

You Can Believe it!

I would guess that if I were to mention the name David Steeves, most if not all would draw a blank as to who he actually was. When I ran across his story, I thought it was one of those stories I would just have to use. In 1957 Lieutenant David Steeves was serving in the Air Force. He had been in training when his trainer jet went down and completely disappeared. It was fifty-four days later that he walked out of the California's Sierra Nevada Mountains. He told an unbelievable tale of how he had lived in a snowy wilderness after parachuting from his disabled plane. By the time he showed up alive, he had already been declared officially dead. When further search failed to turn up the wreckage, a hoax was suspected and Lieutenant Steeves was forced to resign under a cloud of doubt. The story however does not end there. More than twenty years later, his story was confirmed when a troop of Boy Scouts discovered the wreckage of his plane.

As I thought of this amazing story, I could not help but think of another time in history, where people had a difficult time understanding and even accepting a survival story of much greater proportion. A man by the name of Jesus Christ walked out of the Judean wilderness making claims a lot of people found difficult to believe. He stated he was the son of God. He claimed he would sit at the right hand of God, he even stated that all things belonged to him. He was later executed and pronounced dead. It was three days later that he showed up alive. Guess what? That created a new wave of skeptics that have plagued the earth ever since.

Stop to think with me for just a moment. Think about the facts of Christ's life, death, and resurrection. His integrity is well-founded. Prophets foretold His coming. Miracles supported His deity. Eyewitnesses verified His resurrection. And today the Holy Spirit confirms to anyone who is seeking to know the truth that Jesus is alive. I believe that the resurrection of Jesus is a fact of history that demands a response of faith. The Bible simply states concerning Jesus; "He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs." (Acts 1:3).

What a rich blessing to know with confidence you and I can believe, believe in the one they call Jesus.



Enjoy the Climb

In 2009

Onward and Upward

*From the ends of the earth I
call to you, I call as my heart
grows faint; lead me to the rock
that is higher than I.*

Psalm 61:2

Do you know that the US Navy makes house calls? Fourteen year old Laura was on a cruise with her parents when her appendix burst. The pain was terrible! The captain of the cruise ship sent out a distress call. Luckily the USS Ronald Reagan happened to be in the “nautical neighborhood” because of a training exercise. They were about 500 miles away. It took the aircraft carrier all night to get within 175 miles of the cruise ship. At that point they sent a helicopter which in 45 minutes was able to reach the cruise ship. As the helicopter hovered over the cruise ship, they realized there was not enough room to land, so they had to lower one of the sailors onto the deck in a basket. Laura was then loaded into the basket and lifted to the helicopter, where a medic began tending to her needs. She was flown back to the USS Ronald Reagan where emergency surgery was performed. Two hours later Laura was in recovery. The sailors treated her like a celebrity, showering her with souvenirs. The navy even shuttled Laura’s mom to the aircraft carrier.

I don’t know how many read this story? It was in the Tennessean on Christmas day on page 21. Not headline or front page stories, just one of those stories that make you feel good. It was a joy to find in the paper and read. It was a story about a positive acts not one that glorified some negative act.

I don’t know what 2008 has in store for us at Maple Hill. But I would guess that through the year there will be several of those feel good stories that will take place, that many if not most of us will never no about. There may be a group of ladies who volunteer to help feed a stranger in a local nursing home. It will be workers spending a Saturday helping to build a home for Habitat. It may be a group of men traveling hundreds of miles to build a home for needy children in Honduras. Maybe it will be a husband and wife visiting someone who is shut-in and lonely. It could be a teenager who invites someone to Bible class for the very first time. Maybe it will be a teen who says at a retreat “I want to be baptized!” It could be that one individual who is down on their luck and needs a helping hand on Monday night, who learns that there is someone who cares. Could there be someone who will be influenced to be a better husband or wife at one of our men’s or ladies classes?

When Jesus was anointed with the precious perfume at the home of Simon, he said concerning the woman “*she did what she could.*” I don’t know about you, but to hear our savior say that to us would make for a “feel good story.”

Thursday January 1

Bible Reading: Genesis 1-3

Thought for the Day: In his love he clothes us, enfolds us and embraces us; that tender love completely surrounds us, never to leave us

Friday January 2

Bible Reading: Joshua 1-5

Thought for the Day: God has given us two hands; one to receive with and the other to give with. We are not cisterns made for hoarding; we are channels made for giving.

Saturday January 3

Bible Reading: Psalm 1-2

Thought for the Day: The soul that walks in love neither tires others nor grows tired.

Sunday January 4

Bible Reading: Job 1-2

Thought for the Day: There is not one blade of grass, there is no color in this world that is not intended to make us rejoice

Each week we want to challenge each of us to consider answering the following questions:

1. Name a blessing of the past week.

2. What will I pray about this week?

3. What will I work on this week to improve my climb in 2009

Monday January 5

Bible Reading: Isaiah 1-6

Thought for the Day: Some complain because the rose has thorns; Some give thanks because the thorns have roses

What are you living for?

Have you ever awakened in the morning and gone through your morning routine and suddenly ask yourself, where your life is really headed. Does it ever seem to you that you have had an empty and pointless life up to this point? There may have been some successful business deals and had some fun, but in terms of satisfying friendships or lasting accomplishments, your life has been a zero. Maybe you have climbed the ladder of success, only to discover that all the while it had been leaning against the wrong wall.

When one takes a look at the life of Paul, how would you put a measuring stick to his life? Was he a success or a failure? I guess it all depends on whose yardstick you use to measure success. When measured by the world's yardstick of success, his life seems almost insignificant. He put too much aside in order to minister to the needs of others. As Paul looks back over matters, he saw that it had been rewarding but not easy.

Paul wrote his second letter to Timothy while languishing in a cold, damp dungeon awaiting execution. In a matter of weeks, the apostle would stand before Nero, the half-insane emperor of Rome, and learn that his life was coming to an end. But Paul knew that after his death he would receive the crown of life from the King of kings. History will reveal to us that the influence of his life had in reality changed the course of history itself. As Paul penned the words of that last epistle, he stated "*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith*" (II Timothy 4:7). Wouldn't it be grand to one day have the same confidence that the apostle had and to look over our life and say with confidence what he had penned centuries earlier.

Nero made a mark on history also. Ancient historians as well as modern historians have written volumes about the splendor of Nero and the vast Roman Empire. These same historians rarely if ever mention the apostle Paul. He was simply another radical who was put to death by the emperor. It is interesting to note that in our society we name our dogs Nero and our sons Paul. It seems to me that what we live for is pretty important after all. I think it would benefit each of us to simply review what it is that we are living for. Remember there are no losers with Jesus and no winners with the devil.

Tuesday January 6

Bible Reading: Matthew 1-2

Thought for the Day: One filled with joy preaches without preaching.

Wednesday January 7

Bible Reading: Romans 1-2

Thought for the Day: The opposite of joy is not sorrow. It is unbelief.

Thursday January 8

Bible Reading: Genesis 4-7

Thought for the Day: We have peace with God by the righteousness of Christ, and peace of conscience by the fruits of righteousness in ourselves.

Friday January 9

Bible Reading: Joshua 6-10

Thought for the Day: No God, no peace. Know God, know peace

Saturday January 10

Bible Reading: Psalm 3-5

Thought for the Day: In thy will is our peace

Sunday January 11

Bible Reading: Job 3-5

Thought for the Day: Christ alone can bring lasting peace-peace with God-peace among men and nations-and peace within our hearts

1. Name a blessing of this past week.

2. Name one lesson learned for this past week of Bible reading

Changed to Bring Change

One night long ago, a woman had one of those dreams that seemed so real you just didn't want it to end. In her dream she was having a conversation with God. As the conversation continued, the woman became angry with God. Why do you allow all the suffering and evil that is going on in this world to continue? Why don't You do something about it? In the dream, God never gets angry or raises his voice. He gently responds to the woman by saying; "I did. I created you."

As we look around the world at all that is going on, we sometimes shake our heads in disgust and ask where it is all going to end. We know and understand that we serve an all powerful God. And because of that knowledge, we might think he could send another flood as He did in Noah's day, to cleanse away the wickedness of the world. He could do that, but He won't. He has promised never to do that again (Genesis 9:11). Instead, He chooses to work through human beings like you and me.

When one looks through the Bible at the different characters who come alive on the pages of scripture, we realize that God was doing something about the condition of mankind, he made the Peters, James and Johns of this world, and they responded by making a difference. He changed Paul from a persecutor of the church to "*His witness to all men*" (Acts 22:15). Paul's life and letters taught, inspired and comforted the church in its early days. Those same truths are still around, offering comfort and inspiration to those who will heed the teachings of the great apostle. I have to realize that it was God who changed Paul and then He used him to change the world around him. The question always comes back to me and you. Have we been transformed by the power of Jesus Christ? If the answer is yes, there is a second question. Are we now obediently serving Him to change the lives of the people around us? Have we been changed to bring change or do we find ourselves like the woman who dreamed of a conversation with God, complaining about why God will not do something about the tragic way our world seems to be headed.

Maybe the thought we really need to consider is, have I really been changed? Only when we are changed can we help others to change.

Monday January 12

Bible Reading: Isaiah 7-11

Thought for the Day: Who except God can give you peace? Has the world ever been able to satisfy the heart?

Tuesday January 13

Bible Reading: Matthew 3-4

Thought for the Day: If God be our God, He will give us peace in trouble. When there is a storm without, He will make peace within. The world can create trouble in peace, but God can create peace in trouble.

Wednesday January 14

Bible Reading: Romans 3-4

Thought for the Day: Peace reigns where our Lord reigns

Thursday January 15

Bible Reading: Genesis 8-11

Thought for the Day: God often gives in one brief moment that which he has for a long time denied.

Friday January 16

Bible Reading: Joshua 11-15

Thought for the Day: Gratitude is the praise we offer God.

Saturday January 17

Bible Reading: Psalm 6-8

Thought for the Day: A godly man is a praying man.

Sunday January 18

Bible Reading: Job 5-6

Thought for the Day: A single grateful thought raised to heaven is the most perfect prayer.

1. Name a blessing of this past week?
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Thursday February 26, 2009

Bible Reading: Genesis 32-35

Thought for the Day: Success seems to be connected to action. Successful people keep moving...They make mistakes but they don't quit.

Friday February 27, 2009

Bible Reading: Judges 17-21

Thought for the Day: The stories of past courage...can offer hope, they can provide inspiration. But they cannot supply courage itself. For this each man must look into his own soul.

Saturday February 28, 2009

Bible Reading: Psalms 24-26

Thought for the Day: All our dreams can come true—if we have the courage to pursue them.

1. In my own words the first two months of 2009 were..

2. What am I looking forward to accomplishing in the next two months of 2009?

3. What am I going to be able to do to help grow the kingdom here at Maple Hill in the next two months?

2. What specific thing am I going to do to enhance my climb in 2009?

3. Who will I pray for during the week?

Monday January 19, 2009

Bible Reading: Isaiah 12-17

Thought for the Day: The person who has stopped being thankful has fallen asleep in life.

Tuesday January 20, 2009

Bible Reading: Matthew 5-7

Thought for the Day: A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all

Wednesday January 21, 2009

Bible Reading: Romans 5-6

Thought for the Day: He who waits to do a great deal of good at once, will never do anything.

Thursday January 22, 2009

Bible Reading: Genesis 12-15

Thought for the Day: Well done is better than well said.

Friday January 23, 2009

Bible Reading: Joshua 16-20

Thought for the Day: Expect great things from God, attempt great things for God.

Saturday January 24, 2009

Bible Reading: Psalm 9-11

Thought for the Day: What our Lord did was done with the intent, and this alone, that he might be with us and we with him.

Sunday January 25, 2009

Bible Reading: Job 7-8

Thought for the Day: I think that if God forgives us, we must forgive ourselves

Saturday February 21, 2009

Bible Reading: Psalms 21-23

Thought for the Day: I have long since come to believe that people never mean half of what they say, and that it is best to disregard their talk and judge only their actions.

Sunday February 22, 2009

Bible Reading: Job 15-16

Thought for the Day: Think like a man of action, act like a man of thought.

1. What one thing can I do to be a better example to others?

2. What one staff member will I pray for this week?

3. Who in this congregation needs my help, and what will I do about it?

Monday February 23, 2009

Bible Reading: Isaiah 40-44

Thought for the Day: Conditions are never just right. People who delay actions until all factors are favorable do nothing.

Tuesday February 24, 2009

Bible Reading: Matthew 20-22

Thought for the Day: Good intentions are not good enough...ultimately we are measured by our actions.

Wednesday February 25, 2009

Bible Reading: Romans 15-16

Thought for the Day: The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.

1. How was I blessed this week-be specific?

2. Name one way that I was a blessing to someone else?

3. In my prayers this week I will remember...

Monday January 26, 2009

Bible Reading: Isaiah 18-22

Thought for the Day: Best of all is, God is with us

Tuesday January 27, 2009

Bible Reading: Matthew 8-10

Thought for the Day: Be thou a bright flame before me, Be thou a guiding star above me, Be thou a smooth path below me, Be thou a kindly shepherd behind me, Today-tonight-and for ever.

Wednesday January 28, 2009

Bible Reading: Romans 7-8

Thought for the Day: The greatest happiness of life is the conviction that we are loved-loved for ourselves, or rather, loved in spite of ourselves.

Thursday January 29, 2009

Bible Reading: Genesis 16-19

Thought for the Day: Love gives itself; it is not bought

Friday January 30, 2009

Bible Reading: Joshua 21-24

Thought for the Day: Love is life. All, everything that I understand, I understand only because I love.

Saturday January 31, 2009

Bible Reading: Psalm 12-14

Thought for the Day: The heart of a child is the most precious of God's creation. Never break it. At all cost never break it

2. What are my plans this week to call on someone who has not been regular in attendance _____

3. Which staff member will I remember all week in my prayers? _____

Monday February 16, 2009

Bible Reading: Isaiah 20-33

Thought for the Day: There are cost and risks to a program of action, but they are far less than the long range risks and costs of comfortable inaction.

Tuesday February 17, 2009

Bible Reading: Matthew 17-19

Thought for the Day: Leadership is practiced not so much in words as in attitude and in actions.

Wednesday February 18, 2009

Bible Reading: Romans 13-14

Thought for the Day: A man is the sum of his actions, of what he has done, of what he can do, Nothing else.

Thursday February 19, 2009

Bible Reading: Genesis 28-31

Thought for the Day: As I grow older, I pay less attention to what men say. I just watch what they do.

Friday February 20, 2009

Bible Reading: Judges 12-16

Thought for the Day: Character isn't inherited. One builds it daily by the way one thinks and acts, thought by thought, action by action.

Sunday February 1, 2009

Bible Reading: Job 9-10

Thought for the Day: God never gives us discernment in order that we may criticize, but that we may intercede.

1. What will I do this week to show my servant heart?

2. Who am I going to pray a prayer of thanksgiving for?

3. Name one thing I learned this past week as I did my reading

Monday February 2, 2009

Bible Reading: Isaiah 23-28

Thought for the Day: When you come to the bottom, you find God.

Tuesday February 3, 2009

Bible Reading: Matthew 11-13

Thought for the Day: Out of every difficulty Omnipotence can bring us, only let us in childlike confidence cast our burden upon the Lord.

Wednesday February 4, 2009

Bible Reading: Romans 9-10

Thought for the Day: God who foresaw your tribulation, has specially formed you to go through it, not without pain but without stain.

Thursday February 5, 2009

Bible Reading: Genesis 20-23

Thought for the Day: It is impossible to comfort men's hearts with the love of God when their feet are perishing with cold.

Wednesday February 11, 2009

Bible Reading: Romans 11-12

Thought for the Day: Satan promises the best, but pays with the worst; he promises honor, and pays with disgrace; he promises pleasure, and pays with pain; he promises profit, and pays with loss, he promises life, and pays with death. But God pays as he promises; all his payments are made in pure gold.

Thursday February 12, 2009

Bible Reading: Genesis 24-27

Thought for the Day: Fate knows where you are going, but it is up to you to drive there.

Friday February 13, 2009

Bible Reading: Judges 7-11

Thought for the Day: You can't build a reputation on what you're going to do.

Saturday February 14, 2009

Bible Reading: Psalms 18-20

Thought for the Day: I think one's feelings waste themselves in words; they ought all to be distilled into actions which bring results

Sunday February 15, 2009

Bible Reading: Job 13-14

Thought for the Day: I think there is something, more important than believing: Action! The world is full of dreamers, there aren't enough who will move ahead and begin to take concrete steps to actualize their vision.

1. Yes or no! Am I enjoying the climb in 2009? Why?

Friday February 6, 2009

Bible Reading: Judges 1-6

Thought for the Day: I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just.

Saturday February 7, 2009

Bible Reading: Psalm 15-17

Thought for the Day: Socrates, being asked what countryman he was, answered, "I am a citizen of the whole world." but ask a Christian what countryman he is, and he will answer, "A citizen of heaven.

Sunday February 8, 2009

Bible Reading: Job 11-12

Thought for the Day: Those who will not be governed by God, will be ruled by tyrants.

1. What one point stands out in my mind from yesterdays lesson?

2. What am I going to do this week to challenge myself?

3. What lesson can I take with me today from the book of Job?

Monday February 9, 2009

Bible Reading: Isaiah 29-33

Thought for the Day: Our prayers are answered not when we are given what we ask but when we are challenged to be what we can be.

Tuesday February 10, 2009

Bible Reading: Matthew 14-16

Thought for the Day: What is morally wrong can never be politically correct.