



**Forest Hill  
Church of Christ**

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Douglas Alvarenga, Hispanic

**VISIT US SOON!**

**Sunday:**

Bible Study..... 9:30 A..M.  
Morning Worship.....10:30 A.M.  
Evening Worship..... 6:00 P.M.

**Wednesday:**

Bible Study .....7:00 P.M.

**HOME OF THE  
MEMPHIS SCHOOL  
OF PREACHING**

[www.msop.org](http://www.msop.org)

**Missions Supported:**

Far East/World Evangelism  
Gospel Broadcasting Network  
Iglesia de Cristo (Getwell)  
In Search of the Lord's Way  
Kakinada, India  
Manila, Philippines  
Murmansk, Russia  
Truth for the World  
Words of the Master

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[Editor's Note: This past Lord's day our elders announced the beginning of a new building fund. The proceeds will go toward the construction of our residence halls for the Memphis School of Preaching. We ask our members, along with friends far and near, to help with this noble cause that will result in furthering the gospel of Christ. Dear reader, as you consider your contribution, please read the excellent article below, written by our beloved brother, V.P. Black.]

**THE JOY OF GIVING**

V.P. Black

When I was a boy I went to Sunday School at a little country church called Mt. Pleasant. I can remember Old Brother Varner, one of the good elders of this little country church. During the Depression he visited the preacher, who spoke to this congregation once a month, and gave him \$5.00. The preacher said, "No, times are hard and you need the \$5.00." Brother Varner said, "I want you to have it. You will only receive this \$5.00, but I will receive spiritual blessings for it." This old brother truly knew and understood Acts 20:35.

It is cheerful, joyful giving that appeals to the heart of our Lord. "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver." There is nothing surprising about that—that is the kind we love. Who wants a gift that comes with a snarl? Thackeray, in his lecture on "Thrift," tells how the great Dean would spend himself in the service of others. But it added these terrible words, "he insulted you while he served you." Then he adds, "I had rather have a potato and a kind word from Goldsmith than to have been beholden to the great Dean for a guinea and a dinner."

Suppose a husband has been away from home for some time and, returning, brings his wife a gift. He enters the house, throws the gift at her, and says, "There is your gift. I did not want to bring it, but I knew there would be a fuss if I did not." She would not appreciate it. I have known some members of the church who gave so reluctantly, so grudgingly, and so snarlingly, that one feels in the language of Thackeray, that they insult God and his cause every time they give.

In 2 Corinthians 8, we read of some beggars. Now, as a rule we detest beggars. We don't like to be around people who want a handout all the time. Paul compliments these beggars. They are not asking to be exempt from suffering. They were not begging for preeminence. Now listen to it—they were begging Paul for an opportunity to give (yes, give) to the support of the saints. No wonder Paul was so enthusiastic. No wonder he could not think of those Macedonians without his heart bubbling over with joy. These people had a wonderful attitude toward their wealth. Giving had ceased to be a duty that they performed reluctantly and with long face. It was a joy, they could and did give with joy in their hearts. "They begged me of their own accord most urgently for the favor of contributing."

## SOMETIMES THE STORIES DO NOT HAVE HAPPY ENDINGS

Neal Pollard

The news extracted from the coal mine in Upshur County, West Virginia, was a lode of agony for families and loved ones. Especially bittersweet was the false hope dispensed from one who will probably go to all lengths to keep from being identified, who told the world that twelve of thirteen men survived. When word came that twelve of thirteen were, in fact, dead, the news of one incredible survivor was buried in an avalanche of grief and disbelief.

Everyone was rooting for a repeat of the amazing rescue of the nine Somerset County, Pennsylvania, coal miners who lasted seventy-seven hours and were dramatically lifted out of the hole before the eyes of an awe struck audience. We want all such catastrophes and crises to end like this. The latest news from West Virginia is a wake up call that some, even most, do not.

We can carry the same expectations in our Christian lives. We want every struggle, problem, and dilemma to turn out with the happy ending we imagine. We want them fixed to our specifications. We want cheers and elations where once there were pen- sive nerves and stressful anticipations. We want rest- less nights to give way to pleasant dreams and then awaken refreshed the next morning. Yet, sometimes the stories do not have happy endings.

In the church, not all stories end well. While some who are disciplined are restored and may even thereafter serve Christ with distinction, not every one from whom fellowship is withdrawn comes home. Not every prodigal makes his way back to the Fa- ther's house. Not all Christians take root and bring fruit to perfection. Some of the most nurtured and en- couraged new converts turn away because of prob- lems or worldly attractions (cf. Luke 8:11-15). Not every church split leads to two churches more effec- tively serving and doing more for Christ. Not every pulpit hero reaches the land of the hoary head with his faithfulness intact. Not every mean-spirited radical or haughty-minded liberal are clear-headed and humble enough to renounce their extreme, divisive ways.

Neither do all stories end well in the home. Sometimes, the unfaithful spouse does not repent and try to make amends with the offended partner and/or children. Not every abuser successfully reforms. Some, maybe many, slaves to addictions in the home crumble under the weight of such and leave a wake of destruction in their paths. Some never heal from bit- terness, anger, or jealousy. Some in marriage and the

home never can demote self from first place.

So, what do you do when the story does not end well? First, trust God. He did not cause any evil to come (cf. James 1:13-15). Yet, He will give you the strength you need to cope (Phi. 4:19). Second, increase your craving for home. In heaven, there will be no tragedies, no emotional cave-ins, no spiritual asphyxiations (cf. Rev. 21:1-5). Third, reach out despite your personal pain. This is not to minimize the greatness of your per- sonal suffering, but to remind you that such suffer- ing may better equip you to help the hurting who surround you on every side. Empathy is a power- ful tool. Fourth, see the trial as the gateway to the grace of Christ (2 Cor. 12:9) and an ultimately positive expression of the discipline of God in the refinement of your spirit (Heb. 12:4ff).

How it hurts when the story does not have a happy ending. Yet, there is the promise of God that the ultimate ending for the faithful Christian will exceed what we imagine that joy and happi- ness could be (cf. 1 Pet. 1:8-9; 1 John 3:2). That's a life line you can hold on to!

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### PREACHING THE GOSPEL

If we aren't careful, we sometimes think: "Well, people are not responding, very few people are obeying the gospel." Good friend, such has nothing to do with our commission, or privilege. Ours is the wonderful blessing of being entrusted by our Lord to proclaim the truth. The heart of the hearer has to do with his response. Do you recall Paul's statement relative to our work of teaching and preaching? "...To one a savour of death unto death; to the other a savour of life unto life" (2 Cor. 2:16). Man is never the same after hearing the truth. Ours is the work of bringing that mes- sage to their ears and heart. Noah preached (2 Pe- ter 2:5) for more than one hundred years and saved only his family, a worthwhile effort indeed. God's Word is "...Living, and active, and sharper than any two edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joint and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12). It will do God's bidding if we get it into their hearts.

James Watkins

## TWO WAYS TO HELP A MARRIAGE GROW

Matthew Martin

As a newly married man, I know there are a lot of things that can go wrong in the first few months, as well as a lot of things that can go right. With every marriage there is a big adjustment period which must take place. Husband and wife will either grow farther apart or grow closer together. With prayer and commitment, it will be the latter. Still, there are some things that can be done to ensure that the marriage is strengthened.

For an example, consider what some call the “make it, or break it” time of day. This is the part of the day when the husband and wife spend the most time talking to each other. It is in this period of the day that they will either grow closer together (and each look forward to this time of day) or grow apart (and try to find ways to avoid this period).

Based on my own marriage, it seems to me that the “make it or break it” time is when I first get home from work. This is the time when my wife wants to start telling me about *her* day, and wants me to tell her about *mine*. If I did not enjoy this time with my wife, eventually, I would grow not to enjoy talking with her at all. How can I (and all other married couples) make sure that this does not happen?

### DON'T TAKE YOUR PROBLEMS HOME WITH YOU

If all you do when you get home from work is gripe and complain, and have a negative attitude, then your wife eventually may decide that talking to you is a bad idea. Eventually, all communication may be stopped, and before you know it, you may not know what *she* wants in your marriage, and she may not know what *you* want, either. Everyone has bad days, but that does not give a person the excuse to go home grumpy. Check your attitude at the door, and your marriage will grow because of it.

### TAKE YOUR PROBLEMS HOME WITH YOU

Contradiction, you say? Not at all. Never take your *attitude* home with you. But your wife is going to want you to talk about your day. If it was a lousy one, she wants to hear it, so she can try and cheer you up. There are very few people, apart from my wife, that I can talk to about a bad day, and go away feeling better. Take your problems home (not your attitude), talk to your wife about them, and your marriage will grow.

There are probably a million good ideas floating around about how to keep your marriage healthy. Probably written by far more experienced and knowledgeable men than I. But I know what is working with my young marriage: I don't take my *attitude* home with me, but I do take my *problems* home. And my marriage is growing because of it.

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