



“The Vine”

Growing Together in Christ

Newsletter for New Hope Christian Fellowship

Are You In Jesus?

JESUS

Abiding In Christ

Surprises About The Unchurched

Jesus Loves The Little Children!

Are You A Lone Ranger Christian?

Melting The Ice

From Pastor Dennis

How Young Can You Be?

One of my favorite songs growing up was one I learned at Vacation Bible School, Jesus Loves the Little Children (words by C. Herbert Woolston, music by George F. Root):

*Jesus loves the little children,
All the children of the world;
Red and yellow, black and white,
They are precious in his sight.
Jesus loves the little children of the*

world.

Is it true? Does Jesus love children? It surely seems so when you read about his interactions with them. In Luke 9 Jesus sends the 12 apostles on an early mission to preach the Gospel and heal the sick. When they returned, they should have been celebrating all the new people who had received the message. Instead, some prideful ones began arguing - Luke 9:46-48 - 46 Then there was an argument among them as to which of them would be the greatest. 47 But Jesus knew their thoughts, so he brought a little child to his side. 48 Then he said to them, "Anyone who welcomes a little child like this on my behalf welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes my Father who sent me. Whoever is the least among you is the greatest."

Later there was a time when the disciples didn't want to interrupt the "work" of Jesus with little children "bothering" him - Luke 18:15-17 - 15 One day some parents brought their little children to Jesus so he could touch them and bless them, but the disciples told them not to bother him. 16 Then Jesus called for the children and said to the disciples, "Let the children come to me. Don't stop them! For the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these. 17 I assure you, anyone who doesn't have their kind of faith will never get into the Kingdom of God." Jesus made it clear that perhaps our greatest mission field is right here in our families & churches - our children!

Most churches want their young people to consider confirmation, taking their first communion and becoming a member at age 12 or 13. Most churches like us, who believe in infant dedication and adult baptism, want

their youths to consider being baptized at age 12 or 13. Why not become a full partner with Jesus before you go through your teenage years?

Some want to get baptized at eight or nine, and I have baptized a few that young, as long as they were sincere and had the approval of their parents. I was nine when I began to look for a deeper relationship with God. Don't ever tell a child he/she is too young to understand that Jesus loves them and to be with them forever. God knows and loves our children in the womb.

How young can you be? Josiah was only eight when he became king (2 Chronicles 34:1-4) and he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD. At 16 he become more serious about his relationship with God - In the eighth year of his reign (at age 16) while he was still young, he began to seek the God of his father David. In the years following Josiah bravely began destroying the false idols in the land.

Jesus said not to stop little children from coming to him. Let us bring them to him, the sooner and the younger, the better. Jesus loves the little children!

**Don't ever
tell a child
he or she
is too
young to
under-
stand that
Jesus
loves them**

The Vine

Growing Together in Christ



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The Vine is also available on line at New Hope Christian Fellowship's website. Check it out at <http://www.newhope4all.org/vine/vine.htm>

Reflections



A Day at Glacier Bay National Park

“What happens when nature wipes the slate clean and starts over from scratch? Today’s (Alaska) visitors can see the answer to that question during the course of one trip into the bay to the tidewater glaciers. Such a journey is like going back to the last ice age. The land near the mouth of the bay, long-ago released from the grip of glaciers, has had the most time to recover and is now blanketed by mature spruce and hemlock forests. As you travel toward the glaciers the vegetation gets younger and smaller, until you reach the face of the ice where nothing grows at all.”
(www.nps.gov/glba/pphtml/nature.html)

We just returned from an Alaskan cruise along with a number of NHCF members which included, **Russell & Phyliss Duke, Frank & Cora Guice, Larry & Linda Helscher, Lou & Irma Longoria, Ron & Linda Morgan, and Dennis & Maureen Warkentin.** We cruised the Canadian inside passage where we viewed many glacial formations in the mountains surrounding us.

The cruise ship spent one day at Glacier Bay, Alaska, a national preserve. The highlight of the day was our 3 hour stop at Marjorie Glacier, which drops dramatically into the bay. This close up look of a tidewater glacier was incredible. A glacier is the accumulated ice and snow which moves slowly down the mountain side. It’s literally a river of ice. The Marjorie Glacier is over a mile wide and 25 stories high. The ship stopped about one thousand feet from the face of the glacial wall.

Why would someone want to spend a few hours looking at a glacier, you ask? Well, aside from its grandeur and immense size, one can experience an exciting event called calving. No, we were not watching the birth of the glacier, but the birth of ice bergs (also

called "bergie bits"). As the glacier retreats chunks of ice fall off from its face. This is calving. The sound of the ice breaking from the glacier and crashing into the water can be exciting and dramatic. Our day at the glacier provided quite a few opportunities to witness this process.

Glaciers develop their own drainage systems to allow melted ice to drain off of the glacier. As we waited at the mouth of the glacier, we could also hear cracking sounds coming from the inside the glacier and could see muddy water rushing out from the base of part of the glacier - signs that some dramatic event was in the works. Although we witnessed quite a bit of calving, one large portion that was bulging from the face of the glacier finally gave way as our ship began move away from the glacier.

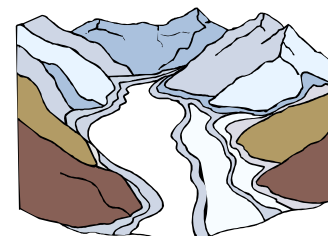
This got me thinking of how the Holy Spirit works on our cold, “glacially frozen” hearts. Our hearts can be pretty cold at times. The bible compares them to stone. But God begins to melt our hearts. We start to see things we never saw before. Sometimes it starts with a few chunks of ice falling off.

When we first arrived at the glacier it looked quite imposing and unmoveable. But there were forces acting on it that were changing it ever so slowly. Some of those forces we could see, like the rushing water pouring out of the glacier. But other forces, like the sun’s heat and the pull of gravity were acting on the glacier almost imperceptibly.

Then something would happen, a piece of ice would dislodge and come crashing down into the bay in front of us. Sometimes you could tell ahead of time where the ice would fall down, at other times it wasn’t that obvious. The same is true when God melts the hearts of those around us. Sometimes it happens slowly and sometimes it happens with a loud crash and a big splash causing those around to marvel at the results.

We can get impatient when friends and family don’t seem to respond to the gospel. But we shouldn’t overlook the never ending work of the Holy Spirit as His light and warmth continues to thaw the hearts of those whom God is calling.

- By John & Diane Siston



New Hope Happenings

NHCF Bible Studies Continue to Equip, Enrich & Change Lives

Sandy Blank took church life on Sunday July 9th along with Jeff Eisen and Al Baroody to update everyone on the Sunday morning and Thursday night Bible studies taking place weekly at NHCF. Sandy used the analogy of singing in the shower alone to singing together with a choir or playing a musical instrument alone and playing in an orchestra. The result of doing things together can produce something you just can't duplicate by yourself.

The same with group Bible study. Jeff mentioned that when you study the Bible together in a group setting you bring together the experience and guidance of the Holy Spirit of all the participants. The result is something you just can't get doing it yourself. He joked that sometimes "fist fights break out but we kiss and make up with a holy kiss," illustrating the give and take that takes place as well as even the fun that is part of the Bible study process.

Members were encouraged to attend the studies as a way of enhancing their Christian walk. Suggestions for future Bible studies were also solicited. Al Baroody gave a personal testimony reproduced below. - *John Siston*

A Lone Ranger Hangs Up His Spurs?

I have been a lone ranger Christian for far too many years. By that I mean I tried to figure things out on my own and pretty much not let other people get too close to me. I always lived with a certain amount of frustration and anger over things that have happened to me. Many of these feelings revolved around what

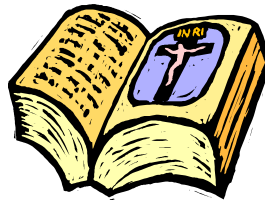
happened in the church. I have always felt a little uncomfortable when I heard people talk about their personal relationship with Jesus. I really could not identify with what they were talking about. I could not deny, however, that many of the people who were talking about Jesus did seem to have a sense of peace which I was lacking.

I can't explain it fully, but I am starting to find that peace. For some reason, studying

the Bible a book at a time in a group setting has allowed me to grow in ways I was not able to before. When a group of believers gets together the Holy Spirit works in a powerful way. I had some misconceptions about salvation which led to an incorrect picture of how God deals with us.

By the grace of God, the good news of the gospel has been penetrating my soul. I can honestly say I am beginning to see how real Jesus is and how much He does love us. I am excited as I continue this journey, to realize how important it is to put Jesus first in our lives, and see how He will never leave us.

- *Al Baroody*



Summary of a Thursday Night Bible Study on Colossians- How Big Is Jesus?

How big is Jesus? How will you respond to Him? Does knowing Jesus change your life, your priorities and your purpose?

Colossians tells us everything is in Christ:

- 1.14 In whom we have redemption
- 1.17 In Him all things hold together
- 1.19 All the fullness of God dwells in Him
- 2.3 All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Him
- 2.5 Your faith is in Christ
- 2.6 We are to live in Him
- 2.7 Rooted and built up in Him
- 2.9 All the fullness of the Deity lives in Christ
- 2.10 You have been given fullness in Christ
- 2.17 The reality is found in Christ

All things
Fullness of God
JESUS
Wisdom & knowledge
Our lives & faith
The church

All things, "in heaven or on earth, visible or invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities" (1.16), are in Christ, "who is the head over every power and authority" (2.10) "so that in everything He might have the supremacy" (1.18). The Father gave this authority to Jesus. "For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him and through Him to reconcile to Himself all
See Jesus on Page 7



Abiding in Christ



In the last 26 years, I've moved four times. I've changed banks and insurance companies three times and changed jobs a few times, too. I've changed my hair style more often than

I can count. I'm still on the same husband. Companies spend major bucks on advertising and constantly make their products new and improved to inspire product loyalty in their customers. They have to, because of cutthroat competition.

In the upper room, the night before Jesus was crucified, he talked to the disciples about what was about to happen, and what would happen to them after he was gone. He had spent three and a half years with them, and most of them already felt strong loyalty to him. But he knew they might have trouble when he was no longer physically with them.

What about us? Do we have product loyalty when it comes to Jesus? In John 15, Jesus likened himself to a vine and said to abide or remain in him.

But it's not easy to stay attached. Outside forces can affect our attachment to the vine: heat - trials and problems; insect damage - listening to criticism or negativity; cuts - damage from getting beat up by life; and frost - emotional and spiritual damage.

These might make us think it's better not to be attached. We might be tempted to get away from the vine and into the shade. Or run away from the insects, rather than stay and take the punishment. We could be weakened by the cuts and bruises and feel too weak to hang on. Or the frost might make us think we're going to fall off anyway, so we give up.

But if we stay attached to the vine, Jesus protects, nourishes, prunes, gives life and growth, and produces fruit. Apart from him we can do nothing.

But if we stay attached to the vine, Jesus protects, nourishes, prunes, gives life and growth, and produces fruit. Apart from him we can do nothing.

We can be proactive about staying with Jesus if we depend on the Holy Spirit for strength to do a few things. First, get our minds off ourselves. Most of us tend to put me first more often than we should. Abiding in Christ - sticking with him - demands we place our trust in him. As he subjected himself to the Father's will and humbly accepted his place as a human son, so we are to lay aside self and cling to the Vine for dear life.

Next, have rejoicing in Jesus as our main attitude in life. Rejoice in him as a response to joys and triumphs, as well as irritations and problems. As Paul said in Philippians 1:21, to live is Christ and to die is gain. Rejoicing in him in all circumstances helps us hang on through all life's vicissitudes.

Then finally, come to value Jesus above everything. What's really important? If Jesus isn't at the top of the list, it's time to evaluate our priorities. After all, we won't be taking any of our toys with us. At the end, Jesus is all we have.

Abiding in Christ is a commitment to stick with him, no matter what. To give him our loyalty, our hearts and our lives, even when the sun beats down and we start to wilt. Even when the bugs bite and sting. Even when we get beat up a little and get cuts and bruises. Even when the frost burns us around the edges. We will stay true to him, firmly attached to our Savior. And his life will continue to flow through us, producing fruit for others to enjoy and giving glory to our Father. - *By Tammy Tkach*

An Empty Space...

An empty space upon this page
Calls out to you of *any* age.
Come share with us a thought or two
So we can know some more of you!
As our Fellowship grows in this delight
New Hope springs forth and takes its flight.

- *By Diane Siston*

The Church



Without Mission There is No Church

“The Church exists by mission as fire exists by burning. Without mission there is really no Church” - Emil Brunner

Every year I have the opportunity to travel to Asia, Europe and North America to minister in many different churches. I meet on a regular basis with Christians and Christian leaders across the globe. What I want to share with you is that I feel spiritual sadness in my heart regarding the condition of the church today, especially in the developed world.

Most of the churches in the West do not have a real vision to pray for and serve the lost, and to send missionaries into the lost world. Often pastors mention something about missions and serving just before the collection is taken. But sometimes I wonder if this is more a ploy to motivate people to give, to ease people’s mind about the money that goes in the offering, rather than genuine concern.

Occasionally, such churches collect funds for short-term mission trips, or a specific project overseas, but they do not have a solid plan or even the intention to send out and support career missionaries. I have this message to share with such churches: “discover mission or die.”

Instead of reaching the unreached, many ambitious pastors of growing churches are simply trying to build “the biggest show in town”. Most of the growth taking place in churches consists of people floating from one church to another, not new souls coming to Christ. Pastors focus on sheer numbers, mere quantity rather than quality of growth, and there seems to be a competition going on about who is bigger and better. But is bigger always better?

Most of the churches in the West do not have a real vision to pray for and serve the lost, and to send missionaries into the lost world.

Most of the big churches I know have more problems and disunity than they can handle. Often big churches lack true worship, fellowship and spiritual growth. I often hear from people in big churches that no one really took time to talk with them. How horrible it is to be in a big church and to feel lonely! Most of the cell groups in North America are also ineffective and lack leadership. Thousands of churches close down every year. When will we learn that numerical growth is not a worthy spiritual goal in itself?

We need to build churches based on God’s word and His ambition for the local community and for the world. Otherwise, when God tests the church with fire from heaven, all that wood, hay and stucco will be burned up, and often nothing remains except what God has built in the lives of the people.

Another problem with North American leaders is that they let themselves be influenced by the principles of the business world. Most leadership literature focuses on marketing for churches, making profit out of the elderly in the congregation, using demographics, and becoming a CEO of a church corporation.

Serving and laying down our lives for one another for Christ’s sake is not often taught. According to several spiritual leaders I spoke with most of North America’s church and ministry leaders have wrong priorities, and this wrong teaching infiltrates the church or organization from the top. Having said this, I know of many real leaders and churches that are truly walking with the Lord and serving and worshiping Him. I do not want to be all negative but aim to tell the truth in love. I just hope we will be open to the lord to speak to us and give Him the opportunity to change us. - Dr. Joseph Chavady June 6, 2006
<http://www.christianity.ca/frame.html?http://www.christiantoday.com/news/editorial/dr.joseph.chavady.without.mission.there.is.no.church/96.htm>



Evangelism



Surprises About the Unchurched: Understanding Their Hearts & Minds

The following is a report from Christianity Today. We print it in the Vine as Part one of the full article.

Over the past few years, I have been privileged to enter a world that I really did not know very well. It is the world of the unchurched. Now, like many Christians, I have interacted with the unchurched, worked with the unchurched, socialized with the unchurched, and witnessed to the unchurched.

To read the full article please go to the link below:

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We who are leaders in the church must challenge the church members. When is the last time they invited an unchurched person to church? When is the last time they offered to meet someone and show him or her around the church?

Jesus From Page 4

things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. (1.19-20) There is nothing that is outside His control. It is impossible to exaggerate the greatness of Jesus Christ. We also see that Jesus needed such supremacy so that He could reconcile all things to the Father through His own death on the cross.

“Since, then you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above.” (3.1) Praise and thank Him for who He is. Worship Him with reverence and awe. He is our life. (3.4) - *Steve Blank*

What Will You Be Doing When The Minister Calls?

A woman was trying hard to get the ketchup out of the jar. During her struggle the phone rang so she asked her 4 year old daughter to answer the phone. "It's the minister, Mommy," the child said. Then she added, "Mommy can't come to the phone to talk to you right now. She's hitting the bottle."