remove some parts and replace them completely.

Some could be sanded, cut away, and new metal welded in its place. The work was tedious, but we could not take shortcuts. If we left any part of the rusted metal, it would just start the corrosion process again and all the work would be for nothing.

Just as we systematically restored the cars, God works to restore me to the condition he intended for all of us before the fall. I need to allow God to strip away my veneer of self righteousness, to dismantle my old self, and then to refinish me with the gloss coat of righteousness, to restore me to "showroom" condition in the likeness of his Son.

The Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:17: "If any man is *in Christ*, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come."

No life or situation is beyond God's ability to save and to repair. God patiently peels away all my attempts to "fix" myself; instead, he renews me from within. That process may be painful, but the result is a life that reflects God's handiwork and brings glory to him!

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November 02  
RISK-TAKERS  
Bill Griffin  
1995

Christian discipleship is a bold adventure. Yet NOT to follow Christ is an even greater risk. Mentally we believe God's promises. We quote them and feel comfort in them. The risk is LIVING them in life situations.

Look at the situation on the Eastern banks of the Jordan River when the Israelites were camped the first time. While waiting for word to cross over into the promised land, twelve men were sent to spy the land. When the twelve returned, ten lamented the fact that there were 'giants' in the land and they demonstrated their fear of them. Two, Joshua and Caleb, begged the Israelites to

move forward. They quoted the promise of God. They were ready to trust God to live up to His promise. The assembly wanted to stone them.

Joshua knew rejection. No doubt many shouted 'ridiculous' at his strategy to capture Jericho by marching around the city and shouting. Joshua lived the promise, "Be strong, and courageous... I myself will be with you" [Deuteronomy 31:23]

When we turn our lives over to the promises of God, we become risk-takers. Risk-takers trust God. Risking to live by God's promises shows how God intends to take a city, heal a hurt, or answer a prayer.

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November 03  
ROBOTS  
Bill Griffin  
1995

*2 COR 5:17... "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"*

God can produce great good out of any life dedicated to Him. If God were to remove all evil from our world (but somehow leave man on the planet), it would mean that the essence of "humanness" would be destroyed. Man would become a robot.

Let me explain what is meant by this. If God eliminated evil by programming man to perform only good acts, man would lose his distinguishing mark -- the ability to make choices. He would no longer be a free moral agent. He would be reduced to the status of robot.

Let's take this a step further. Robots do not love. God created man with the capacity to love. Love is based upon one's right to choose to love.

We cannot force others to love us. We can make them serve us or obey us. But true love is founded upon one's freedom to choose to respond. Man could be programmed to do good, but the element of love would be lost. If man were forced to do good, suffering would be eliminated -- and so would love. What would it be like to live in a world without love?

Thus we can see that God's use of His power to eliminate evil would not prove to be a positive solution to the problem of suffering. The results of such action would create greater dilemmas. Either man would be reduced to the status of a robot in a loveless world or he would be annihilated. Given the choice, I would choose to be responsible for my actions rather than to be a robot without responsibility.

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November 04  
ROOTS  
Bill Griffin  
1998

Looking out my window during Hurricane Hugo, I could see in the glow of the street light. The small maple tree in my front yard was bending

almost double and parallel to the ground. The other trees to the side were also being whipped around by the high winds. I just knew that they

were going to uproot but when the morning came, they were all still standing. The secret to their survival was their root systems. The roots extended far down into the ground. On some trees, there may be more tree below the ground than there is above the ground.

Amazed, I continued to watch the maple tree as I thought of tumbleweeds which blow wherever the wind decides to take them. Our trust in Christ is like a root system in our Christian

life. How deeply rooted you are in the principles of God's Word will determine how well you will be able to stand against the winds of deception, trouble, and temptation that invariably blow in life.

So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us. (2 Thess. 2:15)

Are you a maple or a tumbleweed?

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November 05  
SALT AND LIGHT  
Bill Griffin  
1995

Jesus commands believers to be salt and light in the world (Matt. 5:13-16). Whatever else Jesus means by using these two analogies, He means that believers can and should make a difference in their world.

Salt is a preservative. It purifies, disinfects, and retards decay in whatever it touches. We are to be the salt of our communities in a time of moral and spiritual decay. Our positive actions can retard the moral decadence that has settled over this generation.

As salt, we must seek to be a moral disinfectant by stopping further pollution of the minds of young and old who become addicted to pornography. You can make a difference by helping rid your community of this source of sexual exploitation of women and of horrible crimes against both women and children.

Light is both purifying and illuminating. Believers are to be light by sharing the truth of God's Word and by sharing the knowledge of the Savior, Jesus Christ, who is the Light of the world (John 8:12).

We must also share the truth of God's plan for the sexual relationship within the bonds of holy matrimony. The world has distorted God's purpose for sex. The misused sexual act has become another means of violence and aggression. The truth of God's purpose for sex between a husband and wife needs to be reaffirmed.

We need to be salt and light in our lives, our homes, our communities, our nation, and our world. If you fail to be salt and light, who will?

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November 06  
SAND CASTLES  
Bill Griffin  
1995

Because of our proximity to the beach, it was a favorite holiday spot when my boys were young. It still is today, but now they are no longer youngsters. As most of you can relate, part of the time spent with youngsters involved 'sand'. After the wading and playing in the surf, young minds turned to sand buckets and sand castles. We have built many a castle and dug numerous holes of various shapes and sizes. Know what? Not one of those castles or holes remain. All have been washed away by high tides, stepped on by people walking on the beach, or just blown away by the wind.

Building the castles was fun. It occupied the boys for hours. We had many moments to share together and remember later in life. But none of these were permanent. We never were foolish enough to believe they would last forever. Most never lasted more than a few hours.

Maybe Jesus was walking along the Sea of Galilee, watching fathers and mothers build sand castles with their children. What better way to teach life than to teach it as it is. He used this common event to teach that only a foolish man would build his house on sand. A wise man seeks out a firm foundation on which to build.

There is No greater foundation than "THE ROCK".

Matthew 7:24... "Therefore every one who hears these words of Mine, and acts upon them, may be compared to a wise man, who build his house upon the rock."

What type foundation are you using today? Are you building on the sandy beaches of the world, or are you building upon the 'Cornerstone', the 'Rock of Ages'?

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November 07  
SCARS AND ALL  
Bill Griffin  
1995

Not long after we were married, I bought my wife a cabinet type stereo for Valentine's Day. I think it was only the second piece of furniture we actually purchased. About everything else we had was either a 'gimmie' or a 'hand-me-down'. She loved the stereo and the cabinet and she polished it lovingly.

Then the children came, and we began to discover just how vulnerable furniture really is. Our oldest son was just tall enough to pull up on the cabinet and put his lips on the edging - as he was cutting new teeth. Today there is a ring of little teeth marks from one end of the cabinet to the other. Of course there are other dings and dents on the front and sides where toy trikes, planes, trains, and automobiles tried to move the immovable object. I think it was a launching pad

at one time for the boys to try out bat-wings and superman capes.

Even though it is stored now, it is still my wife's favorite piece, because it carries the signatures of family living. To her, those teeth marks are precious.

Isn't life a little bit like that cabinet? All of us carry marks of living, dents and scratches from sorrows, mistakes, disappointments, often our own foolishness. How comforting it is to think that God doesn't mind those scars; He expects and forgives them. He doesn't want us in some sort of cosmetic perfection. He wants us to come to Him just the way we are, scars and all.

The hymn by Charlotte Elliot tells it exactly like it is:

Just as I am, without one plea,  
But that Thy blood was shed for me,  
And that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee,  
O Lamb of God, I come, I come!

Just as nothing can pluck this cabinet out of  
my wife's hands, John 10:28 tells us that nothing

can pluck us from the hands of Christ when we  
come to Him, scars and all.

And I give unto them eternal life; and  
they shall never perish, neither shall  
any man pluck them out of my hand.

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November 08  
SEPARATED  
Bill Griffin  
1995

Do you remember when you were young and  
started dating? You sat so close together, people  
behind had trouble believing there were two  
people in the car. Most of the time, this habit  
carried over even into marriage. The early years  
of wanting to be together always. Nothing was big  
enough to separate you.

*There was an old farmer  
and his wife who were traveling  
one day in their old pick up  
truck. He was under the wheel  
where he had to be. She was  
against the other door with her  
arm leaned upon the window  
opening.*

*"Ralph," she said, "do you  
remember how it used to be twenty  
years ago when we were driving?"  
"You would place one arm around me  
and drive with the other." "Those  
were the good times." "What  
happened to them, Ralph?"*

*Ralph calmly replied, "I  
haven't moved."*

The sands of time have a way of changing our  
habits. Sometimes for the better, sometimes for  
the worse. Most of us still love our spouses just  
as much, but we fail to show it. We begin to take  
each other for granted, hence the separation.

We treat God the very same way. When we first  
find Him, we can not do enough, study enough, or  
love enough to tell Him exactly how we feel. If  
we are not very careful though, we soon begin to  
take Him for granted also. Each of us should  
examine where we stand with God. If you are not  
as close now as you once were, who moved? God is  
an unchanging God. His love never wavers. His  
kindness is everlasting. I think you will find  
God exactly where you left Him.

Re-examine your relationship by looking at  
Romans 8:35-39... Who shall separate us from the  
love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or  
persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or  
sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face  
death all day long; we are considered as sheep to  
be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are  
more than conquerors through him who loved us.  
For I am convinced that neither death nor life,  
neither angels nor demons, neither the present  
nor the future, nor any powers, neither height  
nor depth, nor anything else in all creation,  
will be able to separate us from the love of God  
that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Now, if none of these things can separate us  
from God, only one other item is left to cause  
the separation: YOU. In these days of trying  
times, we need to be closer to God than we ever  
were. Won't you return to Him today?

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November 09  
SIZE  
Bill Griffin  
1995

We did not have tractors or modern machines  
to help with the work on the farm. The closest I  
ever came to a machine was an old mule. The  
fields had to be plowed by manpower and mule-  
power.

One day as I was plowing and we went by a  
certain spot, the old mule hiked up it's tail and  
started running, dragging the plow and me behind.  
I was yelling to the top of my lungs  
"Woahhhhhhh!" [that's mule language for stop  
fool]. I finally got him stopped at the end of  
the row and had a few choice words to say to him  
and then we started again. When we reached the  
same spot, he took off again. With the plow lines  
around my neck and me pulled across the plow  
handles, I couldn't let go.

Again I got him stopped just before we would  
have entered the woods at a full gallop. I didn't  
understand what was going on. I told the mule  
that in no uncertain terms.

We started again with everything going well  
until we reached the same spot. This time I found  
out what was going on. Just as the mule lifted  
his tail to run, the sky turned black with yellow  
jackets. We had been plowing close to a nest in  
the ground. They had been getting to the mule and  
I had not seen them. He didn't have to drag me

this time, I think I had the plow in my arms as I  
tried to pass him!

There is a lesson to be learned from all  
circumstances. As I think of the incident now, I  
realize that it is not the size that is of utmost  
importance. If it had been, the mule or I would  
have whipped the yellow jackets with no problem,  
but as you see, that little old yellow jacket  
could make the mule or me jump a three strand  
barbed-wire fence. Just because things are small  
does not mean they are not potent. There are some  
small dogs that can whip big dogs, not because of  
size but because of heart. It is not the size of  
the dog in the fight, but the size of the fight  
in the dog.

As Christians, we should realize that no  
matter the size of the foe [trouble, trial,  
tribulation], we are empowered by a God that can  
make all things possible. Too many times, I think  
we look at our size and stature in physical terms  
and give up before we even get into the fight.  
Satan is a prolific foe, an adversary that is  
like a roaring lion. If we depend on our own  
power and size, he will devour us.

Remember, "Greater is He that is in you,  
than he that is in the world." God is our  
equalizer, a very present help in times of  
trouble.

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November 10

SOWING  
Bill Griffin  
1995

I grew up on a small farm. As I grew up, I thought we only grew rocks and stumps but as I look back, I know there was more. We planted crops in the spring to get enough food to feed our family and our mule. When the crops were ripe, we harvested. We spent many hours canning and preserving the foods for the coming winter months. As we prepared the vegetables on the front porch, many a good fight was started between my brother, sister, and myself over who was supposed to shuck corn or string beans. Each of us always thought we were doing more than the others. Mom and her stick usually settled those arguments though, before all the food was scattered out in the yard.

The Bible has a great deal to say about sowing and reaping.

First, you must sow something before you can reap anything. All walks of life have sowing and reaping. Lawyers and doctors and scientists spend long years in study. You reap excellence if you sow effort, but you have to sow to reap.

Second, if you sow, you will reap.

"Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." "Be sure your sin will find you out."

*There is a story about a man who told his son, "Don't go into that watermelon patch. The melons aren't ripe yet." Then the father drove into town. The boy went*

*out to the watermelon patch and found one melon that he knew was ripe. He pulled it, broke it over some rocks and ate it. He knew he had done wrong. He knew he had disobeyed his father, but he hadn't been caught. Several weeks passed. As the father was driving a cow up from the pasture, he saw a strange thing on the other side of the fence. He saw little watermelon sprouts by some rocks. He dug by the new plants and saw the old rinds with seeds sprouting. He knew what had happened. The boy was caught.*

Third, we will reap what we sow. Job says, "They that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same."

We see people every day who have been sowing wrong deeds -- lust, jealousy, lying, drinking too much, taking drugs, greed, shoplifting or cheating on their income tax. God knows the thoughts and the intents of our hearts. We all need the mercy of God. That is why He sent His Son, Jesus Christ. It is through Christ that we are enabled by the Spirit of God to sow and reap a new harvest in our lives. Love, joy, gentleness, patience, goodness, kindness, meekness, and peace.

Are you sowing and reaping from the garden of God?

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November 11  
STAND FIRM  
Bill Griffin  
1995

Have you ever worked on a project or program only to have people doubt that you could accomplish the task? How did you respond? Our human reaction is to defend ourselves and our work. In the second place, have you ever faced a difficult situation that seemed to have no solution? How did you respond -- defeated or hopeful?

When I started playing football in high school, most of the students and even my family doubted I would be able to play, let alone last for four seasons. Later, when I joined the Army, a friend talked me into going "Airborne". I don't know how I became so weak that I would agree, but I did. The training was vigorous and strenuous, downright hard. Again my family laughed at me and said I would never make it.

I faced that time of decision mentioned above when I took my FIRST plane ride. I was the second person standing in the door as we approached the 'drop zone'. I could see past the man in the door. Cars looked like match-boxes. Trees were miniatures. The ground was 1200 feet away. There was a line behind me of other men who would be

going out the same door where I was standing. If I chickened out now, I would be pushed out. The person on the end of the line in jump school was usually a Sergeant who knew No fear. With umpteen jumps to his credit, his only thought was to get all the green-horns out. My only thought was: "Mama, how did your boy get here!!!"

Moses faced both these situations. The Israelites said many cruel things to him even after all he had done for them. They feared the apparently hopeless situation they faced: the sea in front of them and Pharaoh's army behind them. Moses overlooked their typical human behavior and relied on God, who responded with words of encouragement and truth.

"And Moses said to the people, Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will work for you today; for the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again." [Exodus 14:13]

When you are faced with impossible people or situations, remember to rely on God. Stand firm in a godly way. Be an example of behavior that will glorify God in all that you say or do.

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November 12  
STAND TALL AGAIN  
Bill Griffin  
1995

This thought is being written for a special lady in Clemmens, N.C., Mrs. Martha Owens.

Every so often, a person may come into our lives whom we have never met, but it seems we know them. Such a lady is Martha. I inquire about her and keep up with her through her daughter and a friend. It is almost as if I am talking to Martha herself. I do not know Martha in the flesh, but I feel I know her in her spirit. I think God allows us to do this sometimes. If His Spirit communes with us, why can it not carry thoughts or feelings from one person to another? Nothing is impossible with God.

All of us face trials. Jesus told us we would have tribulation in this world. Some have greater burdens to bear it seems. Especially when illness is involved. We must remember though, we are not doing battle against the Lord. Our battle is with the devil. God did not create the earth with the intention of cursing it with sickness and disease. If He had, there would have been sickness in Eden. There was none. God called everything "GOOD." After Adam and Eve had eaten themselves out of house and home, He had to place them outside the garden to allow them to be

cursed by sin. Then God hid His beautiful creation from sinful man.

As the troubles of this world bear down on our shoulders, we become bent, broken, and weak. It requires all our strength sometimes to just place one foot in front of the other. When I think of this situation, I think of flowers that have wilted in the hot sun from too much heat and lack of moisture. They too, become wilted, broken, and bent. I would venture to say that all of us have seen flowers or grass in this situation.

But what happens when the mixture of rain and sunshine touches the flowers? We can actually see a change taking place. Gradually the stem rises from its bent position, the color changes from faded hues to healthy shades again. Soon it is standing tall and straight again. No longer wilted. No longer bent. Facing the sun and absorbing all the rays meant for it. I have seen roses in the morning actually turn on their stem to face the morning sun.

When we are pressed in, squashed, we need to think of the flowers. When we are bowed under with fears and anxieties, remember how the flowers revived after they drew nutrients from soil warmed by the sun.

We need to call on the One who has promised to raise those who are bowed and bent. When this Son shines on us, we can rest assured He will lift us up to stand straight and tall again.

This life is just a shadow and we are standing in that shadow now. David said, "Yea though I walk through the shadow of death...". Paul said, "Now we see through a glass dimly...". In both of these situations, there is coming a Son to shine, to renew, to straighten our bodies and souls from these burdens we now think we carry alone. Remember though, He said He would never leave us or forsake us. He has not departed. He is only a whisper away. Jesus.

God bless you Martha.

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November 13  
STAY IN HIS PRESENCE  
Bill Griffin  
1995

We have a small T.V. on the bar in our kitchen that my wife turns on just to have a racket going. As she prepares a meal, she will listen to the news or a show. This small T.V. only has a single antenna that has to be twisted or turned for better reception.

Sometimes, when you reach for the antenna, the reception becomes clear as the hand nears, and when you start to move away, it begins to fade again. It takes a fair amount of doing sometimes to get the antenna turned just right and allow the hands to be removed.

Electronics are fascinating. Each of us has a small amount of static electricity in our bodies

which can aid or hinder electrical devices. By keeping my hands near the antenna, the sound and picture are strong and clear. When I move them away, the sound becomes garbled and the picture begins to wave or go fuzzy.

How like that T.V. is my life. Once I am removed from the presence of Jesus, I become weak and ineffectual! But by staying close to Him, I can, in some unexplainable way, draw strength and power from Him.

James 4:8 tells us: "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded."

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November 14  
STEADFAST LOVE  
Bill Griffin  
1995

When we hear of GOD'S steadfast love, what do we think of. I looked up the definition of steadfast and share it here.

Steadfast (sted'fast) -- adjective:  
[1] loyal; unwavering;  
[2] firmly fixed; immovable  
[3] firmly settled; unchangeable;  
established.

That is how a dictionary defines steadfast.

Now, use that definition to understand God's love ---

loyal love,  
unwavering love,  
firmly fixed love,  
unchangeable love.

That is why Lamentations 3:22 tells us..."The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end."

Not only does God love us with so great a love, but His mercy for us is endless! As you read the following story, think about all that God has already done for you because He loves you.

*Years ago on a frigid, snowy night, a small child wandered from her cabin in the Appalachian Mountains. The family dog followed her - maybe trying to steer her home again. No one knows for sure. The next day the dog and child were found, the dog's frozen body covering the still-alive little girl.*

Steadfast love!

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November 15  
STENCH  
Bill Griffin  
1995

When Hurricane Hugo visited GASTONIA in 1989, I lost two freezers of food due to the extended power outage. Since my time was taken up with Southern Bell restoration, it was weeks before I could get to my own clean up operations.

One of the freezers was located in my garage behind the house. I had my two teenaged sons to clean out this freezer while I was working elsewhere. They were placing the food in freezer bags and packages into plastic bags. The food in

freezer containers, they were emptying into the bags to allow the containers to be cleaned and reused.

Everything was going well for a while. My wife and I could hear the boys grumbling, then laughing, and then grumbling again. All of a sudden, we saw the oldest come flying out of the garage at a dead run. Cheeks puffed up. Eyes wide and wild. He ran to the side and started throwing up. In just a moment, the youngest emerged,

holding his nose with one hand and a garbage bag out away from him with the other. They could not leave well enough alone. They had to examine the containers to see what was inside. They had jerked the lid off one particular container and stuck their faces down to see what it held. The stench of rotten flesh (fish) hit them.  
ARRRGGGGHHHH!

Our sins are like that to God. They stink. They are a "stench unto His nostrils." Just like the canister, we try to keep the smell hidden. We think no one will notice. Do not be deceived. Sooner or later, the lid is lifted from each of

our lives and the stench therein released. There will be no hiding then.

We need to live lives that are a "sweet savor" unto the Lord. If there is something hidden in your life, now is the time to open it before God, turn from the stench, and live a life pleasing to Him. God gives us a pretty good blueprint in Micah 6:8...

"He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

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November 16  
STORMS OF THE HEART  
Bill Griffin  
1995

In 1964, when I was almost 21 years old, my 16 year old brother was killed in an auto accident. A freak accident, but death was the cost. I remember asking God so many times, "Why him Lord?" "He was so young Lord." "He had his entire life ahead of him." I developed a storm in my heart that troubled me for a long time.

At that time, I did not know God. I only called out His name in times of crisis or need. It seemed that God was so silent, so far away. He was nowhere to be found. Like so many others when tragedy strikes someone they love, I blamed God. It took years, and a relationship with God, for me to come to an understanding. That soft voice whispers to me now, "It was time."

There is a song by Dave Clark and Danny Bunnelle called "In God's Own Time" that goes something like this:

*"I used to pray  
With answers already in my mind,  
And wonder why his leading  
Always seemed so hard to find;*

*But now I'm more dependent  
On His will instead of mine,  
While I'm learning to live  
In God's own time."*

How often God proves that His timing is always perfect. We may not understand it but it is still perfect. Sometimes we have to put aside those things that are past and reach for the prize ahead to gain a full understanding.

"Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark."

We can not press toward the mark, unless we let go of the past.

If there is a storm in your heart today because your timing in some situation did not coincide with the timing of God, pray and ask him to calm that storm and give you understanding regarding His timing and His will. You will be surprised how quickly the storm in your life will subside. If you listen closely, you may hear Jesus Himself say: "Peace, be still."

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November 17  
SUBSTITUTE WHIPPING  
Bill Griffin  
1995

My sister Barbara (Bobbie) was a year and a half younger than me. My brother Fred was three years younger. Even with the age and sex differences, we never let that hinder us when we wanted to pursue the art of fighting. Biting, kicking, hitting, slapping, gouging, pulling hair, or any other form we could think of at the time we were engaged. Bobbie was a big girl, therefore she was about our size. She could stand in with the best of them. As the expression goes, "she could stand flat footed and knock you into next week." No push-over here. Neither was Fred. Although a little smaller, he too, could take care of his end of a good fight.

Sometimes we would get into fights in the house and something would get broke. When mom finished separating us, she would always try to determine who did the breaking, but like most families with children, the "NOT ME" ghost got blamed for everything. When mom could not make a sure determination, she would line us all up and commence to whip us all. She said this way, she knew she would get the guilty party. Oh!!!! the stripes we carried for one another.

There was another time in history when someone else took the whipping that I deserved.

*Isaiah 53:6 .... "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all," and,  
1 Peter 2:24 .... "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree."*

There was No guess work on the part of God to determine who had sinned. God knew that I had. I was the guilty one but He decided to whip Christ in my stead. Christ died for you and me. He wasn't just dying a physical death with the nails in his hands and feet, the spear in His side, and the crown of thorns on His head. He suffered physically, yes, but His greatest torment came spiritually. Our sins were so black that when God laid them on Him, He had to turn His back on His Son. We can never understand the depths of the wonder of the cross. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?", cried the soul that was dying of a broken heart.

I deserved judgment and hell but He took them for me. That is what the cross is all about. That is why the cross is the symbol of Christianity.

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November 18  
SUFFERING  
Bill Griffin  
1995

If you have suffered or are suffering because of someone else's words, you'll be glad to know there is a medicine for this laceration. Meditate on these words from I Peter 2:23..."When they

hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made No threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly."

Did you see what He did not do? He did not retaliate. He did not bite back. He did not say, "I'll get you!" "Come on up here and say that to my face!" "Just wait until after the resurrection, buddy!" No, these statements were not found on Christ's lips. Did you see what Jesus did do? He "entrusted himself to him who judges justly." Or said more simply, he left the judging to God. He did not take on the task of seeking revenge. He demanded No apology. He hired No bounty hunters and sent out no posse. He, to the astounding contrary, spoke on their defense. "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing."

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November 19  
TEENS  
Bill Griffin  
1995

I've heard it said that the teens are the loneliest and most perplexing time of life. Doesn't that seem odd? It's a time when you're surrounded by people and plenty of things to do both in school and out. Isn't it a time though when you want someone to share with and to understand? And what do you talk about? The places you're hurting. You're not popular, or you're not getting along with your parents, or you just feel different. Although the causes are varied, I think many of you are struggling with the same thing: WHO AM I?

Let me share two stories with you; one a young girl and the other a young man, both struggling with individual problems like all teenagers suffer today.

The young girl did not feel she belonged. The "in" thing when she was in school was long, straight hair parted down the middle. All her friends had the "look" but she didn't. Her hair was long alright but it was sure wasn't straight. Like her dad's, it had a curly mind of its own. She could not part it down the middle because she had been born with two cowlicks in the front of her forehead forming a widow's peak.

One day she got up early, went downstairs and set up the ironing board. First she put her head down, stretched out her hair as far as she could and ironed out all the curls. Then she got a razor and shaved off the front of her hairline so she wouldn't have to struggle with the cowlicks anymore. Finally she would look like everyone else. WRONG! You can imagine the mess. From a distance it looked fine, but up close the razor had left its mark. She had a half-inch strip of sandpaper for a hairline. And she had to go to school that way.

As she looks back on this escapade, it was a foolish thing to do but she thought she could loose that lonely, empty feeling if she could just look like her buddies.

The young man grew up in the deep south in poverty stricken Mississippi. As a young man, he taught himself to play a guitar and through his church, he continued with his music. As an older teenager, he had to accept a job driving a truck to have a job and any money but his dream was always on his music.

This young man's goal was to be a gospel singer. After struggling as a truck driver, he finally saved enough money to travel to Nashville, Tennessee to find a record company that would possibly let him make a record of gospel music. The producer in Nashville listened to him play and sing and then shattered his dream when he told him he would never be able to make it as a musician.

Yes, the dialogue that morning was bitter. The verbal attack was meant to sting. How Jesus, with a body wracked with pain, eyes blinded by his own blood, and lungs yearning for air, could speak on behalf of some heartless thugs is beyond my understanding.

Never have I seen such love. If ever a person deserved a shot at revenge, Jesus did. But he didn't take it. Instead he died for them. How could he do it? I don't know. But I do know that all of a sudden my wounds seem very painless. My grudges and hard feelings are suddenly childish. Do we not really see Christ's love as much in the people he tolerated as in the pain he endured?

Do you know who these two are and how their lives turned out? If they had listened to others, they would probably have given up. They were both able to figure out that God made each one of us unique.

At the beginning, He made us just the way HE wanted us. He planned that each of us should be as different as the patterns of a snowflake. Look at what David had to say in the Psalms about our individual beings:

[Psalm 139:13-16] For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

As a young person, you will continue to struggle with the pressures of life but you do not have to face them alone. The Bible contains many examples of young people God called into His service and with whom He had a personal fellowship.

David was a teenager when he was anointed the next king of Israel but it was over twenty years before he actually became king. His family filled with jealousy and even the king (Saul) he adored became jealous of him and tried to kill him. He never gave up.

Jeremiah was approximately 16 years old when God called him to preach to a backslidden nation of hardened hearts. His reaction was like any teens, protesting his youth and not knowing what to say but God said "I will be with you and my words will be by your words." Later Jeremiah was thrown in a dungeon and even later was placed down in a well and left to die there in the mud and darkness. He never gave up.

Samuel was but a boy when God called him.

Paul tells Timothy not to let his youth bother him in his preaching.

When you turn your heart to God in love and service, you will never be alone again. Jesus said just before He died "henceforth I call you friends". Make Christ your best friend and then find you a friend on earth that you can talk to and share your feelings when you feel hurt, or different, or just plain lonely.

In case you have not figured out who the young girl and the young man are, Amy Grant, noted Christian female singer who now also does popular music is the girl and Elvis Aaron Presley, who became the king of rock and roll is the young man. Later he did find someone who would record some of his gospel music.

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November 20  
TELEVISION  
Bill Griffin  
1995

When I was about ten, my father managed to send us an old second hand T.V. It was one of the early models, big cabinet, little picture, big knobs, and heavvvv! I can remember Friday and Saturday nights when nearby neighbors and kids would drop in and we would have a ball laughing and watching the shows. Wall to wall people. Red Skeleton. Amos and Andy. Damon Runyan Theater - Death Valley Days - Lone Ranger, and many more that have long been forgotten.

From our house in Ellijay, we had to have an outside antenna. The only stations we could get were two from Atlanta and two from Chattanooga. We only had one problem. Tenna-rotors had not been invented yet. To change the direction of the antenna meant physical work. We got smart though. We put the antenna on a pole, stuck the pole up beside the window, bent two nails over the pole, not too tightly, and we could just reach out the window and turn the antenna. Improvising. Worked well unless we had heavy winds. Then someone had to stick their hand out the window and hold the pole. Summer, not so bad. Winter....tuff.

One thing we learned quickly. When the antenna was turned just right, we got a good picture. When it blew around, the picture got fuzzy and we had to adjust the antenna.

Our lives are that way sometimes. God's beacon is like the station. As long as we are tuned in and pointed at Him, we have a strong presence in our lives. When we get off course, God becomes fuzzy. The station never moved, neither did God. We move off course and eventually, we have to be readjusted and fine tuned. The good part is that God Himself initiates the fine tuning. We do not get far off course before He begins to remind us of the direction we are taking. His Spirit begins to call us back into the relationship we had before.

Thank goodness, God calls, even before I know I am on a dangerous journey.

Philippians 2:13 says...For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

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November 21  
TEMPTATIONS  
Bill Griffin  
1995

I could hardly wait until I reached 15. In Georgia, a Drivers Permit could be obtained at 15. I didn't have a car but I still wanted the permit. It was the route to a Drivers License when I reached 16. The procedure took every bit of 5 minutes in Ellijay. The Highway Patrol Examiner came to Ellijay on the first Monday of each month. My mom walked into his office with me, told him I was 15, and he wrote out the permit. No flashbulbs. No questions. No hesitation. Just like that.

The permit was a formality. I had been driving my grandfather's old truck since I was 12. When I would work with him on weekends and during the summer, he would slide over against the door, pull me or my other 12 year old friend over next to him as far as he could and we had it. He would proceed to lean his head against the door post and sleep from Ellijay to Atlanta or where ever we were going that day.

After I got the permit, he allowed me to take the truck alone to my Aunt's house [every bit of a mile away on a dirt road]. With my younger brother and sister in the truck with me, I proceeded to drive it straight over a bank into the bushes. Embarrassed to death. I just knew he would never let me drive alone again, but somehow grandfathers seem to have foresight and wisdom that 15 year-olds can not understand. When he got

through laughing, and pulling the truck out with a stump puller, he handed me the keys and told me to go on.

I had to learn that driving involves responsibility as well as privilege. There are stop signs to be observed, not to mention speed limits. The person behind the wheel is the one who must pay the ticket if there is a traffic violation.

Any driver can be tempted to drive too fast. The street or highway is not crowded. The motor responds so smoothly. The driver is late for an appointment. At those times its hard to take the pressure off that accelerator. How easy it is to be tempted, and how easy it is to find excuses that lead to temptation.

Of course, temptations are not limited to driving, nor is responsibility. And the person who breaks the law is still the one who has to pay the ticket. Adam tried to blame Eve, remember, but that didn't work. He was tempted, and he disobeyed. Friends may be guilty of wrongdoing, but you must answer for how you handle temptations.

Be honest with yourself. Realize that you need God's help to meet today's temptations.

"But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted." [Galatians 6:1].

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November 22  
The Ark Of The Covenant  
Bill Griffin study  
1995

A recent movie "Raiders of the Lost Ark" was based on a real search for the lost Ark of the Covenant just before World War II. It shows a fictional archaeologist looking for it in 1936. The movie tells of the Nazis' fascination with the Ark and other sacred objects and of their search for them in Egypt.

Factually, both the German Nazis and the Italian fascists, led by Dictator Mussolini, were

intrigued by the Ark and other rare religious objects. Historical records prove that one of the war aims of the Italian Army that invaded Ethiopia in 1935 was the capture of the Ark of the Covenant for Mussolini. Why would the Italians search Ethiopia to locate the Ark?

Deep within a complex of underground passages beneath the ancient Church of Zion, in Aksum in northern Ethiopia, is a secret passage that leads

to a highly guarded hiding place for the most sacred object in human history. For three thousand years -- from the time of King Solomon -- this passage to the Holy of Holies has been protected by royal priestly guards of the ancient Ethiopian Jewish monarchy. The last ruling monarch of Ethiopia was Emperor Haile Selassie, who called himself "the Conquering Lion of Judah."

The city of Aksum was the ancient capital of the kingdom of the Queen of Sheba. Within this underground Temple are seven concentric rings of interior circular walls. An ordinary Ethiopian Coptic priest can worship within the areas of the first to the fourth rings. Only the highest priests and the Emperor can enter the fifth and sixth innermost ring. The final seventh central walled circular room is the secret Holy of Holies. The Ethiopians claim that the holy Ark of the Covenant with the Mercy Seat and Shekinah Glory of God has lain in this sacred room of their Temple for three thousand years. Only one person is allowed to enter this room and he is the Guardian of the Ark. This Ethiopian priest-guard is chosen at the age of seven, the age of understanding, from the priestly family.

He is trained as a child, in his age of innocence and agrees to guard the Ark for the rest of his life. He never leaves this Holy of Holies until the day of his death, when he is replaced by another chosen Guardian. Each day the High Priest enters the sixth innermost ring to bring the Guardian his food.

The Ethiopian monarchy is the oldest continuous royal dynasty in history. It begins

with the Queen of Sheba and her son, Menelik the First, the offspring of her marriage to King Solomon of Israel, and continues until the late Emperor Haile Selassie. Prince Menelik the First was educated in Israel. When He returned home at the age of 19, he secretly took with him the true Ark of the Covenant, where Ethiopian tradition says it remains. The Ethiopian Royal Chronicles claim he left a perfect replica of the Ark in the Holy of Holies.

The Bible prophecies that Ethiopia will return a special offering to Zion in the last days.

[Zeph 3:10] From beyond the rivers of Cush my worshipers, my scattered people, will bring me offerings.

It is fascinating to note the words of Israel's former chief Rabbi Goren in this regard. He stated to Newsweek Magazine in November, 1981, "the secret of the location of the Ark will be revealed just prior to the rebuilding of the Third Temple."

Today, Ethiopia is in a civil war and the capital city is under siege by northern rebels. Israel has made an agreement with the Ethiopian government which will allow it to rescue the remaining 60 to 80,000 black Jews from the country in return for Israeli technical aid. Sources say however that the Ethiopian Jews will not leave their precious Ark of the Covenant behind when they return.

In addition to the lost Ark, the Ashes of the Red Heifer are also vital to Israel's plans for the rebuilding of the Temple.

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November 23  
Ashes Of The Red Heifer  
Bill Griffin study  
1995

One of the most unusual sacrifices in ancient Israel was the sacrifice of the Red Heifer.

[Num 19:2-9 (2) "This is a requirement of the law that the LORD has commanded: Tell the Israelites to bring you a red heifer without defect or blemish and that has never been under a yoke.(3) Give it to Eleazar the priest; it is to be taken outside the camp and slaughtered in his presence. (4) Then Eleazar the priest is to take some of its blood on his finger and sprinkle it seven times toward the front of the Tent of Meeting. (5) While he watches, the heifer is to be burned-- its hide, flesh, blood and offal. (6) The priest is to take some cedar wood, hyssop and scarlet wool and throw them onto the burning heifer. (7) After that, the priest must wash his clothes and bathe himself with water. He may then come into the camp, but he will be ceremonially unclean till evening. (8) The man who burns it must also wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he too will be unclean till evening. (9) "A man who is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer and put them in a ceremonially clean place outside the camp. They shall be kept by the Israelite community for use in the water of cleansing; it is for purification from sin.

According to the Talmud and the Rabbis, it is essential that Israel resume this Sacrifice of Ashes of the Red Heifer in order to cleanse the Temple Mount and the priesthood. While the aim of the sacrifice was to purify the defilement of death, yet it defiled all those who were connected with the offering.

According to the Mishneh, the ceremonial burning of the Red Heifer happened only seven times in Jewish history: once by Moses, once by Ezra and five other times until the destruction of the Second Temple. Each time, the ashes which remained from the previous sacrifice were added to the new ashes to provide continuity, a perpetual sacrifice.

A "pure" Red Heifer is very rare. Almost all cattle have some imperfections in their coloring. The Talmud states that even one white hair would disqualify the heifer for this sacrifice. Not only did the heifer have to be 100 percent red, it could not have had a yoke laid upon its neck.

Time magazine reported on October 16, 1989, that Israel sent a team of scientists to Europe in August to obtain frozen embryos of a breed of red heifers which will be used to raise a pure Red Heifer on an Israeli cattle ranch. The extraordinary part of this report is that this proves that Jewish authorities have decided to conduct animal sacrifices once more.

It will be necessary to cleanse the Temple area with the waters of purification on which ashes of the Red Heifer have been sprinkled. Then a reconstituted Sanhedrin, a group of senior rabbis, can resume the acceptable Temple sacrifice system.

A fascinating Copper Scroll was found in cave number 8 near Qumran among the Dead Sea scrolls in 1952. This scroll is located in a museum in Amman, Jordan. It confirms that the last sacrifice of the Ashes of the Red Heifer was offered just before the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. During the conflict the Ashes were taken in a clay vessel from the Temple by priests and secretly buried with other sacred objects so they could be recovered in the last days to

enable Israel to cleanse and rebuild the Sanctuary. A portion of the Scroll reads:

"On the way from Jericho to Succukah, by the River ha Kippa, in the tomb of Zadok, the priest, which is a cave that has two openings. On the opening on the side by the north, the view toward the east, dig two and one-half cubits under the plaster and there will be found the Kalal (a vessel made with clay and dung from the Red Heifer) and under it one scroll."

Some Christian and Jewish students of prophecy believe that these Ashes will be recovered from their hiding place before the rebuilding of the Third Temple. Several intensive archaeological investigations are underway in Israel seeking to find information about the Ark of the Covenant and the Ashes of the Red Heifer.

Many other discoveries in this Dead Sea area lend credence to the references in the scroll to the location of the Kalal containing the Ashes.

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November 24  
THE BEACHCOMBER  
Bill Griffin  
1995

My wife is a beachcomber. She loves to walk along the beach looking for shark's teeth and sea shells. She tickles me as she will stop, look intently at an item, and stoop to pick it up. As she examines it more closely, she will either put it in her pouch or discard it back into the sand and surf.

It reminds me also of the times when the boys were young. They would walk along and find one treasure after another. Soon their little buckets would not hold all the shells and they would bring them to their mother for inspection and safekeeping. There would be a few intact shells, but they would be small and ordinary. Mostly there were just bits and pieces of shells but they were determined to save each remnant.

"When," I wondered, "will they learn to be more selective?" As they began to push each one under my nose, I began to see the shells through

their eyes. Some shells glowed with delicate pastel hues. Others had precisely sculpted bumps and ridges. A few were broken in such a way that their spiraling cores would be exposed. As each would be washed in the foaming surf, the shell would take on its own personality.

Jesus is like a beachcomber. He finds humanity washed up, battered, stranded by sinfulness. What if Jesus chose to comb the sands as we do, holding out for wholeness and perfection? We would all be lost.

Instead, He moves among us just as my boys combed the beach. No matter how often we have been rejected by others, he sees us as special treasures. He picks us up, washes us and keeps us close to Him. Our Lord can put our broken lives together again. As we respond to His love, new beauty and worth are revealed in each one of us.

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November 25  
THE BRIDE  
WHY DOES GOD ALLOW SATAN TO LIVE

In love and mercy, God became a man through the virgin birth. He, of course, did not cease to be God, for that would be impossible; nor will He ever cease to be man. Jesus Christ is now and will always be the one and only God-man; and because of who He is, He was able to pay the penalty demanded by His own justice -- a penalty that we could never pay. Having paid that debt in full, He offers pardon for sins and eternal life as a free gift of His grace to whoever will repent of his sin and believe in Him.

Had the battle ensuing from Satan's rebellion been fought on the basis of sheer power, God would instantly have destroyed Satan. But that would not have served His purpose, since Satan had to be allowed to tempt mankind. Because God loves us and seeks to win our love, it was necessary that we be given full opportunity to choose whichever we believed was most attractive, whether God and the blessings He offers or the enticements presented by Satan. That Satan has the power to present the ultimate alternative to God plays an essential role in God's plan for mankind.

Suppose a king seeks a bride among the women of his realm. He faces several problems. He doesn't want the woman he chooses to marry him for position, wealth, or power -- for the gifts he may give her -- but because she loves him. Therefore he must not command her to marry him even though he has the authority to do so. Moreover, she must be free to choose anyone else whom she might desire. If she truly loves

another, then the king would not want to coerce her, for if forced to be his wife she would always be resentful and unhappy. For the same reason God will not force anyone to spend eternity with Him. That would turn heaven into hell and fill it with unhappy, resentful people. Our hearts must be won.

What if the king tells the woman he desires to marry that she can choose whomever she will instead of him -- but then he banishes from his realm all other men who might possibly be his rivals for her affection? That would be unfair and it would make the contest for her love a sham. Satan, as the ultimate rival suitor for the affection of mankind, will not be banished by God until the end of history. In serving God's purposes to win a bride for His Son, Satan will seduce the ecumenical world church into becoming the bride of the Antichrist.

Though his show of love is a pretense, lust thinly disguised, Satan has power, wealth, success, and seemingly the ultimate pleasure to offer those who will worship him. God is saying to mankind: "If Satan's way is really best, if he has more genuine love, joy, pleasure, and satisfaction to offer than I have, then by all means follow him." David as psalmist, having weighed the alternatives and having seen the truth, declared:

Thou wilt show me the path of life: In thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore (Psalm 16:11).

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November 26  
THE DOOR  
Bill Griffin  
1995

A few years ago, Jimmy Dean had a TV program and when he would sign off every night, he always used the expression, "Keep the latch string out and the dog tied up, I'll be home in a little while." If you are not from the country and about my age, you probably do not grasp the meaning. The dogs were usually a pack of old dogs that laid around in the daytime daydreaming but seemed to come alive at night. They offered some protection as a warning system and sometimes if they were startled or did not recognize someone, they would bite.

Doors used to be made of just plain planks nailed together and braced to fit an opening. Level and plumb were words that did not apply. You just got a couple of hinges and nailed the door in the opening. There was not enough thickness to have a door knob, even if you could find one. When the door swung shut, there was a piece of board with one nail on the other wall that turned down and latched the door. You have seen these on early American style cabinets and furniture. Some of the doors had the board nailed on to the door and it lifted and settled into a wooden slot on the side wall. To open the door from the outside, there was a hole drilled above the latch and a string attached to the latch. The string was pushed through the hole. By pulling on the string from the outside, it lifted the latch from its socket and allowed the door to open. This was your basic door knob. When night came and everyone was inside, the string was pulled in. Snug as a bug in a rug.

Times were simpler then. The doors were not to keep a thief out but to keep honest folks honest. Anyone could have kicked the door off the hinges or broken the latch if they tried. Why?

There was nothing of value to steal. Everyone had the same thing. Nothing. It did help to keep critters out though.

At night that door was our security blanket. When we entered the house and closed the door, we felt safe and protected. There was only one way into the house and this comfort zone. Through the door. Any other way into the house meant someone was breaking in and did not belong there.

Behind the door was a haven from all the fears children have. The sounds and evil of the night. Fears of the young from the "boogie man". I heard about the boogie man so much when I was a kid, I had a horror of meeting him. I kept a constant crick in my neck looking over my shoulder. The darkness harbored all the unknowns the mind could imagine.

There is another door of safety for us. Jesus said in John 10:9, "I am the door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." Only through Christ can anyone enter the haven of rest called Heaven. In him we have peace and safety, that security.

Notice two things about these doors.

1. The door is the only entrance.
2. The door handles are on the inside.

Just as the handles are on the inside of the wooden door, the door handles to the soul are on the inside. Jesus says, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." The door handle to your heart is inside and can only be opened by you. Even though Christ could kick down the door, He will never do so. The choice is totally up to each of us. Have you opened the door to your heart to Christ?

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November 27  
THE FOOTBRIDGE  
Bill Griffin  
1995

Some years ago, a friend of mine bought some property in the country near Kings Mountain. The only problem with this property was the access. Most of it lay beyond a creek. Before the property was really usable, he had to build a bridge across the creek.

Now, with his being in engineering, and my being in construction, there is no way we should have to get anyone else involved. We would build the bridge ourselves. We were at his place one Saturday studying the lay of the creek and clearing the place where we wanted to put the bridge. To get from one side of the creek to the other meant going North about 50 yards and wading and jumping across on some rocks or going South and crossing over on a fallen log. We had been across the log before. Many times. Today was different though. I had a chain saw in one hand and a gasoline can in the other and was using them for balance. Just about the middle, I heard a pop. Not a crack or creak. POP! Before I could even shout, the chain saw went one way, the gas

can the other, and I went straight down. Dropped me right in the middle of a small sand/mud bar. PLOP! Straight up! Ankle deep in mud. Stunned! I thought we would have to get a tractor to pull the hippo out but when my friend finished laughing, he did come to my rescue and help me back up the bank.

That is how fragile the foot bridges of life can be. Hopes and dreams can be dashed with the failures. What appears to be solid footing may only be an accident waiting to happen. But, there is one bridge that can never be broken or washed out. That is the bridge that Calvary built between God and man - Christ - The cross. That is why the Bible states in Proverbs 14:12:

"There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death."

Is the bridge you are walking upon firm, or is it like the tree, waiting for just the right moment to drop you? With Christ, you never have to worry about falling.

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November 28  
THE GIFT  
Bill Griffin  
1995

Have you ever received a gift that for some reason you threw into the closet and forgot about? Sure, we all have. Think about it: Is that gift of any benefit to you in the closet? Do the good intentions of the giver of that gift mean anything if you fail to use it? You may even have forgotten you had a gift in the closet! When you accept Jesus as payment for your sins, he gives you God's gift of the Holy Spirit as "his stamp

of ownership on you" [Ephesians 1:13]. The question is this: What are you doing with that gift? Jesus wanted His disciples then as now to see that the only way to carry out His purpose in this world is not only to receive the Holy Spirit, but to let Him be a vital part of our living and being.

Receiving God's gift means nothing unless we use it. We must allow the Holy Spirit to teach

and guide us through this life, or we may as well leave Him in the closet of our hearts -- alone and forgotten. What a shame it is when we fail to

capitalize on the effect that the power of God's daily presence can have on our lives.

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November 29  
THE GRAVE  
Bill Griffin

Nothing holds more fear over man than the grave. We all dread the thoughts of death and burial, to be put aside, not to be able to communicate with this world again. Graveyards become by-words used for scaring others. Movies portray them as morbid at times. Imaginations become vivid when confronted with the dead and the grave.

*There was once a graveyard close to a pub. The graveyard became a short cut for some. Drunk people have no hang-up about walking through a dark graveyard. One night, a particular drunk was walking through the graves when he heard, "Helllp meeee!" He paused for a moment and started to move on when he heard it again. "Helllllp meeeee!" The voice was near so he detoured toward the sound. Soon he came upon a freshly dug grave. Another drunk had stumbled and fell into the grave and was so drunk he could not get out. When he saw the other drunk, he called out, "Help me, its cold down here." The other drunk replied, "You ought to be cold, you done kicked all the dirt off o you!"*

If we could ever truly believe the one who holds the keys to the grave, it would have no hold on us. The grave is not only a resting-place but a hiding-place, to the people of God. Christ has the key to the grave - To let in now and to let out at the resurrection. He hides men in the grave, as we hide our treasure in a place of secrecy and safety; and he who hides will find, and nothing shall be lost.

"O that you would hide me, not only from the storms and troubles of this life, but for the bliss and glory of a better life! Let me lie in the grave, reserved for immortality, in secret from all the world, but not from you, not from those eyes which say my substance when you first made me in the lowest parts of the earth."

Paraphrase: Psalm 139:15-16

Noah was remembered in the ark, where God not only hid him from the destruction of the world, but reserved him for the reparation of a new world. The bodies of the saints shall not be forgotten in the grave. There is a time appointed, a time set, for their being brought forth.

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November 30  
THE PRICE  
Bill Griffin

We had one movie house in Ellijay, right downtown on what was called the 'square.' Most small mountain towns have a square or circle downtown. There was a small area in the middle for a veteran's statue, a phone booth, and a large cedar tree which was decorated every year for Christmas. The businesses were arranged in a 'square' around this 'circle.'

When I was a boy, it cost ten cents to go to the movie. If we were lucky enough to get a quarter, we could have the price of admission, and, money for pop corn and a drink. We could go to the matinee on Saturday at about one o'clock and stay all day. By the time we would go home, we could give you a play by play description of the cartoon, the serial, and the main attraction. The 'News Reels' were a different story. We did not care what was going on around the world or in Korea at that age. Bring on the MGM Lion and let him roar! We came to see Tarzan, or Gene Autry, or anything but the news.

When the price of admission went up to fourteen cents, we cried like babies. Where in

the world were we going to get four more cents? Even pennies were hard to come by. Now-a-days people throw them around or away just so they don't have to carry them. Not so back then. We had to do odd jobs, or collect whiskey bottles to resell, or use a 'push [No motor]' mower to cut a yard. Sometimes, we even had to resort to cutting pulp wood. We really had to work for that little bit of entertainment.

There was another price increase many years ago. The price went from 'animals' to 'man.' This increase was costly to God. There is sacrifice associated with this love. It is the love of One who paid the greatest price. In a world that cares little for human life or rights -- regarding them as things -- we are loved by Jesus Christ and we matter to Him.

Revelation 1:5... 'To Him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood.'

God's Son, alone on the Cross was the ultimate price paid for you and me. We were made in the image of God; in the heart and mind of God, we are worth saving.

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