



REFLECTIONS

Grace OPC

At the Mile Marker

By Pastor Brian De Jong

In His wisdom, God has set certain mile markers in our lives that afford us the opportunity for reflection, reassessment and renewal. These are typically calendar events that remind us where we are, and what time it is.

The dawning of a new decade seems like a significant opportunity for those who will take it. The twenty-teens are over, and we stand at the threshold of the twenty-twenties. Take a moment to pause and consider, before plunging into the new year, and new decade.

As far as reflection goes, we ought occasionally to look back over the past ten years, and see how God’s almighty hand has upheld us. Ask yourself, how has He shown his goodness to me? What has He given me that I didn’t possess in 2010? How has He enriched my life, and poured out His bounty upon me?

Reflection can also cut in the other direction – what have I lost in this past decade? Who or what is no longer in my life, and what good has God brought out of that loss? Also, what things are different? Are they different -better, or different-worse?

Reflection of a personal nature is useful. How have I changed in this past decade? How have I grown, especially in my spiritual life? Am I a stronger Christian today than I was ten years ago? Are there areas of my walk with Christ that have diminished in that time span? Who am I, and what is going on in my faith right now?

Honest reflection can and should

give way to some reassessment. This particularly has to do with priorities. How do I spend my time? Who are the most important people in my lives? What are my stated priorities, and how do they compare to my real priorities?

Sometimes we have just such a disconnect in our lives. For example, I may say that reading my Bible daily is a high priority. Yet in retrospect, I find that I do that maybe every-other day at best, and sometimes a week goes by without spending time in God’s word. My stated

priority and my real priority are at odds with each other.

By reassessing we can make the needed changes to our habits and behaviors. We can throw out our bad, old habits and introduce new, better alternatives. This is simply the process of progressive sanctification, as we put off the old man and put on the new man. With determination and discipline, these new and better choices can become the new habits. Especially when these changes are of a spiritual nature, and involve the means of grace, we can and will grow as a result.

This is all part of the spiritual renewal that should be ongoing for all of God’s people. In 2 Timothy 1:6 Paul reminds Timothy to “fan into flame the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.” We all have a duty to fan the embers into flame. While others can help us



Volume 15, Issue 1

January 2020

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Mnemonics...

- *Worldview Movie Night, January 10th*
- *Session Meeting, January 14th*
- *Congregational and Corporation Meetings, January 22nd*
- *Pastors & Wives Dinner, January 31st*

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Anchor of Hope Newsletter



A Treasured Container

I had time this week to *Be Still*, and as I was listening to a quiet, meditative scripture reading put to music, I began to visualize it: a small wooden box, not too ornate, and big enough to fit in both hands. About the size of a shoe box, cherry wood, with silver, scripted lettering on it: "Treasured."

As I heard the music, I reflected on my container and how I was feeling this week. I noticed it in my neck, my muscles tense from balancing too much this week. Then I also recognized the dull ache in my lower back, strained from pushing too hard and staying too distracted to feel much of anything.

After taking note of my physical pain, I noticed my soul was experiencing a dichotomy of emotions: pain, sadness and doubt mixed together with joy, elation and awe. This week in my ministry at a pro-love pregnancy center, I met with two young women who chose abortion, both believing their life plan was more important than the life of their first child. Both women expressing a desire to be a mother "*someday*" but neither willing to sacrifice a few months of inconvenience now. My container drained out this week.

My words didn't matter. I felt that my obedience in offering all the knowledge and truth I knew to empower them didn't matter. I doubted if I didn't say enough or if I said too much. I grieved the loss of two precious lives, and carried the sadness as tension in my weary body.

As I offered my grief and pain to God in my container, He reached out and reminded me that the lost babies are treasured and safe with Him. That those created in His image are now in his protection. I offered my physical pain and a wave of peace flooded me as He whispered to me "You are treasured, too." He saw my weak body, battling a cold and experiencing the physical weight of the burden my heart carried, and He said, "You are free. It's mine now." The tears gently flowed from my eyes and my whole body experienced a warmth- His embrace of His treasure: Me.

As I offered up my weakness, pain and emptiness, memories of the last few weeks and months flooded my mind to remind me to also celebrate. Today, in my weakness, He had planned for me to attend the birth of brand new child created in God's image. I met his mother 7 months ago when she walked through the doors of the pregnancy center looking for an abortion. To see his little life today reminded me of the countless ways God has taken care of her since she said "yes" to being his mom.

Anchor of Hope Continued....

I often say to the women experiencing this indecision, "I can promise you that if you step out in faith and courage to have this baby, you will be amazed at the way God takes care of you." I can say this with confidence, because I've seen it time after time. And isn't that a part of His nature to be so faithful with our limited faithfulness?

After four visits with this Nepalese mother, and three ultrasounds to show her that it was indeed her 2nd baby, she was able to point to the monitor and finally say to her 4-month old son, "See, that's your brother." That day gave me such joy. This Hindu mother continued to visit us telling us that whenever she came to the center, she felt, "I can do this, I have hope."

While her journey of single parenting has not been particularly easy, I can look back and see how our Faithful Father has cared for her little growing family:

- A larger apartment
- A steady job with an understanding boss who plans to raise money by matching the amount raised to help her through her time off
- A new car, purchased by two caring, Jesus-following men
- Multiple new friendships with caring Jesus-followers
- Multiple loving babysitters to keep her infant safe so she could continue to work
- A traveler's visa approved for her 73-year old mother to travel all the way to Sheboygan from a village in Nepal, without knowing any English
- Her brave mother's idea to shout to a plane full of people, "Who's also heading to Chicago?" and God's provision of 9 similar travelers to assist her
- Her son's 1st birthday party attended by all nationalities of friends she's made in the last year
- Labor that started less than 48 hours after her mother's arrival, so her firstborn son could be safely in his grandmother's care
- Delivery attended by four women she'd met over the past year who wouldn't let her be alone
- The safe delivery of a full term baby boy, lovingly welcomed and named "Navashan": gift of HOPE

My container is full with these treasures. As His Treasure, I rest in the freedom that He carries my burdens and my joys. He hands these treasures back in beautiful container with a silver bow tied around it, just for my added joy and delight.

Written by: Elizabeth Hildebrandt, Nurse Manager, Anchor of Hope

Prayer Without Ceasing

By Andrew Murray



Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

(1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

Pray without ceasing. Who can do this? How can one do it who is surrounded by the cares of daily life? How can a mother love her child without ceasing? How can I breathe and feel and hear without ceasing? Because all these are the functions of a healthy, natural life. And so, if the spiritual life be healthy, under the full power of the Holy Spirit, praying without ceasing will be natural. Praying without ceasing. Does it refer to continual acts of prayer, in which we are to persevere till we obtain, or to the spirit of prayerfulness that should animate us all the day? It includes both. The example of our Lord Jesus shows us this. We have to enter our closet for special seasons of prayer; we are at times to persevere there in importunate prayer. We are also all the day to walk in God’s presence, with the whole heart set upon heavenly things. Without set times of prayer, the spirit of prayer will be dull and feeble. Without the continual prayerfulness, the set times will not avail.

Does that refer to prayer for ourselves or others? To both. It is because many confine it to themselves that they fail so in practicing it. It is only when the branch gives itself to bear fruit, more fruit, much fruit, that it can live a healthy life, and expect a rich inflow of sap. The death of Christ brought Him to the place of everlasting intercession. Your death with Him sets you free from the care of self and elevates you to the dignity of intercessor—one who can get life and blessing from God for others. Know your calling; begin this your work. Give yourself wholly to it, and before you know it you will be finding something of this “praying always” within you.

How can I learn it? The best way of learning to do a thing— in fact the only way— is to do it. Begin by setting apart some time every day in which you say to God that you come to Him now as an intercessor for others. Let it be after your morning or evening prayer, or any other time. If you cannot secure the same time every day, do not be troubled. Only see that you do your work.

Christ chose you and appointed you to prayer for others, If at first you do not feel any special urgency or faith or power in your prayers, do not let that hinder you. Quietly tell your Lord Jesus of your feebleness; believe that the Holy Spirit is in you to teach you to pray, and be assured that if you begin. God will help you

John Ploughman

Chapter 18: Men with Two Faces

Even bad men praise consistency. Thieves like honest men, for they are the best to rob. When you know where to find a man, he has one good point at any rate; but a fellow who howls with the wolves and bleats with the sheep gets nobody's good word unless it be the devil's. To carry two faces under one hat is, however, very common. Many roost with the poultry and go shares with Reynard. Many look as if butter would not melt in their mouths and yet can spit fire when it suits their purpose. I read the other day an advertisement about reversible coats; the tailor who sells them must be making a fortune. Holding with the hare and running with the hounds is still in fashion. Consistency is about as scarce in the world as musk in a dog kennel.

You may trust some men as far as you can see them, but no further, for new company makes them new men. Like water, they boil or freeze according to the temperature. Some do this because they have no principles; they are of the weathercock persuasion and turn with the wind. you might as well measure the moon for a suit of clothes as know what they are. They believe in that which pays best. They always put up at the Golden Fleece; their mill grinds any grist which you bring to it if the ready money is forthcoming. They go with every wind, north, south, east, west, northeast, northwest, southeast, southwest, north-northeast, southwest-by-south, or any other in all the world. Like frogs, they live on land or water and are not at all particular which it is. Like a cat, they always fall on their feet and will stop anywhere if you butter their toes. They love their friends dearly, but their love lies in the cupboard; if that be bare, like a mouse, their love runs off to some other larder. They say, "Leave you, dear girl? Never, while you have a shilling." How they scuttle off if you come to the bad! Like rats, they leave a sinking ship.

When good cheer is lacking,
Such friends still be packing.

Their heart follows the pudding. While the pot boils, they sit by the fire; when the meal tub is empty, they play at turnabout. They believe in the winning horse; they will wear anybody's coat who may choose to give them one; they are to be bought by the dozen like mackerel, but he who gives a penny for them wastes his money. Profit is their god; and whether they make it out of you or your enemy, the money is just as sweet to them. Heads or tails are alike to them so long as they win. High road or back lane, all's the same to them as long as they can get home with the loaf in the basket. They are friends to the goose, but they will eat his giblets. So long as the water turns their wheel, it is none the worse for being muddy; they would bum their mother's coffin if they were short of fire wood and sell their own father if they could turn a penny by the old gentleman's bones. They never lose a chance of minding the main chance.

Others are shifty because they are so desperately fond of good fellowship. "Hail fellow, well met," is their cry, be it traveler or highwayman. They are so good-natured that they must agree with everybody. They are cousins of Mr. Anything. Their brains are in other people's heads. If they were at Rome, they would kiss the Pope's toe, but when they are at home they make themselves hoarse with shouting, "No Popery." They admire the Vicar of Bray, whose principle was to be the Vicar of Bray whether the Church was Protestant or Popish. They are mere time-servers, in hopes that the times may serve them. They belong to the party which wears the yellow colors not in their button-holes, but in the palms of their hands. Butter them, and like turnips you may eat them. Pull the rope, and like the bells they will ring as you choose to make them, funeral knell or wedding peal, come to church or go to the devil. They have no backbones; you may bend them like willow wands, backwards or forwards, whichever way you please. Like oysters, anybody may pepper them who can open them. They are sweet to you and sweet to your

Continued on next page...

Ploughman Continued...

enemy. They blow hot and cold. They try to be Jack-o'-both sides and deserve to be kicked like a football by both parties.

Some are hypocrites by nature, slippery as eels, and piebald like Squire Smoothey's mare. Like a drunken man, they could not walk straight if they were to try. They wind in and out like a Surrey lane. They were born of the breed of St. Judas. The double shuffle is their favorite game, and honesty their greatest hatred. Honey is on their tongues, but gall in their hearts. They are mongrel-bred, like the gypsy's dog. Like a cat's feet, they show soft pads but carry sharp claws. If their teeth are not rotten, their tongues are, and their hearts are like dead men's graves. If speaking the truth and lying were equally profitable, they would naturally prefer to lie; for, like dirt to a pig, it would be congenial. They fawn, and flatter, and cringe, and scrape; like snails they make their way by their slime, but all the while they hate you in their hearts and only wait for a chance to stab you. Beware of those who come from the town of Deceit. Mr. Facing-both-ways, Mr. Fair-speech, and Mr. Two-tongues are neighbors who are best at a distance. Though they look one way, as boatmen do, they are pulling the other; they are false as the devil's promises, and as cruel as death and the grave.

Religious deceivers are the worst of vermin, and I fear they are as plentiful as rats in an old wheat stack.

They are like a silver pin,
Fair without but foul within.

They cover up their black flesh with white feathers. Saturday and Sunday make a wonderful difference in them. They have the fear of the minister a good deal more before their eyes than the fear of God. Their religion lies in imitating the religious; they have none of the root of the matter in them. They carry Dr. Watts' hymn book in their pocket and sing a roaring song at the same time. Their Sunday coats are the best part about them; the nearer you get to their hearts, the more filth you will find. They prate like parrots, but their talk and their walk do not agree. Some of them are fishing for customers, and a little pious talk is a cheap advertisement; if the seat at the church or the meeting costs a trifle, they make it up out of short weights. They don't worship God while they trade, but they trade on their worship. Others of the poorer sort go to church for Soup, and bread, and coal tickets. They love the communion because of the alms' money. Some of the dear old Mrs. Goodbodies want a blessed almshouse, and so they profess to be so blessed under the blessed ministry or their blessed Pastor every blessed Sabbath. Charity suits them if faith does not; they know which side their bread is buttered on.

Others make a decent show in religion to quiet their consciences; they use it as a salve for their wounds. If they could satisfy heaven as easily as they quiet themselves, it would be a fine thing for them. It has been my lot to meet with some who went a long way in profession, as far as I could see, for nothing but the love of being thought well of. They got a little knot of friends to believe in their dime talk, and take all in for gospel that they liked to say. Their opinion was the true measure of a preacher's soundness; they could settle up everything by their own know, and they had gallons of XXX experience for those who liked something hot and strong; but dear, dear, if they had but condescended to show a little Christian practice as well, how much better their lives would have weighed up! These people are like owls, which look to be big birds, but they are not, for they are all feathers; and they look wonderfully knowing in the twilight, but when the light comes, they are regular boobies.

Hypocrites of all sorts are abominable, and he who deals with them will rue it. He who tries to cheat the Lord will be quite ready to cheat his fellow men. Great cry generally means little wool. Many a big chimney in which you expect to see bacon and hams, when you look up it, has nothing to show you but its empty hooks and black soot. Some men's windmills are only nutcrackers, and their elephants are nothing but sucking pigs. It is not all who go to church or meeting that truly pray, nor those who sing loudest that praise God most, nor those who pull the longest faces who are the most in earnest.

What mean animals hypocrites must be! Talk of polecats and weasels, they are nothing in comparison to them. Better be a dead dog than a live hypocrite. Surely when the devil sees hypocrites at their little game, it must be as good as a play to him; he tempts genuine Christians, but he lets these alone, because he is sure of them. He need not shoot at lame ducks; his dog can pick them up any day.

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Ploughman Concluded....

Depend upon it, friends, if a straight line will not pay, a crooked one won't. What is got by shuffling is very dangerous gain. It may give a moment's peace to wear a mask, but deception will come home to you and bring sorrow with it. Honesty is the best policy. If the lion's skin does not do, never try the fox's. Be as true as steel. Let your face and hands, like the church clock, always tell how your inner works are going. Better be laughed at as Tom Tell-truth than be praised as Crafty Charlie. Plain dealing may bring us trouble, but it is better than shuffling. At the last, the upright will have their reward; but for the double-minded to get to heaven is as impossible as for a man to swim the Atlantic with a millstone under each arm.

“The greatest enemy to human souls is the self-righteous spirit which makes men look to themselves for salvation.”

C.H. Spurgeon

Worldview Movie Night



The long overdue Fall Worldview Movie Night is finally happening on Friday, January 10 at 7 pm! We're going to watch and discuss "Queen of Katwe" - a movie recommended by Charles and Connie Jackson. This film has numerous worldview issues, including matters related to foreign missions. Invite a friend, bring a snack, and enjoy a warm evening of fellowship and discussion!

Congregational and Corporation Meetings

Our annual Congregational and Corporation Meetings are scheduled for Wednesday, January 22nd. In the event of bad weather, it will be held the following Wednesday, January 29th.



January Birthdays

Mark Friberg	1 st
Brady Froh	3 rd
Debbie Boss	7 th
Eyob Kaeiser	9 th
Clara Will	14 th
Alyssa Arndt	22 nd
Tom Ver Velde	23 rd
Inga Fester	26 th
Marge Ten Pas	31 st



January Anniversaries

Steve & Megan Boss
~January 28th, 14 years~

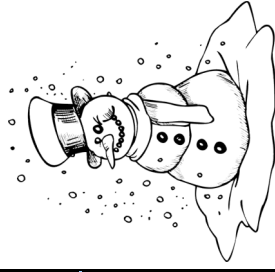




Showing forth the excellencies of Jesus Christ

January 2020

Grace OPC



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Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8 Prayer Meeting	9	10 Worldview Movie Night	11
12	13	14 Session Meeting	15 Prayer Meeting	16	17	18
19	20	21	22 Congregational and Corporation Meetings	23	24	25
26	27	28	29 Prayer Meeting	30	31 Pastors & Wives Dinner	

Chocolate Chocolate Chip Cookies

Ingredients:

- 1 cup butter, softened
- 1 1/2 cups white sugar
- 2 eggs
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 2/3 cup cocoa powder
- 3/4 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 2 cups semisweet chocolate chips

Instructions:

- Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C).
- In large bowl, beat butter, sugar, eggs, and vanilla until light and fluffy. Combine the flour, cocoa, baking soda, and salt; stir into the butter mixture until well blended. Mix in the chocolate chips and walnuts. Drop by rounded teaspoonfuls onto ungreased cookie sheets.
- Bake for 8 to 10 minutes in the preheated oven, or just until set. Cool slightly on the cookie sheets before transferring to wire racks to cool completely.



*“For He
has satisfied
the thirsty
soul,
and the
hungry soul
He has filled
with what
is good.”*



Showing forth the
excellencies of Jesus
Christ

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Spurgeon Corner

“And God saw the light.”

Genesis 1:4

This morning we noticed the goodness of the light, and the Lord’s dividing it from the darkness, we now note the special eye which the Lord had for the light. “God saw the light”—he looked at it with complacency, gazed upon it with pleasure, saw that it “was good.” If the Lord has given you light, dear reader, he looks on that light with peculiar interest; for not only is it dear to him as his own handiwork, but because it is like himself, for “He is light.” Pleasant it is to the believer to know that God’s eye is thus tenderly observant of that work of grace which he has begun. He

never loses sight of the treasure which he has placed in our earthen vessels. Sometimes we cannot see the light, but God always sees the light, and that is much better than our seeing it. Better for the judge to see my innocence than for me to think I see it. It is very comfortable for me to know that I am one of God’s people—but whether *I* know it or not, if the Lord knows it, I am still safe. This is the foundation, “The Lord knoweth them that are his.” You may be sighing and groaning because of inbred sin, and mourning over your darkness, yet the Lord sees “light” in your heart, for he has put it there, and all the cloudiness and gloom of your soul cannot conceal your light from his gracious eye. You may have sunk low in despondency, and even despair; but if your soul has any longing towards Christ, and if you are seeking to rest in his finished work, God sees the “light.” He not only *sees* it, but he also *preserves* it in you. “I, the Lord, do keep it.” This is a precious thought to those who, after anxious watching and guarding of themselves, feel their own powerlessness to do so. The light thus preserved by his grace, he will one day develop into the splendor of noonday, and the fulness of glory. The light within is the dawn of the eternal day.

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Evening, January 5th, C.H. Spurgeon

Front Page Concluded...

in this, it is primarily our responsibility. Don’t let the fire go out, but stoke it up and feed the fire. Let it burn hot and bright. Finally, let me close with a few questions: Where do you need to grow in the years ahead? What needs to change in your own life – individually, as a family, and as a church? What can and should Grace Church be doing in the decade of the twenty twenties? And will we pray to that end?

