

Week of 1/15/06

Well, we are into the third week of 2006 – can you believe it! Our lives can slip away from us if we are not careful. Just ask any parent of grown (or growing) children. The Ministry is staying extremely busy and hopefully bearing fruit for all who are touched by it. The day we launched the “**Online Interactive Bible Study**” was the “most visited” day since the start of 2nd Thief. The second most visited day was when we discussed dealing with loss and I related the story of Kody.

Speaking of the study, we have been listening to the feedback and have incorporated several great changes from the tremendous suggestions that were made to us. We want to be a “**Ministry of Action**” and it is our desire to Glorify God and be a Blessing to you. The printable version of the study has been enhanced using more user friendly methods. Again, we prayerfully consider all that you relate to us. If the suggestion improves our ability to serve you in the Lord then as we are able we will do it.

My wife and I had the privilege of representing 2nd Thief Ministries at an “Appreciation Reception” given by **Prison Fellowship Ministries (PFM) – Angel Tree**. It was a refreshing time to hear all the ways God worked in the partnering churches and ministries to reach out to children of prisoners. PFM is a well run ministry with committed Christians in the leadership and staff. Our Ministry is looking forward to partnering with them again this year to help demonstrate the love that God has for children (and everyone). Please visit with us or PFM and be in prayer as **what part you can play** this year in this needed and worthwhile outreach.

Over the weekend the 2nd Thief Riders had the first planning meeting for the Couples Motorcycle Ride for 2006. We will be going for a week long trip in May, right after the “Sight and Sound Outreach.” The ride will be covering over 1400 miles and take in the entire length of the Blue Ridge Parkway. Points of interest include Mount Airy and Ashville, NC, Gatlinburg, TN and beyond to KY, WV and back to VA. Space is limited, but not to worry if you can’t make it as 2nd Thief Riders (www.2ndthief.org/riders.htm) are planning several day rides and a 4 day ride in the fall. We will also be partnering with local churches for evangelistic outreaches in the greater Northern VA region (and beyond). Check back in with us as events seem to develop on a weekly basis when the motorcycle season gears up.

Recently the Lord has impressed upon my heart the priorities of my life. We just mentioned how our lives can slip away with all that we are involved with. And there certainly numerous events and causes we can get involved with. In Ephesians 5:15-17 (Amplified) we read, “Look carefully then how you walk! Live purposefully and worthily and accurately, not as the unwise and witless, but as wise (sensible, intelligent people), Making the very most of the time [buying up each opportunity], because the days are evil. Therefore do not be vague and

thoughtless and foolish, but understanding and firmly grasping what the will of the Lord is. I would add find out what the will of the Lord is and **do it!**

I am relating the following analogy that can be found in various versions (the original story and author are unknown to me) on the internet. I have adapted it for our purposes here with the intention of clarifying for us what are the priorities in our lives and focus on what truly matters. The focus we gain will in turn enable us to make the wise decisions we want to make, to take us where we want to go.

A Preacher stood before his congregation and had some items on the pulpit before him. With all eyes focused upon him he picked up a large canning jar and proceeded to pour some golf balls in it. He asked his congregation if the jar was filled.

They nodded yes, it was.

The Preacher then picked up a box of pebbles and poured them into the jar and shook it lightly. The pebbles spilled into the open areas around the golf balls. He again asked the members of the church if the jar was full.

They nodded yes, it indeed was full.

The Preacher picked up a box of sand and poured it into the jar. The sand immediately found its way into every available empty crack and crevice (as anyone who has been to the beach knows how that works). Again, he shook the jar slightly and asked if the jar was full.

The congregation responded with an audible yes!

The Preacher produced two cups of coffee (no decaf please) and proceeded to pour the cups of coffee into the jar which filled the space between the sand. Now indeed the jar was filled.

There was laughter among the congregation.

When the laughter subsided the Preacher explained how this jar and its contents applied to their lives. You see, he explained the golf balls represent the most important things in your life – your family and friends. If everything else was lost your life would still be full.

The pebbles represent other things that matter – job, home and other needful possessions.

The sand represents everything else - the small stuff. If you fill your jar with the sand first there would be no room for the golf balls and the pebbles.

The same is true for your life. If you spend your efforts on the small stuff you will never have room for the things that truly matter to you. Pay attention to the things that have **eternal value**. The relationships you have with your spouse, children, family at large and the people in your life have eternal implications. Set your priorities to the eternal things after all **the rest is sand**.

The Bible has something to say about sand. Jesus said in Matthew 7:24-27, "**Anyone who listens to my teaching and obeys me is wise**, like a person who builds a house on solid rock. Though the rain comes in torrents and the floodwaters rise and the winds beat against that house, it won't collapse, because it is built on rock. But anyone who hears my teaching and ignores it is **foolish**, like a person who **builds a house on sand**. When the rains and floods come and the winds beat against that house, it will fall with a mighty crash."

And let's not forget the jar itself. It represents the vessel that God Himself has created that is you. In Isaiah 29:16 we learn that He is the "Potter" and we are the "clay" and He forms us as He wills. As clay are we greater than our Maker? The answer is obvious, no we are not. He loves us and made us to enjoy fellowship with Him and Him with us!

If we are looking for **the meaning of our lives** and how we can "hold it all together" we need to go to our Maker. The only way to our Maker is by Jesus. This is really convenient because we learn from the Scriptures that Jesus is the "maker of all things." So do you really want to learn how to "**hold it together**" in your life? If yes, read on.

"Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before God made anything at all and is supreme over all creation. Christ is the one through whom God created everything in heaven and earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can't see--kings, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities. Everything has been created through him and for him. He existed before everything else began, and **He holds all creation together**...But you must continue to believe this truth and stand in it firmly. Don't drift away from the assurance you received when you heard the Good News." Colossians 1:15-17, 23 NLT

And it comes down to this people, without God's eternal perspective the temporary things of this earth will make no sense. Without a right relationship with God through Jesus you will not have this perspective.

"You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand. Psalm 16:11-12 NIV

Ah, aren't you forgetting one thing Preacher?

Really, What?

What about the coffee. You know the beverage you are always telling us to get and “enjoy time well spent reflecting on the goodness of the Lord.” What about the coffee in the analogy of the “Full Jar” above?

Glad you asked...it just goes to show you that no matter how full your life may seem, there's always room for a cup of coffee with a friend.

Godspeed Friends.

Preacher.

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