

Church Of Jesus Christ
Mount Ayr Restoration Branch

NEWSLETTER

JULY 2010

Testimonies and Sermon Notes

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News and Notes

Reunion brings blessings

Many members of the branch took part in the activities of the Seventy Family Missionary Reunion at Graceland University in Lamoni. A drive with the sermons and classes from the reunion are available for those who couldn't attend.

Fourth of July celebration

A large group from the branch gathered for the Fourth of July celebration on Sunday, July 4, at Ron and Di Smith's home. Ask someone for a song that includes the word "blue" and you could get a long list. (That was one of the games we played).

Back to the Basics

Steve Cunningham
June 6, 2010

Sherman Phipps who presided used Mosiah 9:39-41 as a scripture to prepare us for communion. *"And now, as ye are desirous to come into the fold of God, and to be called his people, and are willing to bear one another's burdens, that they may be light; Yea, and are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and to stand as witnesses of God at all times, and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in, even until death, that ye may be redeemed of God, and be numbered with those of the first resurrection, that ye may have eternal life: Now I say unto you, If this be the desire of your hearts, what have you against being baptized in the name of the Lord, as a witness before him that ye have entered into a covenant with him that ye will serve him and keep his commandments, that he may pour out his Spirit more abundantly upon you?"* After partaking of communion, Steve Cunningham gave the following message.

"It's so nice to be back. It's been a while since we have been here. It seems like we have had so much going on in our lives since Easter. Things have been a little hectic around the Cunningham house, but we have always been blessed. I also appreciate this congregation. To come down here and be able to worship and minister with you has enhanced our family. We appreciate the spirit and ministry that you bring.

"I was talking to my Dad the other day who preached last week. We talked about our responsibilities as ministers. He said that a lot of times when he preaches, he finds out he is preaching to himself. Today I think I am going to be preaching to myself because in life there is a lot we have to endure but if we endure and remember what we are here for, we will be blessed.

"About two months ago, we started Little League. Little League is important

in our house. Jacob used to be involved but now only Steffie is involved. It takes quite a bit of our time. About four years ago we started a taxidermy business. In the past we have tried to get everything done before Little League started because Little League takes all of our time. This last year we had a very good year for our business, almost too good a year. We are too good to be part time but not good enough to be full time. We have quite a few jobs that we still need to be done. I always try to remember to make sure we spend time with the family. I try to make sure we have time to read our scriptures. Unfortunately, I am embarrassed to say, I picked up my Book of Mormon the other day and had to wipe the dust off literally. Many times when we get busy in life, it seems like Jesus Christ and the relationship we have with God is what suffers.

Before Little League started, I had someone ask me if I wanted to be assistant coach. I told Ron, the coach, in fact he was my coach when I was ten years old so he's not really old but sort of old, that I knew nothing about softball or baseball. I didn't know how many girls should be on the field or anything else. He told me that that was no problem that all I had to do was stand in the dugout and send the girls out when it was time for them to bat. I thought that was something that I could help with. Well, we had our very first practice and at that practice, Ron was on the field trying to hit the ball and he just wasn't feeling very good. Lynn, his wife, came up to me and told me that I needed to watch him because she thought his blood sugar was low.

"The next day we got a phone call that said that Ron had had a massive heart attack. He was supposed to go in the next Monday for open heart surgery where he had a quadruple bypass. Ron and I have known each other for years. I have bought and sold a house through him. I really enjoy this individual but we have never really had a relationship where we could talk about religion or anything else. When his wife called very upset, I happened to be in

Des Moines, and I asked her if I could come to the hospital and pray with them. The opportunity to sit there with Lynn, Amanda their daughter, and Ron, and pray for a guy that I had no idea what he believed was a good experience. I told them a little bit about what we believe and said that this was the time that we needed to pray. We did that, he had his open-heart surgery, and now he is even back on the field. It's amazing how fast his recovery was.

"Before he came back all of a sudden I was thrown in as the coach. The very first night we canceled because I didn't have anything put together and I was down at the hospital. I went to the girls and explained what had happened to Ron and that a lot of prayers were being answered. I told them I had said I would be their coach but I didn't even know how many girls were supposed to be on the field. I told them that this was their team and my team and together we would make it happen. They told me how many girls were on the field and some of the rules. We started practicing batting and did pretty good starting out. We haven't won a lot of games but we've won a few games. Being coach put a lot on the family. Sue helped out with the scheduling and finding umpires. It took a lot of my time.

"Also this time of the year is my busiest time at work (he works for the Iowa National Guard). Everything moves toward June when we ship people out for training. You get them ready for training and make sure the paperwork is administratively correct; they are mentally prepared and physically fit. My part is to make sure they are administratively correct. So, it is very very busy at work, putting everything together and making sure things are right so that when they ship they have no problems; they get to the training post and have nothing to worry about except their training.

"Also, Sue graduated about three weeks ago from Graceland University. She has been very busy. She had to write her thesis and finish everything up and put everything together with her job at school coming to the end of the year. Then our son Chris graduated the next weekend. That's bittersweet. I was excited to see my son graduate but I knew that shortly afterwards he would be leaving. Last Wednesday we brought him down to Camp Dodge and he processed and now he is at Fort Eustis, Virginia. He will be there until the first of the year. He comes back in December and then goes back for two weeks and he will be done the middle of January. Like I said things have been really busy but that's not a problem. My daughter had a saying a while back, 'Suck it up, cupcake.' Suck it up and drive on. That's what we have been doing but unfortunately like I said what seems to

suffer is the relationship that we have with God.

"In the meantime we built this new shop for our taxidermy business and we were all excited about our new shop. Well, the sewer wasn't draining, and it was a brand new sewer. I had watched it being put in but it wasn't draining. I thought maybe in the time it took us to build it and actually get all the things inside and get the water going (two years) something got down in the drain. I brought somebody in and found out my sewer had collapsed so you sit back and smile and say, 'no problem.' You get it fixed and luckily we had enough money in our account to pay for it. We put a brand new walk-in freezer in and our freezer cooled it to a great 60 degrees. Sixty degrees is not good on deer hide. It goes up to 60 and drops back down to 20, goes up to 60 and drops down to 20 so we have to figure out what is going on with that. Again, you just sit back and smile.

When we took Christopher to Camp Dodge, Sue drove her car and I drove mine since I had to be down there earlier. We came out from the Pizza Hut and there was antifreeze underneath Sue's car. Luckily it was an easy fix. We went to O'Reilly's, got some stuff and fixed it right there. Then on the way home we had trouble with my car—I think someone's sitting up there having a little magnifying glass down on the ant because it seems like that's us right now but again it wasn't a big deal. We were able to get it home and to a shop. They don't know what's wrong with it yet but again it's amazing how when things go wrong you don't call upon God. I know many times that I have been down here and God has reached down and picked me up, but I don't know why we as humans are so stubborn and why we don't call upon our God.

"Last night I was putting my sermon together and my son called me and said he was out of money. I know he had \$700 two weeks ago. We can't get on his account so Sue was getting on our account to see what we could do to transfer money and some really nice guy? over in the United Kingdom has somehow got our business credit card and was very nice and took our money out of our account. This was the second time. The first time it was Istanbul, Turkey and now it is the United Kingdom. I wouldn't mind that if I was over there but I have never been over there so we have to figure out what is going on with that.

"The thing I go back to is how blessed we are as a family. My son is off at training and it's bittersweet. You want him to grow up, he's half an hour from Virginia Beach, he's half an hour from enjoying himself, but he has training he needs to go

through. This training will prepare him for the world, it really will because now he is on his own. When he went through basic training last year, either you did it or you didn't and they were right on them but now he's in a position where he goes to class during the day and has evenings off. It will be an awesome experience but, selfish me, I miss my son already. He's growing up into a man. When he graduated he got a book entitled *Oh, the Places You'll Go* by Dr. Seuss. It's not the Bible but after I read it three or four times, I thought it was very appropriate so I am going to read it. (Steve then read the book to the congregation. It talked about life after graduation.) When I read that I think it came at the right time. You can sit back and you can pity yourself. You can sit back and ask what does God have for us or you can sit back and realize that God has a purpose for us.

I would like to read out of the Doctrine and Covenants, Section 4 because I ask myself every once in awhile where do I stand with my relationship with God? Sometimes we take it for granted. It's amazing the things we take for granted like the oxygen we breathe but I guarantee you that if someone holds your head under water for just a few seconds, you find out how much you will fight to get your next breath. That's exactly what we need to do. We need to fight for what we believe in Jesus Christ. Section 4 says, *Now, behold, a marvelous work is about to come forth among the children of men, therefore, O ye that embark in the service of God, see that ye serve him with all your heart, might, mind, and strength, that ye may stand blameless before God at the last day; therefore, if ye have desires to serve God, ye are called to the work, for, behold, the field is white already to harvest, and lo, he that thrusteth in his sickle with his might, the same layeth up in store that he perish not, but bringeth salvation to his soul; and faith, hope, charity, and love, with an eye single to the glory of God, qualifies him for the work. Remember, faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, brotherly kindness, godliness, charity, humility, diligence. Ask and ye shall receive, knock and it shall be opened unto you. Amen. All God wants us to do is to reach out and grab hold of this gospel. God wants us to share with our neighbors, our friends and loved ones the promise that He has for us.*

In Section 10:10a-d it says, *Behold, this is your work, to keep my commandments; yea, with all your might, mind, and strength; seek not to declare my word, but first seek to obtain my word, and then shall your tongue be loosed; then, if you desire, you shall have my Spirit, and my word; yea, the power of God unto the convincing of men; (How wonderful would it be to have*

His words so that when someone comes up and challenges you, you could spit right out what you need. You could share what God has given you.) but now hold your peace; study my word which hath gone forth among the children of men, and also study my word which shall come forth among the children of men, or that which is now translating; yea, until you have obtained all which I shall grant unto the children of men in this generation; and then shall all things be added thereunto.

“God has told us what we need to do. We need to keep His commandments and serve Him with all our might, mind and strength. In Hosea 4:6 it says, *My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me; seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.* That is exactly what He is telling us. We have the responsibility to pick our scriptures up and not pick them up to knock the dust off them but pick them up and read them so it is fresh in our heart. I have read the Bible, the Book of Mormon, and Doctrine and Covenants but it seems like as they sit there and get dust on them, I get dust in my brain. It’s amazing when you are feasting on the word and people say something or you are in your office and someone comes up and makes a comment and instead of saying, ‘Hey, that’s lucky.’ You turn around and look at them and tell them that they were blessed. So many times we look at situations and say we are lucky. No we are not lucky we are blessed. It’s amazing when you have these scriptures in your heart and have Jesus Christ with you on a daily basis.

“When we first started playing softball this year, it was amazing how our girls started hitting. As a matter of fact I thought one of the weakest things we had was our hitting. I tried to make sure when I was doing the softball lineup for batting that my first three girls were my girls that I knew I could get on the base and hopefully the fourth girl would hit them all home. Then I looked at who my weaker batters were. Then I put a weaker batter and then a stronger one in the lineup. I have one girl that hits really well but she almost walks to base. It’s amazing she can hit it out to the fence and she has to hurry to first base because she might not even get there. I make sure that when Paige is up I back her up with someone who hits the ball really far because I know she isn’t going to make it to second base. She’s the one person you don’t allow to steal. So I worked the batting order but after about three or four weeks it was amazing what happened when we stopped working at batting. It fell off. It’s amazing after three or

four weeks we were doing OK, we were doing good, we might have lost some games but we could still play a good game even though we lost. All of a sudden I had girls standing there with the ball going through their legs, a slow grounder rolling right to them. I had pop flies where they would catch a pop fly and it would roll right out of their mitt. You sit back and wonder how this can happen because we had been doing so good.

We decided to go back to the basics. We decided that it was time to do nothing but hit ground balls and go back to the basics. We brought the tee out and actually had the girls hitting off the tee. That way they could get use to swinging that bat again. We’ve been doing soft pitching and everything else to bring them back to where they were. I think it is time that we go back to the basics, that we take the time to read our scriptures, to understand what the commandments of God are and bring our family in and pray oft with each other.

“I would like to read out of the Book of Moroni chapter 10:4-15, *And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; And if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost; and by the power of the Holy Ghost, ye may know the truth of all things. And whatsoever thing is good, is just and true; wherefore, nothing that is good denieth the Christ, but acknowledgeth that he is. And ye may know that he is, by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore I would exhort you, that ye deny not the power of God; for he worketh by power, according to the faith of the children of men, the same to-day and to-morrow, and for ever. And again I exhort you, my brethren, that ye deny not the gifts of God, for they are many; and they come from the same God. And there are different ways that these gifts are administered; but it is the same God who worketh all in all; and they are given by the manifestations of the Spirit of God unto men, to profit them. For behold, to one is given by the Spirit of God, that he may teach the word of wisdom; and to another, that he may teach the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; and to another exceeding great faith; and to another, the gifts of healing by the same Spirit. And again, to another, that he may work mighty miracles; and again, to another, that he may prophesy concerning all things; and again, to another, the beholding of angels and ministering spirits; and again, to another, all kinds of tongues; and again, to another, the interpretation of lan-*

*guages and of divers kinds of tongues. And all these gifts come by the Spirit of Christ; and they come unto every man severally, according as he will. And I would exhort you, my beloved brethren, that ye remember that every good gift cometh of Christ. And I would exhort you, my beloved brethren, that ye remember that he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, and that all these gifts of which I have spoken, which are spiritual, never will be done away, even as long as the world shall stand, only according to the unbelief of the children of men. Wherefore, there must be faith; and if there must be faith, there must also be hope; and if there must be hope, there must also be charity; and except ye have charity, ye can in no wise be saved in the kingdom of God;’ “God has prepared so much for us and all He wants us to do is reach out to Him. It’s amazing in the picture where Jesus Christ is knocking at the door, it only opens one way. We have to open the door and let Him into our lives. In verse 29 and 30 it says, *Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ; and if by the grace of God ye are perfect in Christ, ye can in no wise deny the power of God. And again, if ye, by the grace of God, are perfect in Christ, and deny not his power, then are ye sanctified in Christ by the grace of God, through the shedding of the blood of Christ, which is in the covenant of the Father, unto the remission of your sins, that ye become holy without spot.**

“We had the opportunity to partake of communion today in recognition of the sacrifice that God made for us. God has set the way. All we have to do is look at what God has for us. We need to keep His commandments. We need to pray continually and give our lives to Jesus Christ.”

Christ Wants Our Commitment

Ed Anderson
June 13, 2010

As a call to worship, Steven Cunningham who presided read Mosiah 1:119-122, *'For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been, from the fall of Adam, and will be, for ever and ever; But if he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man, and becometh a saint, through the atonement of Christ, the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father. And moreover, I say unto you, that the time shall come, when the knowledge of a Savior shall spread throughout every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. And behold, when that time cometh, none shall be found blameless before God, except it be little children, only through repentance and faith on the name of the Lord God Omnipotent.*

I am very appreciative of being here and of each and every one of you. Each one has had an impact on my life as far as daily interactions, weekly spiritual blessings that have been given to me. The children here have given me hope. I have to remember that there is some hope through the youth and through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

I have selected a joke that you can take for what it is. It carries a little message. It's probably not one you would think about in church but here it is. There was this guy who went into a bar every day and asked for three drinks. The bartender would bring him the three drinks and sits them down before him. He would take a sip out of one, a sip out of the next and a sip out of the third one. He would finish those and order three more. The bartender finally told him that the drinks would stay colder if he just drank one. The man told him that the bartender didn't understand. He explained that he had two brothers, one lived in California and one lived in New York. This was the only way that the brothers could figure out how to have a drink together. This went on for months and then one day he came in and ordered two drinks. The bartender wondered what he should do now. He brought him the two drinks and said he was sorry for his loss. The man told him that he didn't quite understand. He said that his wife and he had joined the

church down the road and they didn't allow drinking so he had to quit.

I look at my life and sometimes I see that in myself. I know what I am supposed to be doing and I know I am not supposed to be doing some things but I continue to do them with some excuse like the guy in the joke who continued drinking with his brothers.

Does anybody remember a guy named Tiny Tim? I remember him vaguely somewhere in the back of my mind. He was about 7 foot tall and entertained in the late 60's to early 70's I think. He dressed kind of funny. He had really long hair and a falsetto voice and sang "Tiptoe Through the Tulips." I found a quote from him. In the 60's and 70's we were fighting in the Vietnam War and this quote was with that setting in mind. "I'd love to see Christ come back to crush the spirit of hate and make men put down their guns. I'd also like just one more hit single." Again he was hoping for the kingdom and yet clinging to the world.

We are all called to be members of the kingdom. We come to church to gain strength and fellowship with one another. We pray and fast all with the intent of coming closer to God. Unfortunately in my life it just seems that maybe I don't do enough praying and fasting and running with the crowd of the Saints.

These quotes I am reading all come from a book called "Life 101." This is from Quentin Criff. "It's no good running a pig farm badly for thirty years while saying, really I was meant to be a ballet dancer. By that time pigs will be your style." If I am voicing and proclaiming one thing and living another way then my style is the other way. This kind of touches on what Rob said in his class this morning as far as living our religion. No matter what we say or what we do, our style is our religion.

I remember sitting in reunion when they had in town reunions at Graceland College in the 60's and 70's. Mom and Dad never went to the campground reunions. We always went to the in town reunion. Under the impress of the Spirit, a message was given that Christ was on His way really soon. It was imminent. This was 45 years ago and I remember sitting there wondering how imminent was imminent. When they said imminent I was assuming two years. I was sitting there saying to myself that I really wanted to grow up to be an adult. I was about 12 or 13. I really wanted to grow up to be an adult and do adult things. I wanted to get married, have kids, get a job, have a house and do all of the fun things in life. I look back and even under the impress of the Spirit I was still thinking of myself and

things I wanted to do. I was not really concerned about the kingdom and that I might want to be a part of the kingdom. I just wanted to do the things that I wanted to do. It's kind of like the guy in the joke I told at the beginning of this sermon. It's also like raising pigs but wanting to be a ballet dancer.

It's time in my life to refresh my commitment. There are so many people out there who seem to be able to accomplish so much. One of them is Philip Adams and he had a quote in the book Life 101 also. "When people say to me, how do you do so many things? I often answer them without meaning to be cruel. How do you do so little? It seems to me that people have vast potential. Most people can do extraordinary things if they have the confidence it takes to take risks. Yet most people don't. They sit in front of the 'tele' and treat life as if it goes on forever." I realize now that I am an adult and a little older that life doesn't go on forever. I am reminded of this every time I get up in the morning and have a stiff back or sore shoulder. I am kind of over the youthful stage.

The scriptures say that we should be anxiously engaged in a good cause to bring forth the Kingdom of God, to change our neighbor. We need to search out those things which will help people with no thought for ourselves, with no reservations. I have asked people at times if they could help me on a particular day or time. One time that I remember was when we were attending Walnut Park in Independence. I had taken a train to Nauvoo and then one back to Kansas City. There was a young man who was a pretty good friend. He was attending a Sunday afternoon class for older youth. I asked him if he could come to the train station and pick me up as Diane was working and I really needed a ride. His response was that he had that class at 2:00 and he couldn't help me. Religion isn't in classes and it's not in a church, it's interaction with our fellow man. It's how we live what Christ has taught us. I need to do more interacting. I need to do more testifying. I need to help people more. I need to do more of those things which bring people closer to Christ.

When I was a kid my brother and I created a game. We called it the game of 'Life.' Since then the game of 'Life' has come out. Most of you have probably played it where you had little cars that you put people in. Our game of 'Life' was a little different. We had a certain amount of time in our life. We would roll the dice and 4 years of our life would go away if we became President, or if we went to the Army that was 2 years off our life. We died at age 72. We crammed everything we could and all the

good things in life that we wanted to do in this game and when we ran out of time it was over. That's a little more realistic of what life is like. I realize that life is kind of like a shopping cart. Everyone who has shopped on the internet adds their purchases to the 'shopping cart.' Instead of adding things to the shopping cart of life, adding things that take time, we can have anything we want if we work hard enough at it. If we give it everything we have, we can pretty much have anything we want. We can not have everything that we want because sometimes the things we want take up all of our time and we don't have any more time to complete the task. So we put in our cart the things in life that we can accomplish. We don't overdue our cart because generally when we overdue our cart, we wind up with less than satisfactory results in our interactions and accomplishments in life. Things are left half done. Along with that is having to say no and to know our limits and our abilities.

What we put in our carts is the next question. An example might be church or reading scriptures. What we put in our cart is dependent upon what is important to you and to me. I talk about the things that are important. What is important to me is the things I find time for. We may not have enough time to help others but we find time to golf. What's important to us is what we talk about and what we find time for. No matter how pressed we are, we find time to do the things that we want to do. We participate in those activities that we want to. Now all we have to do is figure out if these are the things we should be involved in. Is there better use of our time and should we really be talking about the things we talk about? Should our heart be somewhere else? Generally we continue on as if life is going on last forever.

If we knew we were going to die tomorrow, would we think any differently about our selections? I would. There's a few things I wouldn't bother to do if I knew there was a limit on my life. However, there is a limit on my life and I know that I am not going to live forever. As far as that goes twenty to twenty-five years from now I am not going to be able to do all of the things physically that I can do now if I live that long. So there is a limit. We won't live forever and we aren't going to continue in this state so we need to put Christ first and the things that are related to Christ.

Simply put, Christ is our advocate with the Father. In Section 45:1a-e, it says 'Hearken, O ye people of my church, to whom the kingdom has been given, hearken ye, and give ear to him who laid the foundation of the earth, who made the heavens

and all the hosts thereof, and by whom all things were made which live and move and have a being. And again I say, Hearken unto my voice, lest death shall overtake you; in an hour when ye think not, the summer shall be past, and the harvest ended, and your souls not saved. Listen to him who is the Advocate with the Father, who is pleading your cause before him, saying, Father, behold the sufferings and death of him who did no sin, in whom thou wast well pleased; behold the blood of thy Son which was shed, the blood of him whom thou gavest that thyself might be glorified; wherefore, Father, spare these my brethren that believe on my name, that they may come unto me and have everlasting life.'

Christ is standing between us and the Father, being our Advocate. It's been said that when we sin we crucify Christ, knowingly sin, knowingly not doing what we are supposed to be doing. We crucify him unto ourselves and our repentance, our changing of our lives is the only thing really that we have to offer. What else do we have to offer Christ? We can do service. He gave us our bodies, our breath and our possessions. We can be good stewards but what does He really want out of us? He wants our commitment, our love and He wants us to be His children, to walk in the way that He would have us to walk and to be His companion and friend."

Rediscovering Values

Gordon's Sermon
June 20, 2010

For a scripture reading this morning I've selected 2 Nephi 14:11-12 *For if ye would hearken unto the spirit which teacheth a man to pray, ye would know that ye must pray: for the evil spirit teacheth not a man to pray, but teacheth him that he must not pray. But behold I say unto you, that ye must pray always, and not faint: that ye must not perform anything unto the Lord, save in the first place ye shall pray unto the Father in the name of Christ, that he will consecrate thy performance unto thee, that thy performance may be for the welfare of thy soul.*

Last Sunday Ed Anderson spoke and the Sunday before that Ben Anderson spoke and so for those of you that were coming expecting Matt Anderson to speak today, I apologize. You will have to wait for another time for Matt to speak.

I have quite a stack of material here today. I just want you to know I'm not going to read all this to you, but it does remind me of a cute story about a youth group that was

selling Bibles. One young man that was in the group had a real bad stammer and could hardly get a sentence out. They were concerned that selling Bibles wouldn't be a good thing for him to do but he wanted to sell Bibles too so he went out with the group. When they came back in, he had sold the most Bibles. They were all surprised. How could this young man with a stammer sell so many Bibles? So they asked him. He said, "Well, I just went up to the door and knocked and when they opened the door I said M-m-m-r, would you like to buy a B-b-b-ble or w-w-would you want me to r-r-read it all to you?" And he sold a lot of Bibles that way.

The date on the calendar shows that today is Father's Day and Father's Day is a real special day for me. Fatherhood for me started on Father's Day or late the night before, but we got to make an announcement of fatherhood on Father's Day. Melissa was born on June 18 and we got to make the announcement on Sunday the 19th that we had our first child, so we were new parents.

My thoughts for this morning really started when I was attending a meeting in Washington, D.C. back on Tuesday, April 27. I was attending a meeting of the American Hospital Association. We had set up visits to talk to our legislators about health reform and some of the aspects of what was in that 2,700 page bill. I got up in the morning, went to my door and picked up the USA today. On the front page was an article entitled "Young Adults Less Devoted to Faith, Survey Shows Steady Drift From Church Life". I'd like to share with you that article that will give you some idea as to where my thoughts are going for the day.

By Cathy Lynn Grossman, USA TODAY

Most young adults today don't pray, don't worship and don't read the Bible, a major survey by a Christian research firm shows. If the trends continue, "the Millennial generation will see churches closing as quickly as GM dealerships," says Thom Rainer, president of LifeWay Christian Resources. In the group's survey of 1,200 18- to 29-year-olds, 72% say they're "really more spiritual than religious."

Now I can't tell you what the context of the statistics were, the sample size, or the population biases in that sampling. I'm just taking this as presented in the article. It does show a dark cloud over our youth in terms of participation in religion.

Among the 65% who call themselves Christian, "many are either mushy Christians or Christians in name only," Rainer says. "Most are just indifferent. What a terrible term-indifferent. The more precisely you try to measure their Christianity, the

fewer you find committed to the faith.”

Key findings in the phone survey, conducted in August and released today:

- 65% rarely or never pray with others, and 38% almost never pray by themselves either.
- 65% rarely or never attend worship services.
- 67% don't read the Bible or sacred texts.

Many are unsure Jesus is the only path to heaven: Half say yes, half no.

Now according to the Book of John 14:6, Jesus clears that up. “Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”

“We have dumbed down what it means to be part of the church so much that it means almost nothing, even to people who already say they are part of the church,” Rainer says.

The findings, which document a steady drift away from church life, dovetail with a LifeWay survey of teenagers in 2007 who drop out of church and a study in February by the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, which compared the beliefs of Millennials with those of earlier generations of young people.

Even among those in the survey who “believe they will go to heaven because they have accepted Jesus Christ as savior”:

- 68% did not mention faith, religion or spirituality when asked what was “really important in life.”
- 50% do not attend church at least weekly.
- 36% rarely or never read the Bible.

These are all people who said they have accepted Jesus Christ.

Neither are these young Christians evangelical in the original meaning of the term — eager to share the Gospel. Just 40% say this is their responsibility.

So if it's not their responsibility, whose responsibility is it to pass on those beliefs to the next generation.

Even so, Rainer is encouraged by the roughly 15% who, he says, appear to be “deeply committed” Christians in study, prayer, worship and action.

Collin Hansen, 29, author of *Young, Restless, Reformed*, about a thriving minority of traditionalist Christians, agrees. “I'm not going to say these numbers aren't true and aren't grim, but they also drive people like me to build new, passionately Christian dynamic churches,” says Hansen, who is studying for the ministry. He sees many in his generation veering to “moralistic therapeutic deism — ‘God wants you to be happy and do good things.’ ... I would not call that Christianity, however.”

The 2007 LifeWay study found seven

in 10 Protestants ages 18 to 30, both evangelical and mainline, who went to church regularly in high school said they quit attending by age 23. And 34% of those had not returned, even sporadically, by age 30.

The Pew survey found young people today were significantly more likely than those in earlier generations to say they didn't identify with any religious group. Neither are Millennials any more likely than earlier generations to turn toward a faith affiliation as they grow older.

Do you find that as disturbing as I did? That's what greeted me on the morning of the 27th of April.

I was given a book to read. I'm going to be attending a hospital leadership retreat in August and prior to our meeting we're supposed to read this book and be prepared to discuss it in the context of health care in Iowa. The book is entitled Rediscovering Values, Wall Street, Main Street, and Your Street. I haven't read the book, I just got it. I kind of thumb through books when I pick them up just to kind to get a sense of where they're going.

The author of this book is really trying to address that our society, our culture, and our economy is on the demise and our business dealings and our financial interruptions that we saw with the recession are created because of deteriorating values and morals. The author ties that all back to Christian beliefs. He does expand that past Christian beliefs and includes reading the Koran and Jewish beliefs too, but the focus of his book is really on those Christian values and morals.

On the inside flap it says, “Is it possible to change the world's trajectory? Can we create a new moral compass in the aftermath of the recent economic crisis? In Rediscovering Values, Jim Wallis argues that the world can change when people of good faith make different choices and act collectively. Jim calls us, as did Jesus, to challenge the status quo by making kingdom choices.”

Just a little more from the introduction of the book. It says, “The crisis goes deeper as jobs are lost, houses are foreclosed upon, savings are destroyed and future hopes undermined. The global economy has not seen a decline of this magnitude since the Great Depression.”

I just saw a presentation by an economist who analyzed the types of recessions and depressions that we have had and the length of time it takes to come out. It showed that this depression is as great, although in a different context, than the Great Depression, but it does show a longer, slower recovery out of it than the Great Depression did.

“We are in the midst of a fundamen-

tal shift in which the old foundations have shown to be nothing but the shifting sands of speculation. Lying beneath the economic measures of the market is a *moral deficit* that is increasingly apparent and a growing hunger to recover former values. To make sure we do not simply repeat the mistakes of the past that led to this crisis, our economic recession must also be answered with a *moral recovery*.”

He says that we are asking the wrong questions. “We should be asking what happened to our morals, what happened to our faith, and what happened to the belief in the teachings of Jesus as a guide for everything that we do economically, financially and in business?”

Jim Wallis has a friend who is a financial consultant. Can you imagine being a financial consultant, family planner, in the recession that we have gone through as people see their savings dwindle and their interest rates and their housing being considered for foreclosure? He says, “A friend of mine, who is also a financial planner and is now engaged in intense daily conversations with his clients, just left me a simple voicemail—Please pray for me.”

I think that is good advice for all of us. We should be praying.

Interesting, in the back of his book after he goes through everything, he has a section called “Twenty Moral Exercises.” It says, “Any change that is worth your-time pursuing will never be easy.” And he lists 20 moral exercises. I won't go through them all, but there are a few of them that I found very interesting.

1. Calendars and Budgets are Moral Documents

A budget tells you what and who are most important to a family, a church, a city, state, or nation. Being a father, I have also learned that a calendar is also truly a moral document in the same way a budget is. Our calendars show how we spend our time, and our budgets show how we spend our money.

Exercise: Make a list of the priorities in your life. Then go through your calendar and budget with your spouse, a family member, trusted friends or even your church group and list the top ways you are spending your time and your money. How does it match up with your life priorities and how is it different? You may be in for some surprises. What changes could you make in how you are spending your time and your money to make sure it is the same as what you want your most important priorities to be?

2. Screen Time vs. Family Time

Screens are everywhere in our life today, making us more efficient, but also

more distracted. In our families there is a constant tension between the time our kids spend in front of screens and the time they spend reading, playing outside, using their imagination, or spending quality time with their family.

Exercise: How have the TV, computer and phone screens in your life become distractions? Do you or your family need some screen-free time, with some rules and guidelines to make room for time better spent -- including quality time with family and friends?

3. Know Your Scriptures

It is our oldest and best values that we need to rediscover for both an economic and a moral recovery. These are not new principles but lessons that we all forget sometimes. This book draws from the deep wells of Christianity, but of course there is much more that our Scriptures can teach us about the issues raised in the pages of this book.

Exercise: Take the time to consider other lessons you can learn from your faith tradition or other traditions. Explore the Bible for what else it may have to say about the meaning of its ancient values for today. Start or join a regular study group with some friends.

I won't continue with the twenty exercises, but you get a sense for the application and the importance that Mr. Wallis puts into the teachings and the directions that are found in the scriptures.

We go to these seminars and we come up with these new ways of doing things and new ways to look at things and yet, it's not making the difference in our economy and in our world that we would like them to or we think they should and we ignore the ones that will—those that are the teachings in the Scripture and in our teachings of Jesus Christ.

Linda and I were in the Iowa City-Corralville area last week. It is always kind of a special place for us. That's where our relationship started and our family started. It just feels good to go back there and think of all those things that occurred while we were there. One of our favorite things to do when we were poor students was to save up enough money that we could go out to dinner. We used to go to the Amana Colonies as kind of our special place to go out. So we stopped there to eat dinner on our way home.

As we were waiting to be served, we noticed the table next to us had two older couples and a single gentleman who were having a sort of reunion. I wasn't really trying to eavesdrop on their conversation, but they were speaking rather loudly and so we kind of heard what was going on as we waited for our food. It appears the three

gentlemen grew up together. The single gentleman's wife had died. They talked about their childhood and people they remembered and things they had done. The conversation turned to religion. One gentleman said to the gentleman on his left, "Are you still Catholic?" The other answered, "Well yeah, I guess I'm still Catholic. I don't agree with everything the Catholic church is doing and saying, so I just don't go because I don't want to support everything they are doing."

The fellow across the table from him said, "Well that's good because I don't think Catholicism is the right form of religion. What are you?"

"Well, I haven't been to church since I was young. You remember I used to go to church with Grandma. She took me to the Lutheran church, and I was baptized in the Lutheran church so I guess that means I'm Lutheran."

The third gentleman who was at the head of the table by himself commented that he wasn't even sure he believed that there was a god. He believed that there is a higher power, but that is kind of an individual thing where that higher power is and where it resides and what it directs you to do.

As I listened to that conversation I thought, "I wonder where their children are. I wonder what it was that they passed on to their children." We can all speculate, but if that was the foundation and direction that they provided to their children, I can't imagine their children or their grandchildren had much of a chance or much of a start in a foundation of religion and Christian teachings.

Briefly another story. We were in Grand Rapids, MI for my niece Lauren's graduation. Lauren is the oldest child of my sister Karen who died at an early age from breast cancer. We had told Lauren that we would be there for her graduation. Linda was helping Lauren pack up some things. My brother-in-law Todd has remarried and they are going to be moving to Elkhart, IN. There is not a Restoration or Community of Christ congregation in the area there. Lauren was telling Linda that she was going to have to go to a different church that Todd's wife Beth is attending. It was disturbing to her that she "wasn't going to be able to go to my church", as she put it. They talked about that and what that meant. Lauren is going to be coming to Graceland in the fall, so that is going to be an opportunity for us to reach out to Lauren and continue to provide some of that direction that she needs and take advantage of that sense she has that the Restoration is her church. I'll put you on alert, all you Lamoni folks, and

when she gets here we'll make sure you get introduced.

As I was making preparation for the message of today I came across an article that was written by a gentleman by the name of Bob Hostetler. It's entitled "Passing the Baton". How many of you have ever been to a track meet? One of the events in a track meet is a relay race. In a relay race, you have four runners. The lead sprinter on each team runs the first leg of the race and the next runner gets set and anxiously waits his teammate's arrival. He begins to run before the lead man overtakes him. That's when the crucial moment arrives. The lead man passes the baton to the middle man. The process is repeated twice more in the race, as each man surrenders the baton to the next.

A good track coach will tell you that the relay is won or lost in the transfer of the baton. A miscalculation or hesitation at that point can cost the race. I'd like you to think of your relationship with your children and grandchildren or the youth in our congregation. We're in a race and we have to pass off the baton. What is contained on that baton determines if Tyler understands the importance of Christ's teachings, and Matt understands the importance of Christ's teachings, so that we don't end up with our youth and young adults being part of those statistics that were contained in the next article published in USA Today about lack of faith in young people.

Many of us, as Christian parents, grandparents, pastors, and teachers, have begun fearing and feeling that we're losing the race, that we're muffing the transfer, that our kids are dropping the baton.

It's little wonder when you think about it; we look around at a society in which teen pregnancy has increased over 500% in the past thirty years; we look around at a society in which suicide among young people has jumped 300% in that same period; we look around at a society in which over a thousand teen girls get abortions every day in this country; we look around at a society in which over 4,000 kids a day catch a sexually transmitted disease, and we worry that that society is going to seize our kids, we fear that the culture is going to capture our children, that our kids will soon be making choices,

and living lives, and paying the consequences of a value system they've picked up from the world around them, one that rejects the truth of the Bible, one that mocks scriptural morality, and glorifies sex and violence and laughs at drunkenness and rudeness.

My purpose here this morning on this Father's Day, is to tell you that we can transfer our values to the next generation;

we can pass on those values to our children and teenagers; we can equip them to live godly lives in the midst of an ungodly world. There will be hindrances; the crowd may be distracting, and the track may be rough, and as in a relay, we have a limited zone in which to make the transfer, and a miscalculation or hesitation in the passing of the baton can cost the race, could cost us our children and grandchildren.

So what can we do -- now -- to pass on our values to our kids? What can we do to instill biblical concepts of truth and morality within our children and teens?

The answer is in the word of God, in the model He gave to Israel for teaching truth to children. You can find that in Deuteronomy 6:4-7. "Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord; And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart; And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates."

That passage gives us a divine model for passing on our faith and values to our children, a model that involves three steps.

Passing our values on to our children requires a healthy relationship. God's model for teaching Biblical truth to young people called, not only for a constant process, but for a relational method as well. He said, "You shall teach [these things] diligently to your sons (and daughters) and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up."

His words beg the question, of course, how can we expect to teach these things to our sons and daughters when we don't spend any time with them? How can we expect to teach these things to our sons and daughters if we're never around, if we're never sitting in our house, if we're never walking with them by the way, if our kids are in bed by the time we get home and still asleep when we leave for the office?

A big part of the problem we see all around us in our society is the result of messed up relationships. We cannot impart truth apart from honest, meaningful relationships. We are to teach diligently when we sit, walk, lie down, and rise up. In other words, God wants us to teach his truths in every relational interaction with our children -- even the most mundane.

So, the first step in passing the baton

to our children is building a relationship. The second step in the process is being an example to our children. Passing our values on to our children entails example. Look at Deuteronomy 6 once again, and you'll see what God's model for passing values on to children required: "And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words shall be on your heart."

Whether you know it or not, you're being watched. And the things you model - by design or by accident -- powerfully communicate your convictions about right and wrong, about morality and immorality. If we want to pass on Biblical values to our children, we must model those values in our own lives. His words must be on our hearts before we can impress them upon the hearts and minds of our children. If we wish for our sons and daughters to accept the idea that there are absolute standards of right and wrong, we must let them see that we believe it ourselves. I am not saying that we must live perfect lives before our children -- merely consistent lives, lives that model Biblical standards.

The third and final step that Mr. Hostetler talks about is that we must share the Truth. Passing our values on to our children includes instruction. Instilling Biblical values requires a commitment to teach our children consistently, repeatedly, at every opportunity, that there is a standard of right and wrong that transcends human ideas and opinions. God said, "You shall teach these things diligently to your sons (and daughters) and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up."

Several generations ago, fathers and sons spent long hours plowing together and harvesting together; mothers and daughters (and grandmothers, as a matter of fact) spent long hours quilting and canning and cooking together. Those long hours of being side by side presented opportunities to talk, for a parent to teach a child, for a teen to hear a father's perspective on honesty, or a mother's concepts regarding marriage.

Well, in our day and age, those opportunities no longer come easily. There's baseball practice, music lessons, all the distractions of clubs and school and internet and games. We just don't find or make the opportunity to spend time with our children. So passing on our values to our kids often becomes the last thing on our calendar. Remember the book that I talked about, *Rediscovering Values*. One of the exercises was to look at our calendars. Kids often become the last thing on our calendars. But that doesn't mean we've lost the battle. It

simply means we have to seize every opportunity to teach Biblical truths and godly values to our kids.

When we're shopping we need to reinforce the Biblical value of honesty. Watch your teens' favorite TV shows with them in order to discuss prime-time television depictions of love, sex, and romance and how that differs from what is taught in the Bible. Try to "catch" your children doing something good, so you can reward them. Pull out your wedding albums and use them as a way to share your convictions about sexual purity before and during marriage -- and how honoring marriage has resulted in God's protection and provision in your life.

Most importantly, we want our children to understand the truth that God is the source of all truth. Deuteronomy 32:4-5 "He is the Rock, his work is perfect; for all his ways are judgment; a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he. They have corrupted themselves, their spot is not the spot of his children; they are a perverse and crooked generation."

We don't want to replicate that. We don't want our children to have spots that are of a perverse generation. We should seek to impress upon our children the concept that truth is not something God decides; it is something God is. We don't want our children to make the mistake of trying to measure right and wrong by their own ideas; we want them to understand that the basis of everything we call moral, the source of every good thing, is the eternal God who is outside us, above us, and beyond us. The reason we think that there are such things as "fair" and "unfair" is because our Maker is a just God. The reason love is a virtue and hatred a vice is because the God who formed us is a God of love. The reason honesty is right and deceit is wrong is because God is true. The reason chastity is moral and promiscuity is immoral is because God is pure.

Deuteronomy 6:4-7 "Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord; And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart; And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."

Are "these things" on your heart? Is it time for us who say the Lord is our God to act like He is our God? That means we must not only say we believe in truth, we must not only say we believe in right &

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JULY NEWSLETTER

The CHURCH of JESUS CHRIST – Mount Ayr Restoration Branch

Presiding Elder: Sherman Phipps 641-784-6823

JULY 2010 - SUNDAY SCHEDULE								
DATE	Custodians	Greeters	Family Devotions	Planist	Presiding	Speaking	Special Music	Sunday Evening
July 4	Ed Anderson	Rob Rolfe	Steve Cunningham	Jan Jordison	Gordon Winkler	Steve Smith	Steve Smith	Ron Smith
July 11	Jim Barber	Alan Smith	Jan Jordison	Jan Jordison	Rob Rolfe	Sherman Phipps	Cunningham Family	Rob Rolfe
July 18	Rodney Bastow	Jennifer Rowland	Michael Jordison	Jan Jordison	Alan Smith	Eric Woolery	Beth Knotts	Jennifer Rowland
July 25	Jordison Family	Steve Smith	George Knotts	Pat Bolingbroke	Steve Cunningham	Ron Smith	Jim Barber	Ron Smith
August 1	Rob Rolfe	Ron Smith	Norman Nelson	Pat Bolingbroke	Rob Rolfe	Alan Smith	Michael Jordison	Steve Smith

WEDNESDAY SERVICES

DATE	LOCATION	PRESIDING
July 7	RonSmith	Jim Barber
July 14	Sherman Phipps	Ron Smith
July 21	Ed Anderson	Ed Anderson
July 28	Steve Smith	Rob Rolfe
August 4	Gordon Winkler	Rodney Bastow

OTHER INFORMATION

DATE	EVENT
July 4th	8:30 Priesthood meeting. Communion. NO potluck.
July 4th	6:30 pm Family Fellowship @ Ron & Di Smiths – picnic / potluck / games – hotdogs and buns provided by church

Church of Jesus Christ
Mount Ayr Restoration Branch
15581 270th Street
Lamoni, IA 50140

More on Gordon's Sermon

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wrong, we must act like people who believe in truth, we must behave like people who believe in right and wrong, we must walk as children of the light!

If the Spirit of God is stirring in your heart this morning, maybe it's urging you or speaking to you. He may be urging you to examine yourself, look at your calendar. He may be urging you to begin anew. He may be urging you to begin today to set an example. He may be urging you to a commitment to pass on scriptural truth to someone else. He may be speaking something very private and very personal to your heart.

Whatever He is speaking to your heart this morning, even though it's Father's Day, I want you to heed the advice of a mother, Jesus' mother. Jesus' mother says, "Unto the servants, whatever He saith unto you, see that you do it." (John 2:5)

Whatever Jesus is speaking to your heart right now today, see that you do it.