

May 2008 Newsletter

Fellowship Presbyterian Church

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“Closed Doors”

by Martin H. Martin



I still remember the question I was asked as I interviewed for a job coming out of college, “Where do you see yourself five years down the road?” At the time I had no good answer. I was twenty two years old and didn’t have a clue what I would be doing one year out of school, let alone five. I was just hoping to be gainfully employed before they kicked me out of the dormitory at the end of the semester! On the other hand, as we get older, we usually do begin to develop an idea of where we expect to be at different points in life.

So how have your plans been working out lately? Are you where you thought, or hoped, you would be at this point? Perhaps you thought that by now you would be playing on the varsity team. Or maybe you expected you would know by now where you would go to college and what your major would be. Did you expect that by now you would be married? Have children? Perhaps the expectation is that by now you would have an empty nest with much more free time. Or you might have expected that you would now be able to enjoy the things for which you have worked your entire life; but now you have retired from your labors only to find that your health no longer enables you to enjoy their fruit. How are those plans going? Are you where you thought you would be by now?

I ask because, as I get older, I see how God’s plans are often not ours; and I also become grateful when God *closes* doors so decisively that it is clear He does not intend for us to walk through them. Sometimes this can be frustrating and even painful to us, but we need to keep in mind – nothing is ever frustrating to God, and closed doors make it easier to focus our attention on the doors He is opening.

Always keep in mind that nothing is ever frustrating to God. Things are sometimes displeasing, saddening, offensive, even angering to God; but God is never frustrated. He never has purposes or intentions which are not ultimately carried out. His plan, purposes and decree are never “derailed” by anything in all His creation. He has decreed the end from the beginning, and His purposes will be carried out.

With that point about God’s sovereignty in mind, praise God when He makes it clear that He is *closing* a door. When the events of providence make it clear that God is saying “no”, it enables you to focus your attention on the other doors He might be opening. You see two great examples of this in the book of Acts.

The first example is when persecution erupted with the stoning of Stephen and the subsequent scattering of Christians across the Roman Empire. I suspect, had they been allowed to do so, that the early Christians would have “clumped up” in Jerusalem, that they would have remained a largely Jewish clique, basking in their redemptive heritage and debating the finer points of applying the Mosaic law in the Christian era; or speculating as to the exact timing of, and events leading up to, the return of Christ. But God, in His wisdom and goodness, did not allow them to remain where they were; He scattered them throughout the region and the whole of the Roman world. As a result the gospel went forth widely and in power; but that only happened after God worked events so that they could *not* stay put. The decision whether to leave or stay in Jerusalem was pretty easy for many of them – “We had better get out of here, and fast...!”

A second example has to do not with God prompting Christians to do what they would not have done otherwise, but with God preventing the Apostle Paul from doing what he desired. You may remember that Paul had a great desire to take the gospel from Turkey up into Asia itself; however, we read in Acts 16 that the Holy Spirit “forbid” and “did not permit” him and his companions to do so. Instead, God called him to the impoverished region of Macedonia, but from there to Greece, the cultural and educational center of the civilized world. Had Paul had his way, he would have moved up into Asia and never gone to a “declining community” like Macedonia; however, the continued longing to proclaim the gospel in combination with the closed door to Asia directed Paul exactly where God wanted him to be.

So what are the doors that are closed for you at the moment? Maybe you desire children, but the Lord has not given them. Perhaps you wish that there were a better job opportunity, but none of the leads have panned out. It is certainly fine to continue to pray that God would open those doors; but until He does, look at what others He *has* opened already and how you might use the opportunities afforded by *closed* doors to be used for Him!

Marriage is a great blessing, and perhaps you earnestly desire it, and the Lord may lead you to it one day; but as a single person you actually have more discretionary time and money than you will *ever* see again! Use the resources that you have – the time and money completely at your disposal and discretion – to serve in ways that your married friends cannot.

Perhaps God has kept you in a “dead end job” even though you have been looking for a way out; but if the Lord is not opening the doors out then it means He still has work for you to do there. So work there! Give your utmost for His glory right where He has you. Do this job as if you were going to be there for decades. Work to see it become the kind of place that you could see yourself remaining for the rest of your life; and even if it is not, leave it in better shape for the next person.

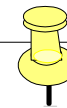
Whatever your own situation might be, the point is this – praise God when He makes decisions *easier* and *narrows* our options by *closing* doors, even one that *we wish* were *open*. Thankfully, every door He closes is one that would be less than best for us, and His redirection is an act of His love for each one of His people – *including you!*

~Pastor Marty



MEN'S FELLOWSHIP & PRAYER BREAKFAST:

Saturday, May 17th, 7:00—9:00 AM; sign-up sheet in narthex.



Church Notes:

*The sacrament of the Lord's Supper will be celebrated (and a special mercy offering received) on **Sunday, May 4th**, during evening worship.*

WEDNESDAY NIGHT SCHEDULE—SUPPER & ACTIVITIES:

5:30 PM: Supper (catered meal cost: \$3.50/adult, \$2.50/child, \$10 max/family)

6:00 PM: Choir Rehearsal

6:40 PM: Devotional & Prayer Time (adults); Catechism (children grades k-4 thru 6th)

CATECHISM TEACHERS:

05/07: Marty & Celanie Martin

05/14: John Way, Jeff & Susan Wayne

05/21: Nick & Carol Willborn

SUPPER CLEAN-UP:

05/07: Terry & Wendy Richards

05/14: Marty & Celanie Martin

05/21: Jeff & Susan Wayne

05/27: NO SUPPER/ ACTIVITIES; WILL RESUME SEPTEMBER 10th.

A Session meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 13th, at 7:00 PM.



Family Movie Events:

Saturday afternoon, May 10th—Movie (*Expelled*), Pizza & Discussion:

*All are invited (including friends & neighbors!) to meet at Hollywood 20 Movie Theatre (on Woodruff Rd in Greenville) to see the **documentary movie *Expelled***; after the show, the group will get pizza and discuss the movie. **Movie tickets are at your expense; pizza will be provided (sign-up required).** Specific show time and location for pizza TBA.*

Saturday afternoon, May 24th—Movie Event: *Prince Caspian*

*Once again, all are invited to meet at Hollywood 20 Movie Theatre to see **The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian**, after the movie, the group will have dinner and discuss the latest Narnia installment. **Movie tickets are at your expense, dinner will be provided (sign-up required).** Specific show time and dinner plans TBA.*

Sign-up sheets for both events are in the narthex.

Questions? Contact Emilio Garofalo (292-9772 or emiliogneto@yahoo.com.br).

The office will be closed Monday, May 26th, for Memorial Day.

Ladies' Tuesday Morning Bible Study: **Shepherding a Child's Heart**

Begins Tuesday, May 20th

(9:30-11:30 AM, at the church; nursery provided)

Sign-up sheet is in the narthex.



COMING SOON—FPC LIBRARY!

SERVING IN MAY:

Elder of the Month: Dave Lesley (877-5102); Deacon of the Month: Bill Wilder (848-6434)

Greeters of the Month: Carolyn Root & Margaret Stannard; Ushers: Troy High & Bill Wilder.

Family and Youth Corner:

“Instead, you ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this and that.’” James 4:15.

What are you doing after graduation? Where are you going? These are questions people ask us constantly. In fact, I keep asking myself those questions. James wisely said that our lives and future are in the hands of the Lord. In our unbelief, it is easy to try to take over control of life, worrying constantly. In the last months, we have been struggling to leave the matters in the hands of the Lord while we do what is in our power.

The Lord has been gracious; I have received a grant that will pay for a good portion of my tuition in Reformed Seminary over in Mississippi, where we plan on going after leaving here. We are still working and waiting on other matters such as employment and housing and so many things that can easily overwhelm our hearts.

This reminds me of about four years ago, when suddenly the opportunity to move to South Carolina seemed to materialize. We would be able to come and go through seminary in Greenville Seminary. We were newlyweds, less than a year! Anxiety, worry, Visas, plane tickets... wow! The Lord was so good to us, allowing me to get an excellent education, bringing us to Fellowship. Those were four challenging years, with much work, study and learning. The Lord was very good in giving me the opportunity to serve you in the internship. Every week has been a blessing in ministering and studying for you. You will continue in our prayers long after we are gone. The greatest of the blessings is to know that though our ways will be separate, we can be sure that because of the cross of Jesus Christ our paths will meet again, if not in this life, then certainly at the throne. Look for us over there.

~Emilio



Congratulations Graduates!!

Graduation Announcement: *Melissa Wayne will receive a High School Diploma from Hillcrest High School on Thursday, June 5, 2008.*

Graduation Invitation: *Emilio Garofalo will receive a Master of Divinity from Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary on Friday, May 16, 2008, at 7:00 P.M. GPTT invites you to attend this Commencement Service (held at the Seminary: 200 E. Main St, Taylors) ; reception following.*

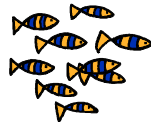
Sunday Evening Picnic Supper: May 18th!

(in honor of our graduates!) 

Plan to join us Sunday, May 18th (following evening worship), for a picnic supper in honor of our graduates.

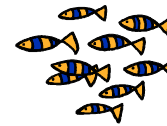
Menu: Sandwiches, chips, lemonade & desserts

Please sign-up to bring a tray of sandwiches or your favorite dessert; sign-up sheet is in the narthex.



MISSIONARY MISSIVE Gideons International

by Carolyn Root



The autumn of 1898 John H. Nicholson of Janesville, Wisconsin, arrived at the Central Hotel at Boscobel, Wisconsin. The hotel being crowded, it was suggested that he room with Samuel E. Hill of Beloit, Wisconsin. Both of them being Christians, they had their evening devotions together and prayed on their knees before God. When they met again on May 31, 1899, at Beaver Dam, Wisconsin, they decided to form a band of Christian businessmen. To this end they called a meeting at the YMCA in Janesville, Wisconsin on July 1, 1899. The three men present – Samuel E. Hill, Will J. Knights, John H. Nicholson – became president, vice president, and secretary-treasurer, respectively. After praying that God would lead them to the proper name, Mr. Knights arose from his knees and proclaimed: “We shall be called Gideons.” He read aloud Judges 6-7.

Most Gideons being traveling men, one trustee suggested furnishing a Bible for each hotel room in the United States. The Bible Project was thus adopted by the convention at Louisville, Kentucky, in 1908. Archie Bailey, an accountant in Iron Mountain, Montana, immediately approached the proprietor of the local Hotel Superior and obtained permission to place the first 25 Bibles in this hotel’s guest rooms.

Over the past 100 years Gideons have distributed over 1.3 billion Bibles and New Testaments to hotels, hospitals, prisons, domestic violence shelters, convalescent homes, etc. God has mightily blessed these efforts, with multitudes testifying of their conversion as a result of reading the Scriptures placed there. In 1911 a shipment of 25,250 Bibles to San Francisco was declared to be the “largest shipment of any book ever made.”

The association now has 260,000 members in more than 180 countries around the world. Gideons International is the oldest Christian business and professional men’s association in the U.S. This year’s convention will be held in Louisville, Kentucky, where the Bible Project began.

“So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it” (Isaiah 55:11).

The Gideons International

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

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