

Improve Your Life

1. Turn off the TV and read your Bible. The Psalmist said of the blessed man, "His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night" (Ps. 1:2).

2. Hang up the phone and pray. I never cease to be amazed at how much time some people spend on their cell phones. Is all that talking necessary or profitable? "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17). "The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much" (Jas. 5:16).

3. Get up out of bed an hour earlier and come to Bible study on Sunday. "As the door turns on its hinges, so does the sluggard on his bed" (Prov. 26:14).

4. Cut down your credit card purchases and give. Give to the poor. Increase your contribution

By Frank Himmel

at church. "One who is gracious to a poor man lends to the Lord, and He will repay him for his good deed" (Prov. 19:17). "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

5. Change the conversation from sports, weather, and politics to spiritual things. Do that at home. "These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons 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" (Deut. 6:6-7). Do that at work, too. "He who wins souls is wise" (Prov. 11:30).



Classes This Week

Sunday 5:00 PM Song leading/learning class in college classroom	Tuesday 8:00 PM Room 2225 in Student Center	Thursday 7 PM Ladies Class on "Song of Solomon" at the Rouse's home.
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Sick

Brad Marshall (Allie Hosey's Cousin)	Owen Mauldin (Seth and Summer Mauldin's Son)	Frank Hand (Laura Humphrey's dad)	Sandlyn Fultz (Davis Fultz's Sister)
Gloria Detmer and Carol Dickerson (Toni Herd's Sisters)	Don Lanier (Father of Greg Lanier)	David Hartsell (Holly and Brad's Father)	Kate Miller (Daughter of Brandon and Erin Miller)
Betty Mcareavey (Mary Ann Roberts' mom)	Neal May (Manna Jones' Mother)	Mark Dean (Father of Logan Dean)	Jerry Foropoulos (Anna Jean's Uncle)
Jon Jon Henderson (Suzanne Stagner's cousin)	Quinton Addison (April Jerkins Grandfather)	Danny Weldon (Rusty Weldon's brother)	Bob Cannon (Friend of Holly Law)
Gerald White (Christopher, Anna and Wesley's Father)	Amy Baswell Hall	Emily Stallings (Anna's sister)	John Marvin Rhodes (Toni Herd's cousin)
Lisa Carter (Josh and Luke Carter's mother)	Joe Perkins (Scott Perkin's Dad)	Toni and William Herd	Tom Davis (Walker Davis' Uncle)

February Birthdays

- 2-Ken Sullivanne
- 2-Wesley Herd
- 3-Chris Long
- 5-Jude Hosey
- 5-Chase Counsell
- 6-Jackson Fowler
- 13-Leslie Freeman
- 14-Leighton Daniels
- 14-Anna Jean Selsvik
- 15-Ella Miller
- 15-Dave Johnson
- 16-Seth Humphrey
- 18-Caralise Hunt
- 18-Tyler Cox
- 20-Andrew Tominack
- 22-Elizabeth Anne Calvert
- 22-Alexander Calvert
- 23-Greg Lanier
- 23-Luke Carter
- 24-Jeff Jerkins
- 25-Valerie Liverett
- 27-Julie Johnson
- 28-Cole Graviett

News and Notes

- ☒ - Lets keep in our prayers our expectant mothers, Laura Humphrey, Brittany Bagents and Jana Hall!
- ☒ - Taylor Lawrence's dad, Jerry, is scheduled to have a benign brain tumor removed on Tues.
- ☒ - Remember Tim Morton in your prayers as he is deployed to Afghanistan.
- ☒ - We are thankful that Kevin Simpson is responding well to his treatments!
- ☒ - Please Pray for Vincent Graham, young friend of Victoria Dunaway, who recently had a liver transplant
- ☒ - This year's VBS will be June 8-11. VBS topic: "Heroes of the NT"
- ☒ - Those interested in helping with "creative" tasks for new OSH NT curriculum are invited to meet after Wed night service in 3rd-5th grade classroom.
- ☒ - Ladies of all ages interested in attending this year's ladies' retreat in April, please see Paula Davis or Karen Padgett.
- ☒ - Brettlyn Currier who is studying in Ireland and has met several Nigerian Christians who have fled their country due to Islamic terrorism. They have asked brethren to pray for those affected.

The Auburn Beacon



Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

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Jesus and Pilate's Wife

By Fanning Yater Tant



Be these.
Matthew 5:13-16

Thoughts to Ponder

He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad. (Matthew 12:30)

Pilate was in a dilemma. An innocent man stood before him for judgment; Pilate knew that for envy he had been delivered up, and there was no evidence of wrong doing which would justify a sentence against him. Yet the mob was howling for blood. It was a ticklish situation, a nasty mess. Pilate must have wished with all his heart that he could be relieved of the necessity of handling this case. Either way he went, he was certain to have regrets. His sense of Roman justice was outraged at the thought of condemning an innocent man; yet his political sagacity told him that he dare not antagonize the mob.

At this crucial juncture his wife sent an urgent message: "Have thou nothing to do with that righteous man; for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him." How pleasant that would be! What a relief just to wash his hands of the whole affair, bow gracefully out of the picture, and refuse to render a verdict. In a sense that was what Pilate tried to do. He even called for water and symbolically "washed his hands" of the matter, avowing

When right and wrong are involved, when truth and error are in combat, neutrality is not only treason, it is impossible. Even an attempt at neutrality marks one as disloyal to Christ. There is no middle ground between Christ and Satan.

his innocence. Yet Pilate found that it was impossible to side-step his moral responsibility. The verdict of history, repeated endlessly in that earliest of all credal statements, is that Christ was "crucified under Pontius Pilate."

As it was with Pilate, so is it with everyone who has knowledge of Jesus. Neutrality is an impossibility. The advice of Pilate's wife is incredible. Pilate's very failure to declare himself was a declaration. Had he been familiar with the teachings of the prisoner he would have recalled his words, "He that is

(Continued on page 2)

Elders
Walker Davis
(334) 703-0050
Larry Rouse
(334) 734-2133

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES Sunday

Bible Class9:30 AM
Worship10:20 AM
Evening Worship 6:00 PM

Wednesday
Bible Classes.....7:00 PM

E-Mail:
larryrouse@aubeacon.com

Larry Rouse
Evangelist and Editor

Check Us Out On the Internet: www.aubeacon.com

(Continued from page 1)

not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." (**Matt. 12:30**) The long story of the years has demonstrated the inexorable truth which Jesus put into words, "I came not to send peace, but a sword." His advent into the world has brought to mankind the necessity of making a choice regarding him. In theory they may postpone the choice, or try to evade it or avoid it; in practice the choice is made every day, and in every act or word or thought. Pilate's theory was that he could avert the choice; his practice was that he delivered Christ to be crucified.

A hundred years ago the Church of Christ stood at the crossroads. For multiplied thousands of Christians an inescapable choice loomed up. They did not ask for this problem; they did not want it; they did not like it. But it was there. In theory multitudes of them tried to shut their eyes to the problem, and ignore it; in practice every last one of them made a choice. Apparently in any such circumstances there are three choices possible: a positive choice for, a positive choice against, and a neutral choice. But as the years unfold, it has been demonstrated over and over again that the "neutral" choice disappears in the cold, hard logic of practice. Men can be neutral in theory only; in practice they are compelled to declare themselves.

In national affairs, when a nation is engaged in a struggle to the death for her very existence, neutrality is regarded as treason. In spiritual affairs, it is true that the Lord's church is perpetually engaged in a warfare that knows no respite. When a matter of truth or error is up for decision, any attempt at "neutrality" is treason to the truth!

"Have thou nothing to do with that righteous man," said Pilate's wife. Attempting to follow that advice, Pilate turned Christ over to his tormenters. "Have thou nothing to do with that righteous man," is the unexpressed, but

none-the-less real, determination of thousands upon thousands of our contemporaries and acquaintances. Yet every such effort at "neutrality" is disastrous to the one attempting it. For Christ cannot be ignored. He makes positive claims and demands on the life of every individual. A failure to acknowledge those claims, a refusal to yield to those demands places one squarely in opposition and rebellion against God.

In theory a man can decide to be "neutral" on the subject of baptism; he is neither "for" it, nor "against" it. But in practice he either will be baptized, or he will not be. There is no neutrality in practice. In theory a man may be "neutral" on the subject of instrumental music in the worship; he is neither "for" it, nor is he "against" it. But in practice he cannot be neutral. He will either worship with it; or refuse to worship with it. The choice may not be forced upon him all at once; but sooner or later it will come. Perhaps he thinks himself against instrumental music; but he never speaks against it; never points out to any man the error of it; refuses to discuss it either publicly or privately. He is neutral in theory only; he is not neutral in practice. His influence is on the side of those who advocate the organ.

In theory, a man can decide to be "neutral" as to the regularity of observance of the Lord's Supper; in practice he cannot be neutral. A failure to be for a weekly observance of it inevitably puts him in the class of those who are NOT for a weekly observance of it.

"Have thou nothing to do with that righteous man." Yes, that is what Pilate devoutly wished could be so. But it was impossible for him. And it is impossible for anybody. It is impossible for YOU! When right and wrong are involved, when truth and error are in combat, neutrality is not only treason, it is impossible. Even an attempt at neutrality marks one as disloyal to Christ. There is no middle ground between Christ and Satan.



"Let Your Words be Few"

By David Smelser

For generations, parents have attempted to comfort emotionally wounded children with some version of the saying, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me." That platitude must ring as hollow to the speaker it as it sounded to me when I was a child. We recognize that words have power – in many ways, much more power than sticks or stones. We sing songs warning against letting "angry words . . . unbridled slip." Paul urges us in **Colossians 4:6** to "let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt." Perhaps most ominously, Jesus warns that our careless words reveal the condition and nature of our heart; thus, "On the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned" (**Matt. 12:36f**). We generally recognize (though too often fail to modulate) the powerful effect our speech has on our interpersonal relationships and that God holds us accountable for our interactions with each other.

However, we ought to guard our words just as much – if not more – when speaking of spiritual matters directly. In **Ecclesiastes 5**, the Preacher admonishes his readers, "Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. To draw near to listen is better than to offer the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they are doing evil. Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven and you are on earth. Therefore let your words be few. . . . When you vow a vow to God, do not delay paying it, for he has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you vow. It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay. Let not your mouth lead you into sin, and do not say before the messenger that it was a mistake. Why should God be angry at your voice and destroy the work of your hands?"

This passage is a warning to anyone who wishes to come before God to worship. The Preacher first calls us to guard our steps, or to be careful when approaching God. This is reminiscent of Paul's exhortation for each worshipper to "examine himself" (**1 Cor. 11:28**). Second, we are warned

Third, **Ecclesiastes 5** warns us that God takes our vows and commitments to him very seriously. We ought to think very carefully before making commitments like, "All to Jesus I surrender," or "For Thee, all the follies of sin I resign." These are bold, though proper, vows. When we sing them, God expects us to keep them.

that it is better to listen than to speak foolishly or hastily. When we come to worship God, have we taken time to listen to what he says before we presume to speak to him or for him? When we come together to sing, are we sure that we are admonishing one another with the "words of Christ" (**Col. 3:16**), or are we using concepts that are of our own invention? (That is not to say we must only sing what is in red letters in our Bibles. All of Scripture is God's Word and therefore Christ's. We must make sure that

the thoughts and concepts in our songs are taken from that Word and not from elsewhere.) And when we instruct each other in God's word either in leading a class or by making comments, have we first spent enough time truly studying the Scripture, knowing that "we who teach will be judged with greater strictness" (**James 3:1**)? "To draw near to listen is better than to offer the sacrifice of fools." Third, **Ecclesiastes 5** warns us that God takes our vows and commitments to him very seriously. We ought to think very carefully before making commitments like, "All to Jesus I surrender," or "For Thee, all the follies of sin I resign." These are bold, though proper, vows. When we sing them, God expects us to keep them.

Our words have great power. But the point of the Preacher's words in **Ecclesiastes 5** is not to discourage us from ever worshipping or approaching God. The result of guarding our feet, listening before speaking, and taking our vows seriously is a proper reverence for God, more effective edification of the saints, and a more powerful commitment to our Christian walk. And although we are sometimes faithless and our failures in our words and commitments lead us to a godly fear, God does not remain unapproachable; God, whose words never fail, has given us a faithful, obedient High Priest, the Word, and has promised us access to the throne of grace (**Heb. 4:16**). Therefore, "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful" (**Heb. 10:23**).

