
September 01
GOD IS GREAT
Bill Griffin
1995

Have you ever tried to envision something with out seeing it, just on someone else's description? It's like trying to tell a well frog how big the ocean is. That was how I felt when people described the ocean and the beach to me when I was young. I just could not imagine that much water anywhere, even though I could see it on a globe or atlas.

I was nineteen when I saw the ocean for the first time. Awestruck is the best way I know to describe myself. After all the water I had to carry in a bucket or a number 10 washtub with my brother and sister, here was enough water to have filled every tub we had every day for our lifetimes.

The ocean has become my favorite place to feel the presence of God. I have had the privilege of being on the beach for a sunrise service on Easter. Nothing has ever stirred my heart like listening to the resurrection story

just as the huge red globe we call the sun burst forth over the morning horizon. It was as if I was standing on holy ground. Never have I felt closer to God than at that moment.

I still can't describe God's greatness, however. Songwriters try. They call Him "King of Kings" and "Lord of Lords." But they cannot describe Him. The psalmist tried. David called Him the "King of Glory [Psalm 24:7-9]. But the shepherd singer couldn't describe him either.

Maybe it does come down to what happens on the beach in the early morning as the sun comes up. Gazing at God's handiwork, my heart recognizes what my tongue cannot tell. My heart sends up a hundred alleluias to ricochet off the clouds. Until the moment we see Him, we have to believe His word.

Job 36:26 says ... "We cannot fully know His greatness or count the number of His years."

Sept 02
GOD SPOKE
Bill Griffin
1995

Can you imagine being there when God created the earth? Those six fantastic days of heavenly interior decoration were awesome. And God didn't do it with graphs, color charts, or mixers filled with materials. He just spoke! "When He spoke, the world was created; at his command everything appeared. -- Psalm 33:9.

He said "Let there be light", and the darkness fled. The light did not sneak into the darkness and push it away little at a time. It was instantaneous. The darkness fled! He said "sky" and there was a sky. He only had to speak to create the earth and sea and sun and moon.

But did you know that God actually 'worked' to create you? Only with man did God do more than speak. He picked up the clay and molded it into a

form and called it "Adam". He breathed into the man to start his heart and lungs pumping and blood flowing. Man became a 'living' being. He gave to man something He did not give to the other creatures. He gave man "His image." God's attributes are our heritage.

God has been speaking to us ever since that day. His Word has shaped and moved and motivated those who would hear Him. He spoke to Moses from the burning bush, and not only a man was changed, but a people. He spoke to Mary, and a Savior was born. He spoke to Saul of Tarsus, and the message of salvation was proclaimed to all people.

God speaks to you and me today. That holy word of His that brought forth the earth can make something wonderful out of you too.

September 03
GOD'S SAFETY ZONE
BILL GRIFFIN
1995

I found this story and analogy in a magazine and want to share it with you just as it is. We all want to know that we are protected by God in all that we do.

An old preacher in England, who had lived on the American prairies in his youth, was involved in street corner evangelism in the small towns and villages. He attracted an audience with his wild-west stories describing how the Indians had saved their wigwams from prairie fires by setting fire to the dry grass adjoining their settlement. "The

fire cannot come," he explained, "where the fire has already been. That is why I call you to the Cross of Christ."

He continued his graphic analogy by explaining, "Judgement has already fallen and can never come again!" The one who takes his stand at the Cross is saved forevermore. He can never come into condemnation, for he is standing where the fire has been. That is what Paul was trying to say in Romans 5:9..."Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!" The saved person is in God's safety zone, cleansed by the blood of Christ.

September 04
GOD'S VALUE SYSTEM
Bill Griffin
1995

How do we value the results of our efforts and those of others? Must the results always be perfect in order to be of value, or is the intent and effort to be considered?

When Samuel went to anoint the future king of Israel, he expected God to choose the one who was most visually appealing. One by one, Jessie's sons, probably striking young men, passed before

the prophet but God said no to each one. "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." Asked if there were any others, Jessie replied, "There is one left tending the sheep."

To God neither the age of David nor his lowly task mattered. God saw the heart of David, a young man who, though he was to have many struggles in the future, had a heart that was totally committed to God. David became known as a man after God's own heart.

Our value system is not God's. We compare the beautiful child to the homely urchin, the

successful businessman to the civil servant, the wealthy baron to the lowly peasant, the great preacher to the timid saint, commending one and ignoring the other. But God penetrates the outward appearance, the obvious success, the eloquent speech, and he sees the heart.

September 05
GUARD DUTY
Bill Griffin
1995

When I first went into the Army, one of the things used to teach us discipline was "Guard Duty." Every private in boot camp had to take turns at guard duty as often as the rotation came or until boot camp was over, whichever came first.

I could not understand at that time why we had to walk around an empty building or some railroad box car out in the boon docks. Especially when it was ten degrees and all the clothes we owned never seemed to be enough.

To be caught sleeping while on guard duty was a court martial offense. Most of us learned to either sleep with one eye open or learn to walk and sleep at the same time. Sometimes, the building would have a furnace room on the end and we could duck in, warm ourselves for a minute, while peeking out, keeping a look out for the duty officer.

I remember one of my occasions. I was taken about five miles out into the country, dropped off at a switching area for the post rail cars. My job for the night was to guard about a half dozen empty railroad cars. Cold!!! BRRRRR! Worse than a well digger in Alaska. I finally found that I could climb under the cars, lean against the wheels, and get partial relief from the wind and cold. I made one mistake though. I got too cozy and dozed off to sleep. UMMM. Bad timing.. I was roused from my sleep by the sound of a jeep

pulling into the gravel parking lot. I had to hurry to scoot out the other side without being seen and commence a hunched over walk on the other side to convince the officer that I was 'walking my post.' Thank goodness jeeps are noisy on gravel.

I realize now that the process was to teach us to remain alert. Even though we were not supposed to be in enemy territory, we were being trained for those times if they should occur. Viet Nam was very active and many young folks found themselves there, using just those skills.

I am glad I have One though who never sleeps on guard duty. Look at the words of the Psalmist in Psalm 121:3-4...

'He will not let your foot slip -- He who watches over you will not slumber; indeed, He who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.'

He is ever watchful and aware of the enemies we face each day. Pride, prejudice, hatred, despair, worry, temptation, the list could go on and on. Your list may be different or the same, but you still have a list. God does not watch over us without a reason and No Christian is ever off-duty for God. Look at John 4:35...'I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.'

We should always be on duty to share Christ where ever we go.

September 06
RENEWED STRENGTH
Bill Griffin
1995

When I was in High School, we had a track team for both boys and girls. Determination was required along with speed and stamina. Every one of those runners got tired from time to time. What kept them going? In a race, it may have been the cheering of the crowd or the hope of winning a prize. It may even have been the simple hope of finishing the race.

Living life is a lot like running a race. There are hills and valleys. There are times when we feel as if we can run forever. There are other times when we think we just can't go on. When we become weary in the race of life, what keeps us going? Encouragement from family, friends, and church? The hope of

completing goals we have set for ourselves? God has given us these and other sources of encouragement. Even more, God Himself can be a source of renewed strength for us.

"But those who hope in the Lord will find their strength renewed. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint. [Isaiah 40:31]

When life has you down, find hope in God. When you feel that you don't have the strength to handle the problems you face, God will renew your strength. If you run with God, you can finish the race of life.

September 07
HEADED TOWARD DISASTER
Bill Griffin
1995

The year is 1960. I have an old 1949 Ford with tires that are so thin, you could read a newspaper through them. Never owned new tires. Never owned even new retreads. We just drove and patched the tubes until we could not find another spot to patch. Then we would keep an eye out at the dump for another tire. Maybe someone would discard one that would fit.

The closest drive-in movie was sixteen miles away in Blue Ridge, Georgia. My friend, Jim, and

I, had managed to find dates for the evening and we were motoring on down to the movie. Jim and his girl were in the back and I was driving, using one arm, since the other surrounded the girl. I only knew one way to drive. "Trimming my toe nails on the fan." Speeding. We rounded a curve when I heard a "Phweeft". One of the may-pops had popped. It did not blow out with a bang, it just let go. I guess one of the patches decided enough was enough.

We began to swerve from side to side - gravel flying. The car did begin to spin. Three times it swapped ends, flipping around in the road. The girls were screaming, trying to hold on. There were no seat belts and everyone was being slammed from one side to the other. I didn't have time to scream or even think. I was holding on to the wheel with both hands. We finally slammed backwards down a ditch and into a culvert. By some miracle, no one was hurt. Maybe needing clean underwear, but not hurt. When we could finally get our breath again and crawl out of the car and back up onto the road, none of us could stand. There was no life in our legs at all. Just wilted. Laid out on the side of the road in the dark, hoping someone would come by and be able to help us out of the ditch. Someone did come by, with a chain, and we were able to get out of the ditch. We even changed the tire and continued on

to the movie. Needless to say, the trip was much slower than I usually drive.

As I remember the incident now, I give thanks to God that He did take care of me that night. There was no thought of Him at that time. No thought it may be my last moment. I just took life for granted. Each of us need to take time to cherish every moment we have. It may be only a moment, but eternity is in it. As I reflect back on my past, I realize that God was taking care of me from my earliest childhood. If he had not protected me, I would have long been wrapped around a tree somewhere, still wearing my car.

The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.... Psalm 24:1

Notice that second line: I belong to him. He protected me. When I was headed for disaster, He had His hand on me.

September 08
HELPING THE NEEDY
Bill Griffin
1995

Godly people can be described as the "salt-of-the-earth." They bring about change in the lives of all people, but especially the poor. Godly people care -- really care.

A bum from the Bowery of New York City was admitted to busy Bellevue Hospital with a slashed throat. On that January morning, this shell of a man, looking twice his age, had fallen in a drunken stupor. In his semiconscious condition, he continued to beg for another drink. This charity case from a 25-cent-a-night flophouse was attended by a doctor, no one special. Unable to eat for three days, this unknown man died. Who cared?

A man came to the morgue seeking to identify this nameless corpse. The pocket of the derelict's jacket contained a scrap of paper that looked like the lyrics of a song. But who cared about this needy man? And so at age 38, Stephen Foster was silenced. No more "Camptown Races," "Oh! Susanna!" and 200 more songs.

What a difference just one godly person may have made in his life? Godly people give to the poor and needy, so that none will perish.

He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor; his righteousness endureth for ever; his horn shall be exalted with honor. -- Psalm 112:9

September 09
HIS EYE IS ON THE SPARROW
Bill Griffin
1995

We have a bird feeder that hangs from the beam on the patio. My wife keeps it filled with seeds and watches from the kitchen window when the birds come to eat.

During the winter, sparrows consider it their neighborhood hangout and come in flocks. Chilled and famished. When she goes out to replenish the supply, they flutter to nearby bushes or trees, patiently waiting in hungry, huddled little humps.

Sparrows don't have brightly colored coats -- just dingy, speckled, dirty-looking ones. And their only song is "cheep-cheep." But the Lord must surely love them, because He made so many.

Now the little brown birds are poking piles of untidy grass and sticks into any open spot in garages or barns or under eaves. Some people find

them a nuisance and shoo them away. Not me. They are an inspiration. I look at them and think of the words to the song:

"I sing because I'm happy, I sing because I'm free,

For His eye is on the sparrow, And I know He watches me."

There is No way to feel sorry or sad or insignificant when the King of Kings is watching over me.

Matt 10:29-31... Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.

September 10
HIS PRESENCE
Bill Griffin
1995

The leader in the church blasted the court volunteer, "You are an embarrassment to our congregation because you associate with the undesirables in town."

Why do we laud one another for visiting people in detention centers and jails or for sponsoring all kinds of support groups; then, reprimand one another for identifying with the same folks on our city streets?

Like the halfway house for ex-offenders who had an ample supply of furniture, food, and money

in the bank. All they needed were "friends to acclimate them back into society."

Would you miss your church one Sunday to accompany an ex-offender to the church in their community?

Would you help them adapt to new budget because of higher prices? Would you step from behind the sacks of groceries and checkbooks and offer yourself?

Instead of confining His presence to the synagogue and out of harm's way, Jesus walked the marketplaces of His society. As disciples, we are

His presence to the neighbor who shares a common fence, the morally good coworker, and the stranger cheered by a smile, the rambunctious student. Being Christ's presence means shunning anonymity and living on the cutting edge. You can be Jesus' presence because He constantly prays

for you. You can take the flak knowing none of us is good. We are forgiven.

When Jesus said we are "in the world, but not of the world", He did not mean for us to give up on all the people we deem undesirable. Jesus showed by example that no one is 'undesirable' to Him. His life was used as payment for all.

September 11
I Was There
IN THE STAIRWELL
Author: unknown

You say you will never forget where you were when you heard the news, Sept. 11, 2001. Neither will I.

I was on the 110th floor in a smoke filled room with a man who called his wife to say "good-bye." I held his fingers steady as he dialed. I gave him the peace to say, "Honey, I am not going to make it, but it is OK...I am ready to go."

I was with his wife when he called as she fed breakfast to their children. I held her up as she tried to understand his words and as she realized he wasn't coming home that night.

I was in the stairwell of the 23rd floor when a woman cried out to me for help. "I have been knocking on the door of your heart for 50 years!" I said. "Of course I will show you the way home-only believe on Me now."

I was at the base of the building with the Priest ministering to the injured and devastated souls. I took him home to tend to his Flock in Heaven. He heard my voice and answered.

I was on all four of those planes, in every seat, with every prayer. I was with the crew as they were overtaken. I was in the very hearts of

the believers there. Comforting and assuring them that their Faith has saved them.

I was in Texas, Kansas, London. I was standing next to you when you heard the terrible news. Did you sense Me?

I want you to know that I saw every face. I knew every name-though they did NOT all know Me. Some met me for the first time on the 100th floor. Some sought me out with their last breath. Some couldn't hear me calling to them through the smoke and flames, "Come to Me... this way...take my hand." Some chose, for the final time, to ignore Me.

But, I was there.

I did not place YOU in the Tower that day-- you may not know why, but I DO.

However, if you were there in that explosive moment in time would you have reached for Me?

September 11, 2001 was not the end of the journey for you. But someday your journey will end. And I will be there for you as well. Seek Me now while I may be found. Then, at any moment, you know you are "ready to go." I will be in the stairwell of your final moments.

Glory to God

September 12
Where Were You (When The World Stopped Turning)
By Alan Jackson

Verse:

Where were you when the world stop turning on that September day
Were you in the yard with your wife and children
Or working on some stage in L.A.
Did you stand there in shock at the sight of that black smoke
Rising against that blue sky
Did you shout out in anger, in fear for your neighbor
Or did you just sit down and cry

Did you weep for the children who lost their dear loved ones
And pray for the ones who don't know
Did you rejoice for the people who walked from the rubble
And sob for the ones left below
Did you burst out in pride for the red, white and blue
And the heroes who died just doin' what they do
Did you look up to heaven for some kind of answer
And look at yourself and what really matters

Chorus:

I'm just a singer of simple songs
I'm not a real political man
I watch CNN but I'm not sure I could
Tell you the difference in Iraq and Iran
But I know Jesus and I talk to God
And I remember this from when I was young
Faith, hope and love are some good things He gave us

And the greatest is love

Verse:

Where were you when the world stop turning on that September day
Teaching a class full of innocent children
Or driving down some cold interstate
Did you feel guilty 'cause you're a survivor
In a crowded room did you feel alone
Did you call up your mother and tell her you loved her
Did you dust off that Bible at home

Did you open your eyes, hope it never happened
And you close your eyes and not go to sleep
Did you notice the sunset the first time in ages
Or speak to some stranger on the street
Did you lay down at night and think of tomorrow
Go out and buy you a gun
Did you turn off that violent old movie you're watchin'
And turn on "I Love Lucy" reruns

Did you go to a church and hold hands with some strangers
Stand in line and give your own blood
Did you just stay home and cling tight to your family
Thank God you had somebody to love

Repeat Chorus

September 13
IDENTITY CRISIS
Bill Griffin
1995

When we first moved into our house in Gastonia many years ago, I contracted with a private garbage collection agency to pick up my garbage weekly. Early one morning my wife made a mad dash out of the house when she heard the garbage truck pulling away. She was still in her bathrobe. Her hair was wrapped in big curlers. Her face was covered with sticky cream. She was wearing a chin-strap and a beat up old pair of slippers. In short, she was a frightful picture. When she reached the street, she called out, "Am I too late for the garbage?" And the reply came back: "Nope, hop right in."

Now I get to back my truck up to the back yard every week or so, load the garbage, and haul

it off myself. I think that decision was made while I was trying to catch my breath from laughing.

We need to be careful how we present ourselves to the world. Christ said we would have to be "in the world, but not of the world." While we are here, we are to represent Christ as His ambassadors. People should be able to see Christ through us, just as the garbage people saw what looked like garbage standing before them.

What does the world see when they see you? If you were being arrested for being a Christian, would the Prosecutor have enough evidence to convict you?

September 14
IN THE SAME BOAT
Bill Griffin
1995

Sir Walter Scott once made the statement: "The race of mankind would perish did they cease to aid each other." That statement goes along with this little story.

There were four men in a rubber raft on the ocean. The raft sprang a leak on one side. The two men on that side began to bail the in-pouring water. One of the two men on the opposite side asked his companion, "Shall we help them bail?"

His companion replied, "Why should we? The leak is on their side of the raft."

The point of this story is plain. We are all in the same boat. No person anywhere can be hurt

without all other people being diminished or endangered.

I find that I need to be reminded of this constantly. The memory of that story helps to remind me when I'm tempted to waste gasoline, or squander electricity, or even throw a chewing gum wrapper on the sidewalk. We are all fellow caretakers of this frail orb known as the planet Earth.

Jesus knew this, too. When He commanded all people to "Love thy neighbor," He was asked, "Who is my neighbor?"... Luke 10:29

His unforgettable answer was the story of the Good Samaritan, saying, in effect, "Your neighbor is always any person who needs your help. You must help him just as he must help you."

Even when WE feel WE can not love someone, we need to ask God to love that person through us.

September 15
DO IT AGAIN, LORD
Max Lucado © September 15, 2001

Dear Lord,

We're still hoping we'll wake up. We're still hoping we'll open a sleepy eye and think, "What a horrible dream."

But we won't, will we, Father? What we saw was not a dream. Planes did gouge towers. Flames did consume our fortress. People did perish. It was no dream and, dear Father, we are sad.

There is a ballet dancer who will no longer dance and a doctor who will no longer heal. A church has lost her priest; a classroom is minus a teacher. Cora ran a food pantry. Paige was a counselor and Dana, dearest Father; Dana was only three years old. (Who held her in those final moments?)

We are sad, Father. For as the innocent are buried, our innocence is buried as well. We thought we were safe. Perhaps we should have known better. But we didn't.

And so we come to you. We don't ask you for help; we beg you for it. We don't request it; we implore it. We know what you can do. We've read the accounts. We've pondered the stories and now we plead, "Do it again, Lord. Do it again."

Remember Joseph? You rescued him from the pit. You can do the same for us. Do it again, Lord. Remember the Hebrews in Egypt? You protected their children from the angel of death. We have children too, Lord. Do it again.

And Sarah? Remember her prayers? You heard them. Joshua? Remember his fears? You inspired him. The women at the tomb? You resurrected their hope. The doubts of Thomas? You took them away. Do it again, Lord. Do it again.

You changed Daniel from a captive into a king's counselor. You took Peter the fisherman and made him Peter an apostle. Because of you, David went from leading sheep to leading armies. Do it again, Lord, for we need counselors today, Lord. We need apostles. We need leaders. Do it again, dear Lord.

Most of all, do again what you did at Calvary. What we saw here last Tuesday, you saw there that Friday. Innocence slaughtered. Goodness murdered. Mothers weeping. Evil dancing. Just as the smoke eclipsed our morning, so the darkness fell on your Son. Just as our towers were shattered, the very Tower of Eternity was pierced. And by dusk, heaven's sweetest song was silent, buried behind a rock.

But you did not waver, O Lord. You did not waver. After three days in a dark hole, you rolled the rock and rumbled the earth and turned the darkest Friday into the brightest Sunday. Do it again, Lord. Grant us a September Easter. We thank you, dear Father, for these hours of unity. Christians are praying with Jews. Republicans are standing with Democrats. Skin colors have been covered by the ash of burning buildings. We thank you for these hours of unity. And we thank you for these hours of prayer.

The Enemy sought to bring us to our knees and succeeded. He had no idea, however, that we would kneel before you. And he has no idea what you can do.

Let your mercy be upon our President, Vice President, and their families. Grant to those who lead us wisdom beyond their years and experience. Have mercy upon the souls who have departed and

the wounded who remain. Give us grace that we might forgive and faith that we might believe.

And look kindly upon your church. For two thousand years you've used her to heal a hurting world.

Do it again, Lord Do it again
Through Christ, Amen.

September 16
INSIDE TROUBLES
Bill Griffin
1995

Spray paint won't fix rust. A band-aid won't remove a tumor. Wax on the hood won't cure the skipping of a motor. If the problem is inside, you must go inside.

Ever blamed your plight on Washington? (If they'd lower the tax rates, my business would work.) Accused your family for your failure? (Mom always liked my sister more.) Called God to account for your problems? (If he is God, why doesn't he heal my marriage?) Faulted the church for your frail faith? (Those people are a bunch of hypocrites.)

Reminds me of the golfer about to hit his first shot on the first hole. He swung and missed the ball. Swung again and whiffed again. Tried a third time and still hit nothing but air. In frustration he looked at his buddies and judged, "Man, this is a tough course."

Now, he may have been right. The course may have been tough. But that wasn't the problem. You may be right, as well. Your circumstances may be challenging, but blaming them is not the

solution. Nor is neglecting them. Heaven knows you don't silence life's alarms by pretending they aren't screaming. But heaven also knows it's wise to look in the mirror [inside self] before you peek out the window [outside self].

Consider the prayer of David: "Create in me a new heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me" (Ps. 51:10).

Real change is an inside job. You might alter things a day or two with money and systems, but the heart of the matter is and always will be, the matter of the heart.

Are there any unsundered worries in your heart?

"Give all your worries to him, because he cares about you" (1 Pet. 5:7).

The German word for worry means "to strangle." The Greek word means "to divide the mind." Both are accurate. Worry is a noose on the neck and a distraction of the mind, neither of which is befitting for joy.

September 17
IRONING WRINKLES
BILL GRIFFIN
1995

When I enlisted in the Army, I had to learn to do a lot of things for myself. Quickly! How to sew on a button. How to wash clothes in the sink in the latrine. How to iron clothes. I had a taste of a lot of these things because I grew up on a farm where we all had to pitch in and do our parts. There were no "hers" and "his". The chores were all "ours." I just had to refine and perfect these items because mama was not there to assist or guide me any more. I wasn't about to ask a Drill Sergeant for advice. It worked out though. By the time I was through with my three years, I felt like I would make some woman a good wife.

I can remember a time though when I was trying to iron a uniform using my footlocker as an ironing board. I was pushing the iron all over the shirt but the wrinkles were not coming out. Of course I discovered, then, that I had forgotten to plug the iron into the electrical outlet.

How often we try to smooth out the wrinkles in our lives with an iron that isn't plugged in to the Power Source. We struggle and push against our problems, hoping to iron them out by our own efforts, but the stubborn creases remain. Yet all the time we have access to a power that can smooth out the troubled places in our lives if we will only keep the connection intact.

If there is a problem worrying you today, take a few minutes to sit quietly with closed eyes and plug in to the presence of God. Don't fill up the silence with pleas for help. Just sit in the stillness until you feel the current of God's power coursing through you. Then return to your daily routine. The problem will still be there, but now the power to cope with it will be moving through you, smoothing the way for a solution.

"The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me." Psalm 138:8

September 18
JAILED
Bill Griffin
1995

When I was younger, I thought I could do as I pleased. I drove at speeds that were really life threatening. I never thought anything could happen to me. Because of my speeding, I was invited to spend some time behind bars in a couple of local jails. Usually, this time was just until someone could post bail and get me out. My driving did not impress the Highway Patrolmen. I personally helped to make Highway 74 a four lane between Charlotte and Fort Bragg.

Even before I could drive though, I was running from the law. My uncle operated a liquor still in Ellijay. He made the booze, my aunt sold

it. When I was about fourteen or fifteen, I was helping my cousin keep the fire burning under the cooker. Our job was to keep the wood coming. For our reward, we had a small barrel included, and what we produced was ours.

One day, we were stirring and sampling our barrel when a man stepped out of the edge of the woods into our small clearing and said, "Don't move, you're all under arrest." Before he could take another step, my cousin and I had already started running - out the other side of the clearing at a dead run. My uncle just sat there. The revenue officer had stepped out right at him

and had his hand on his shoulder. The other man with us ran too, but there was another officer close enough to catch him. My cousin and I did not know there were just two of them. We ran until we could run no more. We jumped behind a fallen log and made ourselves part of the landscape. We listened as they chopped the still into tiny parts. When we could hear no other foot steps or voices in the woods, we proceeded to run in a round-about-way that would eventually take us back to the house. Up a creek to keep the bloodhounds from following. Never-mind the copperheaded-rattle-moccasins which may be hanging around. We were more worried about being arrested than we were bitten. We did get away that day without being arrested though.

The revenuers were more interested in the grown-ups than they were in two teenaged boys. I ran from many things for a long time. Successfully, too. But one day the Sheriff from Heaven came and arrested my soul. Since that day, I have become a prisoner to His cause. Philippians 3:12 says . . .

Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.

I am not perfect, nor will I ever be in this life. Why did Christ arrest me? I do not know. But I do try to determine that cause, and then I try to be obedient to it. May each of us search for our own cause and obey it.

September 19
JUDGMENT DAY
Bill Griffin
1995

The following story appeared in Reader's Digest recently and hits close to home.

Henry Wallace, law enforcement officials say, is a nightmarish example of what can go wrong in a system that often relies on understaffed local police and courts to deal with an exploding criminal population.

Wallace was arrested on a burglary charge in Washington State in January 1988 and served eight days in jail. He violated his probation, and a nationwide warrant was issued for his arrest.

Wallace went to South Carolina, where two years later he was charged with criminal sexual conduct against a 16-year-old girl. Authorities didn't know about the Washington State warrant, and Wallace was allowed to enter a special pretrial intervention program for nonviolent offenders. He was ordered to perform public service and to partially pay for counseling for the victim.

Less than a year later, Wallace was arrested and convicted of burglary and larceny and served less than four months of a ten-year sentence. In 1992 Wallace was arrested on a criminal sexual conduct charge in Rock Hill, S.C., but he was released from jail on his promise that he would come back for a trial.

Today Wallace sits in jail in Charlotte, N.C., awaiting trial for the murders of ten women, all of which occurred while he was wanted in Washington State.

We wonder how these people can continue to walk the streets of our society and decent people must lock themselves in their own homes for protection. In our society, the criminal has all

the rights, the victim has none. Criminals can 'plea bargain' to the point that some may never do the time for the crime.

We are caught between a rock and a hard place. Like the fellow who had his doctor tell him; "You're over your original virus, but it looks as if you caught Dutch elm disease from the tongue depressor!"

Every one of us must make our plea bargains here on earth, criminals and decent folks alike. There is coming a time when there will be no plea bargains. Judgment will be swift. Judgment will be final. There will be no appeal to a higher court. THE HIGHEST POSSIBLE COURT WILL HAVE MET.

Rev 20:11-15... And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found No place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

September 20
KEEPSAKES
Bill Griffin
1995

When my mother died a few years ago, my brother and I had the duty to go through all her belongings to determine what to do with each. Old newspaper clippings. Papers that were the drawings of children saying, "I love you Grandma." Photos past and present. Things gathered over the period of a lifetime. Keepsakes, one and all.

I guess it was really at that moment that I realized that the owner of those mementos was dead, gone. She had gone to a place where pictures and papers are of no use. She would walk this earth no more. Real treasures, lasting treasures, are not here on this earth. The ones

that matter are those that are stored in heaven. Jesus said it in Matthew 6:19-21.

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

One day all the keepsakes we store in the backs of our closets will be taken by our loved ones to save in their closets, or sold to someone else or thrown away. But the treasures of love

and personal friendship with Jesus can never be taken from us. The hours we spend in prayer and

daily devotion, the wisdom we 'store away' from the Bible will go with us beyond this life.

September 21
LAMP TO MY FEET
Bill Griffin
1995

A popular comedian today issues the statement, "If going to the bathroom involves shoes and a flashlight, you might be a redneck." I never thought of myself as a red-neck when I was a kid. Never knew such a thing existed. That was just a fact of life in the North Georgia hills.

I can still remember the dark path that lead from the back door of our house, across the small barren back yard and along the edge of a slope to the woods. Just a foot path. One mistake and you would find yourself sliding down the side of the slope into a briar patch. Most of the time you came out okay except for the shredding.

Learning to traverse the trail in the dark was a real feat of agility. Loose rocks. Old tree roots. Slick red dirt when it rained. All of these added to the peril of a nightly trip.

A flashlight would have been nice to light the way and guide our path but we could never afford one. If we could find one, we never had

batteries. Lanterns were not of much use because when you held it out to light the path, it made you as 'blind as a bat.' Mostly night vision and remembering when and where the trail turned was all we had. That and a lot of luck.

Word pictures help us to understand Bible passages. Life can be as dark as night, causing us to become confused, afraid, uncertain what to do next. The words of the psalmist in 119:105: "*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path*" should be a comfort to each of us when we are experiencing the dark periods in our life. Reading God's Word restores confidence and faith in God's guidance in our lives.

One other point should be noted. A flashlight's beam does not light the entire length of the path, only the next place we are about to step. We must return to God's Word again and again, trusting that step-by-step God will lead us through life until we reach the full light of His presence in heaven.

September 22
LIFE AFTER DEATH?
Bill Griffin
1995

Job's question, "If a man dies, will he live again?" [Job 14:14], has been asked by every succeeding generation. It was not satisfactorily answered until God's Son said, "Because I live, ye shall live also" [John 14:19].

Robert Ingersoll stood before his brother's open grave and said: "Life is a narrow vale between the mountain peaks of two eternities. The skies give back No sound. We cry aloud and the only answer is the echo of our wailing cry." How tragic that so many anguished hearts, like this well-known infidel, have cried up into the skies without faith in God, only to hear the echo of their own lamentation! In earth's "narrow vale," how many pilgrims have lost their way!

Job gives us a startling picture of the brevity of life in Chapter 14:1-3. The image in this section describe with clarity just how temporary life is: "a rotten thing," a "moth-eaten" garment, "a flower," "a shadow." Each of these speaks of the tenuous nature of human life on planet earth. Life, says Job, is transient and temporal, even at its best.

Man's trouble starts soon after he is born. Life's shortness is bad enough, but even the short span man does have on earth seems filled with difficulty.

Job moves from the brevity of life to the hopelessness of human existence in Chapter 14:10-12. He points out that death means to be removed from this world on a permanent basis. A man cut down by death will not revive again, as a tree cut down will. If the body of a tree is cut down, so that only the stump is left in the ground, though it seems to be lifeless, it will still shoot out young sprouts again as if newly planted.

Vegetable life is revived by the presence of water. The warmth of the sun revives life for many living things in the animal world. But human

beings are too great and too noble to be recalled from death by any of the powers of nature. Man's life beyond the grave is out of the reach of the sun or rain. Life after death can only be provided by the Omnipotent Himself.

From hopelessness to hope. Chapter 14:13-17. A very remarkable change occurs in verse 13. Job turns from hopelessness to a new possibility. Suppose there is something beyond the grave. Suppose physical death is for man a time of waiting, so that beyond its mysterious barrier God would call him into renewed meeting with Him. This possibility leads Job from the expression of dark hopelessness toward a new dawn of hope.

All things may be against you. Your friends may desert you. Circumstances may seem to conspire against you. But if you are righteous, God cannot and will not desert you. If you die under a cloud, even death will not prevent your vindication. Your Redeemer lives, and one day you shall again see God. And to see God is to have life.

When David Livingston asked the natives of central Africa what became of their noble river, they, having never seen an ocean, replied, "It is lost in the sands." We know another wonderful river, the river of human life which rushes through our world, spreads far and wide, and flows on through the ages.

What becomes of this river of life? Skepticism says sadly, "At death it is lost in the sands." But we can never be content with such a solution, for it is No solution at all. The Lord Jesus alone enables us to see beyond the sands of time into the vast sea of eternity. Through the mist comes the music of a vast heavenly choir and the vision of a "cloud of witnesses" whose sins have been washed white in the blood of the Lamb of God.

That is why today our mourners are musicians, our graves are filled with flowers, and our epitaphs are hallelujahs!

September 23
LIFE'S DEEPER MEANING
Bill Griffin
1995

All of us have questioned at one time or the other, the meaning of life. Attached is a little story I found that deals with deeper meanings and appearances.

An engineer, a psychologist, and a theologian, all from Atlanta were hunting in the hills of northern Georgia. They came across an isolated cabin, far removed from any town. Because friendly hospitality is a virtue practiced by those who live in the mountains, the hunters knocked on the door to ask permission to rest. No one answered their knocks, but, discovering the cabin was unlocked, they entered. It was a simple place -- two rooms with a minimum of furniture and household equipment. Nothing was surprising about the cabin except the stove. It was large, potbellied, and made of cast iron. What was unusual was its location: it was suspended in midair by wires attached to the ceiling beams.

"Fascinating," said the psychologist. "It is obvious that this lonely hillbilly, isolated from humanity, has elevated his stove so he can curl up under it and vicariously experience a return to the womb."

"Nonsense!" replied the engineer. "The man is practicing the laws of thermodynamics. By elevating his stove, he has discovered a way to distribute heat more evenly throughout the cabin."

"With all due respect," interrupted the theologian. "I'm sure that hanging his stove from the ceiling has religious meaning. Fire LIFTED UP has been a religious symbol for centuries."

The three debated the point for several minutes without resolving the issue. When the old mountain man finally returned, they immediately asked him why he had hung his heavy pot-bellied stove by wires from the ceiling. His answer was succinct: "Had plenty of wire, not much stove pipe!"

We need to be careful sometimes how we try to figure out life. Maybe we should remember that God planned it, we just need to live it. Proverbs 3:19-20 tells us:

[19] "By wisdom the Lord laid the earth's foundation, by understanding he set the heavens in place; [20] by His knowledge the deeps were divided, and the clouds let drop the dew."

September 24
LIFE'S DRIVING COURSE
Bill Griffin
1995

My father was a mechanic. He never went to school past the third grade and could barely read and write. Mostly just mechanical books and pictures to assist him in the auto business. Education did not keep him from being smart though.

He used to get on my case about driving. "Boy, if you want that car to last, you have to take care of it."

"How's that?" I would ask.

"Don't race the engine." "Don't drive fast until you've gone at least five miles." "Keep off the curbs and you won't knock the front end out of alignment." "Don't make 'jack-rabbit' starts." "Don't ride the clutch." "Don't ride the brakes."

"That sure is a lot of don'ts," I commented, mostly mumbling under my breath.

He would chuckle. "Yeah, I suppose so, but if you want to avoid repairs and get smoother performance, practice these little tips."

It's the same way in my relationship with God. If I'd regularly follow more of the little tips He's given me in the Bible about daily living, my Christian life would be a lot more fulfilling.

"Don't overtax yourself unnecessarily; don't rush into a day without a purpose; don't get into arguments that put relationships out of alignment; don't rush into judgment; and don't be so stubborn that you cannot accept advice without criticism."

Our prayers and God's mercy are like two buckets in a well; while the one ascends, the other descends.

September 25
LONELINESS
Bill Griffin
1995

Loneliness is one of those problems that everyone will face sooner or later. When I was sent to Miami to work during the hurricane restoration, I missed my family. There were times that I was lonely even though I had all manner and numbers of people around me. All of a sudden, I would just feel lonely. Do you know what that is? That is missing someone. Missing their fellowship, their companionship. Just to talk to them, to hold them.

There is another loneliness built into man. The loneliness for God. We were made for fellowship with Him. We were made to love Him. We were made to be with Him. That fellowship was broken when man made the choice to sin. We do not find fulfillment or purpose in life without fellowship with Him.

But even in spite of our breaking the fellowship, the Bible tells us that "God so loved

the world that He gave His only begotten Son". God the Father loved us enough to give us His Son. Jesus the Son loved us enough to go to the cross and lay down His life voluntarily. No one took it. He gave it away. God the Spirit comes to live in our lives when we turn again to Holy God and Christ for the cleansing and forgiveness of sins. He loves us enough to stay with us even when we do things that bring shame to Him.

When God breathed into man the breath of life, it was like placing a lamp inside man. That lamp shined brightly until sin put it out. It did not cease to be a lamp, it was still a lamp, but now there was No light. When Christ died on the cross, every lamp inside man was empowered with the ability to be turned on again. That is what the Spirit does when He comes to live inside us. Our dormant lamps are once again lit and light can flow from within us again. Have you rekindled

your lamp? Is it once again shining in the
darkness to lead the way for someone to find

their way to the savior?

September 26
God, Speak To Me
Author: Unknown

The man whispered, "God, speak to me"
And a meadowlark sang.
But, the man did not hear.
So the man yelled "God, speak to me!"
And, the thunder rolled across the sky.
But, the man did not listen.

The man looked around and said,
"God let me see you"
And a star shined brightly.
But, the man did not notice.

And, the man shouted,

"God show me a miracle!"
And, a life was born.
But, the man did not know.

So, the man cried out in despair,
"Touch me God, and let me know you are here!"
Whereupon, God reached down and touched the man.
But, the man brushed the butterfly away and
walked on.

Don't miss out on a blessing because it isn't
packaged the way that you expect.

September 27
LOSING WEIGHT
Bill Griffin
1995

A few years ago, I decided to loose some
weight. I had gotten to the point that I had to
hold my hand up to see if I was walking or
rolling. My only form of exercise at that time
was climbing a high bar stool and bending my
elbow. I am still no athlete. I get shin splints
from a fast game of chess.

I tried yoga exercises, but when I did the
headstand, everything went black, and I couldn't
breathe. It was scary. Then I realized it was
because my fat had rolled down over my head and
cut off my air supply.

When the yoga didn't work, I decided I needed
to take up jogging. When I started to jog, I
forgot about the fat in front of me bouncing with
each step. I did okay until my shirt slipped out
of my jogging pants, up over my belly, and my

belly plopped up and hit me in the face. My
belly-button suctioned to my forehead and I
almost smothered. When I finally got it loose, it
left a big hickey. My wife asked me if I had been
jogging with "Jaws."

When all the programs failed, I had to resort
to being what I had to be to lose weight. I
started a proper diet, and with moderate
exercise, I did lose thirty pounds. (I have
since found every ounce of it and some I think
someone else lost.) Not all programs are for
everybody.

Our service to God is the same way. We are
not all on the same program. It is only when we
find the program God has for us as individuals
that we can begin to enjoy what He has planned
for us.

September 28
LOVE OF THE WORLD
Bill Griffin
1995

At the age of 17, I graduated from high
school in Ellijay, Ga. I walked up one side of
the stage, received my diploma, walked down the
other side, outside, picked up my suitcase and
left home. I wanted to see the world. I knew that
if I stayed in Ellijay, the only scenery I would
see would be the hind end of a mule. I went to
the city. Spartanburg. My father was living there
at the time and I thought I would go to work with
him in his garage. It was okay for me and him but
there was a problem with his current wife. The
wicked stepmother syndrome. One month was all we
could stand of each other and one of us had to
have some relief. I went to the Army recruiter's
office with a friend and we both signed up for
the Army. We took the tests. I passed. He failed.

Before I knew it, I was at Fort Jackson, S.C.
Seventeen, alone, ready now to do all the things
I had left home to do. I did them. I found them.

In a bottle. I could have been a good genie.
The devil didn't dig a hole and tell me to
jump into it. I walked into it one step at a
time, and I took the first step when I decided to
place my priority on being a success in the eyes
of others. 1 John 2:15 describes this part of my
life. "Do not love the world, nor the things in
the world." It is now a strong warning for me and
for all Christians. We are not to love the world
or the things in the world. If we do, our
priorities will shift to something other than
Christ. We will walk away from Him one step at a
time.

September 29
LOVE YOUR ENEMIES
Bill Griffin
1995

Matthew 5:44 . . . But I say unto
you, Love your enemies, bless them
that curse you, do good to them
that hate you, and pray for them
which despitefully use you, and
persecute you;

Do you have a boss that sometimes takes his
frustrations out on you? Do you hate to go to
work?

A little story for you:

*There was once a man who worked in
a bank. His boss was a skinny little man
who kept bicarbonate of soda in his desk
to soothe his churning, angry insides.*

[He could have been at the telephone plant just as well.] This man hated to go to work. Until, that is, he learned the secret for handling difficult people.

One day when the boss was being unfair, he mumbled a "Bless you!" under his breath. He meant to be sarcastic but right away he thought he heard the Lord's voice whispering, "That's the idea! Ask for a blessing on your boss."

The next morning he decided to try an experiment. Whenever his boss got angry, he would ask God to bless him.

At first the experiment seemed to fail. For instance, one morning he arrived at the bank ten minutes early. The boss greeted him with, "Decided to get to work on time for a change?" ("Lord, thank You for this man and bless him", he prayed.) Later his boss criticized him in front of a customer. ("Lord, bless my boss and bring him

peace.") On and on the experiment went, always with the same apparent failure.

But then an interesting thing began to happen. He accidentally learned that his boss had a painful back problem which he never talked about. Later he also learned that the boss' wife was an invalid who constantly nagged him.

Suddenly his "Bless You" prayer had a new focus. His feelings began to shift. The boss was still a bit testy but then he did have a lot to put up with!

The secret was not that the boss changed; he changed. He started to see his boss as a needing, hurting man. And when that happened he began wanting -- really wanting -- God to bring him His best.

Sound familiar? Maybe you need to "love those who persecute you" and pray for a blessing on them.

September 30
MADE TO SOAR
Bill Griffin
1995

Deuteronomy 32:11 describes the preparation the Lord makes for us to enter into life's ventures.

As an eagle stirreth up her nest,
fluttereth over her young, spreadeth
abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth
them on her wings:

The mother eagle teaches the eaglets to fly by making the nest uncomfortable. Forced to leave the nest, they flounder in the air. The mother eagle swoops under, lifting them higher for another attempt.

God pushes us to the edge of our comfort zones, forces us to use wings. Yet He is ever present to keep us airborne. Our problems may be blessings in disguise. The mistakes make us less critical of others. Trials develop spiritual maturity and help us to fly high.

A little story to illustrate:

One eagle's egg rolled from the mountain nest and rested among some goose eggs. When the eggs hatched, the mother goose saw a big, muscular creature among the goslings. The little eagle never felt at home. He never waddled well, ventured into the pond, or dug for bugs. He sat stately on the bank.

One day he heard the call of one eagle to another. Looking up he saw the peaks. Quivering with excitement, he moved his broad wings. He flapped them. To his surprise, they lifted him up from the mud toward the peaks of the mountain. The eagle was not born for the muck and mire. He was born to soar toward the sun.

We were not born to live by the precarious standards and pressures of this world. We were born for bold adventure - to soar with the Son. We must first look up, to see where God wants us
