

newsletter



Matthew 5:17 (ESV)

Christ Came to Fulfill the Law

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.”

We will continue our walk through the 10 commandments with 8,9,10, listed in Exodus 20: 15-17. Remember that the 10 Commandments are a heavenly design to protect your dignity, self-esteem and self-worth.

Commandment #8: “You shall not steal.” Someone once said that a thief is a person who has the habit of finding things before the owner loses them. This commandment simply says, don’t steal! The Bible is quite clear that God owns everything and wants us to be good managers of it. So why do people steal? To support a habit, many do that. Excitement – most juvenile car thieves never intend to keep the car. They steal for the thrill. Social justice – you disagree with the government and protest silently by cheating on your taxes. Economic justice – Some people think they’ve worked hard and deserve more than they’re getting besides the company will never miss it. Greed! Enough is not enough.

Every thief robs themselves of the pride of workmanship, the pride of earner ship, the pride of ownership and the pride of stewardship. So why did God give this command? So that you and I would be free to work and succeed, free to risk and taste the dignity that comes through every act of effort. And in the end we would be free to enjoy the pride of workmanship, ownership and stewardship.

Commandment #9: “You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.” This means the sanctity, the sacred holiness of truth in all areas of our life. God’s Word, the Bible, says to get rid of all slander, keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking lies, guard your mouth, keep your conversation full of grace and seasoned with salt, keep a tight rein on your tongue, and keep your lips from deceitful speech.

We are known by what and how we say things. Are the things we say right and honest? Are they constructive and inspiring? Are they kind and uplifting? Do they encourage? If they are, then chances are those around you will see you as thoughtful, sincere, loyal, neighborly, and dependable.

What and how we say things probably has more to do with our self-respect and the respect from others than any other single factor. Mark Twain said, “It is better to remain silent and thought to be a fool than to open one’s mouth and remove all doubt.” In the book of James, he wrote the tongue is a fire and can corrupt the whole person and sets the whole course of their life on fire.

Ps 19:14 sums it: “May the words of mouth and meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.

Commandment # 10: “You shall not covet...” This commandment is not meant to remove from your life the pride, happiness and pleasure that things can give. Rather this command is meant to put contentment, satisfaction, and fulfillment into your life. It’s as if God is saying, “Look inside yourself, don’t look outside. If you want contentment, search your soul. Don’t envy someone else’s possessions.

Things are not in and of themselves wrong. I have things. I like my things. You also have things. But consider these questions to yourself: Do my things make me free or enslave me?

Do I exist for my things or do they exist for me? Do my things drag me down or lift me up? Do they identify who I really am? Do my things give me positive feelings of self-worth? Or, are my things phony props for a low self-esteem? Does my ego need them? Can I say that the things I have help give me a healthy and wholesome way of life?

Now go and guard your dignity, self-esteem and self-worth through right action and right speech.



Are You Plugged In?

Glenn Koster

As you read this you will quickly notice a change in the content of my monthly column. While it will continue to include words of encouragement, I am going to try to focus on what is going on within the First Church of God, from Sunday School to Bible study – and all points in between.

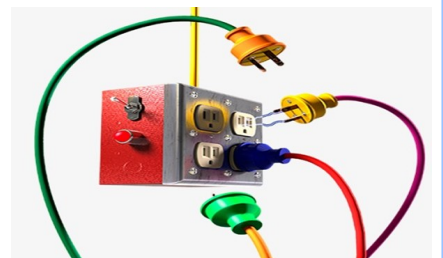
As we begin the new year, the Faithful Followers Sunday School class will begin a new series that focuses on love and trust, which are two key elements necessary for us to have a meaningful relationship with God. However, the love and trust is not **our** love and trust, but God's love that allows us to trust with our whole lives. We will look at what it means to hold fast to God's love during the first week. In subsequent weeks we will explore how our selfish desires cause us to lose out, how Paul overcame his suffering, and the humble example Christ set for us. We will wrap up the unit by focusing on the perspective we get from knowing that Jesus is Lord. We begin (somewhat) promptly at 9:00 a.m. by sharing our prayer concerns and praises, two critical things that help to build up the body of Christ while simultaneously helping us to trust God. Come on out a bit earlier and join us!

On Sunday evenings, a growing Bible study group meets in the fellowship hall. With more than a dozen folks now in attendance, we continue to welcome new folks to join us. We have been walking through the Book of Ezra and hope to wrap up this study by the end of the month. It has been an amazing journey to see how such a minor Old Testament prophet has a message even for believers in the modern world. Just a note, the group will not be meeting on January 20 because I will not be available either in person nor by Internet. Speaking of using the Internet, the group does have some occasional attendance from folks as far away as Kentucky and Pennsylvania. If you have someone you think might be interested in joining us, contact me for the necessary link.

On December 23, L.I.F.E. Outreach held their first Candlelight Christmas Dinner in the fellowship hall. For many, this was the first candlelight dinner they had ever experience. But it proved to be even more powerful because as those in attendance were seated, each was announced and those seating and serving them provided them with a round of applause. Some who attended said it was the first time anyone had ever clapped for them. The "L.I.F.E." in L.I.F.E. Outreach is an acronym that stands for **L**ifting **I**ndividuals **F**rom **E**mptiness. With more than a dozen volunteers on hand to help, this truly was an experience to help lift these folks.

But where else can you plug in? Our church provides a food pantry. We have an incredible music team. We can always use folks to help usher. Maybe your love is kids and you want to help Pastor Tim with a Sunday children's message? We can use more help with L.I.F.E. Outreach on a regular basis. We even have the occasional need for those willing to pick people up for church. We will explore these options (and many more) in the coming months.

If we want to be a growing, vibrant church ministering to the world, it will require everyone to find a place to plug in and be used by God. Are you plugged in?



It Came to Pass



Just
A
Thought

It Came
To Pass

By
Cindy
Hogan

Well, folks, it's been another year. Another year that seems to have passed a bit faster than the one before. How is it that when I was a child, it was an eternity between summers, birthdays, and Christmases—and now I find myself asking, “It’s already ‘that time’ again? Wasn’t it just yesterday...?”

When I was younger, this is something I remember the generation before me saying, and now, it’s me. It’s as if growing older has happened. Does that mean I’m... OLD? Hmmmm, say it ain’t so!

This aging process is just so odd. As a teenager I wanted so badly to be older—to be an “adult”. That was where the REAL living was! Just as kids are today, I was clueless about how precious each day of my youth was. Then, in my twenties, I hardly knew what to do with my adulthood. Here I thought things would simply fall into place once the age did, but no. I found out that real living meant you received some unexpected bumps and bruises, and serious lessons. While those experiences continued for another decade into my 30’s, the feeling of ‘being older’ was slight, and mostly internal. Externally, I could hang with much younger people and not really stand out like a sore thumb. Often I got the: “You’re HOW old?” response to my age.

When the forties swung around, I was really feeling that desire to hide from my aging, but the noticeable effects weren’t big things—just a lot of little things—a little more difficulty keeping the bod in shape, and in opening the mayo jar, more lines and wrinkles were appearing in the mirror that used to be so friendly, and wow, my feet really hurt at the end of the day, and pulling those gray hairs was beginning to be a threat to the hair count.

Now, I’m into my fifties, and I kid you not, the downhill slide steepened significantly! I swear, the DAY after my 50th birthday celebration, I noticed I had bags under my eyes—make that bag, singular—below my left eye. As I peered into the mirror, I knew it had not been there the day before, and the celebration had not been THAT big of a shindig. Now the workouts that I used to do as a good habit are a requirement to getting this aging body through the day. I pay for over-exertions for WEEKS. Making sandstone steps years ago left me limping like someone 30 years older, and required several trips to the chiropractor to get my hip to behave again! A task like that may have worn me out a couple of days just a little while ago! And, while I hate to admit it, I know I have arthritis in my hands, and even in that hip. Oh, and the sore feet thing? Worse! I have already done the heart monitor thing—the ticker’s fine, but it has aspirations of jumping out of my rib cage from time to time.

Over the years I have mentored a few psych interns, and the realization that I was old enough to be their MOTHER was kind of traumatizing. Oh, and I’ve noticed how conversations with peers seem to unintentionally venture into topics about menopause, surgeries, the mysteriously vanishing waistline, and various aches and pains. How did this happen dear brethren and sistren??

One day at a time, baby, one day at a time.

I look at people older than me (and trust me, the age for older has dropped drastically from when I was 30), and I appreciate how good they look, think, act—because I know it takes hard work and finesse! I recall my aunt telling me said she looked at her reflection and asked herself, “Who is that old woman in the mirror?” I can totally relate! It doesn’t matter that I typically FEEL like I’m still 30ish. After several minutes in front of the make-up mirror, I have to admit to myself there is really no more that can be done. It’s just not going to get better.

And, I haven’t even mentioned the mental toll of aging. It was years ago when then 95-year-old aunt tisk-tisked my horrendous memory and asked, “Cindy, what will you be like when you’re MY age?” I shudder to think. Really, I do. As much as I truly enjoyed the anesthesia during my cancer/reconstruction surgeries in my forties, I do believe many of my brain cells floated off to la-la land never to be used constructively again. *(continued on back page)*

Fresh Start

By Laine Alex Moore



I want to start the new year off right. And I will do so by looking back.

Over the next couple of days, I will be taking some time to sit down and assess the year 2018. What were my goals at the beginning of the year? What did I hope to accomplish? How have my prayers been answered by my Father this year? What unexpected blessings did He give me? There are many things to ponder, so I will be writing it all down for myself. Maybe I will sit in the coffee shop with my journal and favorite pen. Maybe I will see you there, doing the same.

As I look over my year, I know I will be reminded of the things I didn't get right this time around. It may not be obvious *why* I didn't succeed in some areas, but that doesn't mean I failed. Only the Lord can see the big picture and I'm glad He knows what He *has* accomplished in me and through me this past year. I will try again.

Looking ahead, I don't want to list so many goals that I feel undue pressure, but I do want to be honest. (Deep-down-honesty with *myself* is a bit of a challenge!) I want to approach the weeks to come with a well-rounded perspective. I'm not going to be able to tackle everything at once. I just want to make progress.

I believe the most important piece to consider in the new year is God's Word. What has your focus been in the past? Did you commit to a certain path of study? I accepted a challenge to read through the entire Bible in a year. I went home that day and looked at reading plans online, selecting one that offered variety and seemed logical to me. I did great until May! I read diligently, and I think the part I enjoyed most was not having that lingering sense of guilt that said, "Have I read my Bible today?" Every day I just jumped in! However, I missed one day when I was in the hospital. That did it! With my all-or-nothing mentality, I struggled from there on.

One thing I was disappointed about with reading the Bible through was just moving through the books without really *studying* each segment as much as I liked, and really needed. It was more fast-paced and I basically got an overview. Yes, I read it all but I would like to take each portion and really absorb it.

In light of all this, in 2019, I have decided to use a study plan that I believe will help me dig in below the surface. The focus is on observation, interpretation and application of a passage. This plan emphasizes prayer and gratitude, as well as tracking the progress I'm making on my spiritual goals. I'm excited to begin but truthfully, a clever set-up is not what will help me mine God's Word for truth – it will take me actually putting forth the effort to study!

Have you given any thought to what you might focus on in your Bible this year?

Today is the day to begin!

Just think how different your life could be at the end of 2019!



January 2019

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p>Happy New Year</p> <p>coloringpage.eu</p>			<p>2</p> <p>Pattie ♥ Gerald Belden</p> <p>Creyton Nisly</p> <p>Laine Moore</p> <p>Lukas Schwiebert</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>4</p> <p>Felip Orozco</p>	<p>5</p> <p>Merna Sanburn</p>
<p>6</p> <p>Annual Business Meeting after service</p> <p>1:00 L.I.F.E.</p> <p>5:00 Bible Study</p>	<p>Fundraiser for Mona at Pizza Ranch 4-8</p> <p>Logan ♥ Caley Robinson</p>	<p>8</p> <p>Prayer Group</p> <p>9:30 am.</p>	<p>9</p> <p>Logan Robinson</p>	<p>10</p> <p>Julie White</p>		
<p>13</p> <p>Dennis Fischer</p> <p>1:00 L.I.F.E.</p> <p>5:00 Bible Study</p>	<p>14</p> <p>Overcomer's Outreach</p> <p>6:30pm</p>	<p>15</p> <p>Council Meeting</p> <p>6:30p.m.</p> <p>Prayer Group</p> <p>9:30 am</p>	<p>16</p>	<p>17</p>	<p>18</p>	<p>19</p>
<p>20</p> <p>Dakota Arpin</p> <p>Willa West</p> <p>1:00 L.I.F.E.</p>	<p>21</p> <p>Overcomer's Outreach</p> <p>6:30pm</p>	<p>22</p> <p>Prayer Group</p> <p>9:30 am</p> <p>Khalin Scott</p>	<p>23</p>	<p>24</p>	<p>25</p>	<p>26</p> <p>Carol Moore</p>
<p>27</p> <p>1:00 L.I.F.E.</p> <p>5:00 Bible Study</p>	<p>28</p> <p>Karson Nisly</p> <p>Ellen Mathias</p> <p>Overcomer's Outreach</p> <p>6:30pm</p>	<p>29</p> <p>Prayer Group</p> <p>9:30 am</p> <p>Orville West</p>	<p>30</p>	<p>31</p> <p>Elna Fager</p>		

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Charlcie Koster, Administrative Assistant

Tim Nisly, Custodian



(Cindy Hogan—Continued)

So what, I ask you, is the point to this checking off yet another year's passing, which results in adding yet another year—sometimes painful-- of aging to our lives?

Aside from being a better alternative to dying, there's a few things I've gained through the years that God has allowed me to keep counting. No doubt, the best is that I've learned the life-saving importance of holding on to my Savior, no matter what. Even when it doesn't make sense to me. Even when I'm tempted to loosen my grip.

Because I've seen numerous New Years slip by, I have been given the honor of being able to look back and see that old or not, year after year, I matter to Him. Through traumas and tragedies, I know I've been hidden in the cleft of the rock, and I've seen proof that He's passed by.

Years ago, I gave my niece some advice I think I'll take myself: "Take note of each passing year—it's one more year I didn't have last year, and a chance to decide what I'm going to do differently for the one coming up!"

Even if you don't believe in resolutions, these are some pretty good ones to shoot for:

Keep Jesus the focus at all times.

Learn to be still and ponder, and write your ponderings down.

Remember the lowly.