

Pastor's Letter (December 6, 2019)

the Attitude of Gratitude

I had the blues because I had no shoes

until upon the street I met a man who had no feet

who was so sad until he met a man with one arm

who was sad until he met a man who had no arms or legs

Sometimes our gratitude can be very conditional and limited if we forget to be thankful to God all of the time.

Many of us have just celebrated Thanksgiving with family and friends and appreciated the opportunity to do so. It was also nice to also see various neighbors around expressing gratitude. This is because the Bible predicts (in 2 Timothy 3:2) that the majority will become increasingly unthankful, as society becomes ever more secular.

God gives us a powerful plea to remember how He has blessed us and as we know, He wants us to *be forever grateful!!*



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There is a special passage of Scripture that is especially important to remember on Thanksgiving Day and every day throughout the year – especially for all of us who live in this country – it is found in Deuteronomy 8:7-11.

Deuteronomy 8

- :7 For the Lord your God brings you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills:
- :8 a land of wheat and barley and vines, and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey
- :9 a land where you shall eat breads without scarceness, you shall not lack anything in it; a land whose stones are iron. And out of whose hills you may dig brass
- :10 When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land that He has given you.
- :11 ***Beware that you forget not*** the Lord your God, in not keeping His commandments, and His judgments, and His statutes, which I have commanded you this day.



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Just a Fraction of What God has given us

Yes, as you surely know, we must always remember God has uniquely blessed us in this nation and the Bible gives us many admonitions to never forget what He has done for us. Here is a partial list:

- Psalm 126:3 The LORD has done great things for us, forever we are glad
- Psalm 103:2 Forget not all of His benefits
- Ephesians 5:20 Giving thanks always for all things unto God
- Psalm 34:8 Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD
- Psalm 59:16 I will sing of your power; I will sing of your mercy in the morning, for you have been my defense and my refuge
- Psalm 34:1 I will praise God at all times
- 2 Samuel 22:50 I will give thanks to you ... I will sing praises unto your name
- Psalm 99:3 Let them praise your great and awesome name
- Psalm 98:1 O sing unto the LORD ... for He has done marvelous things
- Colossians 3:17 Whatever you do ... give thanks to God
- 1 Thessalonians 5:18 In everything give thanks to God
- Jeremiah 33:11 praise the LORD of hosts; for the LORD is good.. ,
- 1 Chronicles 16:34 O give thanks unto the LORD for His mercy endures forever
- 1 Chronicles 29:13 therefore, our God, we thank you and praise your glorious name
- Psalm 100:4 Enter into His gates with thanksgiving
- Psalm 107:1 O give thanks unto the LORD, for He is good, His mercy endures forever
- Psalm 69:30 I will praise the name of God with a song and will magnify Him with thanksgiving

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More of what God has given us

Local Evangelism Efforts

We have begun the invitation of *Beyond Today* subscribers in a campaign that will continue for several months. The goal is to connect with local subscribers of the magazine and foster a positive relationship by which they will 1) know we are nearby 2) know we are happy to help them where we can, and 3) eventually establish ourselves to them as their local “go-to” source of Bible information.

Rather than invite them to a one-time seminar, we will do this first round of presentations on “Why You Were Born.” That happened last Sabbath for Ocala. It will occur tomorrow in Tallahassee; on January 11 in Ft. Myers and on January 25 in Vero Beach. Traditionally, on average, 1.7% of invitees actually come. But what if they are invited, say on three separate occasions within five months? Response averages could improve. The closest project that did some of this was the Kingdom of God seminars that sent an invitation and then one follow up reminder letter. However, we aim to do three invitations per church area. To my knowledge, that approach has not been tried in too many places, if, at all.



Local Ocala brethren addressing 200 envelopes for Tallahassee

Our experiences may be valuable and worth sharing with other church areas on this later. If we recall, all of us did not immediately write in for literature or ask to be visited or come to church as soon as we received information about the church. It is the same with our subscribers.

Last week we had two people call me after receiving their invitation letter. That represents just more than 1.7% of the subscriber list. Although 98% did not respond, perhaps they will on the 2nd or 3rd presentation that we will sponsor. Traffic last Saturday on I-75 was terrible. Possibly that could have served as a deterrent to response but it is more likely that people need a persistent nudge to make a connection with us. This takes time and we must remember that this project is long-range.

It was great to see all of the brethren in Ocala involved in such a project. It enables brethren to be a part of the Great Commission of Matthew 24:14 and Matthew 28:18-20. Based on past experience, we likely will pick up new church attendees that may eventually become members.

Several brethren have already given some valuable input. One suggestion is to establish a stronger connection between the *Beyond Today* program and the United Church of God in the minds of the subscribers. We can place on the return address labels both the name of the church and “Beyond Today.”

Another is to make it a point to offer free booklets in our invitation letters, including those offered at earlier seminars that people may have missed.

Some suggested avoiding dates so close to Xmas and Thanksgiving. However we need to further understand our audiences and their inclinations better. Our most serious readers are probably coming out of Xmas and also may even be thankful enough at Thanksgiving time to focus on God. We may find out that any time is an opportune time to preach the gospel. It is part of our calling.

We continue to ask for your prayerful support on this ongoing project. Also remember to pray for those who wrestle with ongoing health issues.

And read of Bill Wilson and Ray King. . .

Long Live the “Dean” of Vero Beach...

Here is a picture of our deacon Bill Wilson after a 5-hour operation to repair one heart valve and replace another. I was able to get to him 2 hours after the operation was over. Here he waves a ‘hello’ with his right hand. He gave me permission to share this with you.



The plan is through rehab to have him walking the halls by Saturday and be home next week. This is great because I have him down for 3 sermons for the rest of December.!! Is that really true? Come and see!!!

Ray King – A Special Person



And finally, we give homage to one of the most precious members to grace our presence; long-time church member Ray King who died last Sunday after a long bout with cancer. A number of Ocala brethren visited him in Hospice days before

he died. The Braumullers and my family were with him the preceding Saturday night. That visit was quite convivial with a mix of humor, music and serious discussion. We had a prayer and in it I reminded us and Ray that based on what we know from the Bible, his life is just ready to *really* begin.

This coming Sabbath, I will be in Tallahassee to conduct the seminar on “Why Were You Born”. Jim Kocher (an elder in the Wheeling, WV church) will give the sermon in Ft. Myers, Moses Summers will be in Vero Beach, and Paul Bidetti will speak in Ocala.

Till next time,

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