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2700-PLUS SERMON ILLUSTRATIONS (M-TOPICS)
Compiled and Arranged Topically by Duane V. Maxey

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MAN

1498 -- MEN ARE NOT RENEWED APART FROM CHRIST

"In 1924 the Soviet revolutionist Leon Trotsky promised that with the abolition of God would come a new breed of man. 'Man will become immeasurable stronger, wiser and subtler; his body will become more harmonized, his movements more rhythmic,' Trotsky wrote. 'The average human type will rise to the heights of an Aristotle, a Goethe, or a Marx. And above this ridge new peaks will rise.' Today's Russian laughs at such words, but not our philosophical elite. Instead they promise a new breed of human who can be moral without God. Could we be so blind in the enlightened '90s? Where will we find the motivation to love? To be honest, selfless, good? History demonstrates that apart from Jesus Christ we will never find it within ourselves." -- Graeme Crouch

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MARRIAGE

1499 -- AN AWFUL MISTAKE TO MARRY FATHER

There is no place where a man's salvation is so valuable as in his own home. Many a man, appears very religious on Sunday, but if you could see him at home with his family at the table, or when he loses his temper over some trivial thing, you would not wonder when he says he cannot do personal work. It would not do any good for him to speak to his own children about becoming Christians.

A man in Iowa had been storming at his family, especially at his poor wife one day, until he had spoiled the pleasure of everything in the home, for that day at least. Then he went out slamming the door behind him. His little boy stood off at one side listening to it all. He looked into his mother's face and tearful eyes, and coming across the room took her hands in his own, and exclaimed: "Mother, we made an awful mistake when we married father, didn't we? -- R. A.Torrey

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MARRIAGE

1500 -- LASTING MARRIAGES NOT FROM LOVELY WEDDINGS

On July 29, 1981 Britain's Prince Charles married his Lady Diana in a grand royal ceremony. The glamorous wedding was a fairy tale of present pomp and past glory, a last gold-leaf page from the tattered book of empire. London was a city dressed like a vast stage. Buses were painted with bows, and parks bloomed with Charles' royal crest outlined in precisely painted blossoms. Some 4,500 pots of flowers lined the wedding route.

Besides the happy couple, the audience included 26 prominent clerics, a congregation of 2,500 crowding each other for pew space under the great painted dome of St. Paul's Cathedral, more than 75 technicians manning 21 cameras, and an estimated worldwide television audience of 750 million.

Isn't it noteworthy that a glamorous wedding does not guarantee a great marriage?

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MARRIAGE

1501 -- THE ONLY RIGHT MARRIAGE TRIANGLE

Although we usually think of a marriage triangle as a dangerous situation, there is one sense in which a third person could create the right triangle.

Viola Walden tells the story of a newly married couple riding a train on their honeymoon. A silver-haired man leaned across the aisle and asked, "Is there a third party going with you on your honeymoon?" The couple looked at him strangely; then he added, "When Sarah and I were married, we invited Jesus to our marriage. One of the first things we did in our new home was to kneel and ask Jesus to make our marriage a love triangle -- Sarah, myself, and Jesus. And all three of us have been in love with each other for all 50 years of our married life."

* * *

MARRIAGE

1502 -- VALENTINE

Many people do not know why February 14 is called Valentine's Day. Most people believe it got its name from a man named Valentine who lived 1700 years ago. He was a priest in Rome when Christianity was a new religion. He was put to death for teaching Christianity. Afterwards he was called a saint. One legend tells why Valentine is the patron saint of lovers. The Roman soldiers did not want to leave their homes to fight the emperor's wars. Claudius II, who was the emperor then, ordered the young men not to marry. He thought that if they did not have homes, they would be willing to go away and fight. Valentine felt sorry for the unhappy young men and their sweethearts. He married many of them secretly. So even today, sweethearts celebrate in his honor.

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MARRIAGE -- COMMENDED

1503 -- WHO HE WOULD LIKE TO BE

Perhaps the best compliment a husband ever gave his wife was given by Joseph Choate, one-time U. S. ambassador to Great Britain. When asked who he would like to be if he could come back to earth again after death, Choate replied without a moment's hesitation, "Mrs. Choate's second husband."

Such an expression of love would have to make a wife feel valued and secure. But the fact that Choate's reply was recorded for posterity points up a problem: we often forget those closest to us when it come to things like compliments, courtesy, and good manners in general.

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MARRIAGE -- SOLEMN OBLIGATIONS OF

1504 -- A TIGHTLY LOCKED DOOR

There is a custom in an area of the Netherlands where newlywed couples enter their house through a special door. The door is never used again until one dies and the body is carried out through that same door. God designed marriage like that house. It has one door that is locked tightly. That lock, which keeps the marriage bond secure, is loving commitment for life, which includes a commitment to being reconciled if the relationship should break.

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MARRIAGE -- SOLEMN OBLIGATIONS OF

1505 -- DON'T MARRY UNTIL YOU DO

Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Kantzer mentioned to a cashier that they were about to celebrate their 48th wedding anniversary. The cashier said, "I can't think of any man I'd like to live with for 48 years." Ms. Kantzer replied, "Well, don't marry until you do." That's good advice!

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MARRIAGE -- SOLEMN OBLIGATIONS OF

1506 -- MAINTENANCE DONE ON EARTH

J. Allen Petersen said, "I do not know whether or not your marriage was made in heaven, but I do know that all the maintenance work is done on earth."

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MARRIAGE -- SOLEMN OBLIGATIONS OF

1507 -- REQUIRED TO TEACH THEIR CHILDREN

I wish my parents had known that unless marriage partners truly love one another, there is little they can teach their own children about the love of God or Christian living. -- Anonymous Teen

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MARRIAGE -- SOLEMN OBLIGATIONS OF

1508 -- THE THIRD STRAND

Leadership magazine carried a short item sent in by Cathryn Paxton that illustrates the importance of letting God be uppermost in the marital relationship. She wrote, "A braid appears to contain only two strands of hair. But it is impossible to create a braid with only two strands. If the two could be put together at all, they would quickly unravel. Herein lies the mystery: What looks like two strands requires a third. The third strand, though not immediately evident, keeps the strand tightly woven." Then Paxton concluded, "In a Christian marriage, God's presence, like the third strand in a braid, holds husband and wife together."

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MARRIAGE -- SOLEMN OBLIGATIONS OF

1509 -- TOO MUCH WORK TO INTEREST HIM

The pastor of a big city church ran an ad for a caretaker- housekeeper. The next day, a well-dressed young man appeared at the pastor's door. But before he could say more than, "Hello, I came to see about...," the pastor began questioning him.

"Can you sweep, make beds, shovel walks, run errands, fix meals, balance a checkbook, and baby-sit?" the churchman asked?

"Whoa," the young man said, "I only came to see about getting married, but if it's that much work, I'm not interested." -- Virginia Myers

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MARTYRDOM

1510 -- NOT A SETBACK

The "homegoing" of slain Wycliffe linguist Chester Bitterman was not a setback to the work of translating the Scriptures into the world's remaining 3,000 unwritten languages. It was, said William Cameron Townsend, 84, founder-patriarch of Wycliffe and its Summer Institute of Linguistics, "a tremendous advance. Young people have been awakened in a new way." That this is not pious sentiment or wishful thinking became evident at the Golden Jubilee celebration of Wycliffe in Anaheim, California, last month, when 7,500 Wycliffe supporters paid tribute to "Uncle Cam" and Wycliffe's 4,255 members who work in 750 languages in 35 countries.

Since the 28-year-old Bitterman was kidnapped, then murdered 48 days later in Bogota, Columbia about 100 students at Columbia Bible College in North Carolina, where Bitterman was graduated, have pledged themselves to missionary service. Chet's widow, Brenda, has vowed to return to Bible literacy work, and his younger brother, Craig, 21, has applied to Wycliffe, hoping to be a Bible translator. And a new chair of linguistics and Bible translation has been established at Biola College in La Mirada, California, in Chet's memory.

Said Chet's father, Chester Bitterman, Sr., who, with his wife, Mary, and Chet's five brothers and sisters were special guests at the Golden Jubilee: "On a human level, Chet may have lost his life. But we believe that God is not finished in this. We haven't read the last chapter yet."

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MARTYRDOM

1511 -- POLYCARP

Polycarp (69-155), one of the early church fathers, was put on trial because of his faith in Christ. When the Roman proconsul told him to deny his faith, Polycarp answered, "For 86 years I have served Him, and He has never wronged me. How can I blaspheme my King, who has saved me?"

The proconsul then threatened to cast him in with the wild beasts, but Polycarp answered, "Call them!" He was then warned that he might be burned at the stake. Even that failed to move him. He responded, "You threaten me with fire which burns for only a moment, but you are ignorant of the fire of eternal punishment, reserved for the ungodly."

These are Polycarp's final words: "O Father of Thy beloved and blessed Son, Jesus Christ! I bless Thee that Thou has counted me worthy of this day, and of this hour, to receive my portion in the number of the martyrs, in the cup of Christ."

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MARTYRDOM

1512 -- THE FATE OF THE APOSTLES

Matthew suffered martyrdom by being slain with a sword at a distant city of Ethiopia. Mark expired at Alexandria, after having been cruelly dragged through the streets of that city. Luke was hanged upon an olive tree in the classic land of Greece. John was put into a caldron of boiling oil, but escaped death in a miraculous manner, and was afterwards banished to Patmos. Peter was crucified at Rome with his head downward. James the Greater was beheaded at Jerusalem. James the Less was thrown from a lofty pinnacle of the temple, and then beaten to death with a fuller's club. Philip was hanged up against a pillar at Heiropolis in Phrygia. Bartholomew was flayed alive. Andrew was bound to a cross, where he preached to his persecutors until he died. Thomas was run through the body with a lance at Coromandel in the East Indies. Jude was shot to death with arrows. Matthias was first stoned, and then beheaded. Barnabas of the Gentiles was stoned to death by the Jews at Salonica. Paul after various tortures and persecutions, was at length beheaded at Rome by the Emperor Nero.

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MARTYRDOM

1513 -- THE FORTY WRESTLERS

The forty wrestlers were Christian soldiers in one of the legions of the Roman army. The army was on a campaign in the high mountains of Armenia in Asia Minor, and it was bitter winter. The emperor had issued a decree to the generals of all his armies that on a given day the soldiers must march past the statue of the emperor, do obeisance, pour out a libation of wine, and drop incense on the fire. At the appointed time, the trumpets blew and the army marched past the emperor's statue, where all bowed and poured out the wine and offered the incense as if to a god. But the forty wrestlers, these Christian soldiers, refused to pay the emperors statue divine honors. They were renowned, for both their prowess on the field of battle, and for their athletic triumphs in the amphitheater.

Their general, who thought highly of them, besought them for his sake, and their love for him, to obey the decree. For a moment they hesitated, as they thought of the sweetness of life and of their families at home, but it was only for a moment. Then they answered their general and said: "For Rome we will fight on any field and under any sky. In the service of the emperor, if necessary, we will die. But we worship no one save our Master, Jesus Christ." Then, with great sorrow and reluctance, the general pronounced the sentence of punishment decreed for those who refused to worship the image of the emperor. The forty soldiers were stripped of their armor, which they had honored so in many a hard-fought campaign. Their helmets and breastplates, and shields and spears and swords were taken from them. Then, they were divested of their under garments and their sandals, and stark naked were driven out into the sub zero weather upon the frozen lake.

The night had come down, and as the soldiers of the legion sat about the campfires in their bivouacs they could hear the voices of the forty wrestlers as they sang: "Forty wrestlers, wrestling for thee, O Christ, claim for thee the victory and from thee the crown." As the night passed, their song grew fainter and fainter as man after man succumbed to the cold and fell lifeless on the ice.

At length, only one survivor was left. Naked, and trembling and shivering, he appeared before the tent of the general and said to the sentinel, "I will drop the incense and pour the wine."

But the sentinel who, although a pagan, had been moved by the heroic faith of the forty wrestlers answered, "Since thou hast proved a coward, I will take your place." With that, he stripped off his armor and his clothing and went out in the night upon the ice to take his stand among the thirty-nine who had fallen. For a time, the soldiers about the campfire heard his voice singing as he caught up the chant of those who had fallen: "Forty wrestlers, wrestling for thee, O Christ, claim for thee the victory and from thee the crown." At length, he too fell dead upon the ice. When the morning sun rose over the bleak Armenian mountains, that was what it looked down upon -- the forty wrestlers who had died for Christ, and from whom they had received the crown. -- McCartney

I do not have the proof that this story is authentic. It sounds like it could be fictional -- an ancient Christian tale, designed perhaps to inspire Christian courage in the hearts of those who heard or read it. Such Christian fiction is produced in our day for Sunday School papers, etc.. Still, lacking proof of this also, I think that it is possible that the story is entirely true. I will leave it up to those who read it from this source to discover, or to decide, for themselves concerning its authenticity. -- Duane V. Maxey

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MARTYRDOM

1514 -- THE SLAYING OF A WYCLIFFE TRANSLATOR

Chet Bitterman, a Wycliffe Bible translator in Bogota, Columbia, made this entry in his diary on September 13, 1978: Costa Rica, the situation in Nicaragua is getting worse. If Nicaragua falls, I guess the rest of Central America will too. Maybe this is just some kind of self-inflicted martyr complex, but I find this recurring thought that perhaps God will call me to be martyred for Him in His service in Columbia. I am willing. On January 19, 1981, 7 armed terrorists burst into the Wycliffe Bible translators office in Bogota, Columbia and took Chet captive for 7 weeks until they shot him in the head.

* * *

MARTYRDOM

1515 -- WILL YOU CEASE TO PRAY?

On the 28th of March, 1849, fourteen Christians were condemned to death on account of their faith. The place at which they suffered was a precipitous rock on the west side of Antanarivo, the capitol of Madagascar. The precipice overlooked a drop of at least 150 feet to the rocks below. On arriving at the edge of the rock, a rope was firmly tied round the body of each, and one by one they were lowered a little way over the precipice. While in this position and when it was hoped by their persecutors that their courage would fail, the executioner, holding a knife in his

hand, stood waiting for the command of the officer to cut the rope. Then, for the last time, the question was addressed to them: "Will you cease to pray?" But the only answer returned was an emphatic "No." Upon this, the signal was given, the rope was cut, and in another moment their mangled and bleeding bodies lay upon the rocks below. -- Dictionary Of Illustrations

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MARTYRDOM

1516 -- WON'T YOU RECANT?

When I was in Scotland I went a long way out of my path to visit the city of Sterling. Having only a short time to stay, I went at once to the spot I sought -- the old cemetery -- and I gazed upon that monument. Looking back through the mist of years, it brought to my mind the story of the Covenanters. It was the monument of Margaret Wilson. It told how that dear young saint, that girl in her teens, held so to her love of Jesus that the pleadings of father and mother and friends kept her not back from death. "Only one little word, Margaret, one little word, and your life will be spared," they said. "I cannot speak the word that shall dishonor Jesus," she replied. "Remember your father's grief," he begged, the night before she died. She stroked his gray hairs, and said, "I cannot speak the words you bid me speak." And then the next morning they took her out, those rude men, and tied her to a stake and put it into the sea. And they tied another to the stake, a gray-haired old saint, and they put her a little farther out in the wild sea, so that Margaret could first see her die. And they said, "Margaret Wilson, if you speak that word you shall be free." And then they left her to the billows of the rising sea. Nearer and nearer they came to the aged martyr; they reached her waist, they reached her shoulders, they swept her face, but she stood there with her countenance lifted to Heaven. And they said, "Margaret Wilson, don't you see her? Won't you still recant?" And she said, "No; I do not see her: I only see Jesus Christ in His suffering servant wrestling there"; and as she lifted her eyes the chariot of the Lord was waiting to bear the martyr home. -- A. B. Simpson

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MATERIALISM

1517 -- AN IDOL OR A TOOL

My wife Jeanne and I once dined with a rich man from a blueblood Boston family, and I asked him, "How in the world did you grow up in the midst of such wealth and not be consumed by materialism?" His answer: "My parents taught us that everything in our home was either an idol or a tool." So how do you view your possessions? -- Howard Hendricks

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MATERIALISM

1518 -- FOOLISHLY EMPLOYED

An anonymous author, who chose to disregard Jesus' admonition to seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and who lived instead for the fleeting things of this world, penned the following lines in great remorse: "How foolishly I have employed myself! In what delirium has my life been passed! How I've wasted my life while the sun in its race and the stars in their courses have lent their beams -- perhaps only to light me to perdition! I have pursued shadows and entertained myself with dreams. I have been treasuring up dust and sporting myself with the wind. I might have grazed with the beasts of the fields, or sung with the birds of the woods, to much better purposes than any for which I have lived."

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MATERIALISM

1519 -- MONEY DOES NOT MEAN HAPPINESS

"Happiness is not based on money and the greatest proof of that is our family!" -- Christina Onassis

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MATERIALISM

1520 -- THE DOLLAR GOD

A missionary in Africa had been witnessing faithfully to a certain individual. Following their conversation one day, the unconverted man placed a small statue and a silver coin on the table before him. Then he took two slips of paper and wrote something on each. Putting one beside the image and the other with the money, he turned to the Christian worker and said, "Please read this." On the note by the idol were written the words, "Heathen god." The sheet next to the coin bore the inscription, "Christian god." From what that needy soul had observed in the lives of the merchants from so-called "Christian" nations, he concluded that money was the object of their devotion!

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MATURITY -- SPIRITUAL

1521 -- EMBARRASSED BY IMITATING

To have unquestioning reliance upon a pastor or other spiritual leader can lead to embarrassment and even bitter disillusionment. I was reminded of this recently when I came across an interesting item about President Coolidge. Once he invited some friends from Vermont to dine at the White House. They were worried about their table manners, so they decided to do everything their host did. All went well until coffee was served. Coolidge poured his into the

saucer. The guests did the same. The President added sugar and cream. So did the visitors. Then Coolidge leaned over and placed his saucer on the floor for the cat.

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MEDICINE

1522 -- SHE WON'T STOP BARKING

In Sudburg, Mass., Country People reports that Barbara Robinson reached for her vitamin pills after breakfast and mistakenly consumed pills which the vet had prescribed for her dog. The vet says they won't hurt her. Her husband says that she won't stop barking! -- Associated Press

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MEDIOCRITY

1523 -- NO HITS, NO RUNS, NO ERRORS

Miss Jones, an elderly spinster, lived in a small midwestern community. She had the notoriety of being the oldest resident of the town. One day she died and the editor of the local newspaper wanted to print a little caption commemorating Miss Jones' death. However, the more he thought about it, the more he became aware that while Miss Jones had never done anything terribly wrong (she had never spent a night in jail, or had ever been drunk), yet she had never actually done anything of note. While musing over this, the editor went down to have his morning coffee and met the owner of the tombstone establishment in the little community. He poured out his soul to him. The tombstone proprietor stated that he had been having the same problem. He wanted to put something on Miss Jones's tombstone besides: Miss Nancy Jones, born such and such a date and died such and such a date, but he couldn't think of anything of significance that she had ever done.

The editor decided to go back to his office and assign the first reporter he came across the task of writing up a small article suitable for both the paper and the tombstone. Upon returning to the office, the only fellow around was the sports editor, so he gave him the assignment. They tell me if you pass through that little community you will find the following statement on her tombstone:

Here lies the bones of Nancy Jones,
For her life held no terrors.
She lived an old maid.
She died an old maid.
No hits, no runs, no errors.

-- C.C. Mitchell

* * *

MEDITATION

1524 -- BE LOST IN HIS IMMENSITY

Discouraged? Take this good counsel from Charles Spurgeon: "Plunge yourself in the Godhead's deepest sea; be lost in His immensity; and you shall come forth as from a couch of rest, refreshed and invigorated. I know nothing which can so comfort the soul; so calm the swelling billows of sorrow and grief; so speak peace to the winds of trial, as a devout musing upon the subject of the Godhead." -- C. H. Spurgeon

* * *

MEET AGAIN -- FRUIT OF PAST LABOR

1525 -- WHEN CALDWELL MET MOFFAT AGAIN

Robert Moffat, the missionary to Africa, on one of his visits to his native country, had been engaged in a missionary service in the North of England, and was invited to stop for the night in the home of a friend. Here he met an aged minister named Caldwell. In the course of the conversation Moffat adverted to his mother, for whom he entertained the most devout regard. Mr. Caldwell, whom Moffat did not know, not even his name, mentioned that he perceived that he was a Scotchman. "Yes," said the missionary, "the scenes of my boyhood and youth in my native land are very dear to my memory. I often think of them when far away among the heathen. I often think of my excellent mother leading me when a little fellow to the old meeting house to hear an excellent minister whose name was Caldwell." He then spoke with enthusiasm of his mother, of the minister, and of the impressions he had received then and there.

The venerable listener rose up, with tears coursing down his cheeks, and exclaimed: "Can it be? Are you little Bobbie Moffat? Is Moffat the missionary, the little fellow whom his mother used to lead to my meeting house in Falkirk when I was a minister there many years ago?" The mutual recognition, the embrace, the rapture, may be better conceived than described. The venerable Caldwell had not till then identified the little boy with the man who had done so much for Africa.

May there not be many surprises in store for workers when they enter into their rest in Heaven? We are favored even now to enjoy some instances of this happy nature; but what will be the unfolding of the pages of our life history in the perfect light of eternity? Christian worker, faint not, even in the darkest hour of testing and discouragement. The wintry days and stormy nights will soon pass away; and then eternal peace and rest. -- Gospel Herald

* * *

MEMORY VERSES

1526 -- VERSES? OR CHAPTERS?

Many believers remain weak because they fail to store up in their minds helpful passages from the Word of God. Apparently they do not realize that in times of stress, sorrow, or temptation, the Holy Spirit can bring those portions to their remembrance to comfort, warn, and direct them. The followers of some pagan religions are often required to saturate their minds with their sacred writings.

For instance, no one can teach in a Mohammedan mosque until he has first memorized the entire Koran! One missionary tells that for 21 hours she heard a group of Buddhist priests quoting their devotional literature from memory, seldom if ever making a mistake. Michael Billester once gave a Bible to a humble villager in eastern Poland. Returning a few years later, he learned that 200 people had become believers through using it. When the group gathered to hear him preach, he suggested that before he spoke he would like each person to quote some verses of Scripture.

One man rose and said, "Perhaps, Brother, we've misunderstood you. Did you mean verses or chapters?" Billester was astonished. "Are you saying there are people here who could recite complete chapters of the Bible?" That was precisely the case. In fact, 13 of them knew half of Genesis and the books of Matthew and Luke. Another had committed all the psalms to memory. Combined, the 200 knew virtually the entire Bible. Are you constantly hiding the Word of God in your heart? If not, begin today!

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MERCY

1527 -- LA GUARDIA SHOWED MERCY

Whom have you shown mercy to lately?

One night in 1935, Fiorello H. La Guardia, mayor of New York, showed up at a night court in the poorest ward of the city. He dismissed the judge for the evening and took over the bench. One case involved an elderly woman who was caught stealing bread to feed her grandchildren. La Guardia said, "I've got to punish you. Ten dollars or ten days in jail."

As he spoke, he threw \$10 into his hat. He then fined everyone in the courtroom 50 cents for living in a city "where a person has to steal bread so that her grandchildren can eat." The hat was passed around, and the woman left the courtroom with her fine paid and an additional \$47.50.

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MERCY

1528 -- MERCY DURING THE CANDLE'S LIFE

One of the old Saxon kings set out with an army to put down a rebellion in a distant province of his kingdom. When the insurrection had been quelled, and the army of the rebels

defeated, the king placed a candle over the archway of the castle where he had his headquarters. Lighting the candle, announced through a herald to all who had been in rebellion against him that those who surrendered and took the oath of loyalty while the candle was burning would be spared. The king offered them his clemency and mercy, but the offer was limited to the life of the candle. -- McCartney

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MERCY -- EXAMPLES OF DIVINE

1529 -- SAVED AT AGE 103

During the revival in Ireland in 1853, an aged convert at Achile, a poor man, one hundred and four years old, walked ten miles to make a public profession of his faith, at a confirmation held by the Protestant Bishop of Tuam.

Mr. E. had a most interesting conversation with this aged man. He said: "I lived one hundred and three years and six months in total darkness, knowing nothing of the way to heaven, blind, and ignorant." "And now," said Mr. E., "what is your hope?" "My hope, sir, is in the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world. Oh, to think that I have gone on one hundred and three years and six months, caring not for my soul, and then that this blessed truth should have burst upon me! How can I praise Him enough for His wondrous love towards such a poor, old sinner!"

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MERCY -- OF GOD

1530 -- A HYMN OF JOHN NEWTON

How many times I have thought of that sweet hymn of John Newton's:

Saved by grace, I live to tell
What the love of Christ hath done,
He redeemed my soul from hell,
Of a rebel made a son;

Oh! I tremble still to think,
How secure I lived in sin;
Sporting on destruction's brink,
Yet was saved from falling in.

-- Albert P. Graves

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MERCY -- OF GOD

1531 -- WINDS OF MERCY PAST REDEMPTION POINT

When Mr. Aitken was in this country, he told an anecdote concerning a vessel on the Niagara River, which had in some way become loosed from its moorings and was drifting down toward the cataract. There is a point above the Falls called "Past Redemption Point," and, as the vessel came near to that point, those that were watching it from the shore trembled. Nothing had ever passed that point before and been rescued.

The little boat came drifting on and those that were on board were unable to extricate themselves from their awful danger until she passed the fatal point, and they had given up all hope. Just as those on board were about to commend themselves to such mercy as they might find in their dying hour, the one who had charge of the little craft started, and a look of eager expectation came upon his face; and then he gave some orders and immediately the sails were raised upon the little craft. He had thought that he felt upon his cheek a faint breath of air blowing up the river.

At first it did not seem to make the slightest difference with the sails, but as the breeze grew fresher the sails began to fill out; and then occurred a terrible battle, the wind against the current until at last, the might of the current remaining the same in power and the breeze increasing in force, the little vessel was held still for a moment; and then as the breeze quickened and grew mightier and mightier against the sails. The wind triumphed, and the little boat moved almost inch by inch at first, fighting her way until at last they were able to guide it in safety into the calm water out toward the great lake.

Oh man, have you been heedless and careless, and drifting on the tide of worldliness, the tide of selfishness, the tide of avarice, the tide of unbelief, the tide of simple indifference? Has it been bringing you nearer and nearer to the fatal plunge? Tonight, spread every sail to catch the wind that blows from heaven, that it may touch your heart, your conscience, and your life, and bring you into the desired haven. -- B. Fay Mills

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MERCY -- PROMISES OF DIVINE

1532 -- STRIKE ME DEAD!

When the infidel Robert G. Ingersoll was delivering his lectures against Christ and the Bible, his oratorical ability usually assured him of a large crowd. One night after an inflammatory speech in which he severely attacked man's faith in the Savior, he dramatically took out his watch and said, "I'll give God a chance to prove that He exists and is almighty. I challenge Him to strike me dead within 5 minutes!" First there was silence, then people became uneasy. Some left the hall, unable to take the nervous strain of the occasion, and one woman fainted. At the end of the allocated time, the atheist exclaimed derisively, "See! There is no God. I am still very much alive!"

After the lecture a young fellow said to a Christian lady, "Well, Ingersoll certainly proved something tonight!" Her reply was memorable. "Yes, he did," she said. "He demonstrated that even the most defiant sinner cannot exhaust the patience of the Lord in just 5 minutes!" Another man added, "As I was coming downtown today, a belligerent little fellow came running out of an alley, daring me to hit him. Do you suppose I actually struck him, just because he challenged me to do so? In the same way, our Lord will not strike everyone dead who defies Him. We should be thankful that in this age He is still operating in grace and desires to show His love rather than His wrath." (Romans 9:22)

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MERCY -- SUPPLICATION FOR

1533 -- ALWAYS UNDESERVED

A mother sought the pardon of her son from Napoleon. The emperor said it was his second offense, and justice demanded his death. "I don't ask for justice," demanded his mother, "I plead for mercy." "But," said the emperor, "he does not deserve mercy." "Sire," cried the mother, "it would not be mercy if he deserved it, and mercy is all I ask for." "Well, then," said the emperor, "I will have mercy." And her son was saved. -- Good Company

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MERCY -- SUPPLICATION FOR

1534 -- MERCY, NOT JUSTICE

When a former mayor of New York befriended a poor, dejected outcast of society, he was reproved by the prosecuting attorney who said, "That tramp's no good. He's getting only what he deserves." hearing this, the judge interrupted the harsh counselor by asking with a smile, "Did you ever hear of the mother who visited Napoleon on behalf of her condemned son? The emperor told her the young man had committed the same offense twice, and justice demanded the death penalty. 'But Sire,' she pleaded, 'I don't ask for justice -- only for mercy.' 'He doesn't deserve it,' said Napoleon. 'No, he doesn't,' she admitted, 'but it would not be MERCY if he deserved it.' 'You're right!' said the ruler quickly, 'I'll grant your request and show him mercy!'"

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MIND -- EVIL THOUGHTS

1535 -- INVISIBLE WICKEDNESS

In an old Grecian myth, Gyge had a ring which enabled the possessor of it to be invisible to all. Many would wear the ring of Gyges if they could; and if they did, their lives would be quite different from what the world sees. In the subterranean chamber of imagination, what do you worship? Before what pictures do you bow? Do you do, in the mind and imagination, what you

fear to do in the flesh? Are words spoken there which you dare not speak with the lips? There, do you scorn and ridicule one whom you publicly praise or flatter? In this realm, do you ever wish another out of your way? What are the pictures on the walls of your imagination? -- McCartney

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MIND -- SINFUL

1536 -- DISTORTED ILLUSIONS

Recent experiments have been made in which people were fitted with special prismatic glasses. These devices greatly distort the vision so that straight lines appeared to be curved, and sharp outlines seemed fringed with color. Within just a few days, however, the unnatural shapes, tinted edges, and inverted landscapes gradually disappeared, and the world began to be normal again, even though they still wore their optical fittings. The brain was finally able to overcome the false data that came through the prismatic lenses. This adaptability in the physical realm is indeed a blessing. In the area of the spiritual, however, the human mind does not function very well. In fact, man is a sinner whose deepest imaginations are evil, and his thought life produces a world of illusions. He thinks of himself as pure when in reality he is guilty before God.

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MINISTERS

1537 -- A TYPOGRAPHICAL ERROR

A pastor recently noted in his resume that his spiritual gifts were: preaching, serving and exhortation. When the typist set the type, however, she typed his gifts as: preaching, serving and exhumation. Maybe some churches could use that second set of gifts!

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MINISTERS

1538 -- HE ALREADY KNEW THAT

A preacher's new car broke down just after his Sunday service. Monday morning he managed to drive the vehicle to the town's one garage for repairs. "I hope you'll go easy on the cost," he told the mechanic. "After all, I'm just a poor preacher."

"I know," came the reply. "I heard you preach yesterday." -- Reader's Digest

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MINISTERS

1539 -- MINISTERS MUST TRULY LOVE CHRIST

Dr. Richard Halverson noted: "We don't want ministers anymore, we want CEOs. We don't want prophets, we want politicians. We don't want godliness, we want experience. We don't want spirituality, we want efficiency. We don't want humility, we want charisma. We don't want godly authority, we want relational skill." As a result, we have thousands and thousands of churches in this country whose ministers are very qualified to do what the Church has asked of them, but the one thing that hasn't been asked of them is to love Jesus.

So they don't.

And neither do their people.

-- Mike Yaconelli

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MINISTERS

1540 -- MINISTERS SHOULD NOT BE LAZY

Dr. Storrs tells of an Indian who was a candidate for the ministry and was asked before the Presbytery the important question: "What is original sin?" He answered that he didn't know what other people's might be, but he rather thought that his was laziness. There is no doubt at the present time that many are suffering from the same disease. Truly he is to be pitied who has nothing to do. He is like a barnacle on a ship or a floating derelict -- useless to himself and dangerous to others.
-- Rev. E. W. Caswell

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MINISTERS

1541 -- MORE POWER NEEDED

The story is told of a preacher who wanted an electric light in his study. There was, in the house, an electric battery that was used for the ringing of various bells. Knowing very little about electricity, he fancied that if the battery could ring a bell, it could make a light. So, he ran wires from the battery into his study. Then he adjusted an electric bulb, turned the key, and was disappointed to find that he got no light. He consulted an electrician. He said: "I have a battery in my house that has been ringing all the bells for a long time. I thought that this battery, that could so well ring bells, could light my study. I tried and it failed. What is the matter?" The electrician looked at him and said: "Do you not know that it takes much more power to make a light than it does to ring a bell?"

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MINISTERS

1542 -- SIGN-POST

The story is told of a clergyman who was far more at home on the hunting field than in the pulpit. On the morning of a meet, he was much annoyed at having to officiate at a funeral, but this over, he mounted his horse and started in pursuit of his friends. On the road, he sought information of an old woman with a donkey-cart. "Well," she said, "if you ride to the top of the hill, you will come to a minister, then if you turn to the right, you will be likely to come up with them." Handing her a shilling, he said: "My good woman, why do you call the sign-post a minister?" Why, you see, sir, its like this: we used to call them sign-posts, but since you've been in these parts we call them ministers, 'cause though they point others the way, they never go themselves." -- London Tidbits

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MINISTERS

1543 -- SINFUL DESERTION OF THE MINISTRY

Heliodorus, Bishop of Fricca, wrote a romance. The poor bishop thought so much of his book that when he was commanded, under ecclesiastical censure, to burn it or give up his bishopric, he gave up the bishopric. -- Mrs. Browning

Who, when he is called of God into the ministry, could rightly make such a choice -- especially if the book was not of a religious or theological nature? If this man had a Divine call, it would appear that he thought more of his own product than he did of preaching the Word! -- Duane V. Maxey

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MINISTERS -- AS SHEPHERDS

1544 -- ANXIETIES OF PASTORAL CARE

St. Francis, reflecting on a story he heard of a mountaineer in the Alps who had risked his life to save a sheep, says: "Oh God, if such was the earnestness of this shepherd in seeking for a mere animal which had probably been frozen on the glacier, how is it that I am so indifferent in seeking my sheep."

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MINISTERS -- AS SHEPHERDS

1545 -- RESCUING THE FLOCK

A friend once told D. L. Moody just how the sheep in the Highlands of Scotland are rescued when they wander off and become stranded on a rocky crag. He said, "The vegetation on those mountains is so sweet that the sheep will jump down 10 or 12 feet to get it. Soon their bleating can be heard as they try unsuccessfully to return to higher ground. The shepherd does not rush to the rescue, but leaves them where they are until there's no more grass to be eaten. After several days they become so faint they can't stand up. At that point the herdsman will lower himself to the dangerous ledge below and bring them to the fold." Mr. Moody asked, "Why doesn't he go down as soon as the sheep get into trouble?" "Ah," said his friend, "if he did, those animals are so stupid they would dash right over the edge of the cliff and be killed!"

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MINISTERS -- AS SHEPHERDS

1546 -- THE CAUSE FOR PASTORAL CONCERN

During a voyage, sailing in a heavy sea near a reef of rocks, a minister on board the vessel made, in a conversation between the man at the helm and the sailors, an inquiry whether they should be able to clear the rocks without making another tack, when the captain gave orders that they should put off to avoid all risk. The minister observed: "I am rejoiced that we have so careful a commander." The captain replied: "It is necessary I should be very careful, because I have souls on board. I think of my responsibility, and remember that should anything happen through carelessness, souls are very valuable." The minister turning to some of his congregation who were on the deck observed: "The captain has preached me a powerful sermon. I hope I shall never forget when I am addressing my fellow creatures on the concerns of eternity, that I have souls on board. -- A. C. Benson

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MINISTERS -- CHARACTERISTICS OF

1547 -- NOT SO HOT

The wonderful Korean evangelist, Billy Kim, said that during his first visit to America, after he had spoken, someone came up and told him that he was a very warm preacher. He felt so complimented until he looked up in the dictionary and found out the definition of warm is not so hot.

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MINISTERS -- CHARACTERISTICS OF

1548 -- REACH HEAVEN

A Western rancher had asked the district superintendent to have a pastor assigned to his community. "How big a man do you want?" asked the superintendent. "Well, Elder," the wiry,

tanned man replied, "we're not overly particular, but when he's on his knees we'd like to have him reach heaven."

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MINISTERS -- DIVINELY APPOINTED

1549 -- A FACT, NOT A FLATTERY

When Andrew Jackson was president of the United States, a certain man asked to be appointed to a responsible post. Mr. Jackson asked him about his present occupation. He replied that he was a minister of the Gospel. "Well, sir," said the President, "you will have to come down from that exalted position to accept the highest office I could give you in this government."

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MINISTERS -- DIVINELY APPOINTED

1550 -- TOO BIG TO BE OF USE

The great bell of Moscow is too large to be hung. The question arises, "What was the use of making it?" Some preachers are so learned that they cannot make themselves understood, or else cannot bring their minds to preach plain gospel sermons. Here, too, the same question might be asked: "What was the use of making such a sermon?" -- Spurgeon

I might add the following question: "Is it not true that some preachers have considered themselves too big of a bell to be hung in the little steeple where God wants them? Disdaining the small place where God would have him minister can render a preacher useless in the ministry, as "too big of a bell" to be hung anywhere in God's will. -- Duane V. Maxey

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MINISTERS -- GOOD

1551 -- A FOLLOWING HARVEST WHICH HE DID NOT SEE

In the church of Somerville, New Jersey, where I was afterwards pastor, John Vredenburgh preached for a great many years. He felt that his ministry was a failure and others felt so, although he was a faithful minister, preaching the Gospel all the time. He died, and died amid some discouragements, and went home to God; for no one ever doubted that John Vredenburgh was a good Christian minister.

A little while after his death, there came a great awakening in Somerville, and one Sabbath two hundred souls stood up at the Christian altar espousing the cause of Christ, among them my own father and mother. What was peculiar in regard to nearly all of those two hundred souls was,

that they dated their religious impressions from the ministry of John Vredenburg. -- T. De Witt Talmage

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MINISTERS -- GOOD

1552 -- DIDN'T NEED THE WHOLE LOAD

Out in Wyoming's ranching country a severe snowstorm hit the area the Sunday before Christmas. Although the minister felt certain that nobody was going to show up for his church service because of the weather, he opened up the church just in case someone might appear. Sure enough, through the cold and snow, a weather-beaten cowboy appeared in the doorway of the church. The minister did not recognize the man as one of his parishioners, however he invited him in and the cowboy took a seat near the back of the church. After a wait of 20 minutes, it became apparent to the minister that this cowboy was going to be the only person to attend his church that day. Approaching the man, the minister asked him if he was expecting a full service.

"I've been a cowboy out in this part of the country all my life," the fellow answered. "And all winter long I feed 500 cows every day. And come rain or shine, sleet or snow -whether one comes or all 500 come -- I feed them every day." Duly inspired, the minister launched into a sermon that lasted the better part of an hour and a half. At the conclusion, the minister walked over to the cowboy and asked him how he enjoyed the service. "Like I said before," the cowboy answered, "I've been feeding 500 cows every day all my life. And come rain or shine, sleet or snow -- whether one comes or all 500 come -- I feed them every day. But if only one cow comes, I don't dump the whole feed load."

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MINISTERS -- GOOD

1553 -- IT WAS THE APOSTLE PAUL

One of the toughest tasks a church faces is choosing a good minister. A member of an official board undergoing this painful process finally lost patience. He'd watched the Pastoral Relations Committee reject applicant after applicant for some fault, alleged or otherwise. It was time for a bit of soul-searching on the part of the committee. So he stood up and read a letter purporting to be from another applicant.

"Gentlemen: Understanding your pulpit is vacant, I should like to apply for the position. I have many qualifications. I've been a preacher with much success and also had some success as a writer. Some say I'm a good organizer. I've been a leader most places I've been. "I'm over 50 years of age. I have never preached in one place for more than three years. In some places I have left town after my work has caused riots and disturbances. I must admit I have been in jail three or four times, but not because of any real wrongdoing.

My health is not too good, though I still get a great deal done. The churches I have preached in have been small, though located in several large cities. I've not got along well with religious leaders in towns where I have preached. In fact, some have threatened me and even attacked me physically. I am not too good at keeping records. I have been known to forget whom I have baptized. "However, if you can use me, I shall do my best for you."

The board member looked over the committee. "Well, what do you think? Shall we call him?" The good church folks were aghast. Call an unhealthy, troublemaking, absent-minded ex-jailbird? Was the board member crazy? Who signed that application? Who had such colossal nerve? The board member eyed them all keenly before he answered. "It's signed, 'The Apostle Paul.'"

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MINISTERS -- GOOD

1554 -- SOME OF SPURGEON'S ADVICE

C. H. Spurgeon in his book "Lectures to my Students" has some wise, if caustic, advice. "Sepulchral tones may fit a man to be an undertaker, but Lazarus is not called out of his grave by hollow moans." "I know brethren who from head to foot, in garb, tone, manner, necktie and boots are so utterly parsonic that no particle of manhood is visible.... Some men appear to have a white cravat twisted round their souls, their manhood is throttled with that starched rag." "An individual who has no geniality about him had better be an undertaker, and bury the dead, for he will never succeed in influencing the living." "I commend cheerfulness to all who would win souls; not levity and frothiness, but a genial, happy spirit. There are more flies caught with honey than with vinegar, and there will be more souls led to heaven by a man who wears heaven in his face than by one who bears death in his looks."

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MINISTERS -- GOOD

1555 -- THINK WHAT A GOOD PASTOR SHOULD BE

In a general way, the model pastor may be described in a few words, as was a certain New England woman: "Mary Ann Pratt -- Think what a good woman should be -- she was that."

This was the inscription put upon her monument to commemorate her virtues. She was dead, and so, perhaps, is the model pastor or he is laboring in some Utopian field far far away. But it is well to have as many of his virtues as possible in the living and present pastor. -- Topical Illustrations

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MINISTERS -- GOOD

1556 -- TRUE MINISTERS OF CHRIST ARE RECOGNIZED

One who had spent a few days at a hotel, when he came to settle his bill, in order to get reduced rates, mentioned that he was a preacher. But the landlord said "This is the first indication I have seen of it. I haven't heard you return thanks at the table or engage in religious conversation. I haven't seen you read the Bible. I accompanied you to your room and you did not pray before you retired. You ate like a sinner, slept like a sinner, talked like a sinner, and you can pay like a sinner." If that minister had been a model, it would have been known that he was a Christian before he came to leave, and he would have paid his bill like he was a millionaire even if it took the last dollar in his pocket. The true pastor is not a beggar. He need not refuse a favor because he is a minister, but he is not to ask it because he is a minister. -- Topical Illustrations

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MIRACLES -- PURPOSE OF

1557 -- A SIX INCH MIRACLE

A teacher was doing her best to discredit the miracles of the Bible. She said, "Take, for instance, the crossing of the Red Sea. We know this body of water was only 6 inches deep." Immediately from the back of the room came the remark, "Praise God for the miracle!" Annoyed, the teacher asked, "What miracle?" "Well," explained the boy, "the Lord must have drowned the whole Egyptian army in just 6 inches of water!"

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MISERY

1558 -- CARRYING THE DEAD

It was the custom of ancient conquerors to prevent the escape of their prisoners by tying a dead body to their backs. With such gruesome burdens, these poor wretches could not run away. Paul may have had this in mind; so some think Roman 7:24 should read: "Oh, wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from this dead body?"

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MISERY

1559 -- MISERY -- COURTESY OF SIN

Following the terrible Mexico City earthquake of 1985, live satellite coverage carried the news of Mexico's anguish to a watching world. A man was sitting in front of his television set stunned by the extent of the damage. Mountains of broken concrete filled the screen. Rescue workers dug frantically. Fires raged. Smoke and dust filled the air. Then suddenly in the lower

left-hand corner of the screen appeared the words "Courtesy: SIN." The letters S-I-N actually stood for Spanish International Network, but for a moment it meant something different to him. It reminded him that in some way all trouble, pain, and suffering can be traced back to the problem of sin. That's not to say that God judged Mexico City with an earthquake. We don't know that. But if sin directly or indirectly caused such a tragedy, or even the more disastrous quake described by John in Revelation 6:12, it deserves to be treated with contempt, not courtesy.

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MISERY

1560 -- THE MISERY OF THE MISGUIDED

The dark blue leather logbook is stained and watermarked, the last entry nearly obliterated. "Rain squalls. Rough seas. Rolling heavily. Very rough gale. Taking seas. No contact with any...." For Jerry Ballard and his father, Fitze, that terse entry from the log of the sailboat Mermaid's maiden voyage marked the beginning of a 13-day ordeal, drifting without sails or masts, food or water, in the currents of the North Pacific Ocean. Fitze, who died from the hardships, had decided to sail from Honolulu to Oregon without installing a sophisticated satellite navigation system. But without that equipment, the Ballard's weren't able to steer a steady course when the storms hit.

What a picture of the sinful condition of people in our day.

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MISSION -- LIFE'S

1561 -- GETTING THE PICTURE STRAIGHT

If I straighten the pictures on the walls of your home, I am committing no sin, am I? But suppose that your house were afire, and I still went calmly about straightening pictures, what would you say? Would you think me merely stupid or very wicked? The world today is on fire. What are you doing to extinguish the fire? -- Corrie Ten Boom

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MISSIONARY -- STORIES AND INCIDENTS

1562 -- ABRAHAM BININGER'S COMPASSION FOR SOULS

Abraham Bininger, a Swiss boy from Zurich, came with his parents to this country on the same ship that brought John Wesley. The father and mother of the lad both died on the voyage and were buried at sea, and he stepped alone from the gangway onto a strange continent where there was not a single familiar face. This solitude of his childhood drove him closer to the Friend in whom religion had early taught him to trust. The orphaned condition of the gentle boy must have

appealed strongly to the sympathy of Mr. Wesley, and it was probably the great preacher himself who took him from the ship to the Methodist orphan school in Georgia where he was educated.

In his youth, Bininger gave proof of singularly devout and tender feeling, and this character was intensified with added years. When he had grown to manhood, he asked to be sent to tell the story of the cross to the Negroes of the island of St. Thomas, having heard of their great misery and degradation. When he arrived at the island, he learned that it was against the law for any person but a slave to preach to the slaves. It was the policy of the planters to keep the blacks in ignorance and superstition. Shortly after this, the governor of St. Thomas received a letter signed by Abraham Bininger, in which the writer begged urgently to become a slave for the rest of his life, promising to serve as a slave faithfully provided he could give his leisure time to preaching to his fellowslaves. The governor sent the letter to the King of Denmark, who was so touched by it that he sent an edict empowering Abraham Bininger to tell the story of the Messiah when and where he chose -- to black or white bond or free. -- Youth's Companion

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MISSIONARY -- STORIES AND INCIDENTS

1563 -- CONVERTED THROUGH EXAMPLE

When H. M. Stanley went to Africa in 1871 to find and report on David Livingstone, he spent several months in the missionary's company, carefully observing the man and his work. Livingstone never spoke to Stanley about spiritual matters, but Livingstone's loving and patient compassion for the African people was beyond Stanley's comprehension. He could not understand how the missionary could have such love for and patience with the backward, pagan people among whom he had so long ministered. Livingstone literally spent himself in untiring service for those whom he had no reason to love except for Christ's sake. Stanley wrote in his journal, "When I saw that unwearied patience, that unflagging zeal, and those enlightened sons of Africa, I became a Christian at his side, though he never spoke to me one word."

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MISSIONARY -- STORIES AND INCIDENTS

1564 -- HE LEFT A CHURCH

A missionary returning home after many years of service was asked, "Tell me what you found when you arrived in New Guinea." "Found? I found something that looked more hopeless than if I had been sent into a jungle of tigers." "What do you mean?" "Why, the people seemed utterly devoid of moral sense. If a mother was carrying her little baby and the baby began to cry, she would throw it into the ditch and let it die. If a man saw his father break his leg, he would leave him by the roadside to suffer by himself. They had no compassion whatever. They didn't even know what the word meant." "Well, what did you do for them?" "I thought it best to show them my faith by my works! When I saw a baby crying, I picked it up and consoled it. When I saw a man with a broken leg, I sought to mend it. When I found people distressed and hungry, I took

them in, comforted them, and fed them. Finally they inquired, 'What does this mean? Why are you doing this for us?' Then I had my chance, and I preached the gospel!" "Did you succeed?" "My friend," said the missionary, "when I returned home on furlough, I left a church!"

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MISSIONARY -- STORIES AND INCIDENTS

1565 -- ONE SMALL BOY

After years of service in South Africa, the famous missionary Robert Moffat returned to Scotland to recruit helpers. When he arrived at the church one cold wintry night, he was dismayed that only a small group had come out to hear him. What bothered him even more was that the only people in attendance were ladies. Although he was grateful for their interest, he had hoped to challenge men. He had chosen as his text Proverbs 8:4, "Unto you, O men I call." In his discouragement he almost failed to notice one small boy in the loft pumping the bellows of the organ.

Moffat felt frustrated as he gave the message, for he realized that very few women could be expected to undergo the rigorous life in undeveloped jungles. But God works in mysterious ways. Although no one volunteered that evening, the young fellow assisting the organist was deeply moved by the challenge. As a result, he promised God he would follow in the footsteps of this pioneer missionary. And he remained true to his vow. When he grew up, he went and ministered to the unreached tribes of Africa. His name was David Livingstone!

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MISSIONARY -- STORIES AND INCIDENTS

1566 -- VICTORY AFTER DISCOURAGEMENT

The history of the efforts of missionaries in Tahiti is a most wonderful one. For fifteen years there was not a convert. The London Missionary Society seriously debated recalling their missionaries and giving their efforts to some other fields. After an earnest debate, it was decided to continue the work and letters were sent to the missionaries telling them of the decision. Now, notice a wonderful fact: A vessel sailed from London for Tahiti and at the same time a vessel sailed from Tahiti for London, and they passed each other in mid-ocean, one containing letters to the missionaries telling them to go on notwithstanding the fruitless character of their labors, and the other letters from the missionaries to the Society in London saying that a great revival had spread over Tahiti, that the idol temples were destroyed and that the idol gods were surrendered, and those gods were on that vessel on their way to London where they are now to be seen in the Missionary Society museum. See how God challenged his people and said to them, "While ye are calling, I will answer."

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MISSIONARY -- STORIES AND INCIDENTS

1567 -- YOU WON'T LIKE ME

A missionary fell into the hands of cannibals. "Going to eat me, I presume?" asked the missionary. The chief grunted. "Don't do it," he advised, "you won't like me." Thereupon the missionary took out a knife, sliced a piece from the calf of his leg and handed it to him. "Try this and see for yourself." The chief took one bite and choked. The missionary worked on the island for fifty years. He had a cork leg!

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MISSIONS

1568 -- WHY NO INTEREST IN

"I have no interest in missions," exclaimed a petulant young lady. "No, dear," said her aunt, "you can hardly expect to. It is just like getting interest at the bank. You have to put in a little something first before you get any interest. So it is with missions, the more you put into it of your time, or money, or prayer, the more your interest grows. "But something you must put in, or you will never have any interest." -- Spirit of Missions

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MISSIONS -- WORLDWIDE

1569 -- CAREY STOOD THE TEST

William Carey had to overcome great odds to obey the call of God. In "The Challenge of Life", Oswald J. Smith noted that "even the Directors of the East India Company opposed [Carey's] work. Following is the idiotic resolution they presented to Parliament: 'The sending out of missionaries into one Eastern possession is the maddest, most extravagant, most costly, most indefensible project which has ever been suggested by a moonstruck fanatic.'" Smith added, "In 1796, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland passed the following infamous resolution: 'To spread the knowledge of the gospel amongst barbarians and heathens seems to be highly preposterous.' One speaker in the House of Commons said that he would rather see a band of devils let loose in India than a band of missionaries. Such was the opposition to missions when Carey set forth. And yet, he was able to write, 'Why is my soul disquieted within me? Things may turn out better than I expect. Everything is known to God, and God cares.'" William Carey stood the test, and became the father of modern missions.

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MISSIONS -- WORLDWIDE

1570 -- DEFINITION OF A MISSIONARY

"A missionary is one who never gets used to the sound of heathen footsteps on their way to a Christless eternity" -- Author Unknown

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MISSIONS -- WORLDWIDE

1571 -- POPULATION GROWTH

During the 70's, the world's population growth slowed but it is now speeding up again, the Population Reference Bureau reports. There is now a quarter billion more people on the earth than there were in 1987. (We Christians must work harder than ever!) This increase adds up to about 90 million people a year -- equivalent to another Mexico. If the growth continues as it is, by the year 2000 there will be 6.3 billion people; by 2020, 8.3 billion, and it will be double within 39 years.

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MISSIONS -- WORLDWIDE

1572 -- PUT A FEATHER IN HIS WINGS

At a missionary meeting, the hymn, "O'er the gloomy hills of darkness," was sung while the collection was being taken. One woman was very energetic in the line: "Fly abroad, thou mighty gospel," but she shut her eyes when the collection box came near. The old man who was collecting, seeing this, said, "It is no use singing 'Fly abroad' unless you give something to find wings to fly with." "And," said he, giving her a nudge with the box, "put a feather in his wings." -- Dictionary Of Illustrations

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MISSIONS -- WORLDWIDE

1573 -- WANTED: MEN!

There is a story to the effect that a certain society in South Africa once wrote to David Livingstone, "Have you found a good road to where you are? If so, we want to send other men to join you." Livingstone replied, "If you have men who will come ONLY if they know there is a good road, I don't want them."

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MISSIONS -- WORLDWIDE

1574 -- WHO WILL DIE?

Fearful scenes are flung our way;
Masses jostle to a judgment day,
Led by liars headed for fire;
Death they ignore and demons admire;
Helpless, hopeless, tricked, but proud.
Who will go and love this crowd?
He who bravely met the test
Leaves for us the scene impressed:
Who will die as Jesus died,
Calmly setting self aside?

-- Byron Harting

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MOCKERS -- IN THE LAST DAYS

1575 -- HEADY, HIGHMINDED, UNBELIEVING PREACHERS

What is happening today in many of our standard brand churches? One of the first exposes of the beliefs of our future ministers was made by Redbook magazine in August of 1961. The publishers hired one of the top pollsters in the nation to survey seminaries which are supposedly preparing men for Protestant, Christian service. Here are some of the results: Compare them carefully with what the Bible says about apostasy. Of the ministers in training, 56 percent rejected the virgin birth of Jesus Christ, 71 percent rejected that there was life after death. 54 percent rejected the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. 98 percent rejected that there would be a personal return of Jesus Christ to this earth.

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MOCKING

1576 -- MOODY'S RESPONSE TO A HECKLER

When D. L. Moody was conducting evangelistic meetings across the country, he frequently faced hecklers who were in rather violent disagreement with his tenets. In the final service of one campaign, an usher handed the famed evangelist a note as he entered the auditorium. Supposing it to be an announcement, Moody quieted the large audience and prepared to read the notice. He opened it to find a single word: "Fool!"

The colorful preacher was equal to the occasion. Said he, "This is most unusual. I have just been handed a message which consists of but one word, the word 'fool.' I repeat, this is most unusual. I have often heard of those who have written letters and forgotten to sign their names, but this is the first time I have ever heard of anyone who signed his name and forgot to write the

letter!" And, taking advantage of the situation, Moody promptly changed his sermon to the text: "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God." -- Moody Monthly

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MONEY

1577 -- NO SUPPORT FOR A PANDERER

British writer and politician Joseph Addison once loaned some money to a friend with whom he was accustomed to having long discussions on topics of mutual interest. Soon afterward Addison noticed a change in his friend's behavior. Before the loan the two of them had disagreed on a number of subjects, but afterwards the borrower fell in with every line that Addison adopted. One day they were talking on a subject about which Addison knew his friend had previously held an opposite view. Frustrated by the other man's compliance Addison exclaimed, "Either contradict me, sir, or pay me my money."

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MONEY

1578 -- ONE'S WORTH AFTER LOSING ALL

"The real measure of our wealth is how much we'd be worth if we lost all our money." -- J. H. Jowett

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MONEY

1579 -- SPENDING PATTERNS ARE INDICATIVE

Soft heart or soft drinks? Jesus said that where our treasure is, there our heart will be also (Matt. 6:21). If our spending patterns, then, are an indicator of where our heart is hot and where it is not, at what level would missions register compared to soft drinks? -- John and Sylvia Ronsvalle

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MONEY

1580 -- WHERE MONEY IS NOT MENTIONED

Did you ever see a tombstone with a dollar sign on it? Neither did I. I have known hundreds of men who lived as though their only ambition was to accumulate, but I have never known one who wanted a final judgment of himself to be based on what he got. A man wants

people to read in his obituary, not a balance sheet of his wealth, but a story of his service to humanity.

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MOTHERHOOD -- CARES OF

1581 -- ARE YOU STILL COMING OVER?

I read about a woman who telephoned a friend and asked how she was feeling, "Terrible," came the reply over the wire, "my head's splitting and my back and legs are killing me. The house is a mess, and the kids are simply driving me crazy." Very sympathetically the caller said, "Listen, go and lie down, I'll come over right away and cook lunch for you, clean up the house, and take care of the children while you get some rest. By the way, how is Sam?" "Sam?" the complaining housewife grasped. "I have no husband named Sam." "My heavens," exclaimed the first woman, "I must have dialed the wrong number." There was a long pause. "Are you still coming over?" the harried mother asked hopefully. -- Bobby Moore

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MOTHERHOOD -- CARES OF

1582 -- THE SOUND THAT BROUGHT IMMEDIATE RESPONSE

In "Bold to Say," Austin Pardue tells about a woman who lived on a busy street corner in the heart of a large city. One hot summer night she retired early. The telephone rang, but she slept through it. Loud music blasted from a passing "boom box," but she slept through that. The children raided the refrigerator and played the stereo at full volume, but she slept through all of that too. Then, a remarkable thing happened. From the back room, at the opposite end of the house, came a little voice that called, "Mommy," and immediately the woman jumped out of bed and rushed to the side of her three-year- old daughter.

There probably aren't any scientific studies to prove it, but we all know that mothers can hear their children's slightest cries from great distances.

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MOTHERHOOD -- CARES OF

1583 -- THOUGH THE PRODIGAL HAD NOT RETURNED

She waited for the call that never came;
Searched every mail for a letter, or a note, or card,
That bore his name;
And on her knees at night, and on her feet all day,
She stormed Heaven's Gate in his behalf;

She pled for him in Heaven's high court.
"Be still, and wait," the word He gave;
And so she knew He would do in, and for, and with him,
That which she never could.
Doubts ignored, she went about her chores with joy;
Knowing, though spurned, His word was true.
The prodigal had not returned but God was God,
And there was work to do.

-- From *Sitting By My Laughing Fire*, by Ruth Bell Graham,

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MOTHERS -- GODLY CONCERN OF

1584 -- ARE ALL THE CHILDREN IN?

I think oftentimes as the night draws nigh
Of an old house on the hill,
Of a yard all wide and blossom-starred
Where the children played at will,

And when the night at last came down,
Hushing the merry din,
Mother would look around and ask,
"Are all the children in?"

'Tis many and many a year since then,
And the old house on the hill
No longer echoes to childish feet,
And the yard is still, so still.

But I see it all, as the shadows creep,
And though many the years have been
Since then, I can hear my mother ask,
"Are all the children in?"

I wonder if when the shadows fall
On the last short, earthly day,
When we say good-bye to the world outside,
All tired with our childish play,

When we step out into that Other Land
Where Mother so long has been,
Will we hear her ask, just as of old,
"Are all the children in?"

-- Florence Jones Hadley

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MOTHERS -- LOVE OF

1585 -- MOTHER'S LIGHT

A very beautiful story is related of a boat out at sea, carrying in it a father and his little daughter. As they were steering for the shore, they were overtaken by a violent storm which threatened to destroy them. The coast was dangerous. The mother lighted a lamp and started up the worn stairway to the attic window. "It won't do any good, mother," the son called after her. But the mother went up, put the light in the window, knelt beside it, and prayed. Out in the storm, the daughter saw a glimmer of gold on the water's edge. "Steer for that," the father said. Slowly, but steadily, they came toward the light and at last were anchored in the little, sheltered cottage by the harbor.

"Thank God!" cried the mother as she heard their glad voices, and came down the stairway with a lamp in her hand. "How did you get here?" she said. "We steered by mother's light," answered the daughter, "although we did not know what it was out there." "Ah," thought the boy, a wayward boy, "it is time I was steering by my mother's light." And e'er he slept, he surrendered himself to God and asked him to guide him over life's rough sea.

Months went by, and disease smote him. "He can't live long," was the verdict of the doctor; and one stormy night he lay dying. "Do not be afraid for me," he said as they wept, "I shall make the harbor, for I am steering by my mother's light." -- Sent Of God

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MOTHERS -- LOVE OF

1586 -- MOTHER'S TOUCH

Nowhere, is a mother's hand and a mother's voice forgotten. During our late Civil War, a mother was telegraphed: "Come to the front. Your boy is seriously wounded." She left on the first train, and when she arrived where her boy was being cared for, the lady of the home met her at the door, and was asked if a wounded soldier boy was in the house. "Yes," the lady replied, "and we are expecting his mother." "I am his mother," she said, "where is my boy?" "He is in his room. The doctors are in there now, but they will be out in a moment or two."

Directly, the doctors came out, and she introduced herself, but they said: "We are glad you have come, but you mustn't go in where your boy is. His fever is so high, and his nervous system on such a tension that if you walked into his room, the excitement of seeing you, his mother, might produce death. We will be back early in the morning, and we will let you know when you can see him." The mother stayed in the adjoining room all night, listening to the cries and moans of her

poor wounded boy. But in the morning the doctors only said: "You can't see your boy this morning. He is still delirious, and it would be a dangerous thing to let you into his room."

But when they all went away, she slipped down the hall with the tread of a cat, and she went in at the open door of her boy's room, and stole past the nurse to the side of his bed. She stood there a moment, listened to his cries, watched the nervous twitching of his body, and then she began to stroke his forehead with her hand. Her boy passed off into a quiet sleep, and the nervous twitching all stopped. He lay perfectly quiet for a moment, and then he said, without moving his position, "Oh, how like my mother's hand!" -- Sam Jones

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MOTHERS -- LOVE OF

1587 -- WHAT WAS IN HER HEART

A very pretty story is told by Mr. Stuart Robertson in his delightful book of "Talks to Children." A little girl was sitting on her mother's knee. She was very fond of her mother. She called her, her "very own mother," and like one who was rejoicing over very precious treasures she was touching, one after the other, the features of her mother's face with her little fingers -- her mother's lips, her eyes, her cheeks, her hair. After a while she said, "Mummy, can I see your heart?" The mother said, "I don't know about that, but you can look into my eyes, and see if you can see anything." The child climbed up and peered in; and then she cried out gleefully, "I can see your heart, Mummy, and there is a wee girl away in there, and it's me!" -- Sunday School Times

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MOTHERS -- PREVAILING FAITH OF

1588 -- MY BOY IS NOT DEAD

Dr. Thomas N. Carter, the ex-convict, tells a thrilling story of the faith of his mother, who followed him with her prayers for many years until she listened to him preach the gospel in answer to her prayer. On one occasion, while he was in prison, his mother received a telegram from the prison stating that her son was dead, and asked what she wanted done with his body. His mother was stunned at receipt of the telegram for a few minutes, then retired to her prayer closet after instructing others in the house not to disturb her. She got her Bible and opening it, spread it before her, with the telegram beside it. "Oh, God," she began, "I have believed the promise you gave me in your Word, that I would live to see Tom saved and preach the Gospel, and now a telegram comes saying he is dead. Lord, which is true, this telegram or your Word?" When she rose from her knees, having won the victory, she wired the prison: "There must be some mistake. My boy is not dead." And there was a mistake. Tom Carter lived and was recently in our church preaching, with his mother seated on the platform. -- Sunday School Times

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MOURNING

1589 -- FOR ALL PARENTS

I'll lend you for a little time, a child of mine, he said.
For you to love while he lives, and mourn when he is dead.

It may be six or seven years, or twenty-two or three.
But will you, till I call him back, take care of him for me?

He'll bring his charms to gladden you, and shall his stay be brief,
You'll have his lovely memories as solace for your grief.

I cannot promise he will stay, since all from earth return,
But there are lessons taught down there I want this child to learn.

I've looked the wide world over in my search for teachers true
And from the throngs that crowd life's lanes, I have selected you.

Now will you give him all your love, nor think the labor vain,
Nor hate me when I come to call, to take him back again?

I fancied that I heard them say, dear Lord, thy will be done.
For all the joy thy child shall bring, the risk of grief we'll run.

We'll shelter him with tenderness, we'll love him while we may;
And for the happiness we've known, will ever grateful stay.

But shall the angels call for him much sooner than we planned,
We'll brave the bitter grief that comes, and try to understand.

-- Edgar A. Guest

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MURMURING (COMPLAINING)

1590 -- A GOOD SHOW FOR A NICKEL

A typical American family was driving home from church one Sunday. Dad was fussing about the sermon being too long and sort of boring. Mom said she thought the organist played too loudly during the second hymn they sang. Sis, who was a music major in college, said she thought the soloist sang about a half note off key during most of her song. Grandma said she couldn't hear very well -- since they were sitting toward the back. As they pulled in the driveway, little Willie, who had listened to all of this, started to fuss about the woman who sat in front of him with that big

hat. Then he paused, nudged his dad, and said, "But, Dad, you gotta admit, it was a pretty good show for a nickel."

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MURMURING (COMPLAINING)

1591 -- SHE SPENT ALL HER TIME FUSSING

A woman took a short train trip through an area known for its scenic beauty. Once on board, it took her quite a while to get her packages stowed just the way she wanted them in the overhead rack. Then she had trouble getting the window shade adjusted. Deciding she would rather be farther back in the coach, she moved to another seat. After searching through her handbag to make sure she had her return ticket, she decided to relax and enjoy the passing scenery. Just then the conductor announced the train's arrival at the woman's destination. "Oh, my!" she exclaimed. "If I had only known that we would be here so soon, I wouldn't have wasted all my time in fussing." She was so concerned about her personal comfort and satisfaction that she missed the beautiful sights along the way. Let's purpose to get our minds on those things that are really important and not miss the wonderful sights along the way.

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MYSTERIES -- GREAT

1592 -- AN OBSERVATION BY AUGUSTINE

Understanding and accepting this next sentence will improve anyone's self-image. In A. D. 399 Saint Augustine said, "People travel to wonder at the height of mountains, at the huge waves of the sea, at the long courses of the rivers, at the vast compass of the ocean, at the circular motion of the stars -- and they pass by themselves without wondering."

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THE END