

News & Notes

Sunday, January 1, 2006

Remember in Prayer: M. B. Anthony; Al Alberson; Sandra Albertson; Melissa Bennett; Patricia Cash; Sally Etta Crawford; Lawrence Dawson; Tommy Dawson; Flora Estes; Gloria Fortner; Carrol Holmes; Carolyn Jordan; Dot Kethum; Deliah Mann; Diane Mize; Howard Moody; Charlie Murfey; Hadie Pickens; Tate Peeler; Leyland Ray; Janet Rooker; Lillie Mae Shelby; Jayme and Trucilla Spence; Carrol Street; Calvin and Ollie Ursery; James Williams; Alvie Williford;

Sympathy is extended to the families of Doyle Cooper and Billy Sterling.

Pantry item for the month of January is peanut butter.

Several are gone today **traveling for the holidays**. Please remember all these in your prayers.

Special thanks to all who helped with the New Year's Eve get-together last evening. Everyone had a good time.

Sermon In Preview: Pressing Toward the Upward Call of God:

AM: Why Press Toward the Upward Call of God?

PM: How do We Press Toward the Upward Call of God?

For the Record (December 25, 2005):

Attendance: 81 Contribution: \$1781.00 Budget: \$1205.00

The Ashland Church of Christ

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Sunday:

Bible Study 9:30 AM

Worship 10:30 AM

Worship 6:00 PM

Wednesday:

Bible Study 7:00 PM

Shepherds:

Barney King

Carrol Street



ASHLAND ANNOUNCER

"I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14)

Theme for 2006

Jeremy Northrop

Once again, another year has passed. 2005 was a great year and certainly those who came benefited greatly from the study of the family and the home. It was designed to make the families of the this congregation better, more in line with God's word, and thus be a real benefit to the congregation here. 2006 begins today and with the transition in time, the shepherds have chosen another theme for the congregation here. In Philippians 3:14, the apostle Paul wrote, "I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." In this passage, Paul was expressing his desire to follow things greater than the way of this world. He was looking for God and His calling. As one looks throughout the Bible, it is clear that the way of God is better than the way of the world. Jesus said, "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:26). This year, the Ashland church of Christ joins Paul in the noble goal of the upward call of God.

To seek the way of God, first one must **reach in**. This is the necessary action of introspection. Twice in the book of Haggai, God exhorted the people through the prophet and simply said, "Consider your ways" (Haggai 1:5, 7). One can never convince someone else to follow a path that he himself is not on. Introspection or reaching in involves *humility*. Peter said, "Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time" (1Peter 5:6). One must come to the sobering reality that without God, there is no life worth living. Reaching in involves introspection and *acceptance*. It means

accepting things as God has created for them and the plan for redemption God has given the world. Jeremiah exhorted the world: “O earth, earth, earth, Hear the word of the Lord!” (Jeremiah 22:29). Too often times, finite human beings find themselves questioning an infinite God. They want to understand everything about God and why God has required certain things of man. Sometimes, people need to stop questioning God and simply start accepting what God has said. Acceptance leads one to do what God says and prepare for eternity. Paul said, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8). Faith is man’s part of accepting and doing what God says. Faith involves active work. “But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?” (James 2:20). Finally, reaching in involves *spirituality*. This is a both wonderful yet solemn fact: there is more to humanity than the physical side of life: “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:19-21). Paul said, “For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace” (Romans 8:6).

To seek the upward call of God, one must also **reach up**. One must be *dedicated* fully the will of God and look for biblical authority for all that he or she does (Acts 17:11; 2Timothy 2:15). Again, Paul said, “And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him” (Colossians 3:17). One must give *allegiance* to God through worship and righteous living (1John 1:7). A Christian is not seeking his or her own will but rather the will of God. This is the example Christ portrayed in His prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:42). One must surrender to God in *obedience* to His will. The words of Joshua still ring true today: “But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15b). It is not enough to simply believe God. James acknowledged the demons do that (James 2:19). The writer of the book of Hebrews said, “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6).

The Bible also teaches that faith is seen in action (James 2:18). Finally one must *grow* in the knowledge and wisdom of God. The writer of Hebrews reprimanded them for not growing saying they should have been mature but still need the spiritual milk of the word (Hebrews 5:12-14). The high call of God means reaching to God and His way and becoming the man or woman that God would want one to be. When one submits to the will of God, he or she will be blessed beyond measure (Ephesians 3:20).

Finally, the high call of God involves **reaching out**. *Fellowship* with other followers of God becomes a great blessing. The first-century church worked together (Acts 2:42). Peter spoke of a ‘like precious faith’ (2Peter 1:1). One of the great blessings for any Christian is the establishment of the church. Christians can know that they are not on the journey alone. The congregation can worship together, grow together and be pleasing to the Lord together. Paul was thankful for the fellowship he was able to have with other Christians (Philippians 1:3-5). Also, the church becomes a place where people can get their physical needs met. The church reaches out in *servitude* to others (Acts 2:44-45). One of the purposes of the church is benevolence or helping the poor. James said, “Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world” (James 1:27). Jesus said that when Christians perform acts of kindness of other people, it is the same as doing it for Him (Matthew 25:34-40). The church also becomes a place where one can find the greatest need of his or her entire life — salvation. Thus, the church becomes a place of *evangelism*. Jesus has commissioned the church in Matthew 28:18-20: “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” The church today strives to fulfill His command.

Reader, be a part of this most noble theme and goal. The conclusion of the studies this year will bring one to *application* of the will of God in his or her life. Only blessings await those who apply the will of God (James 1:22). Come and press toward the upward call of God.