

Piercing the Darkness

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I'M ALL IN

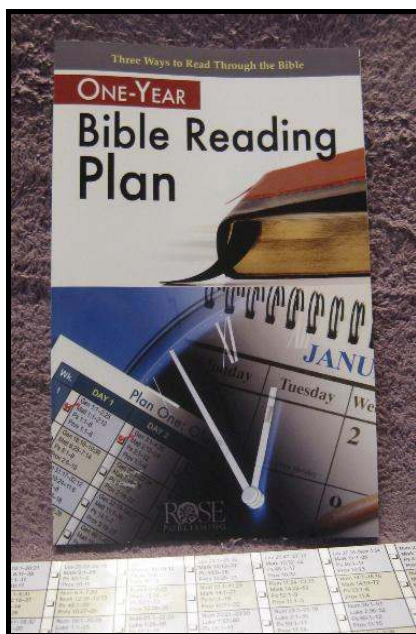
by Trip Critz

With the year 2012 looking us in the face, I can't help but see her inquisitive glare. A glare, as to ask, "Will you make a lasting impression on me, or leave it to someone else?" Can you hear her say, "This New Year is a blank canvas waiting to record what the one with the sharpest pen purposes to write." A glare, as to say, "I'm a level playing field and whosoever will can step up to my plate and play their best game."

My response was quick, "Yes I'll leave my mark, my pen is sharp, count me in on the whosoever will line and put me on the roster!"

As this posture resonated in my spirit, I saw David looking into the face of the giant, and shouting "I'm all in." Always remember when you go to take a giant's head, you better be "all in", and if the truth be know, that's the place where God's miracle working power lives.

My thoughts were also drawn to Tim Tebow playing the game that he loves, and saying to his critics "I'm all in." Should it really surprise us to see persecution come upon someone willing to stand up after a football game and say "I give glory to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ?" My friends, the anti-Christ spirit is assigned to those who shout it loud and shout it strong that Jesus is THE GREAT GOD, THE MIGHTY GOD, THE ONLY TRUE AND LIVING GOD and THERE IS NO OTHER!



See the end of the Newsletter for details on these free reading plans.

But that same anti-Christ spirit trembles with fear in the face of such boldness. Daniel 11:32 says:

“...but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits.”

The Amplified Bible renders this verse:

“...but the people who know their God shall prove themselves strong and shall stand firm and do exploits [for God].”

The anti-Christ spirit works hard to quickly shut down the voice of those that are “all in”, but God said: “It won’t prevail because I have a people that will choose to stand firm on what they believe and I’ll work through them to do exploits that will silence the critics.

I stood in my kitchen last week explaining my position on a certain matter to my fourteen year old daughter, when I heard her reply “whatever.” You’ll be happy to know that I caught my hand as it was preparing to move swiftly through the air and connect. After regaining my composure, I proceeded to tell her, “Next time you are going to be disrespectful and dishonorable, please have enough boldness to just cuss me out and maybe even use some four letter words with a passionate tone.”

I continued to explain, when it comes to being disrespectful and dishonorable, there are no levels from one to ten. If you cuss me, that is not level 9 on the disrespectful scale, disrespect is disrespect, so if you’re going to do it, then be “all in” because the results are the same.

Wow, no sooner had the words left my lips, when it hit me... that’s how I live my life most of the time. Doing good things here and there, praying every now and then, reading my Bible when I have time, and serving God when it’s convenient. And I’m even first in line to convince God to accept my halfhearted effort as my best.

I thought to myself, why don’t you practice what you preach? At that same moment, I also heard the voice of an old friend, who has since gone on to be with the Lord, saying as he preached, “God designed the Christian life to be lived at 100%, and anything less only brings frustration, and discontent.” Could that really be true?

Could it be if I decided to live 2012 “all in” that I could know levels of success, peace, boldness, and contentment like I never have? Could it be that frustration and discontentment have lingered as a result of giving God only 50%? As my attention was drawn back to the look on my daughter’s face, I could tell she got it; I know I did.

Now that a few weeks of soul searching have passed, I’m ready and resolute and say to 2012 “I’m all in”. No more trying to run some kind of con game on God. No more trying to get him to accept 50% when he created and equipped me to live at 100%. At the end of next year, let it be said of me

that I left nothing on the playing field. Let my reputation in the realm of the spirit be of one that didn't know what quit or be quite meant, and that I lived my life so loud for Jesus that it terrorized the works of hell. What do you say?

WHAT DID YOU GET FOR CHRISTMAS?

by Sally Bates

I'm sure the list for each of us could be extensive, surprising, full of pleasure and lots of smiles! Because that's what we do for Christmas . . . we do our best to bring a smile to the faces and hearts of those around us, yes? But what did WE get for Christmas, really? Of course, we got the gift of Christ. The babe in the manger who already had the spiritual marks of the cross in his tiny little hands, because that's the plan he and God made before He left His throne on high and came in human form.

His birth was significant to the world, but it was also singularly and primarily significant to each of us individually and personally. His birth was so the world could be restored to His Father, to Himself, and receive the Holy Spirit . . . His death later made his personage significant in a very individual way. The gift he left under your tree of life, your family tree, your tree planted by the waters . . . was a way to be restored to communion with Father God.

What were among the first gifts brought to the Christ child? Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh. What was the significance of each of those gifts? Were they just what the wise men found in their homes? Were those gifts ones they bought from the local medicinary or the merchants of the time? Were they gifts they had purchased and stored up for this purpose? Did they truly understand what they were bringing to the Christ child when they made that trek across the deserts and hills of that land?

To know the gift of Christ holds so much more for us. We didn't receive only one gift because in Him are a myriad of gifts. In Him is the gift of Grace that accomplishes the restoration of our covenant promises with God . . . and there are no finer gifts than those that come within this new covenant and the fulfillment of the old through Him.

I am not sure where the gifts of the wise men came from . . . but I sure know who they came to! They represent so many of the beautiful gifts that were to follow. Royalty, sweet sacrifice, one who was to die and be raised to sit at the right hand of His Father, to make intercession for us.

What more beautiful gift could He have brought to us? What did you get for Christmas? I bet nothing under your tree can compare to the gifts of the

wise men, nor the gift of the Christ child from God to us.

Finally . . . Are you looking forward to the return of this gift? When God turns to Christ and says "It is time. Go, and bring forth your church." When Christ breaks through the Eastern sky and we see Him in all His Glory? It won't be the only time He has been or will be seen on the planted called Earth. But as is all that comes from God, surely it is only a tiny piece of this magnificent puzzle we are walking out, and seeing come to light.

WHAT DOES BELIEVE REALLY MEAN?

by Pastor Ronda Ehlert

As we closed out 2011 at Manifest Youth in Chino Valley, I wanted to challenge the youth to take a look at this past year. Every year I have them write down goals to reach for in the coming year. I am a big believer of having a vision, a goal to focus on throughout the new year. Now this doesn't always mean that they attain them, in fact there are many that don't. It's the focus and direction that I am looking for, more that actually attaining it. Working towards it is just as important. However the challenge this year is to LIVE differently than years past. I feel sometimes time passes and we look back and wonder what we did with our lives. More importantly what did we do with our lives that really mattered!

David realizes in Ps.39:5 *"You have made my life no longer than the width of my hand. My entire lifetime is just a moment to you; at best, each of us is but a breath."* The Bible also says in James 4:14 *"How do you know what your life will be like tomorrow? Your life is like the morning fog--it's here a little while, then it's gone."* We put so much into this life, as if its all we have to live for. When really all we have to live for is the one who gives us life! Abundant life!

Eternity is huge compared to the life we are living now. If what we experience now is just a handbreath or just a mist, then doesn't it make more sense to store up treasures in heaven? We spend way too much time concerned about our comfort and entertainment, our social and physical and emotional needs than we do with the matters of eternity.

So we rely on the words that Jesus said in John 3:16. We all know it, the greatest salvation verse of all time! *"For God so loved the world the whosoever BELIEVES in Him shall not perish but have eternal life."* But what exactly does believe mean? Is it like the believe, "I know you're there and you saved me from sin... catch ya later," believe? Or is it something deeper?

This past Wednesday night I asked the youth if they believed that I could shoot a balloon that was pinned to the wall, with a pellet gun. I had brought

with me a very nice pellet gun that actually looked like a .22 caliber shotgun. I told the youth that girls are better shots than boys..etc. 75% of the room believed I could do it. They believed in me!. Then I made it a little bit harder to believe. I asked how many thought I could shoot the balloon if someone actually held it in their hand...about only 20% of the room believed that. Then I asked how many think I can shoot the balloon with someone holding it between their teeth? Two people believed in me at that point, and one actually did it. She held it between her teeth. I made her sign a fake medical release form and put her up against the wall. Of course I am not a good shot, and didn't want to take the chance so it wasn't loaded. But it still makes the noise and was fun to watch.

The point however is that "believing" is easy. But living it, proving it is really believing. I had many believers in the room when it was just a balloon pinned to the wall, But those believers fell away as we got right down to proving it.

Live what you believe this year! Don't work so hard for things that don't matter. Let everything you do and say be in light of eternity! That is where we will spend most of our time!

SMI has acquired some **Bible reading guides** to assist in reading through the Bible in a year. There are three different plans one can choose from, with boxes to be checked when the daily reading is completed. These rugged, colorful guides are free for the asking. Give me your mailing address and I'll send you one.

END OF THE WORLD

by Bruce Montroy



I've seen several renditions of the accompanying cartoon about the end of the world and the Mayan calendar. We've heard so many "prophets" predict the end of the world that's no one takes it seriously – well most folks just laugh it off. Remember the yearly series: 88 Reasons Why The Rapture Will Be in 1988"? The author had to keep updating his theory. One religion even had people selling off their assets and waiting on a hilltop for the return.

Jesus said that no one but the Father knows the precise time, and date-setters argue with Him as though they were smarter! It is humorous except for two obvious issues:

1. Not taking the reality of the end of time seriously and thus living unrighteously; and 2. Resigning one's self to a fatalistic attitude.

There is one theological position that the church, like the stone in Daniel 2:35, will grow and take over the whole earth, bringing in the promised Millennium. The proponents of this position push for world evangelism, and the increase of faith that will quench the powers of darkness. The power of conversion is held out as a societal as well as medicinal cure.

A viewpoint that emerged in the 1800's was that there would come a secret rapture in the midst of increasing darkness and woes, thus releasing a time of great tribulation. Those who hold to this view also press hard for world evangelism, especially in light of massive world tragedies and growing darkness.

Both of these eschatological views have Scriptures they propound, thus making it hard for the average believer to sort through. I was raised with one theory, sort of and schooled in the opposite view point. Since graduation from Bible College 42 years ago, I've studied on my own and come to this conclusion:

Prepare and live as though our faith will bring in the Millennium; but have your bags packed, ready for the rapture that could come at any time! Definitely, work for world evangelism and don't be negative!

Taking in the tragedies that have pummeled our world this past decade, debate over when the world will end is meaningless for those who perished in the two huge tsunamis, the many earthquakes, floods, tornados, fires, wars and accidents. For millions, the world did end. *"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment"* (Heb. 9:27).

"When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. Before Him will be gathered all the nations, and He will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats" (Matt. 25:31-32 ESV).

What about using the talk of the world ending in 2012 as a witnessing tool? We could ask, "What do you think about the Mayan Calendar ending in 2012? And then following their response with, "If it did, are you ready to stand before God and give an account of your life?" 2012 needs to be a year of sharing the full Gospel of Salvation through faith in the risen Christ.

Rapture or restoration is not as important as being ready through the New Birth. I have a bunch of business cards that have John 3:16 on one side and the sinner's prayer on the other. If you could use some, let me know how many! Everyone needs to hear at lease once! Help us share the plan of salvation with those on the internet. Share our website with others: www.SpearMinistries.org

COLLEGE COURSES

Chino Valley Word of Life Church is starting their second semester of Berean University, Tuesday, January 17th. The classes can be taken for credit that is transferable to several Universities and allows one to prepare for credentials with the Assemblies of God. The classes can also be audited by those just desiring a deeper working knowledge of the Word.

Here are this semester classes: The Book of Romans; The Abundant Life; Hearing the Voice of God; Assemblies of God History; History of Missions; Ethics in Ministry; and, The Local Church and Evangelism.

Read the brochure enclosed in the newsletter. For more information call the church office: (928) 636-4224. Guests are welcome at the Wednesday 9:15 a.m. chapel services, and auditing courses is free. Attend one course or as many as you like.

VIRTUOUS

by Linda J. Humes

"She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness."

Proverbs 31:26 (KJV)

Proverbs talks about a virtuous woman that most of us can only wonder about. In the hustle and bustle of the modern day life, most of us are tickled to get home from work, put dinner on the table, help with the kid's homework, draw their baths and find 5 minutes to breathe before "hitting the sack." I feel greatly accomplished if I can get an hour of prayer, Bible study and devotionals in before the family is up in the morning. How did life get this way?

The husband of the virtuous woman trusts her, and because of it he increases in his livelihood but today the divorce rate (inside and outside of the church) is 50% in America in 2011, and many couples never marry at all, they just enjoy the "pleasure" without the commitment. Trust becomes scarce.

The virtuous woman works with her hands and brings food from "afar" today, working with your hands ruins a \$40 fingernail job and no one wants to travel more than a mile to go to the well-stocked grocery store.

The virtuous woman gets up while it is still dark and provides food for her family and servants today, it's a waffle or Pop Tart tossed in the toaster and everyone is still eating as they run out the door to school, appointments and work.

The virtuous woman buys land and plants vineyards today, we're trying desperately to keep our homes out of foreclosure. Inner city home lots are very small and growing a small garden is a true challenge with limited time and the cost of water. The time and financial economics doesn't encourage the consideration, it's cheaper and easier to pick up processed canned veggies.

The virtuous woman girds herself with strength today, we are bombarded with ads about workout videos, the newest greatest exercise equipment, and classes that we attend a few times and then drop out of for lack of time and/or ambition.

The virtuous woman makes good quality products and works late into the night to finish them today, we spend our days at a job in a business owned by someone else, hoping for a reduction in hours and an increase in pay. It is just an end to a need, no feeling of belonging, no pride in ownership, and little hope of success.

The virtuous woman makes sure her family is well clothed, and in "fine" clothing today, there are charities and websites addressing the needs of the homeless and impoverished, begging for warm clothing and blankets because jobs are so scarce. People are living in their cars, in parks, in tents, or if they're lucky, with relatives; trying to survive.

The virtuous woman has many other qualities that I do see clearly in the Church today, and even stronger as this economy rages. I see diligence in prayer, for themselves and for those in the community around them. I see honor in lending a hand to another, knowing that "but by the Grace of God go I." I see developing and increasing wisdom through their relationship with Jesus. I see extended kindness to the hurting and lost through the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Although the times have drastically changed between the writing about the Virtuous Woman and now, we still have the choice of how we will live our lives and present ourselves to those around us. We can take on the armor of God, or find continued excuses to give into the way of the world. We can exhibit the fruit of the Spirit, or we can block out the needs of the helpless and dying; caring for "our 4 and no more." We can be the hands and feet of Jesus or we can prepare ourselves for the words "I never knew you: depart from me . . ." (Matt 7:23).

Lord, help me to strive to be virtuous, never forgetting that EVERYONE around me is your child, filled with dimmed hopes and abandoned dreams. Let me be your hands and feet.

Another year has rushed by us and we stand at the beginning of new opportunities. Thank you so much for your prayers and gifts this past year.

We will be sending out the donation records within the next couple of weeks. If you do not receive yours, please contact us by the end of the month, realizing that things do get lost in the mail. We had a piece of an envelop delivered to us by the postman... guess their machines get hungry!

Norma says, "Watch out for 2012!" Many blessings from Spear Ministries.

Bruce & Norma Montroy
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