

No Time Like the Present

By Steve Klein

The old saying is that the past is a canceled check, and the future is a promissory note; only the present is cash on hand. The year of our Lord 2010 is in the record books. Nothing about it can be changed. The year 2011 lies before us like a clean canvas before a blind painter. Who knows how it will look when finished? The only moment of time we can do anything about is the moment we're in right now. There is no time like the present because it is the only time that we really own.

We must leave the past in the past. We can learn from our past, but we mustn't live in it. Perhaps our better days are behind us, but even so, we cannot go back. Solomon instructs, "Do not say, 'Why were the former days better than these?' For you do not inquire wisely concerning this." (**Ecclesiastes 7:10**). Or perhaps our former days are filled with regrets. Paul's were (**1 Timothy 1:13-15**). We cannot change them. We can get forgiveness if needed, and we can choose to do better today, but we cannot go back.

We must prepare for the future, but live in the present. The future is uncertain. We do not have full control of it. "You do not know what will happen tomorrow" (**James 4:14**). Tomorrow is only ours if the Lord wills (**James 4:13; Luke 12:16-20**).

The apostle Paul's approach toward both past and future is ideal. He said, "Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are

ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (**Philippians 3:13-14**). Paul forgot the past, reached toward the future, but lived in the present. Notice the use of the present tense in the preceding verse: "I do not count . . . one thing I do . . . forgetting . . . reaching . . . I press."

What are you doing with the present? Are you making the most of this day and doing your best to serve the Lord in this moment of time? Live in the moment. The Bible says, "Whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord" (**Colossians 3:23a**). And, "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might" (**Ecclesiastes 9:10**). And a poet wrote . . .

*Today is mine to do with what I will
Today is mine my own special cup to fill
To die a little that I might learn to live
To take from life that I might learn to give
Today is mine*

*Like most men I cursed the present to avoid the
peace of mind*

*And raise my thoughts beyond tomorrow
and vision there more peace of mind*

*But as I view this day around me I can see the fool
I've been*

*For today's the only garden we can tend
Today is mine*



Sick			
Fran Snyder (Mother of Carla Humphrey)	Lori Holloway	Chick Wade	Sandlyn Fultz (Davis Fultz's Sister)
Gloria Detmer and Carol Dickerson (Toni Herd's Sisters)	Carrie Chavers (Friend of Sharon Bailey)	Jared Nixon	Philip Locke (Jeremiah Johnson's Uncle)
Ross Folmar	Grandparents of Mary Ann Roberts	Joe Perry (Anna Miller's Relative)	Toni Herd
Ed Mort (Friend of Sharon Bailey)	Kenn and Ellen Smith (Ken Sullivane's Parents)	Erlene Davis (Walker Davis' mother)	Daphne Whatley (Lisa Lanier's Mom)
Gerald White (Christopher's and Wesley's Father)	Dave Brown (Friend of the Lanier's)	Bill Rhodes (Toni Herd's Uncle)	Mike Reed (Friend of the Long's)
Marty and Aubrey Meeks (Toni Herd's Nephews)	Frank Johnson (Debbi Coleman's Uncle)	Herbert Missildine (Toni Herd's Uncle)	Jo Faust Williams (Manna Jones' friend)

December Birthdays

- 1 - David Ogle
- 2 - Chuck Hunt
- 4 - Phillip Box
- 5 - Amber Adams
- 6 - Erica Seymore
- 7 - Hunter Collins
- 8 - Paul Coulston
- 10 - Megan Lee
- 11 - Spencer and Shepherd Hall
- 14 - Roy Liu
- 21 - Jacob Jerkins
- 23 - Conner Godwin
- 24 - Melanie Daves
- 25 - Caleb Daniels
- 29 - Jonathan Cagle
- 29 - Matthew Persell
- 31 - Jennifer Daniels
- 31 - David Frame

News and Notes

- Let's remember our expectant mothers: Joy Liu, and Amanda Stephens .
- Tam is away for several weeks visiting in China.
- We will be starting a new teaching quarter next Sunday.
- Brother Rouse will be having another Question Night in May. Please give any questions to him in writing in the next few weeks.
- Larry and Nathan Rouse will be away in Virginia from Monday through Friday. Larry will have some important opportunities to assist brethren there. Please remember him in your prayers.

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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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When to End a Bible Study

By Larry Rouse



Thought to Ponder

If you don't make up your mind, then your unmade mind will unmake you. A closed mind will be the Trojan horse that will get on the inside and open the gates to the enemy.

Several years ago I brought a brother with me to meet a man who was convinced that all churches were "filled with hypocrites" and because of that he no longer attended anywhere. In my optimism I thought than an open Bible would, in time, convince this man to change his attitudes and practices. After three hours of patiently struggling with a man who displayed open dishonesty, irrational anger and had plainly stated that he would never change his mind, my brother pulled me aside and made a comment that I never forgot. "Larry, my abilities and efforts are not highly valuable, but they are more valuable than to be used like this! Brother, it is time to go home."

It was not until I carefully studied how my Lord Jesus Christ worked with people did I come to understand what I could and what I could not do in my teaching of His word. What was the goal of Jesus when He taught men? Surely He wanted to convert everyone He taught since He came to "seek and save that which was lost" (**Luke 19:10**). But as I look into His ministry I find that a large majority rejected His teachings (**John 6:66**). Rather than viewing Jesus' ministry as a failure, I needed to learn what the primary purpose of Jesus' teachings really was. When I learned that truth, I discovered how successful Jesus was and, as a result, I was then able to properly gauge and evaluate my efforts in teaching.

Look again at your approach to teaching and make sure your focus is the heart and not just the head. Peter, having made effective and essential arguments, turned his message to the heart. "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

To Expose Hearts

When Mary brought Jesus to the Temple a few weeks after His birth, a prophet, Simeon, foretold what the primary work of Jesus' ministry would be. "Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against . . . that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. (**Luke 2:34-35**)" This is precisely what Jesus accomplished as He taught others in His ministry. More than just trying to have someone agree on a point of doctrine, Jesus looked to open the hearts of those that engaged Him in discussion. Once opened, a man could see his own heart and then make an important choice. This one could then either be grieved at what he saw and thus would allow Jesus, as the Great Physician, to operate on his

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Do You Have a Bible Question?
Call (334) 734-2133 or
E-mail:
LarryRouse@aubeacon.com

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES Sunday

Bible Class 9:30 AM
Worship 10:20 AM
Evening Worship 6:00 PM

Wednesday

Bible Classes..... 7:00 PM

Ask about our home Bible Study Groups!

Larry Rouse
Evangelist and Editor

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

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heart bringing the needed change or he could reject Him by slamming the door of his heart in the face of our Lord.

Some Cases in Point

From this perspective let us look anew at some well-known exchanges in the ministry of Jesus. The rich young ruler appeared to be the perfect prospect to become a disciple of the Lord. He seemed to agree on the “essential” doctrinal components, claiming to have kept God’s written word (**Mark 10:17-20**). Jesus not only heard the words of this man, He also heard his thoughts. He wanted this man to see them too. “Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, “One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.” But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions” (**Mark 10:21-22**). Jesus opened this man’s heart and then this man chose to walk away. Jesus accomplished what he wanted to in this exchange!

Look at how Jesus turned the discussion from the place of worship to the condition of the heart of the woman at the well (**John 4:1-26**). Seeing her own heart she came to know that Jesus was the Messiah and, in turn, she left her water pot and quickly spread that news to others (**John 4:28-30**). She rejoiced at the work of the Great Physician and, in turn, sought as many as possible to have their hearts opened by Him too.

Whether it was a question, a direct comment, or a simple parable, Jesus confronted his opponents time and again with the contents of their own hearts! The parable of the Good Samaritan helped a very reluctant lawyer admit who his neighbor was, and in that, he came to see the racial prejudice that dominated his heart (**Luke 10:28-37**).

We Must Learn to Open Hearts

While we cannot instantly see the contents of the hearts of others as Jesus did (**Luke 5:22**), we can, however, through wisdom, learn how to open hearts. Why do people believe and act as they do? Even Pilate, through his experience, looked beyond the empty lies of the Jewish Rulers to know that they were motivated by envy when they attacked the Lord (**Mark 15:10**). From personal observation and insight you may come, over time, to know the motivations of the ones you teach.

Several years ago I learned that the best approach in

studying with “Jehovah’s Witnesses” was to challenge their personal loyalty to their headquarters, the Watchtower Society. At the beginning of the study they claimed that the Bible alone was the guide of their beliefs, but by the end of our studies I was able to show to them that this was not the case. When their hearts were opened to this truth, one man cried like a baby while another man, while screaming, threw me out of his house. In both of these studies, hearts were opened and decisions made. I believe that the Lord was pleased with both results (**2 Cor 2:14-17**).

When to End a Bible Study

A lesson that took me years to learn was when to end a Bible study. In the earlier example of the man that was dishonest and plainly proclaimed that he would not change, I should have accepted that he, in fact, had exposed his heart to me. His resounding answer was “No, I will not follow the Lord.” Indeed, it was time for me to move on.

The Heart of the Matter

The Pharisees would never accept any proof that Jesus was the Son of God. Any approach to them at that level would bring endless disagreements and arguments. Jesus knew why this was so, for these men in their hearts had put relationships and position above everything else. Jesus said: “But I know you, that you do not have the love of God in you . . . How can you believe, who receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that *comes* from the only God? (**John 5:42-44**)”

I have known of men and women who destroyed their marriages through their own immorality or had become bitter with another only to then make a jump into denominationalism, liberalism or even agnosticism. Often they try to put a spotlight on the inconsistencies of brethren and tenaciously hold on to arguments that are easily answered. Why can’t they see through these empty beliefs? It is because these beliefs are a cover or mask for the real reason for their newfound stand.

Speak to the Heart

Look again at your approach to teaching and make sure your focus is the heart and not just the head. Peter, having made effective and essential arguments, turned his message to the heart. “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” Now when they heard *this*, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Men *and* brethren, what shall we do? (**Acts 2:36-37**)”

May the Lord bless you in this dangerous but rewarding work in the opening of men’s hearts.



Today is Today

By Dee Bowman

Jesus said in His mountain message, “Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble” (**Matt. 6:34**). What a telling statement. I’ve been thinking a lot lately about the value and beauty of a single day.

Each day has its own sunrise, its own sunset. No two are exactly alike. Every day is different, with its own weather, its own wind and temperature, its own warmth or lack of it. Every sunrise is special in its own way; so with every sunset. They are all similar, but no two are the same.

What a joy to see a new day born. Every sunrise speaks of a new beginnings—a new slate, a new page. No matter how bad last night’s nightmare, or yesterday’s bad weather, with the first splash of sunshine across your quilt, everything is washed clean and you can start over.

A new day is a resurrection of sorts, too. With each new day we are raised up to new possibilities, new perspectives, new opportunities to serve and glorify God.

Sunsets serve a purpose, too. They remind us of what we did or didn’t do that day. As the sun disappears each evening, we look for rest if we’ve used the day well. And it brings us little twinges of conscience if we didn’t. If you’re right with God, you can look forward to the sunset.

Each day has its own thoughts. The thoughts that accompany each new day relate directly to neither yesterday or tomorrow; they belong peculiarly to today. You can’t do tomorrow’s thinking today. Sure, you can plan for tomorrow; but the thought you used to do so is today’s thought, not tomorrow’s. And you can relate back to yesterday in your mind, but the very thoughts you used are today’s thoughts, not yesterday’s. “As a man thinks in his heart so is he” (**Prov. 23:7**). Today’s thoughts belong to today.

Every day brings new circumstances and new possibilities. Circumstances have to be handled. So do possibilities. You have choose every day what you’ll do with them. That means you have to meditate, contemplate, discriminate, then decide on what actions you will take about what’s happening around you. Oh, you can put off thinking about it, but procrastination seldom serves anybody well, and you’ll likely be sorry if you put it off till later.

Good and evil thoughts battle one another every day. We all have some of both. You have to choose which you will allow residency in your mind. “...give no place to the Devil,” Paul said (**Eph. 4:27**). Someone has said “you can’t keep the birds from flying over your head, but you can keep them from making a nest in your hair.” It’s that way with evil thoughts. They’re going to race through your mind every day—count on it—but you don’t have to give them a place to stay.

Each day has its own joy and its own sadness. Information—both good and bad—travels quickly these days. And each day you’ll find some good news and some bad, some joy and some sadness. Both, it seems to me, are necessary to the good life. The joys bring us encouragement and give us pleasure. Sadness brings us to a realization of who and where we are, and the fragileness of time. Just as joy encourages and makes our disposition sanguine, so sadness brings us stamina, teaches us patience, and keeps us courageous as we struggle through the vicissitudes of life.

Solomon said, “in the day of prosperity, be joyful, but in the day of adversity, consider” (**Eccl. 7:14**). Did you notice that there is a day of prosperity and a day of adversity? The actions for each are recommended. When the day is good we should rejoice and be thankful; when it is not, we should give due consideration to the fragileness of life. Furthermore, we are told by the wise man, “Surely God has appointed the one as well as they other...” If you use each day to serve God, the adversity will be of as much benefit as will the joy. That’s if you serve God.

Each day is a gift from God. Every one of them lasts 24 hours. It’s up to us what we do with them. We can use them to glorify Him, or we can waste them with inordinate pleasures, worldly ambitions, and illicit thoughts. It’s up to each one to decide what this 24 hours will mean in his life. And no matter how many of those 24 hours we still have, each one is its own, and each one will be used as we see fit to use it.

I read somewhere that “yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery, today is a gift, that’s why we call it the present.” “It is not the care of the day, but the cares of tomorrow that weigh man down. For the needs of today, we have corresponding strength given. For the morrow, we must trust. It is not ours yet” (George MacDonald).

