

The Brighton Light

BRIGHTON ARP CHURCH

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FEBRUARY 2015: 'Love, Mercy and Forgiveness: Cannot Have One, Without The Other.'
"There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing with which to pay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which one of them will love him more? Simon answered and said, 'I suppose the one whom he forgave more... Therefore, I say to you, her sins, which were many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But, to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little.'" (Luke 7:41-43, 47)

This subject should be clear in the minds and hearts of believers, but when all is said and done, the clarity is more than a little foggy. Sometimes this is the case because we come with our own preconceived notions and ideas. Or, we may not really understand what love, mercy or forgiveness is about. Or, to what extent not having true biblical picture of these are, and how this lack of understanding can and will affect us. Some may think the biblical standard is too strict, too difficult. There is, perhaps, more to consider here than we may have considered before.

Some may have the mistaken notion that when a person does something to me I will forgive, but don't do it again. We are quick to forget how often our loving, gracious and forgiving Lord does just that, He forgives and reminds us; "For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us." (Psalm 103:11&12) But one will say, "He is God, I am not. I am just a human being." And remember when Peter posed the question to Jesus; "If my brother sins against me how often am I to forgive him, seven times? Jesus said to him, 'I do not say to you, up to seven times, but seven times seventy.'" (Matthew 18:21&22) We, like Peter, feel that we are really doing something amazing and great when go a little beyond what the law requires. In his mind Peter was saying something truly amazing because the traditional Jewish requirement was only three times. Peter was willing to go beyond what was required of the law, and he most likely felt justified by his statement. However, Jesus was showing His disciples not to set limits on what God wanted them to do. The Lord does not keep a record book on how many times He has forgiven us. If He were like us, we would have long reached our quota of being forgiven.

Do we see the connection of being truly forgiven and truly forgiving? We too often place conditions on these relationship principles that the Bible says are fundamental in gaining a true picture of who God is, how He relates to His creation and how we are to be as His sons and daughters. It is clear in the scriptures that the Lord has always been about creating living relationships with those who are in need of the restoring work. We, too, are to be about building relationships. This reflects the truth that we are indeed sons and daughters of the living Lord Jesus. His glorious nature will be seen through our living out this Christian life.

If I have experienced Jesus' love, mercy and forgiveness, I will be compelled to be a loving, gracious and forgiving child of the living Lord God. God has called each of us to be involved in His great work. "Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself, and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us to us the ministry of reconciliation." (2 Corinthians 5:18&19) Pray, pray, pray for the Lord to His great work in us as His people! Love your brother, Meredith.

SERMON SCRIPTURE SELECTIONS FOR THE MONTH:

February 1	John 21:15-29 "Restoring Love, The heart of Forgiveness"
February 8	Matthew 18:21-35 "True Forgiveness comes From One3 Who Has Been Forgiven"
February 15	Luke 7:36-50 "A Lack of Understanding of Forgiveness Will Become Evident"
February 22	Psalms 86:5-17 "Our God Stands Ready"



Shut ins:

Bennett, Mary Frances	Moore, Martha Lou
Goulder, Gordon	Smith, Mary Frances
Goulder, Helen	Rhodes, Geraldine
Trotter, June	

Ill / Recovering

Jill Gross (Pat's Daughter) -	Cancer/Radiation
Wanda (Pat McCains Sister)	Chemo
Erick Cavin	Infant, Kidney Blockage
Ty Bryan	Infant, Heart condition - Surgery to repair when 4 mos

Sick

Culver, Anthony	Lineberger, Rachael
Culver, Michael	Locke, Mike
Curtis, Cooper	McCain, Pat
Goulder, Bobbie	Moncla, Luke
Griffin, Melanie	Moss, Charlie
Hill, Dana	Otis, Mike
Hill, Joy	Patrick, Carolyn
Hubbard, Kristi	Pugh, Kaleb
Huffman, Linda	Stitt, Sam
Lewis, Adam	Tyler, Jean
	Wells, Whit

Military

Bornaman, Zachary	Heathman, Matthew
Donahoo, Tim	Hill, Debra
Dooley, Rod	Hunt, Boyce
Hair, Colton	Smith, Brad

Missionaries

Coad, Jim & Gala	Carson, Rebekah
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FLOWERS FOR THE MONTH

Mary Steele Circle

WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

February 14	<i>Mr. and Mrs. Robert Bailey</i>
February 17	<i>Mr. and Mrs. Jonathan Glass</i>
February 23	<i>Mr. and Mrs. John Yarbrow</i>

CHILDRENS SERMON

Feb 1	<i>Julia Moore</i>
Feb 8	<i>Leslie Alsbrook</i>
Feb 15	<i>Meredith</i>
Feb 22	<i>Margarette Alsbrook</i>

NURSERY ATTENDANTS

February 1	Joanna Simonton
February 8	Vickie Hugues
February 15	Margarette Alsbrook
February 22	Helen Woods

February Menu



Feb 4 Baked Potato
 Feb 11 Mexican
 Feb 18 Ham Croissants
 Feb 25 Family Night

Cost: \$3.00 person
 \$10.00 Family

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

1 Christie Bridges	19 Billy Pugh
Emil-Grace Tia White	20 Robert Bailey
9 Samantha Wells	23 Anna Hugues
10 Michael Griffin	Sarah Cavin
Stacey Huffman	24 Shirley Kennedy
11 Cassie Cranford	Verlie Wells, IV
Wesli Whitmer	26 Blake Walker
12 Charlotte Williams	Christi Huffman
13 Sarah Huffman	Jean Chisolm
15 Gwen Goulder	28 Mallory Glass
Joe Anne Alsbrook	Robin Gravely
Swayne Huffman	
16 Chad Walker	
Norma Columbus	

Upcoming Events

PLEASE NOTE: If you have any ideas or suggestions for the church website, please contact Chris Gravley, webmaster, at 901-674-3851 or e-mail at chris_gravley@bellsouth.net.

THE DEACON OF THE MONTH is Chris Gravley. If you have any requests for the deacons, please contact Chris at 901-674-3851.

BANQUET TIME: The Mary Steele Circle Valentine Banquet will be held on Saturday, February 14th from 5:00 P.M. until 7:00 P.M. There will be a great meal, entertainment and door prizes. Donations will be accepted at the door. Proceeds go to church renovations. Please be sure to bring your friends and come out to enjoy this event.

PLEASE NOTE: There will be a Worker's Council Meeting on Tuesday February 3rd at 7:00 P.M. in the Fellowship Hall. This meeting is for all who are concerned about the Christian Education of our church.

I Can't Breathe!

"But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him "I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused. And another said, "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused. Still another said, "I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come." (Luke 14: 18-20).

Our nation has recently watched the horrible death of a father due to the actions of an apparently over-zealous police officer who placed him in a chokehold and would not release it despite the pleas of the father that he could not breathe. Such a useless death was not planned by the officer or anticipated by the father at the start of their day, and it could have been avoided had both participants been better aware of the consequences of their actions prior to the initiation of the incident. But this is true of many situations in life. Unplanned consequences occur often as a result of our lack of forethought, and often they are regrettable consequences that cannot be undone.

Years ago I wrote a piece for publication in the Brighton Light entitled "Which Old Ladies" in which I unsuccessfully attempted to describe the dedication of the older and more faithful members of our congregation. It became evident from the reaction to that article that my literary skills were more lacking than I had previously thought, and I have refrained from submitting anything more than some light musings since then. But recent issues within the church have prompted me to make another stab at confronting somewhat serious matters before us as a congregation.

In my years of service to the church I have had the privilege and pleasure of being involved in the establishment of two new church plants. Both times my involvement was a pleasurable and rewarding experience, and I would be willing to repeat the experience. Conversely, I have also been involved in the unpleasant experience of having to close a church. That is not an experience through which I am eager to go again.

I became so personally involved in the affairs and politics of this church because of some uniquely particular circumstances. I was approved by the presbytery as a ruling elder in a church that I was not a member of due to the temporary inability of her current elders to perform their duties due to health and personal issues. And although I was more than willing to temporarily fulfill the duties of ruling elder in two churches, it seems my willingness enabled those who should have eventually resumed their duties to the church to evade them in favor of a less strenuous form of church membership. And so it happened that when there was a congregational meeting called to determine whether to close the church or not, those men who should have been intimately involved in the health of the church were completely unaware of exactly what had happened. And so the church died.

A similar illness seems to have crept into the male membership of our church. As is the custom of our church, when the annual elections for officers were approaching the session reviewed those men who were qualified to hold office according to the Form of Government and the observations of the life witness of the members. The resultant list of eligible men was unusually long, and it seemed that the church would return to the days when there was an actual list of candidates for the congregation to choose from. And yet, as in the scripture above, they all with one accord began to make excuses. And instead of proceeding through the processes of nominating and electing officers through a series of congregational meetings the session was forced to inform the congregation that the number of ruling elders and deacons required to fulfill the spiritual and physical needs of the church would be reduced, and that the few men willing to serve the church would be elected by acclamation due to the pitiful number of candidates available.

I mostly blame myself for this situation. As I was tasked with the privilege of approaching many of these candidates to inquire into their willingness to serve in the various offices, I empowered their refusals by expressing my own understanding of just what a sacrifice it is to serve the church. As I was told that they were involved in career changes, or educational opportunities, or family issues, or that they just weren't qualified to serve the church, I smiled and told them that I understood, and perhaps next year. And so, as in the scripture, they very respectfully asked to be excused. And, again as in the scripture, they were. Because I do understand what it is like to be involved in the pursuit of more than one career at a time. And I do know what it is like to meet the requirements of a full time job, with overtime, and to pursue a full education. And I do recognize the

demands of a mother and a wife and children and grandchildren on a man's time and resources. And I very well sympathize with the feeling of inadequacy to govern the church of Christ, His bride. And so I very complacently said I understood these men's unwillingness to serve. But I don't really understand that sentiment at all.

It is evident to me from my study of the scriptures that the privilege of serving the church is to be considered exactly that- a privilege. And it is one that is accorded to those men who have guarded their lives through an intimate knowledge and practice of the scriptures. "This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of Bishop, he desires a good work." "But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless." (I Timothy 3: 1,10). According to the scriptures, if service to the church is a burden, it is because of a misplaced sense of duty and responsibility. What man of the church really wants his children or the younger men of the church to emulate an example of evasion of responsibility and privilege? "Let us now build an altar, not for burnt offering, nor for sacrifice, but to be a witness between us and you, and between our generations after us, that we do perform the service of the Lord in his presence with our burnt offerings and sacrifices and peace offerings, so your children will not say to our children in time to come, "You have no portion in the Lord". (Josh 22: 26,27).

The simple fact of the matter is that our church is choking, not from the lack of qualified leaders to provide the necessary service she needs, but from their unwillingness to do so due to their own personal prosperity and ambitions. She is screaming to anyone who will listen "I can't breathe", but there is no release of the chokehold simply because everyone desires to cling to their own agendas. And so it goes with many churches these days, until the church collapses and expires.

As an ordained ruling elder in our church I am instructed to encourage, instruct, and admonish the church. It seems that I am better at encouraging and instructing than I am at admonishing. But this is a subject that cannot be swept under the rug, hoping no one will notice the gasping. And so I reluctantly admonish those who have required our church leadership to dwindle. Because I love my church so much, and have invested so much time, tears and concern into her, I can categorically state here that I will not officiate at her funeral. I will not be here for the congregational meeting that calls for the vote to close her. I will have long before sought out a church where the word of God is respected and obeyed, and sacrifice on behalf of that is considered an honor and privilege.

There are, of course, those men who are willing and even eager to serve the church. And we as a church should thank the LORD for their willingness to set aside their personal desires for a time to promote the needs of our church. And we should most definitely thank those men themselves most honestly and most often. The task they have assumed is not easy, has almost no earthly rewards, and usually has reasonably high costs associated with it. A few words of encouragement and honor from the congregation are most definitely called for and required "Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching" (I Tim. 5: 17). "We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work." (I Thess. 5: 12,13).

It is my prayer, and the prayer of all who truly love the church, that the strangling of the leadership offices of our church is only temporary and is caused by a simple unawareness of what is happening. Surely those men qualified to serve in the offices of the church do not really place their own temporary ambitions of the world above the eternal rewards of glory with Christ! And so, as a church, I ask that we devote at least a small portion of our prayer time to the re-dedication of these men to the tasks to which they have been so gloriously elected. And may Jehovah, our God, have the glory!

In HIS love and service, Richard Moore.