

I've Been Thinking about . . . Lincoln's Spiritual Journey by Pastor Chris

In light of the video that we saw in our combined adult Sunday School on January 9, and in anticipation of Abraham Lincoln's birthday on February 12, I am reprinting this *Cornerstone* article that I wrote a few years ago.

As we celebrate Presidents' Day, we are cognizant of the public statements that our presidents have articulated concerning God and faith. However, it is possible to speak of God without having a personal relationship with him.

Abraham Lincoln sewed biblical references to God into the fabric of his speeches. But did he have a personal relationship with God through Christ? Did he have a saving faith? Given that we celebrate Lincoln's birthday every February, and given that he arguably is our most consequential president, we are compelled to ask, "Was Abraham Lincoln a Christian?" The answer to that question is not only one of historical curiosity, but provides an encouraging lesson for us today.

His Mother's Knee

During his early childhood, Abe Lincoln's mother took him to church every Sunday. After church, she always sat young Abe on her knee and read the Bible to him, especially the Ten Commandments, which she taught him to memorize.

Lugubriously, when Abe was only nine, his mother became ill and died. While dying, she called her son to her bedside and spoke her last words: "Abe, I am going to leave you now, and I shall not return, but I want you to be kind to your father and to live as I have taught you. Love your heavenly Father and keep his commandments."¹

Did her dying behest take root in young Abe's heart?

The Twenty-Something Skeptic

As a young man in Illinois, Lincoln developed friendships with agnostics and others who were skeptical of Christianity. In 1834, they gave Lincoln a book entitled *Volney's Ruins*, a volume that viciously attacked the Scriptures. This book so chilled Lincoln's boyhood faith that he became skeptical of Christian doctrine.

The next year, at the age of 26, Lincoln wrote a book denouncing Christianity. Lincoln's book attempted to prove that God did not inspire the Bible and that Jesus Christ was not the Son of God. Lincoln intended to have his book published. However, Samuel Hill, Lincoln's employer and friend, viewed Lincoln as a rising star and was fearful that Lincoln's book would prove so unpopular as to destroy his future. So one day Hill snatched Lincoln's book from his hand and threw it into a burning stove. "The book went up in flames, and Lincoln's political future was secure."² Lincoln himself, however, remained skeptical of Christianity.

Lawyer and Politician

In 1837, Lincoln established a law practice in Springfield, Illinois. John Stuart, Lincoln's first law partner, recounts that Lincoln "went further against Christian beliefs and doctrines and principles than any man I ever heard. He shocked me."³

In his 1846 campaign against the Rev. Peter Cartwright for a seat in the United States House of Representatives, Lincoln's opponents labeled him an infidel. The label stuck and was damaging to Lincoln. Nevertheless, he won the election. Throughout the victories and defeats of his political career in the 1840s and 1850s, Lincoln remained an unbeliever.

“How Can I Most Bless You?”

Associate Pastor of Ministry Advancement & Adult Ministries

Howard Lundeen

“Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit.” (Psalm 32:1-2 NIV)

One morning a short time ago, the above two verses from Psalm 32 gripped my attention; how incredibly blessed we have been through Christ Jesus! As Pastor Chris reminded us in early January, God has “blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ” (Eph. 1:3). While visiting with others, does the following thought often come to your mind: “How can I most bless you?” Each word in that question becomes important as we ponder it: How?... Can?... I?... Most?... Bless?... You?

When personally addressing this question, perhaps the most obvious truth is that I am in need of wisdom and grace much beyond myself. I know “I” can do nothing of eternal worth (Jn. 15:5); and yet, “through Christ I can do all things” (Phil 4:13). As I visit with people and hear of challenging life situations, whether they are financial, work, marital & family relationships, addictions or other issues, the need for insight, discernment, and wisdom is great. For example, I know that usually it would be better to give someone work than to pay a bill for them. Also, I know it is better to draw attention to God than to others or myself. But, what if they simply can’t grasp God’s love for them? And, I know I don’t have a pocket full of jobs to give away. What can I do? We all struggle with challenges in our own lives that are greater than we can resolve; so, how can we truly help others? It seems obvious that the supernatural intervention by God is the most significant need we all have. Only God can transform heart attitudes. Only He can provide forgiveness for sin. Only He knows the deepest needs of all, and only He can provide all that is necessary to meet those deep needs. Consequently, please allow me to suggest what I believe is a best response to the question, “How can I most bless you?” – pray for them. At times this may seem rather unresponsive, yet I believe the most powerful and effective way any of us can bless others is by bringing them before our Heavenly Father in prayer.

In 1 Timothy 2:1 Paul urged Timothy that first of all “requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone.” The older I get, the more I realize that I am woefully inadequate for the challenges life brings, and I believe this is true for all of us. We all are totally dependent upon God’s grace and the Spirit’s work in our life if we are going to live victorious, fruitful lives. God delights in strengthening others as a result of our intercessory prayers for them. Prayer is extremely powerful. In Jeremiah 32:27 we read, “*I am the LORD, the God of all mankind. Is anything too hard for me?*” With this in mind, I would like to personally devote more time praying for others in 2011 and challenge each of you to do the same.

Continued on page 8

H.T.C.

Heart Thoughts for Cornerstone

By: Pastor Zach Marino

Just coming off the Christmas season, it's good to reflect on the time you had with family and friends. The Christmas goodies, the traditional board games, the traditional Christmas movie, serving at the local soup kitchen, opening presents, Christmas Eve Service, wearing your Christmas sweater to Church the following Sunday, etc. This of course all comes from the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the King of King and Lord of Lords. Yet one thing I found, at least within myself, was an anxiousness; a desire to run here and there, to hang with this person and then run over and pick out these gifts. We'll call it an impatience; or wanting to do more. Yet to do more you must move quicker, which means you put less thought into what you do. There's this old concept from the bible called "Waiting." I don't know, seems pretty basic right? If you don't have something now, just wait for it. If you didn't get the gift you wanted, just wait. If you couldn't hang out with the friends you wanted, just wait for another opportunity. However, this has become more of an ideology than a reality. It's what we preach, but have a hard time living out. I, have a hard time living it out. Let me share.

I just recently, on New Years day, cleaned up my room. Yes mom, it was a disaster. Yes dad, like a tornado hit it:) I had two options: take the time, be patience and watch it become clean with a little elbow grease, or just become impatience and leave it as is. Well, I chose the first option and wow, does that feel good! To keep it clean though takes patience in the little things. It takes time to make sure your clothes are hung up, your stuff is put back in the right place, keeping things neat and clean. My actions find intention. I don't just do, I do with purpose. And sometimes that means being able to wait; to show patience. That brings me to scripture.

Psalm 27:14 says this *"Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord."*

Now, this verse seems like a stretch to fit into my "room cleaning" story. The principle however is the same, just applied on a life level. We move through life way too fast and without very much intention. There's a reason scripture follows up "Wait for the Lord" with "be strong and take heart." **Waiting isn't a sign of weakness, it's a sign of strength and courage.** I would say that patience isn't a sign of weakness but a sign of strength and courage. When we want to exercise more or eat better, it takes some strength to be intentional about choosing the more healthy food or the daily workout routine. When we want the Lord to move in our life, He calls us to be strong and courageous because His plans might take some time, and that will be tough for us.

How does this all pull together? While waiting on the Lord, live in the present with intention. In the small things, be intentional. In those moments we experience that presence of God in our life and we tend to hear God a little more clear as He reveals His plans for us, His beloved children.

And who knows, maybe you'll actually keep up your New Years Resolution of losing that 10lbs. you've always wanted:)

Wait for the Lord; Be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.

Pastor Zach

MISSIONS BUZZ

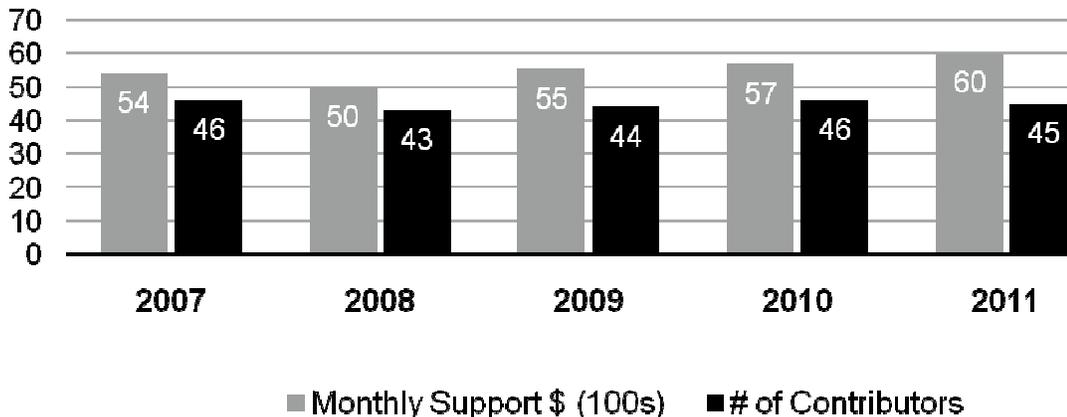


2011 Faith Promise Missions Giving Update

It's been exciting to watch our 2011 Faith Promise pledge support building over these last few weeks. Our 2011 Faith Promise commitments now total \$6,013 in monthly financial support for our Missionaries, which is more than a 5% increase in our support levels compared to the beginning of 2010!

Our Faith Promise commitments to our Missionaries have grown over the last few years, as the following graph illustrates.

Faith Promise Missions Giving



If you're not already involved in Faith Promise Missions Giving, it's not too late! Just grab a Missions Brochure and Pledge Form for more information.

“THANK YOU!” to all who are participating. We praise God for his provision for our Missionaries through your faithful financial and prayer support!



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E-MAIL: ccc@ccecfca.com

Website: www.ccecfca.com

PRAYER REQUESTS: prayer@ccecfca.com

A heart for God and you

Sunday Worship Events



First service: 8:00 - 9:15am

Fellowship: 9:15 - 9:30am

Sunday School: 9:30 - 10:30am

Second Service: 10:45am - 12pm

Prayer Meeting: 5:00 - 6:00pm

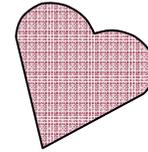
Staffed Office Hours

| | <u>Volunteer</u> | <u>Secretary</u> |
|------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Monday: | 9:30 am - Noon | Noon - 5:00 pm |
| Tuesday: | ===== | 9:00 am - 5:00 pm |
| Wednesday: | 9:30 am - Noon | Noon - 5:00 pm |
| Thursday: | ===== | 9:00 am - 5:00 pm |
| Friday: | ===== | 9:00 am - 4:00 pm |

Christ Community Church Mission Statement

As a local body of believers, we will seek to glorify God in worship, in evangelizing the unsaved and in teaching Christians to obey everything Christ commanded. To that end, prayer will be our foremost task, Scripture will be our authority, God's Holy Spirit will be our source of power and love will be our motivation.





**** Women's Ministry ****

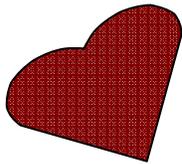
February 6th

Souper Bowl Sundae!!

Fundraiser

**Tasty Soups, Yummy Sundaes
& Great Fellowship!**

You won't want to miss this!!!!



***** Breakfast & Bible Study *****

Saturday, February 19th

**Come spend your morning studying God's Word,
sharing great food and a wonderful time of fellowship together!!**

Saturday, March 26th 10 am – 1 pm

Salad Bar Lunch

Guest Speaker Rachel Schaus

**will speak on her time spent in Central Asia
as a Missionary, mother and wife.**

Free will offering will be taken





MAKS

(Moms And Kids)

ALL MOMS WELCOME!!

FRIENDS, FUN & FELLOWSHIP!

Bring a friend!!



***The winter season is here and MAKS is here to rescue you!**
Whether you have come in the past or are new to MAKS, be sure to put us
on your calendar and relax with a little, peaceful "mom time."*

MAKS is a moms & kids group that meets the **first & third Tuesdays** of each month in the Fireside Room from **10am to noon**. There is no cost to attend. Meetings are geared toward mothers with small children at home; but all are welcomed and encouraged to attend. It is a blessed time to relax, unwind & enjoy spending time working and learning together as mothers. Then we have the benefit of a meal together while our children are well cared for & having fun.



February 1st Candy Making Day!

This day is a great opportunity to be creative. Come & enjoy the company of other moms & create some yummy candy!



February 15th

Disciplining with Love & Logic

This day is going to be filled with good information from Sheryl Stroda. Whether you have questions on disciplining your child or have some experiences to share with others, there will be something for all moms.



Our leaders this year are Stacy Dufault, Stephanie Bartelt, Shannon Kuball, Melissa Sexton, Lisa Cage & Jessica Mickelson. Please contact any one of us with any questions.

**Come prepared to relax,
laugh & meet other moms.**

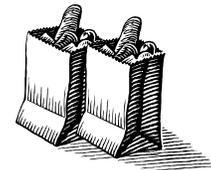


Continued from page 2 **“How Can I Most Bless You?”**

Another desire of mine this year is to slow down and place a higher priority on my personal love relationship with God by spending more time in His presence. By obeying the great commandment and by lifting up others in prayer, I believe I will become more effective in truly blessing others and extending for the kingdom. If we would faithfully pray for, and introduce to Christ, those special persons God brings into our lives, I know we would find rich reward in God’s using us to bless them. Wouldn’t it be great if “each one could reach one” other person for Christ this year?!! Let’s pray believing that God will accomplish this through us; thus, providing someone else with the greatest blessing they could ever experience.

Pastor Howard

February is Food Drive Month



Please bring non-perishable food items to the church. All donated items will be given to the Waseca Neighborhood Service Center Emergency Food Shelf.



Look for the grocery cart
in the foyer.

Continued from page 1 *I've Been Thinking about . . . Lincoln's Spiritual Journey*

The President

In the 1860 presidential election, twenty of Springfield's twenty-three pastors opposed Lincoln due to his skepticism of Christianity. Reflecting upon this opposition, Lincoln stated, "I am not a Christian. God knows I would be one, but I do not read the Scriptures like those clergymen in Springfield."⁴

While in the White House, two tragic events softened Lincoln's attitude toward the Christian faith. One of these events was the death of his beloved son Willie in February of 1862. Lincoln was devastated and shaken to the depths of his soul. "Mrs. Lincoln stated that after the demise of their son Willie in early 1862, her husband drew much closer to God."⁵ However, he did not yet embrace faith in Christ.

The Civil War was the other event that softened Lincoln's heart toward the Christian faith. The burden of leading a nation torn asunder and the tragic losses of the war profoundly saddened Lincoln.

The July 1863 Battle of Gettysburg saw 51,000 casualties. To bury the Union soldiers who had died at Gettysburg, a "Soldiers Cemetery" was established on the battleground near the center of the Union line. On November 19, 1863, Lincoln helped to dedicate this cemetery by delivering his Gettysburg Address. In commemorating the dead, Lincoln found life.

Shortly before his death, Lincoln was speaking with an Illinois pastor who asked him, "Do you love Jesus?" Lincoln solemnly replied, "When I left Springfield, I asked the people to pray for me. I was not a Christian. When I buried my son, the severest trial of my life, I was not a Christian. But when I went to Gettysburg and saw the graves of thousands of our soldiers, I then and there consecrated myself to Christ. Yes, I do love Jesus."⁶ As Dr. John Barrows records in the *Lincoln Memorial Album*, "When the clouds lifted above the carnage of Gettysburg, he gave his heart to the Lord Jesus Christ."⁷ Lincoln's pastor in Washington, the Rev. Phineas Gurley, recounts, "In the latter days of his chastened and weary life, after the death of his son Willie, and his visit to the battlefield of Gettysburg, he said, with tears in his eyes, that he had lost confidence in everything but God, and that he now believed his heart was changed, and that he loved the Savior."⁸ Shortly before his assassination, Lincoln told journalist Noah Brooks that he had "a hope of blessed immortality through Jesus Christ. . . ."⁹

In 1865, President Lincoln confided to his closest friends that he intended to make a public profession of his faith on Easter Sunday.¹⁰ An assassin's bullet altered that plan. Abraham Lincoln was ushered into the presence of his Savior on Good Friday.

An Encouraging Word

To every Christian parent who has raised a child in the nurture of Christ only to see that child turn away from the Lord, to every believer who loves a skeptic wandering far from God, the story of Abraham Lincoln shines a ray of hope, a beam of encouragement. As a child he was taken to church every Sunday and nurtured with the Scriptures on his mother's knee. As a man he forsook Christ, embraced skepticism, and was an avowed unbeliever. Yet the gracious heart of God never forsook him. Patiently, mercifully, over decades, the Lord drew Abraham Lincoln to a saving faith in Christ. No one, not even the most hardened skeptic, is beyond the reach of God's grace. No valley of wandering is too deep for the Savior's arm.

1. D. James Kennedy, "Keep His Commandments," *The Kennedy Commentary*, April 1, 2002.

2. William Herndon, *Herndon's Life of Lincoln* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1983), 355

3. *Ibid*, 356.

4. D. James Kennedy, "The Early Years," *The Kennedy Commentary*, April 2, 2002.

5. Gordon Leidner, *Lincoln's Faith in God* (Great American History, 2004)

6. D. James Kennedy, "Do You Love Jesus?" *The Kennedy Commentary*, April 4, 2002.

7. John H. Barrows, "The Religious Aspects of Abraham Lincoln's Career," *Lincoln Memorial Album*, 508.

8. Phineas D. Gurley, pastor, New York Avenue Presbyterian Church, Washington DC, quoted in "The Later Life and Religious Sentiments of Abraham Lincoln," a lecture by Rev. J. A. Reed in Springfield, IL, text in *Scribner's Monthly*, July, 1873.

9. D. James Kennedy, "Immortal Abe Lincoln," *Impact*, February 2004.

10. *Ibid*.

2011 Elder Assignments



The elders have elected the following Elder Board
and Church Corporate Officers for 2011:

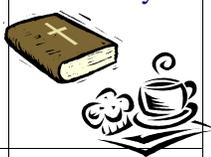
Elder Chairman & Church Chairman – Pat Davis
Elder Vice Chairman & Church Vice Chairman – John Langford
Elder Administrator & Corporate Secretary – Bob Pearce
Corporate Treasurer – Keith Sykora

The elders have designated the following
liaisons with commissions & committees:

Children's Ministries – Phil Ring
Youth Discipleship – John Langford
Adult Discipleship – Pat Davis
Finance (Disbursements & Receipts) – Keith Sykora
Congregational Care – Bob Morris
Missions – Bob Pearce
Outreach – Carroll Galvin
Property & Tech Committee – Mitch Austin
Worship – Barry Dufault
Nominating Committee Elder – John Langford

*Please keep these men in prayer as they give of their time
to provide leadership for our church.*

FEBRUARY 2011

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | | | | | | |
| | | 1 <u>10:00am</u> MAKS <u>6:30pm</u> Women's Min. <u>7:00pm</u> Congreg. Care <u>7:00pm</u> Property Comm. | 2 <u>6:00-7:30pm</u> AWANA <u>7:30-9:00pm</u> Jr. & Sr. High Youth Group | 3 <u>12:00-1:15pm</u> Men's Study <u>3:30-5:00pm</u> Vocal Class <u>6:15-8:30pm</u> Worship Team <u>7:00pm</u> Women's Study | 4 <u>6:00-7:30am</u> Men's Group | 5 |
| 6 <u>8:00-9:15am</u> Worship Service <u>9:30-10:30am</u> Sunday School <u>10:45-12:00</u> Worship Service <u>12:15pm</u> Souper Bowl Sundae <u>5:00pm</u> Prayer | 7 <u>10:00am</u> Women's Study <u>6:30pm</u> Precepts <u>6:30pm</u> Outreach Commission | 8 <u>7:00pm</u> Children's Commission | 9 <u>6:00-7:30pm</u> AWANA <u>7:30-9:00pm</u> Jr. & Sr. High Youth Group | 10 <u>12:00-1:15pm</u> Men's Study <u>6:15-8:30pm</u> Worship Team <u>7:00pm</u> Women's Study | 11 <u>6:00-7:30am</u> Men's Group | 12 <u>8:00-3:30</u> Elder Retreat |
| 13 <u>8:00-9:15am</u> Worship Service <u>9:30-10:30am</u> Sunday School <u>10:45-12:00</u> Worship Service <u>5:00pm</u> Prayer | 14 <u>10:00am</u> Women's Study <u>6:30pm</u> Precepts | 15 <u>10:00am</u> MAKS <u>6:00pm</u> Joint Elder - Commissioner Meeting | 16 <u>6:00-7:30pm</u> AWANA <u>7:30-9:00pm</u> Jr. & Sr. High Youth Group | 17 <u>12:00-1:15pm</u> Men's Study <u>3:30-5:00pm</u> Vocal Class <u>6:15-8:30pm</u> Worship Team <u>7:00pm</u> Women's Study | 18 <u>6:00-7:30am</u> Men's Group | 19 <u>9:00am</u> Women's Breakfast & Bible Study  |
| 20 <u>8:00-9:15am</u> Worship Service <u>9:30-10:30am</u> Sunday School <u>10:45-12:00</u> Worship Service <u>5:00pm</u> Prayer | 21 <u>10:00am</u> Women's Study <u>1:00pm</u> Quilt Group <u>6:30pm</u> Precepts | 22 | 23 <u>6:00-7:30pm</u> AWANA <u>7:30-9:00pm</u> Jr. & Sr. High Youth Group | 24 <u>12:00-1:15pm</u> Men's Study <u>6:15-8:30pm</u> Worship Team <u>7:00pm</u> Women's Study | 25 <u>6:00-7:30am</u> Men's Group | 26 |
| 27 <u>8:00-9:15am</u> Worship Service <u>9:30-10:30am</u> Sunday School <u>10:45-12:00</u> Worship Service <u>5:00pm</u> Prayer | 28 <u>10:00am</u> Women's Study <u>6:30pm</u> Precepts | | | | | |