

VOICE OF CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

VOLUME 15 ISSUE 12

DECEMBER 2008

“THE KID IN ME AT CHRISTMAS”

It's a shame that we have to grow up and leave all of those fun things that we did as kids. We didn't have much at Christmas time, but the spirit was there and the understanding of the holiday still lingers in my mind from those formative years. The old house in which we lived only had one fireplace for a source of heat and we would all gather around it to stay warm and reflect on the meaning of Christmas. Most of the family and the old house is gone now but those memories are part of what allows me to enjoy the Christmas holidays as I do today. One present was all we would receive for we couldn't afford more but that present was monumental to me. Today, we have our own families and we have the responsibility to pass on the tradition. To me, Christmas is still a fun time and I hope that I never lose that spirit to the fast pace of life. Without sounding religious, allow me to say that Christmas is still the celebration of Our Lord and Savior's life and that America allows us the freedom to celebrate freely and joyfully. He is the reason for the season. May you and yours have a very joyful Christmas and New Year. Don't forget our New Year's Blessing Sunday on the 1st Sunday of the New Year. Happy Christmas and New Year from Christian Fellowship and your pastor and his family.

Pastor George Ferrington

SPECIAL CHRISTMAS PROGRAM

On Sunday, December 21st, the kids and youth will offer a special Christmas program for the Sunday morning service. This program will begin at 11:00 AM and will take the place of Sunday School and the worship hour. The services that day will begin at 11:00 instead of 10:00. All are encouraged to attend and enjoy what our kids have prepared for us at this very special time of the year. Also, Sunday, January 4th, will be blessing and communion Sunday. Pastor encourages all to come for this special annual service.

THE SUPERNATURAL POWER OF A TRANSFORMED MIND

“Putting the Will of God on Display”

When an Experience Becomes Understanding—I've made the decision that I can not go through life knowing that there are realms of mystery with keys available to me to unravel, and sit back and do nothing. I fully believe that Christians should not live their lives only in what they perceive as the natural realm. Why? Because we will stop growing spiritually, and will start leaning on our own understanding. When we live our lives with only that which we understand in the natural realm, we continue to travel the same familiar roads we have traveled all our Christian life. It's important that we expose ourselves to impossibilities that force us to have questions that we cannot answer. It is part of the Christian life experience, and that is why the Christian life is called a “faith walk.”

Expanding and Increasing Revelation—This realm of mystery and revelation goes far beyond

what we normally think of as “ministry.” Stored in the mind of Christ are vast resources of revelation of hidden mysteries. These areas include education, business, the arts, music, etc. Revelations in these areas have not yet reached anywhere near their fullness. There are melodies that have never been played or even considered. There is lyrical content that would minister deeply to the Church and stir the world causing them to praise God. What is our job? Is it not to stir the pot by tapping into revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ in our area of talent or gifting so that we can accurately and powerfully reflect the King and His kingdom? I am convinced that the pace of revelation will increase very rapidly in these last hours of history. Amos 9:13 says, “**The plowman [will] overtake the reaper.**” What did Amos mean? It means that the seasons won’t be so distinct anymore. They will overlap so that planting and harvesting will occur in the same motion. We will live in a supernatural season when understanding comes much more quickly and bears fruit much more dramatically.

Putting Revelation into Practice—The truth is, even as great as the spirit of revelation is, we must require an experience from what we believe. Pastor Bill Johnson shares the story of a ministry team from their church who was on a ministry trip in Johannesburg, South Africa. It seems they didn’t confine ministry to a church service or a healing line; they were instantly ready to respond to the Holy Spirit’s prompting wherever they went. After the main aspect of the trip was over, they were walking from their hotel to a restaurant, intending to relax and buy souvenirs. It was during this time that they came across a homeless man named Peter who was in a wheelchair. Peter shared how he’d been paralyzed for 11 years after falling from a height of four stories. He could not feel anything from his waist down and could barely move his arms. The day before, local hoods had taken him to a field and left him to die. Peter had given up on life, but heard God say, “If you stay here, you’re going to die.” So he crawled all the way back to town using only his arms. The team prayed for him and Peter started shaking crazily. “What’s happening to me?” he cried out. He began to weep and repent for being mad at God. He even promised to give up smoking. A team member went to put shoes and socks on his feet, and he felt a tickle in his toes, the first sensation he’d had there for 11 years. They lifted him up and he began to walk. His countenance completely changed. The man who had pushed Peter’s wheelchair for many years was saved, too, and they all sang together, “Our God is an awesome God.” By this time that parking lot became a scene of spontaneous ministry as word quickly spread about Peter’s healing. People stopped out of curiosity to observe what was happening, and soon they were saved and filled with the Holy Spirit. Then a car drove up and the driver was impatiently trying to get past the crowd. Team members approached the car and discovered that one of the occupants had been the one who robbed Peter and left him in the field to die. The man got out of the back of the car and fled the scene. The others saw how Peter was healed, and they gave their lives to Christ and broke off their witchcraft bands. In all there were around a dozen new Christians, some filled with the Holy Spirit, and a cripple who wasn’t crippled anymore—all on the way to get a bite to eat!

This above story is what is called putting revelation into practice. What we must come to understand is that renewing the mind is not merely reading words on a page and having a moment of revelation about a particular verse. The above passes for renewal of the mind in many churches, but at best that’s only half the equation. Real renewal comes as revelation leads you into a new experience with God, as those people had that day in South Africa. Yes, you may have a moment of inspiration while reading the Bible or listening to someone preach from the Scriptures, but without taking the next step into experience, the process stalls and there is no

renewal. This is backed up by what Jesus said in John 5:39: **“You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.”** These words by Jesus clearly reveal to us that revelation is meant to bring us into an encounter with God, and if it doesn't we only become more religious. The spirit of revelation was not designed to increase our head knowledge. That's a by-product at best. The truth is, serious mature Christians are probably all so “smart” in biblical things that we could drown in the flood of information! Bottom line, in order for us to renew our mind, we must not just think differently but live differently, in the new experience of the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

Gene R. Brown, Associate Pastor

FOOD FOR MY FELLOWSHEEP

“Gratitude for Dummies”

or

How to Develop an Attitude of Gratitude

Thankfulness is not something that can be faked very successfully. What if you read my article explaining how gratitude is a powerfully transformative practice that can actually improve our emotional and physical well-being. And suppose your personality is more akin to Dennis's neighbor, Mr. Wilson, or Hallmark's Maxine character. Well, not everyone can be Pollyanna. Okay, here's the scoop: **gratitude is not only an inborn trait, but also a state, which can be changed and yes, even cultivated!** So, here are some tips to get you started.

Start small. Commit yourself to noticing your blessings, and saying thank you to God and to others for them. For example:

- * Say thank you to other people as often as possible (and mean it).
- * It sounds old fashioned, but take the time to write thank-you notes in response to gifts you've received, events you've enjoyed, or anything else that deserves thanks. (By the way, this will make the recipient's day!)
- * Say grace before and/or after meals in thankfulness for the food that sustains you. God does take notice; He listens.
- * Set aside time every day to reflect on positive things-early morning, at bedtime, or during a walk. Whatever time works best for you. Father *longs* for you to spend time with Him.

Saying “thank you” isn't tough for most people; it can be a habit, something done automatically. Modeling a **spirit of gratitude** takes more effort, and requires a shift in thinking. When you're ready for the **next step**:

- * **See the giver behind the gift.** People are our greatest blessings. Be grateful for those who light up your life, who make life easier, who make your life worth living. When someone does you a favor or gives you a gift, of course gratitude should be expressed. But what about...
 - > When children behave? Acknowledging good behavior promotes more of the same.
 - > When your spouse goes to work every day? (Or cleans the house or is a full-time mom?)
 - > When someone in your path does a job well? (e.g., a store clerk, your housekeeper or lawn service, a receptionist, a teacher, your pastor, a student worker, or employer or employee)

> When you are blessed with good neighbors?

Expressing thankfulness impacts the receiver as well as the one giving thanks; it has a definite ripple effect!

* **Be thankful for each new opportunity.** Each day we are given a chance to make a difference in the world. Even in the midst of problems, we can find **something** to be thankful for. When mistakes are made (which are going to happen, as long as we are DOING anything), we can focus on the lesson learned, and be grateful that similar mishaps can be avoided in the future.

* **Keep a blessing journal.** Research has shown that folks who keep a gratitude journal on a regular basis—even weekly—exercise more regularly, report fewer physical symptoms, feel better about their lives as a whole, and maintain greater optimism about the future.

Sometimes we can get so focused on our “rights” that we forget to be gracious and appreciative of what we really do have. When modeling gratitude, we develop an awareness of appreciating small everyday experiences—and the people who make them possible. To say we feel grateful is not to say everything in our lives is great; it just means we are aware of our blessings. We can know disappointments while also being thankful for the good things that come just from being alive.

There is no quick fix to strengthen our “gratitude muscle”; the only way to become grateful is to act like a grateful person over and over. But practicing gratitude, learning to appreciate what we have, makes life more valuable and meaningful.

Be blessed, from your faith community nurse, Marcia Williamson RN

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**HAVE A MERRY
CHRISTMAS AND
A HAPPY AND
BLESSED NEW YEAR!!!**