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# Who's On First?

*Dr. T. D. Worthington*

*A Father's Day Message On Family Priorities*

*“I have to put my children and family first.”* Oh, how many times have I heard that statement? Sometimes such a pronouncement can be a sign of good judgment and properly placed priorities. When one of our children is hurt or having some other type of real crisis, it is right to put them in first place. People say that it is wrong to have “favorites” among your children. I have always said that among our five children Sherry and I had a favorite child on many occasions. It was always the one needing us most at that particular time. That is what loving parents do.

We can certainly apply the Scriptures to justify putting our family in a priority position.

*“But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.”*

**I Timothy 5:8**

We can easily note other Scriptures that teach us to lovingly care for our families as a God given responsibility. However, we are never to place our families above our responsibility in the Kingdom.

*We Have A Command To Obey.*

*“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness...”* **Matthew 6:33**

*“Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.”* **Hebrews 10:9**

Now, while it is true that anything good for the Kingdom, will by default, be good for your family, we seldom look at it in that light. Sadly, more often than not, the statement of putting your family or children first is used as a justification to do something shortsighted or foolish.

Consider for a moment how many missionaries would be on the mission-

field if they always put the interest of their children first. I think of Adoniram and Ann Judson and the difficulties they faced in Burma. Inadequate food, agonizing heat, and widespread diseases made life almost impossible. They worked hard to learn the Burmese language and then translate the entire Bible so the people could understand it. It took six years to have their first convert. Two of their babies died as a result of the harsh conditions. Both Ann and Adoniram were imprisoned during the war with Britain. Did Judson do what was in the short-term best interest of his family by going to Burma? No, he did not. He did what was best for the Kingdom.

When Judson died in 1850, there were 7,000 baptized believers, 63 Christian congregations, and 163 missionaries in Burma. To this day, over 150 years later, his Burmese Bible translation



is still in use. Oh, how great was the eternal reward for his family, including his children who gave their lives that others might live.

How many Pastors would still be serving in their churches if they decided to put the needs of their children first? I do not deny that many pastors have lost their families because they neglected them unnecessarily, but I've also seen many pastors lose their ministry because they put their families ahead of their calling and made their families an idol.

Charles Weigle was an evangelist and song writer. His wife had often voiced her displeasure at being married to a preacher and even threatened to leave him if he did not give up his ministry. He refused to stop doing what God had called him to do. One day after preaching at a gospel crusade, he came home to find a note from his wife. The note said that she refused to be married to an evangelist and she was leaving him. Weigle said that he became so despondent that he even wondered if anyone really cared for him. During this time, he wrote that famous hymn ***“No One Ever Cared For Me Like Jesus.”*** Did Charles Weigle do what was in the short term best interest of his family? No, he did not. He put the Kingdom first.

Isn't that the reason a lot of Christians don't tithe? The mis-directed thinking is that God would want me to put my family first. For the modern family, fun at Disney World will always trump the church.

Churches themselves have fallen victim of this ***“family first”*** attitude by canceling evening services so their members can enjoy a family night. On the surface that sounds like a

good idea. I am sure church leaders imagined that instead of meeting together for worship that it would be great if families could have their own worship service at home. Maybe Mom could lead in a few songs, Dad could bring a short devotional message tailor made to address the needs of his family, and then the whole family could enjoy a time of prayer. Sounds like a good idea. Trouble is, it usually doesn't work that way. Dad watches the ball game, Mom is in the kitchen, and the kids are in their rooms



using social media. Often, putting family first only served to put God somewhere way down the list behind a lot of trivia.

Lest you misunderstand, no church or Christian ministry should ever say that it is ***“more important than your family.”*** That would be wrong. But, there are things which God has called us to do; our ministry, the spiritual gifts we have been given, responsibilities God has entrusted us with, and the people and service to which we are called. These things ***are*** more important than our family.

Remember, the family of God is not here primarily to serve the interests of our family. Rather, our families are here to serve the family of God.

After pastoring for over forty years, I can tell you there have been many times when I felt my family might be better off if I just preached to them at home. I am sure many servants have felt the same way. Yet, missionaries still surrender to go, and pastors still fill their pulpits. Why? The reason is they are willing to put the Kingdom first. They realized that the Family of God, not marriage, is the primary community in which eternal spiritual growth most often occurs.

Many do not know that **Pathway Christian Academy** was born on the sidewalk in front of a public school. Sherry and I spent a day visiting the schools our children would be attending. After our visit, we stood outside on the sidewalk, joined hands and said, ***“By God's grace we will not send our children to this place.”*** This is not a criticism of others who may choose differently, but we knew the environment would not be compatible with the things we would be teaching them at home.

But, what choice did we have? We could not afford to send five children to a Christian school. So, we entertained the idea of homeschooling. That would make sense! But God had other plans. As we began to seek His will over our decision, God brought other parents into our pathway who shared our concerns. For many of these parents homeschooling was not an option. Of course, that was not our problem, at least until God told us it ***was*** our problem. He reminded us that we might be able to educate our children at home, but what about the



people who did not have that option? Perhaps they were single parents and had to work, or perhaps they did not have sufficient education to home school their high schoolers? What were they to do? God made them our responsibility, and **Pathway Christian Academy** was born.

Although attending a Christian school was a blessing for our children, there were times when we knew some problems could have been addressed better in a homeschool environment. So was starting **Pathway Christian Academy** our way of putting our children first? No, it was our way of putting the Kingdom first, and yes there were times that it did not work out for the short-term benefit of our family. Even so, we still had a command to obey.

There was a time after the Academy was up and running that Sherry and I discussed the possibility of having another child. After all, five is an odd number. However, we decided it would not be in the best interest of the ministry nor would it likely be in the best interest of our other children. This decision did not lessen the desire. Even at sixty-eight years old I still think about what we may have missed, but putting our desires first could not be an option. The net result in putting the Kingdom first was that God placed hundreds of children under our influence at the Academy. That brings me to my second point:

***We Also Have A Promise To Receive.***

***“...and all these things shall be added unto you.” Matthew 6:33***

So I freely admit that there were times when not putting my family

first caused them some hardships and difficulties. And yes, there were times when it made me feel like a bad parent. Furthermore, there were times when they may have been better off if Sherry and I did not surrender to full time Christian service. But those moments were short-lived, and the end result was better than we could have ever imagined. As we have seen in the lives of so many of God’s servants, He will truly work it all out for good if you will give Him opportunity.

***“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose.” Romans 8:28***

***“... the recompense of a man’s hands shall be rendered unto him.” Proverbs 12:14***

***“But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.” Hebrews 13:16***

Don’t you see how simple it really is? By putting the Kingdom first, **you are** putting your family first. By putting God’s will in the priority position, **you are** putting your children first. Yes, they may temporarily suffer the

consequences of your decision, but in time God will grant your whole family the blessings that will supernaturally flow from your sacrifice. Isn’t that the way God works? Is He really going to punish you for putting the Kingdom first? Is He really going to be in your debt?

Sometimes we forget that in the New Testament marriage is viewed as **“a concession”** to our physical desires. Singleness is commended as the superior way to be available to serve the Lord. Paul even says, **“It is good for a man not to touch a woman,”** because a single person, male or female, is free to better serve the Lord. Although the Scriptures are not against marriage, Paul’s priorities still look quite different from the priorities we see taught in most of our churches today.

***“But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you. But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none;” I Corinthians 7:28-29***







***“But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife.”***

**I Corinthians 7:32-33**

Furthermore, our Lord even puts other family relationships behind our responsibility to the Kingdom. Jesus said, ***“He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.”***

**Matthew 10:37**

He taught the closest relationships in life are not our physical family, but our spiritual family. Remember the occasion while He was speaking to the people, His mother and his brothers stood outside asking to speak to Him? But He replied to the man who told him, ***“Who is my mother, and who are my brethren?”*** And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, ***“Behold my mother and my brethren! For whoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.”***

**Matthew 12:46-50**

Jesus is not setting aside all human relationships, rather He is defining them. The Scriptural order of priorities is first our Lord and His Kingdom, then comes our spouse, children, parents, extended family, brothers and sisters in Christ, and then the rest of the world. While sometimes crisis decisions must be made to focus on one person over another, the goal is not to be neglecting or wrongly

prioritizing any of our relationships. The biblical balance is allowing God to empower us to meet all of our responsibilities, inside and outside our families, while maintaining a ministry focus.

If you are married, your spouse requires and deserves your attention. Our children also need our attention and they will often demand it. It is also natural for parents to desire to smooth out every wrinkle that comes into a child’s life. We cave in to their wishes for all sorts of well-intentioned reasons. We feel guilty when something comes up which may seem to ruin their idealistic childhood, even if it’s God Himself. It’s a sickness of our modern culture; we despise observing spoiled children, but we raise them that way nevertheless.

Yes, if your child has a severe medical problem or other crisis, drop everything possible and run to their aid. But, most of the things we consider to be a crisis worthy of propelling our child into first place is not a crisis at all. And even if it is a real crisis, we allow it to continue with that status far too long. The real crisis comes when we fail to put the

Kingdom first. The missed blessing may be a liability which could follow your family for generations to come. More than anything, your children need to see you loving God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength.

God’s intention is neither that in loving Him are we to ignore our families, nor that in loving our families we are to ignore Him. Instead, we are to love our families as a result of loving God, and as one means by which we love Him. Just like most all parents we made sacrifices for our children, but there was always a line in the sand. That line represented the call of God upon our lives. That line could not be crossed. The challenge was making sure that God maintained the center of our lives, and that we allowed God to touch all of our priorities, including our family. We had to make sure that our children held a privileged position within our circle of ministry rather than having a circle of their own.

So, putting your family first or putting your children first sounds like a Godly goal and a Scriptural concept. Truth is, it usually isn’t. It will work no better for you and I than it would have worked for Abraham had he refused to offer Isaac. The better rule to follow is the one we’ve all heard, but often ignored:

***“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you.”***

**Matthew 6:33**

***Happy Father’s Day!***



*Dr. Worthington has been in the ministry over forty years and serves as President of Pathway Ministries.*



# Radio**bits**

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## Decrease For Joy

*“... my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease.”*  
**John 3:29-30**

Can you imagine the initial reaction of the disciples of John the Baptist when hearing him talk about decreasing? What church member would want to hear that? Who would enjoy hearing talk about becoming less? Can you imagine any situation where such negative talk would be appreciated? Fact is, we usually want more; the businessman wants more business, the investor desires more profits, the pastor seeks more church members, and the radio station wants more listeners. Isn't this natural?

Of course, they could all see that John's influence was not as great



as it had been. Their numbers were decreasing, while the number of folks following Jesus was increasing. I can imagine them holding a meeting with John and asking, *“What are you going to do about this, John? We need to take some drastic action. Perhaps we need to get a better program to attract more folks.”* They did not understand John was talking about something more than just numbers, popularity, or success.

Do we realize John's words also apply to us? Do we realize this truth in our own lives?

When our children are young, we are more influential over their lives. We have the power to make most of life's decisions for them. However, as they grow older our power over them begins to decrease as they reach their own potential. As they become more fully themselves, we have to decrease. This reorientation is not a rejection of us as parents, but rather it is giving them space to become what they are destined to be. As parents, we know this diminishment is not always easy, but it is necessary. Yet,

even with our loss of power, seeing our children reach for their own independence brings us a sense of great joy and accomplishment.

John's message is also true for us. For Jesus to have the relationship He desires to have with us, we must be willing to let Him increase. We must freely give Him space in our lives by surrendering our will to His. Can you imagine what kind of relationship you would have with your adult children if you still tried to exert the same control over them as you did when they were children? The same is true for Christ. Let Jesus increase. For fullness of joy, let the Son of God take the helm of your life.

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## Artist Spotlight - The Barry Stallings Family

Ever so often you are blessed with the sound of *The Barry Stallings Family* on GoMix Christian Radio. The group consists of Barry Stallings and his wife of 26 years, Olivia, along with their two daughters, Karen and Katie. This family may be small, but their talents are great. If not immediately recognized by songs such as, “Singing with the Angels,” “Into His Eyes,” “Antioch Church Choir,” and “Jesus, What a Friend for Sinners,” this family is for sure recognized by the many other abilities the Lord has blessed them with. Even though they don’t travel and sing often, their date books have certainly been staying full.

Back in December of 2003, Barry Stallings and his family became active at what he nicknamed “The Grove” when he became the Pastor of **Pleasant Grove Original Free Will Baptist Church** in Pikeville, NC. Going on his 15th year at **Pleasant Grove**, Pastor Barry says this past year has been difficult with lots of sickness in the church, but God has continued to bless both physically and spiritually. He adds, *“I do some singing on occasion, but I haven’t written as many songs as I have sermons that the Lord has laid upon my heart with three services per week here at The Grove!”* Pastor Barry also teaches a Bible class for his Alma Mater, **Carolina Bible Institute and Seminary**, each Monday night in the spring and fall. Pastor Barry states, *“We have a satellite class here at our church, and we have a great time around God’s Word and wonderful fellowship, too!”*

Olivia sings quite a bit in church. She enjoys singing backup and even duets with Katie and Karen both. During the

week she rarely gets a break as she is also an Instructional Assistant at Fremont Elementary School. She is now in her 14th year there and has been awarded “Teacher Assistant of the Year” 2 of those years.

Karen, Barry and Olivia’s oldest daughter, has been busy preparing for her second year of competing for Miss North Carolina as Miss Greensboro, 2018. Last year, she was blessed to finish in the Top 15. They invite everyone to tune-in to the televised event on Saturday night, June 23rd, at 8 pm to cheer her on. Karen also has information available on her Facebook page titled “Miss Greensboro 2018.” With all that said, let’s not forget about her day job! Karen is also a ninth grade English teacher at her Alma Mater, Charles B. Aycock High School, in Pikeville, NC.

Katie, the youngest of *The Barry Stallings Family*, has been busy using her talents writing some of her own music. She has even been invited to do a few concert dates on her own. Keeping her busy during the week, she also works at a local church day camp and dance studio.

As you can see, *The Barry Stallings Family* stays pretty busy these days. Regardless of the hectic schedule, Pastor Barry welcomes anyone to reach out and contact him with questions about *The Barry Stallings Family*, **Pleasant Grove OFWB Church**, or any other ministries the family is involved in. He can be reached at [BarryStallingsMusic@gmail.com](mailto:BarryStallingsMusic@gmail.com).





# Yesterday's Memories...

# Tomorrow's Dreams.

*Mrs. Sherry Worthington*

As I watched her cross the platform to shake my hand, memories started flooding through my mind. You see, I had the privilege of teaching my granddaughter at Pathway. I have been her principal, her teacher, her counselor, her disciplinarian, her Children's Church Teacher, and most importantly, her friend! I love her so much! She was such a little thing when she first came into our lives. She began school at Pathway when she was 4 years old. Victoria had the cutest accent, and some of that sticks with her today. Her smile is beautiful, and she still lights up a room when she enters in it.

I have some beautiful memories. Her favorite candy was "*lem and lems (M & M's)*." I used every opportunity to get her some, too! I won't bore you with all of my memories, but I can't help but share some of them with you. Victoria had some of the cutest sayings. One time we took her home from school, and she asked us if her mama was going to be home. My husband teased her about it, and asked why she thought her mama was supposed to be home. She simply replied, "*If I'se be there, she's sposed to bes there!*" She informed us how things were supposed to work. Even then

she knew there was a certain order in life.

On another occasion, I observed Victoria in the hallway at school. I saw her sniffing the air. I asked her, "*What are you doing, Victoria?*" She said, "*I smell my Granddaddy!*" Oddly enough, he had just passed by that way headed down the hall. And no, he didn't stink. She told us she smelled his "*perfume.*" We all got a laugh out of that one.

There were many other instances that took me back on graduation day. I remember vividly the first time I

had to punish her as principal. She was in second grade, and she was upset with another student. There was an altercation on the playground, and I had to discipline my angel. After I finished, I cried. It hurt so badly. I did not like being her principal at that moment. Grandmas were supposed to be fun. My husband is so wise. He said, *“Who better to discipline her than someone who loves her?”*

We had fun times together baking and even cleaning at my house. Throughout her school days there were good times and tough times, but I would not trade them for anything. It allowed me to be a part of her life in a very special way. She is precious to me as are all of my grandchildren.

Victoria is now embarking on a new phase in her life. She accepted the Lord as her Saviour at a very young age and has grown in her knowledge of His precepts. What she does with that knowledge is up to her. She has had some very good role models to follow in her young life as well as her teenage years. They would never try to steer her wrong. Victoria has grown from a child with a temper to a loving and patient young lady. At the present, she wants to work with young children as her career. When she helps them, she is gentle and loving, yet firm. I think she will be great! But then again, I think she would be great at whatever she sets out to do. All she has to do is determine in her heart and she will excel.

As her grandmother, I hope our relationship continues to blossom. I want to be a grandma she has fun with, but also one that she can cry with. Most importantly, I want to be an example she can



follow. Grandparents are supposed to influence their grandchildren to serve the Lord. I have been able to teach Victoria math and other subjects in school, but I pray I have been a good example for her to follow. I hope our talks are ones that she can remember and grow to appreciate.

As Victoria and the other students walk across the stage, I pray they will be prepared for the steps they are taking. I pray that the staff at Pathway and the other adults in the students' lives have been a Godly influence and the spiritual mentors they need.

For young people to blossom, they need the right combination of tough and tender. Just as a flower needs the right amount of sunshine, they need the rain, too. We must ask ourselves, have we taught them how to handle difficulties? Have we helped them to conquer problems? Have we shown them who to lean on? Have we shown them how to forgive? Have we shown them how to work hard? Children learn by example. Our words may say what they are supposed to do, but our actions are what they see and emulate.

Graduation is a ceremony filled with joy and uncertainty. Young people walk across the stage and into the world around them. Every day for the last eighteen years has been planned for them. Now, they are walking into a world where they have to decide which way to go. Some of the best gifts we can give them are a Godly example to follow, an ear to bend, and a heart that loves them unconditionally.

### ***Congratulations Class of 2018!***

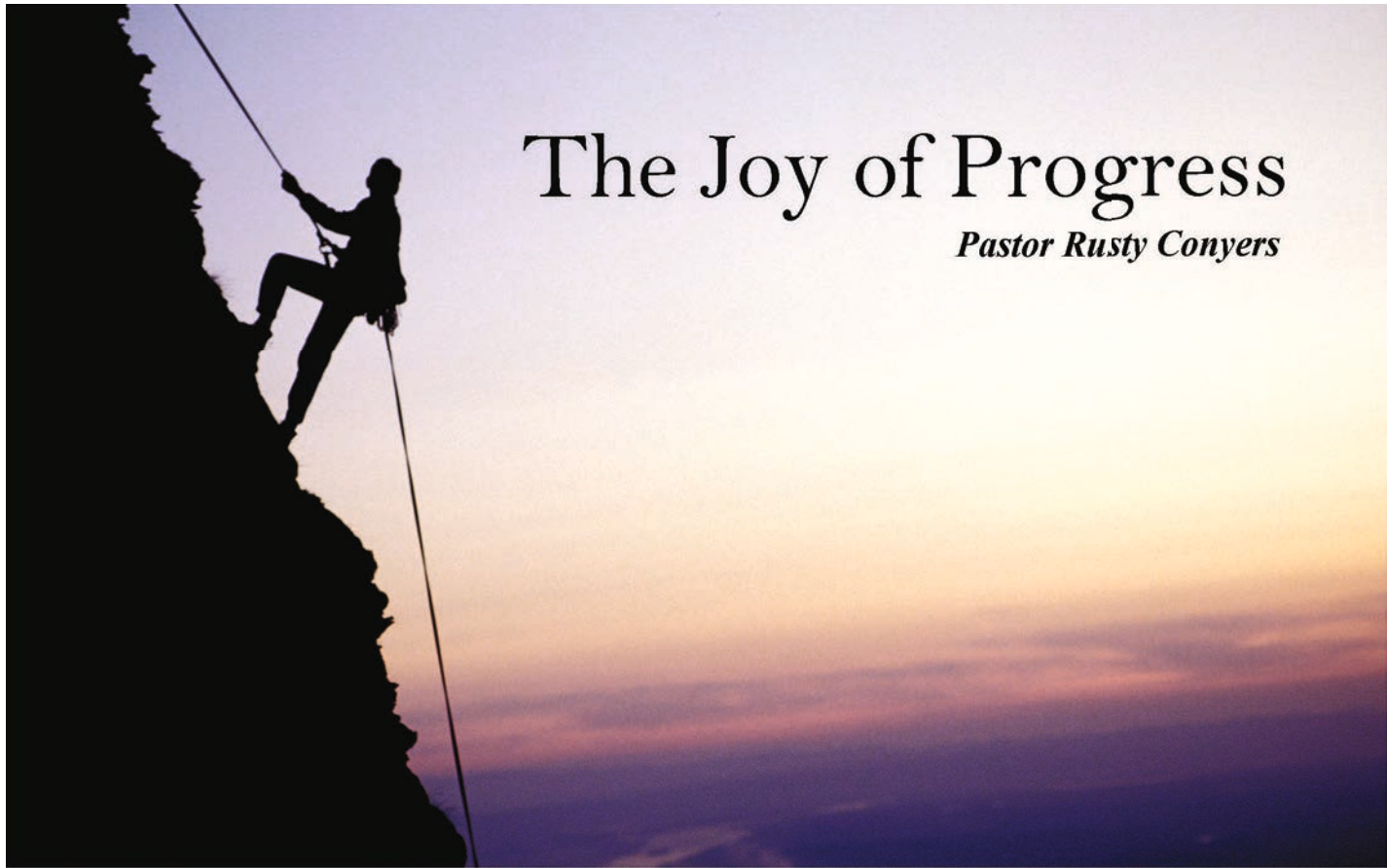
*This article is dedicated to my oldest grandchild, Victoria; hopefully the first of many of our grandchildren to walk across the stage and hopefully take the next step into what God has for them.*

*I love you,  
Grandma*



***Mrs. Worthington has five children and eleven grandchildren. She serves as Principal of Pathway Christian Academy in Goldsboro.***





# The Joy of Progress

*Pastor Rusty Conyers*

The Bible says in **Luke 14:28-30**, *“For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish.”*

The idea of the passage is that Christians need to make progress for the Lord. We often start out with big goals, but just like the man in the parable, we don’t see those goals accomplished. When a Christian stops making progress, he begins to backslide. When that happens, he gives the world an occasion to mock Christianity.

One of the good things about making progress is that it brings with it a sense of joy and satisfaction. Let’s notice three factors concerning the joy of progress.

### *We Should Enjoy Working For Jesus.*

Salvation is a free gift from God. We get saved by grace through faith in God’s Son, the Lord Jesus

Christ. We never have to work for salvation. However, after we get saved, we should work for our Saviour, and be glad to do so. There is plenty of church work we can do; from ushering, to singing, to teaching, to keeping the grass cut. There’s so much church work that can be done. Just ask your pastor where you can help.

There’s also the work of the church. I mean, the main work. It’s the work of witnessing. This has nothing to do with our talents or spiritual gifts. No, witnessing is the Lord’s command, or commission, for every believer. Jesus said, *“ye shall be witnesses unto me.”* (**Acts 1:8**)

Do you enjoy the work of witnessing? I hope you do. Whenever I get the opportunity to share the Gospel with someone, even if they do not choose to be saved, I thoroughly enjoy the chance to tell the old, old story once again. Of course, it’s even better if the person gets saved.

### *We Should Enjoy Advancing For Jesus.*

We read in **Luke 9:62**, *“And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the*

*plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.”* Like the man in the parable, stalling out is not much fun. Yet, moving forward can be a tremendous blessing. Advancing, making progress, is what the Lord wants from our efforts as a Christian.

In fact, in **Luke 14**, we see Jesus advancing towards Jerusalem. He was actually advancing towards the cross. Paul was also one who advanced for God in spite of much opposition. A job well done is never easy, but there is joy as we make progress along the way. That’s why Paul could say in **Philippians 3:14**, *“I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”*

***We Should Enjoy Finishing With Jesus.***

So many have started out in the Christian life, but failed to finish strong. I think we would all like to say what both Jesus and Paul said at the end of their earthly journeys. Jesus said from the

cross, *“It is finished.”* (**John 19:30**) Paul said, *“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.”* (**II Timothy 4:7**) Isn’t that the goal of progress, to end or finish well? And, if we continue to move forward for the Lord, we can one day hear Him say, *“Well done, thou good and faithful servant.”*

Someone once said, *“You cannot go back and make a new start, but you can start today and make a new ending.”* That is especially true when the grace of God is applied. Perhaps your progress has faltered or slowed down a bit. Now, with God’s help, why not decide to experience the joy of progress?



*Pastor Rusty Conyers has been in full-time ministry since 1998 and Pastor of Liberty Baptist Church in Snow Hill, NC, since 2010. More information is available at [www.libertybaptistsnowhill.com](http://www.libertybaptistsnowhill.com).*



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# And Finally...



## Father's Day...

*My dad has been gone for almost seven years now, but I am reminded of him every time I look in the mirror. People always told me I looked like him, but I never really noticed it until I started getting older. Now I see it and what a wonderful reminder it is! My dad taught me so many great things. Dad taught me to be honest, hardworking, and kind. He said it was important to treat everyone with respect and to always remember to greet people with a "Hello" and remember to say "Thank you." I share that with my son and grandsons, his lineage. He is missed every day, but his memories live on in my heart as they are shared with family and friends. I love you always, Pops!*

**A. W.**

*My sister and I were raised by two great parents in the greatest decade that there has ever been, the 80's. We were church-going people who loved each other and always (well, usually) got along great. My dad worked hard at his job, and we waited for him to come home after work every day. He taught me how to love your family and to be involved in everything that family did together. A few weeks ago, my 12-year-old son unknowingly reminded me I'm turning into my dad. Before we left the house for church one Sunday morning, I noticed his hair was messed up. So without thinking, I ran my hands through his hair to try to fix it. He said, "Dad, why do you always do that? Stop it!" At that point, I realized I do that because my dad did the same thing to me when I was 12 years old. And, at 12 years old, I reacted just like my son did! It's amazing how those little memories pop up from time to time.*

**T. M.**

*My dad and mom raised five kids on a Pennsylvania dairy farm. From sunup to sundown Dad worked, milking 100 Jersey cows twice a day, every day. Dad taught us Sunday was the Lord's Day. Every Sunday we were at church with our tithe of 7 pennies each; one for every day of the week. Sunday was also a day of rest. Dad would nap in the afternoon, only to rise to milk the cows again in the evening. On special Sunday afternoons, all seven of us would go for a ride to a park or to get an ice cream cone. We learned to work and take care of the things God gave us. Dad taught us many things, not by telling us, but by example. From generation to generation, my gentle, loving dad has been a picture of my heavenly Father. I am blessed beyond measure.*

**D. S.**

## "Senior Citizen's Day"

We'd like your help for an upcoming edition of  
"And Finally..."

August 21st is Senior Citizen's Day! Write to us in 150 words or less and tell us about how you plan to celebrate a Senior Citizen in your life. The deadline for submission is June 25th, 2018.

You can send an email to: Attn: PathPointe  
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Or write to: Pathway Ministries  
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