

10 Marriage Tips - THE SUPER-NATURAL LIFELINE IN THE STORMS OF LIFE!

PUT A SMILE BACK IN YOUR LIFE – Stopping the bad habits

A broken barometer in John and Mary's home registered STORMY. They were filled with romantic optimism after a blind date but later found that love was blind but marriage was their eye-opener. John was star-struck when he met the elegant, voluptuous Ms. Knockout but no longer felt goose-bumps in spite of her Wow and Dazzle factors, eye-catching appearance and other eyebrow-raising traits of magnificence that turned a lot of heads.

"We should sell our TV," said John, rising from his easy chair. "We produce a soap-opera here every day."

Mary sitting in a rocking chair realized their stand-off would not change if both did not stop doing certain things. Dripping with acid and barking like junk-yard dogs did not bring peace in their cold war. Often there is a stalemate with no communication. Which mate is stale? Just look in the mirror! John found it hard to let his light shine after blowing a fuse. Emotionally divorced people do one thing together, argue. They said "I do" but then say "I don't" by their lifestyles. They were shipwrecked in need of The Lifeline.

Sweating in the dog house, John prayed. He then tried to learn something from dogs that do not complain about food, unruly children, or lack of money. But, thought John, due respect should be shown to the one that brings home the bacon and dog food!

A muscular blacksmith who could break almost any chain except those he made himself landed in jail and waited for a chance to escape. At midnight with no guards in sight he tried to break free but could not. He then noticed his own trademark on the chain he made. Destructive life patterns developed in the past will cause crises in the present.

A stronghold is anything that has a strong hold on us. Eat, drink, and be miserable lifestyles forge the strongest chains but God gives us a second chance (Jonah 3:1).

To avoid traffic fines, accidents, and cancer, we must stop speeding and smoking and to counteract marital woes, quit acting like wrecking crews. At last, speaking in civil tones, John and Mary called for a cease-fire in their no-win war of words and agreed that pointing fingers would only leave a vacuum unless they did positive things.

Receiving this booklet does not suggest you have any of these issues so think of it as Shipwreck Prevention.

New Year's Day arrived and a time for making resolutions in an attempt to smell the roses ever after. They RESOLVED TO STOP 10 BAD HABITS. Something good can happen for you! May you always walk in sunshine!

1. STOP Grumbling & Lighten Up

Grumbling is the spice of life for dysfunctional people but it zaps their joy. John worked from 9 to 5 until 65 and then entered the empty nest, couch potato stage of life, joining Do-Little & Sit-More. Signs of ageing made him humorless, bored, depressed, and irritable. His knees buckled but his belt didn't and his back went out more than he did. The little old lady he helped across the street was his wife. Also, mid-life crises struck them like lightning.

John spent his time doing impersonations of bread, loafing. His hostility escalated to include in-laws and unresolved friction points created intractable gridlock. He claimed to be a Christian but had little mouth and impulse control. Mary's dream-boat became a battle-ship with non-stop verbal volleys so marriage was no bed of roses.

John shot from the lip: "I get a strike every time in bowling by pretending the pins are your relatives!"

In spite of hot-flashes, Mary tried to avoid flashpoints by not adding oxygen to their verbal fire-storm. She had accepted John for better or worse not for lunch but now was mired in domestic servitude while he sat. She did not express her feelings but silent scorn spoke louder than words as she tripped over her lip and filled the house with negative vibes.

John was fixated on a newspaper article as the aroma of frying steak wafted through the house.

“Honey!” he called excitedly, “This article says people don’t quit laughing because they are old but are old because they quit laughing! Are we too mean-spirited, harsh and grouchy?” Take time to play for it is the secret of youth.

Laughter is good medicine for self-pity and depression so put your troubles on hold, throw caution to the wind, and break out with a smile. With a holier-than-thou attitude we build walls and isolate ourselves in a cubicle of our own making. But we need each other in this global village. My dad said, “You can’t even get to the grave alone.” Showing love in action by helping the less fortunate will relieve depression.

Mary sat in a foreboding mood on the warpath and responded scornfully like a person marinated in vinegar: “The Bible says in the last days we shall have tribulation so I will tribulate.” She spent much time with her arms in the sink so had little time to sink in his arms.

This way of life is best expressed by Johnny Cash in “Cry Me a River” or Elvis, who found a new place to dwell -down on Lonely Street, Heart-Break Hotel. We must show ourselves friendly if we want friends (Pr 18). Our cups are neither half-full nor half-empty but running over so we can’t help but slop some over wherever we go. God’s will is the attitude of gratitude which excludes grumbling for there is no such thing as a thankful grumbler or a happy selfish person. If Scrooge smiled, his face would crack!

We cannot lighten up without Jesus, The True Light. Some use silence and negative body language to convey messages believing their spouse is a mind reader so it is time to enhance our speaking skills. Imagine the boredom of cooking seven days a week? Take your mate on a date and don’t spend all you have on cars, junk and machinery. Laugh at your mistakes. “A merry heart is good medicine but a doom and gloomy spirit dries the bones” (Pr 17). Let’s turn the frown around! Some say men and women are incomplete until marriage, and then they are finished!

Very few will attend your pity party as you work yourself into an altered state of consciousness. Stop complaints and give compliments. When given a lemon you can make lemonade or eat it and become a sour-puss or crab apple. Don’t envy the fleeting fame of those behind the veneer of polished exteriors. Tabloid papers are full of sensual, suicidal, methed-up, falling mega-stars. Life is like weaving a tapestry - God sees the top side and we see the underside. Storms such as sickness, grief, natural disasters, and things beyond our control are certain. So, all we can do is pray and leave it in God’s hands. “Weeping may endure for a night but joy comes in the morning” (Ps 30). These dark and stormy nights of the soul can last a while but the sun will shine and you will smile again. God gives beauty for ashes, oil of joy for mourning, garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness and peace in the midst of storms (Is 61). God’s eye is on the sparrow and I know he watches us, too.

Don’t feel guilty for having a bad day for we all have emotional ups and downs. Our bodies are incapable of producing enough adrenaline to keep us on a perpetual high so encourage each other on those down days. Others cannot be our full-time anti-depressant so decide to be up-beat and look on the bright side of things. Anger and irritability can be symptoms of depression. Young at heart seniors can Rock and Roll by putting wheels on their rocking chairs.

God loves us just as we are: thieves, murderers, white, black, rich, Muslims, poor, gay, straight, crooked, liars, pagans, atheists, addicts, agnostics, Christians, or unbelievers. His great love does not leave us there but desires to bring us to higher ground. The Bible gives a list of sins then says, “Such were some of you (past tense) but now are washed and justified in the name of Jesus” (1 Cor 6). We don’t clean ourselves outside the shower or wait until we are well before seeing a doctor. So, come just as you are and Jesus will welcome you. Down-and-outs come up and proud up-and-outs must come down to the common mercy seat.

Do you know how they train auctioneers? The course lasts 10 days. Most students cannot speak rapidly enough to get the crowd into a buying frame of mind. First, they put 10 marbles in your mouth and then you talk for eight hours straight in order to make the voice apparatus more flexible. Each day one marble is removed from your mouth and by the tenth day you have none left. I graduated with flying colors at the top of my class after losing all my marbles. I now sell sand to Arabs and ice to Eskimos.

2. STOP Demanding More

Happiness is not having what we like but liking what we have. We don't need all things to enjoy life for God gave us life to enjoy all things. Consumerism worships created things so it is time to purge the excessive baggage. Marriage was the first union to defy management.

Self-absorbed, opulent gold diggers can be resentful because of shattered expectations. Mary expressed discontent about their small house so they bought a high-maintenance, ego-boosting, humongous house that was hard to keep clean. They also found it painful to climb stairs after knee surgery. It was difficult keeping up with the Jones and although their facade and high-end worldly entanglements were trendy they longed for an uncomplicated lifestyle. After buyer's remorse kicked in John and Mary learned that the superficial value of living in excess, thinking bigger is better, is an illusion.

They browsed in an RV lot and found one they could not live without. Later, luxuriating in their motor home, John was all smiles but Mary was no happy camper.

"How do you like this new lifestyle?"

John, broadly smiling, replied, "This is like dying and going to heaven. In spite of gas pains at the pump, I like getting away from it all. We might become full-time RV-ers, foot-loose and house-free."

"Mary, how do you like it?"

Pointing to the back of the RV, she replied like the Queen of Mean, "Look! There is the bed, stove, sink and my personal dish rag. It's the same relentless monotony. You leave your tools at home but I continue in the same rut. I am boxed-in and need liberation." We spend most of our lives accumulating things and then desire to escape from them.

John surfed the Web and found bargain vacations on the Hawaiian Islands.

"Honey," he called excitedly. "Your freedom has arrived. If you still want to break free from it all where there is plenty of sand, surf and sunshine, I found the ideal place!"

"That suits me perfectly," she replied with euphoric anticipation. "Maids will make the beds, chefs will cook the food and I can leave my dish rag at home. What a pleasant change from our motor-home and tent!"

With passports in hand they boarded a plane but soon ran into turbulence with a whole lot of shaking over the Pacific. Finally, they landed in Kona and a steward on the plane said, "We are not here for a long time but for a good time." They were careful not to bring emotional baggage from the past. Some have more baggage than the airlines.

They visited an active volcano, enjoyed dinner cruises with singers, belly dancers, luaus, sun-drenched beaches, and had champagne at night and real pain in the morning. They also gained weight but their wallets were lighter. Soon, they resembled bronzed, well-basted turkeys as they soaked up sunshine and spent time reviewing their list of Ten Things They Had to Stop Doing.

They controlled negative thoughts by shifting gears between the ears and concentrated on uplifting things (Ph 2:8). Unkind thoughts trigger arguments and evil actions. Exercise self-control by doing and saying nice things even when fickle feelings tell you to have an emotional tantrum to get even. Petty bickering can act as a passion-killer.

Some marriages are politically correct. Politicians make promises but then forget about them after elections. We vow to love in sickness and health, for richer or poorer, until death but forget unconditional love. Now marriage is performance-based as we raise the bar like a high-jump competition. In this pressure-cooker of work and debt load, there is little time to smell the roses. Exceeding load-limits, like placing a ten ton load onto a one-ton truck, will cause physical or emotional breakdown. God will not hear our prayers if we mistreat our spouses (1 Pet 3:7; Psalm 66:18).

Chronic fatigue is common in our sleep-deprived, fast-lane, fast-food lifestyles of instant gratification. Let's break from the gridlock of complexities and live simply before we flame-out like meteorites. To retain sanity as we grow older, avoid

hurry sickness and use pruning shears on endless to-do-lists. Some suffer from renovation fatigue but spiritual up-grades will teach us contentment.

We can juggle a limited number of balls before some fall to the ground. The same principle applies to multi-tasking. Slave-drivers expect spouses to be super-moms and super-dads with unlimited energy to handle overloaded schedules. They insist on their partners going the extra mile when they themselves won't go another inch. Listen to your own body not to arrogant sweat-shop bosses/spouses. All work and no play, pray, or time-out makes depressed basket cases. The life God gave you does not totally belong to others, so... take a day off.

"How much money would it take to make you happy?" Billionaire John Rockefeller replied, "Just a little bit more." Don't covet and set up idols in your heart and long for things just out of reach and marinate in jealousy? We will never be satisfied with worldly pleasures and possessions for God has put eternity and a God-shaped vacuum in our hearts. Let's raise our gaze from temporal to eternal verities.

If our focus is only material we become desensitized and having everything would not be enough. "We spend money we don't have to buy things we don't need to impress people we don't like," says Rev. Charles Price on Vision TV. I have never seen a hearse pulling a U-Haul trailer so store up your treasures in heaven. The only way to help God is to help our fellow man. Jerry Lewis said, "If there is some good I can do, let me not defer or neglect it for I shall not pass this way again." Give to Jesus by giving to the needy, "the least of these" (Mt 25:31-40).

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust corrupt and thieves steal" (Mt 6). The motive is wrong in storing up for self with no intention of sharing. Jesus told a rich, young ruler to sell his possessions and give to the poor to have treasures in heaven. How much does the world weigh? To find out, just ask a single mom. Doing spur-of-the-moment acts of kindness will relieve depression. I wept because I had no shoes then met a man with no feet.

More is never enough for high-maintenance people whose wastefulness is without bounds. Getting things can give temporary satisfaction but long-term emptiness of soul and wallet. It is not cosmetic face-lifts we need but faith-lifts with Jesus as the object of our faith. Some have too little interest in each other, pay too much interest at the bank and love the purse and the posh not the person. Let's live as agents of change by seeking eternal not just temporal things. Abundance of things keeps us on a treadmill so we no longer have possessions but our possessions have us.

True love is not just a feeling but a loyalty to love in good times and bad. Feelings ebb and flow but true love lasts forever. You can give without loving but cannot love without giving. A demanding, critical spirit and emotionally overpowering to-do lists represent the tyranny of the unfinished. Be sure you are on the list and do something nice for yourself. The Titanic had a list before it went under.

Old age is not about getting everything but about losing all except our souls. Grass might look greener over the fence but even that requires mowing. Psalm 23 speaks of green pastures but refers to paths of righteousness and a restored soul. We can have all the treasures and pleasures of this world and be miserable, poor, blind and naked (Rv 3).

James Dobson on Focus on the Family spoke of a Monopoly game where he acquired real estate including hotels. After the game was over he put it back in the box. A materialistic lifestyle consists of getting more but when the game of life is over they put us in a box and spend what we saved. The guiding principle that more of anything leads to bliss is a delusion since true joy from Jesus comes from within not from externals.

"Do you believe Jesus changed water into wine?" asked a sceptic who thought it out of the realm of possibility.

A Christian replied, "I believe it for he changed beer into furniture for me! I used to spend all on alcohol but after accepting Christ I lost that thirst and bought furniture."

A high roller won bags of money and wished to take it with him after crossing his finish-line on earth so he put them in his attic intending to grab them on his way up to heaven. The tides of time moved against him and he departed from this life. Later his wife found that the bags were still there and said, "I told him to put them in the basement!" Obviously he went in the other direction! Another dreamed he had gone to his reward only to wake and find his electric blanket

turned too high! When Colonel Sanders arrived at the Pearly Gates, two chickens were in charge of admission. Life is similar to a hotel where we check in and before long we check out.

Beware of unrealistic expectations. I know some longshoremen who were like hunters - looking for big bucks by working triple shifts in 24 hours, paying triple taxes, tripled alimony and had triple heart bypass operations from stress. We should neither burn out nor rust out. The more comfortable we are, the greater the temptation for discontent can become. We seek something faster or bigger including a greater credit card debt. It is futile to try and solve problems by throwing money at them without a lifestyle change.

What shall it profit a man if he gains the world and loses his own soul or wife? Attention you financial wizards, that is gain without profit! Why burn rubber in the fast lane while going the wrong way? Jesus claimed to be the only way to heaven not just one of many equally good ways with Muhammad or Buddha (Jn 14:6). True prophets speak for God but Jesus spoke as God.

“Come apart and rest a while” is the advice from Jesus. We should adjust our schedules before our health and marriages come apart in life’s unforgiving pace. Parents call for a time-out with unruly children but parents need time out of the house for nobody can survive if needed 24/7 by others. When crowd pressure became too great, Jesus went by boat to the other side of the lake. Excessive demands produce compassion fatigue.

John had caviar tastes and expensive toys. With massive egotism he sat behind the wheel of his Hummer as it rolled out his drive-way. Passing a hard-up section of town with neglected children he was moved with compassion.

Mary watched TV as he arrived home. “You look sad,” she said. “Did you have a challenging day?”

Wiping his forehead, he answered, “We have an over-inflated sense of self-importance in our comfort zone. Our lifestyle should not be All About Me but Less About Me and more about God and others. Today I felt like the priest in Luke 10 who saw a needy man but then passed him by. We can learn from the good Samaritan who bound up his wounds and took care of him.” They started a new way of life by sponsoring a child through World Vision and by bringing clothing and food to the homeless.

In that story, the Samaritan put the man on his mule and took him to the Inn. He then paid the Inn-keeper, saying, “If it costs more I will pay when I return.” In like manner, if we spend more to reach the lost than we receive, Jesus will reward us at his second coming. “Behold I come quickly and my reward is with me” (Rev 22). We own nothing in this world but are stewards of a few things for a while.

People grow up thinking mostly of themselves. They then marry, have children, and realize their lives have become more about others. They suffer withdrawals from less time in shopping malls and on golf courses but gradually conform to a new normal and find it is more blessed to give than to receive. Consuming everything for ourselves to find satisfaction is like chasing the wind.

3. STOP Living in The Past

Those with a victim mentality are historical, looking only in the rear-view mirror of life, replaying nightmares and digging up dirt to throw during blame games. But past issues are like water under the bridge. There is enough blame to go around so don’t focus on the blame but rather on finding solutions. Life in our broken world is not always fair so bad things do happen to good people and good things do happen to bad people. Look in the windshield of life but don’t drag past baggage to move past your past. Do your best to heal your past or you will continue to bleed.

The Dodo bird is extinct because it flew backwards. Like believers in evolution, the Dodo was more interested in where it came from than where it was going. Some people remarry and use their previous hostile, mismatched unions as a pattern to undermine the present. Others think good marriages must be fought for. Success in marriage, education, business, farming and all other fields is often found beyond Hill of Difficulty. Most married couples have more hang-ups than a dry cleaner. Minor sticking points can be easily harmonized when there is agreement on major points such as God and His Word.

We are God's work in progress and He gives us inner strength to live accordingly. Haunting memories of past traumatic experiences cause sadness, depression and heartache. In blame games, people are re-traumatized as they re-fight old battles ego against ego causing the same anxiety as the day it happened. They are drawn seductively into the past so homes become epicenters of misery and strife rather than blessing.

John and Mary were in full-blown rage over past minor irritations when suddenly friends knocked at the door.

"Hello John! How are you?"

"I'm still above ground! Please come in."

They had lunch, laughed and talked (which shows we can control our emotions in a micro-second). Some with family rifts and festering resentments react against siblings, ex-spouses, neighbours and others. Hind-sight is 20/20 but the future is like looking through a dark glass so we walk by faith not by sight. Set aside the past for the sake of the future or clouds from the past will obscure today's sun.

We cannot change the past but we can confess our sins to God. Also we can ask our victims for forgiveness and forgive those who have sinned against us then nurture a forward-looking attitude and move beyond our setbacks. But be patient for it might take time to restore trust.

God forgave us a huge debt and does not remember our past sins against us so why should we hold them against others? With God's help, turn the other cheek, overcome evil with good and refuse to remain stuck in the past. Anger, like acid, does most harm to the container it is in.

President Obama said, "We will extend a hand to all who unclench their fists." He also said Russian leader, Vladimir Putin, from the Cold War era had one foot in the past and the other in the future. Where are your feet?

God wanted to humble the slaves so he led them with a pillar of fire by night and a cloud by day from Egypt into the wilderness. They walked in circles for 40 years on an eleven day trip to the Promised Land. They grumbled about Moses and about manna from heaven and desired their idols, flesh, leeks and garlic as back in Egypt. God granted their request by sending quail for meat but sent leanness into their souls (Ps 106).

If we lust after pleasures and false gods from our old life, this package deal includes bondage and a lean soul. If you are going in circles with many speed bumps, do not give up for God is leading you through your wilderness.

David spoke to himself as he marinated in his own pity-party during the dark night of his soul: "Why are you cast down O my soul and disquieted within me? Hope in God for I will praise him" (Ps 42). At the mint where our money is made, the refiner keeps heat on molten silver until all the dross comes to the top. When he can see his own reflection on the surface of the silver he knows the new coins will have a clear impression of the king. If we endure trials of faith the influence of Jesus will show in our lives

It is futile to live in the anxiety mode for we cannot resolve everyone's problems. A raisin is a worried grape so don't torment yourself by worrying. Life is a puzzle and Jesus is the missing piece. Christianity is not a religious treadmill but rather an association with a person, Jesus, our Ultimate Lifeline, sent by God to rescue the perishing. He allows evil to come our way by giving all, including criminals, a free will to do good or bad.

"I feel God has forsaken me. I trusted him to look after my family and then my girl was assaulted," said a panic stricken, storm tested mother.

"You feel forsaken," I replied, "Unreliable feelings ebb and flow but God 'will never leave or forsake you'" (Heb 13). Always trust the objective word of God not feelings.

God does not intervene in every situation but leaves parents and others in charge. He sent angels to close the lion's mouth when Daniel was in its den and to break Peter's prison chains but these miracles are not the norm.

You will self-destruct by throwing a fit while planning revenge against enemies rather than loving them. Pray they will have a change of heart and then put the whole shebang behind you. Move forward but progress is slow if you mountain-climb over mole-hills. People who are supercharged with strife and carry all-consuming grudges try to get even but become only bitter not better.

CNN's Larry King said, "The grudge holder is the victim." Mistakes are good teachers for they teach us how not to do things but we will not learn from them if we blame others. Sorting out things from the past is as impossible as unscrambling eggs. Acting like a fused powder keg or a spewing volcano of red-hot lava produces more heat than light. Hostile, grouchy, cranky, bossy, bitter, condescending, moody people with simmering resentments are like fire-breathing dragons with razor-sharp tongues that carve up others (Ja 3:6). Control your emotions or they will control you. Being right all the time, is like a drug to proud people.

In the 1960s, Russia and America had their fingers on hot buttons to launch missiles. The Russians suggested perestroika, peaceful co-existence, and together the two lived happily ever after having turned back the doomsday clock. Perhaps we can use that cold war formula in our homes! Some argue about how to squeeze the toothpaste tube. Why not buy two tubes, his and hers, and squeeze your mate with a big hug, instead?

If you upset a glass of water, the water will flow out. Whatever is on the inside comes out when upset. You can tell what is in your heart by what comes out of your mouth when you are upset. Paul and Silas were beaten in jail and very upset but what came out? They prayed and sang praises unto God and then an earthquake shook the prison and the jailer was saved (Ac 16). Whatever goes into our minds from the Internet, from gossip or TV, settles in our hearts and then comes out in everyday life, garbage in - garbage out. David said, "I hid your word in my heart so I would not sin against you." "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Ps 66:18). Don't let your Bible gather dust but put on the whole armour of God including the helmet of salvation and the Word of God or you are a guaranteed casualty in spiritual warfare with the world, flesh, and devil (Eph 6).

Satan, an invisible fallen angel and the father of lies, whispers negative things in the ears of our minds. Jesus promised, "In the world you shall have tribulation but be of good cheer for I have overcome the world." If your obsession is what others have done to you, refocus on what Jesus did for you at Calvary and the gift of salvation which is not of works (Eph 2:8-10).

When buying a car, we do not just kick the tires and sound the horn but we take it for a road test, too. We talk faith with a loud voice and then God gives us a cross and takes us for a test on rough, less-traveled roads in the valley. Here we find that the God of the mountain is God in the valley and we are never alone. He gives us the courage and strength to step into tomorrow. While going against head-winds, it is better to shout than to doubt so doubt your doubts and believe your beliefs. Jesus, The Good Shepherd, carries his wounded sheep. Thank You, Jesus!

The God of the Mountain:

Life is easy way up on the mountain You've got peace of mind like you've never known Then things change and you're down in the valley Don't despair for you are never alone God of the mountain is God in the valley He will take the wrongs and make them right God of good times is still God in bad times God of the day is God in the night We talk of faith way up on the mountain Talk comes easy, life's at its best	Now down in the valley trials and temptations That's where faith is put to the test One ship sails east and another sails west By the very same wind that blows It is not the gale but the set of sail That determines the way it goes
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Automatic Answers to Prayer

Acts 12 tells us how things happen automatically when we pray. Peter was in prison, chained to guards, as the church in Mark's house prayed for him without ceasing. Suddenly an angel appeared and his chains fell off. He walked out as an iron gate opened "of its own accord" (automatos in Greek v.20).

This shows the importance of prayer to break chains of greed, lust, temper, and to find freedom from cult prisons. In two-way human interaction we talk and listen and, as children of God, prayer is talking to our Heavenly Father as he speaks to us. Jehovah's Witnesses fled in terror from the streets of Vancouver after much prayer at Western Bible College. See: www.christswitness.com

Paul had a thorn in the flesh and prayed several times for healing. God answered, "My grace is sufficient for you and my strength is made perfect in weakness" (Jas 5:14; 2 Cor 12:9). If healing does not come right away continue to pray and accept God's grace day by day. The task we are called to is beyond us so prayer is needed. Our prayers are hindered or not heard if we mistreat our spouses and others, or if we have some secret pet sin we enjoy but have not forsaken (1 Pet 3:7; Ps 66:18, 19; Isa 59:2). How can God answer prayers he does not hear? Looking at pornography is the same as committing adultery in our hearts (Mt 5:28).

Satan Lives Here!

May 6/05: I held a Jesus sign in the Bible Belt on an Abbotsford, BC street when, suddenly, a witch dressed in black grabbed my cross, broke it in several pieces, threw it into traffic and walked home. Later on her driveway she turned to me saying, "Satan lives here!" She then continued in a state of rage ordering me off the property. She called 911, reporting, "There is a man here trying to force me to believe in Jesus," but nobody showed up.

As a last resort, she threatened to turn two pit-bulls loose to drive me away. I said, "Bring them on. Dogs are my friends." She opened her high fence gate and roared, "Attack! Attack!" The dogs ran up to me and I petted one of them. I then extended my hand and said, "In Jesus' name..." The high-pitch screaming stopped and she walked down the street. Jesus can close the mouths of lions, witches and dogs. "Submit to God, resist the Devil and he will run" (Jam 4:7). Go out on a limb for God and he will meet you there. In an ancient battle arrows flew so thick they blotted out the sun. An old soldier said, "I like fighting in the shade." Our Goliaths appear big at times but God is bigger.

Life is stormy at times since we live in an imperfect world but adversity makes us strong. Weeds still grow in our gardens, pollution changes climate, wars rage and hospitals are full. Flaws in Mother Nature, in human nature and fault lines in the earth cause earthquakes, tsunamis, tornadoes and hurricanes but God is bigger than any problem. He allows us to go through turbulence so we can comfort others in their fiery furnaces (2 Cor 1:4). If finite humans think they fully understand the infinite God, their God is too small. We can take a glass of water from the ocean but know very little about the whole ocean.

There will be no more crying, pain, abuse, or death after resurrection at the Second Coming of Christ (Rev 21). In this life we pass through valleys and shadows of death but we fear no evil for God is with us. His rod and staff comfort us and will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. This is what we see when we look forward. In the end the wrong will fail and the right will prevail. Don't worry about hair loss for it will be restored in the hair-after. Women live longer than men for it takes them longer to get ready.

Jesus spoke of two houses, one built on sand and the other on rock, but storms hit both (Mt 7). We do not have cloudless skies and fair-weather faith exempt from storms because our houses are built on The Solid Rock Christ Jesus. When His disciples were caught in storms, Jesus spoke to the wind and brought calm. Thousands have died for their faith in this century. Some heroes of faith have stopped the mouths of lions while others were sawn in half (Heb 11). In our broken world there are unhappy times such as sickness or when pets and loved ones cross their finish line and sorrows like sea-billows roll.

One grieving woman said, "I lost my husband."

I asked, "Was he a Christian?"

With a light in her eye she answered, "Yes."

I replied, "You did not lose him for you know where he is, 'absent from the body - present with the Lord'" (2 Cor 5:8). If you lost your purse, you would not know where it is. A line in a hymn: "He's gone to that city where the roses never fade." We are a body/soul unity so, at death, souls of believers are carried by angels to the place of comfort then reunited with new bodies in the resurrection in a new heaven and earth (Lk 16:22; Rev 20:4; 6:9-11 & ch 21). Memories are a gift of God that death cannot destroy.

A hairy caterpillar cannot understand how it can become a butterfly and we don't have all the answers about the after-life. We don't know what the future holds but we know who holds the future so we walk by faith in various levels difficulty. Our Great God has put roses on thorns.

The supreme race in the Bible is the human race and the church includes people from every tribe and tongue (Rev. 7). Sabbaths, prophets, and animal sacrifices were previews of Jesus, our Passover, who came later. Old Testament people looked forward to the cross for salvation and we look back to the cross. Adam and Eve were saved through the blood of the Lamb (Genesis 3:21).

Let's pray: Lord Jesus, speak peace to troubled hearts, draw near to those in prison, the sick, grieving and lonely. Let not their hearts be troubled. Our help comes from the Lord who made heaven and earth. Bring salvation to those who repent, comfort to mourners, health to the sick, clarity to the confused, and direction to the lost, Amen.

4. STOP Cloning Each Other

Most people don't celebrate their differences but try to clone others into their likeness. But if two are duplicates then one is unnecessary. Also, living with a mirror image, a carbon copy of you becomes boring. Be flexible but do not flex-think that you are always right. Insisting that others do things your way and jump through your hoops is not leadership but dictatorship.

In mutual submission couples put each other first (Ep 5). We all live below our potential for doing well but have unlimited potential for evil. Do not follow the road well-traveled, but go where there is no road and blaze a trail. To make our dreams come true we must first wake up. May the wind be at your back as you press on in life's journey?

God made each snowflake differently and has a special plan for each of us so don't shoe-horn others into your routine or culture. Magnets have North and South poles. Unlike poles attract and like poles repel so emotional magnetism brings those with different talents together. The church is likened unto the human body with many parts. The eye sees and the ear hears. All do not preach, work miracles or speak with tongues but all have various gifts (1 Cor. 12).

God broke the cookie cutter after He made you then he said, "One is enough." Let's stand by each other's side not in each other's way. Both are in the same boat so row in the same direction.

A lady in a panic mode at her rehearsal feared she would not recall the sequence of events at her wedding. The plan was to walk down the aisle to the altar and sing a hymn. As they stood together the groom heard her repeating quietly, "Aisle - altar - hymn." On the verge of fainting, he thought she would clone him into her likeness with an extreme makeover in a strait-jacket of conformity stifling all his creativity. Another couple married on a roller-coaster to prepare for expected ups and downs.

A macho ego-maniac married four women who died one after the other: First a millionaire, second an actress, third a preacher and fourth an undertaker - one for the money, two for the show, three to get ready, four to go. His verbal bullets and domineering, possessive ways gave each of his wives an early finish. Bullying or belittling your spouse causes stress, fear and heart attacks.

5. STOP A Dictator/Doormat Relationship

Both spouses were trapped and suffocating in their master/slave association. Open the cage, cut the leash, and set the captive free! Everyone needs space, a retreat from routine. Men controlling women is part of the curse in The Garden of Eden (Gn 3:16). Nagging is death by a million cuts. Perfectionists set themselves up for failure since no human is flawless. If we were perfect, we would not need Jesus.

My son worked in an auto parts store where information on each part was stored in a large Main Frame server computer. Monitors, without brains, sat on the counter but were connected to the Main Frame, the source of all information. Mean-spirited, divisive, tyrannical control freaks act like Main-Frames thinking others are brain-dead monitors with no mind of their own. You hear them pontificate during vociferous conversations butting in halfway through someone's sentence to finish it or silencing them with an explosive mouth. God gave us two ears and one mouth to listen twice as much as we talk. Let's not send our brains on a holiday and leave our mouths in charge. King Solomon said, "A fool is full of words." What counts is what we learn after we know it all. These loose cannons should join Compulsive Talkers Anon Anon Anonymous. We learn nothing while talking only when listening.

Exercising control through a toxic temper and criticism is often used by those with short fuses to manipulate others but produce greater hostility, rage, and ulcers. In this regime of hate and fear minds become like concrete - all mixed up and firmly set. It's easy to act like an angel if nobody ruffles our feathers. If feelings tempt you to rage just turn on self-control and keep your mouth shut to give the Devil a black-eye. Satan wants our feelings to control us so let's control our feelings.

Be God's mouth-peace by breaking old patterns, mood swings and verbal sniping. If one does not open his mouth he will not put his foot in it. One antidote is low-calorie shoes! Many have great self-control with a friendly attitude in the workplace but drip with acid at home. The spouse usually cannot reconcile the unequal public and private faces. Let's love in deed not only in word. As Ambassadors for Christ we should not be two-faced.

Good deeds never go unpunished but do them anyway. Jesus went about doing well but they nailed him to a cross so his followers cannot expect better treatment. If you are always harping you just might be an angel! The largest room in the world is the room for improvement and we are all in that crowded room together. It takes patience to overcome deep-rooted habits.

If you were raised in a home where raging, nagging, whining, lying, pouting, bullying, silence, or physical and verbal abuse were used to gain control you might practice the same. Break this vicious cycle by accepting Christ. Then a new heart will give a new start. "Love is patient, suffers long, is kind not jealous, does not brag, is not arrogant, does not seek its own way, is not easily provoked, rejoices in truth, keeps no record of past wrongs, bears and endures all things" (1Co 13). Christians are forgiven so they should be forgiving. Save your marriage for you will need it in old age. Open your Bible and jump-start your faith.

Domineering and regimented people with unbearable attitudes act like Army Commanders whose position of Boss is threatened if others don't submit. They might say, "Rome wasn't built in one day but I wasn't the foreman." Ulcers are caused by what we eat or by what emotionally eats us.

Liberal post-modern thinkers with no moral plumb-line or sense of right and wrong say all truth is relative so mine is as valid as yours. What about the so-called truth of Hitler or atheistic Communism that caused the death of millions? Non-negotiable, absolute truth is only found in the Bible, "You shall not murder." Who is the truth? Jesus is Truth personified excluding all others. Einstein said, "Relativity refers to science, not ethics." Truth is not in conflict with scripture so all must be tested by that standard. God does not say something in scripture and then contradict himself by some false prophet or twisted Bible.

6. STOP Correcting Each Other

Is your home a correction center? Always find faith rather than fault. An Ego-centric person thinks his is the only way but most things can be done many ways. Good Ego control is giving up the need to be right all the time so try to alter your Ego. A child or adult who is criticized will become fearful and do nothing. A husband who finds fault with his wife's cooking soon prepares his own food.

Ms. Perfect, a nitpicking fussy, found Mr. Right, whose every move was wrong so she robotically micro-managed every detail of his life. She frowned on the way he mowed the lawn and vacuumed the house. Soon, she did these chores herself. If this behaviour persists the victim will depart the suffocating atmosphere and sit in a bar to get some space. Some say marriage is not a word but a sentence.

We are not TV sets that need a remote controller. If you give positive reinforcement others will do better. If not, they will give up. Avoid the comparing mode implying that others have better jobs, nicer homes, newer cars, more money, pleasure, and romance. Build bridges not walls by saying, "This is such good food. You should have a culinary award so thank-you for all your hard work, Honey." Don't talk like a Monday morning quarterback: "I told you so; We should've done it; if only, What if?" Speak kindly not as an unfailing walking encyclopaedia. Use words that heal rather than hurt. Also, don't ask each other "Why" questions.

Tell your mate, "Here's some money. Take the day off and visit friends or go shopping for a break from me and the sink." If you smother and keep her confined on a choke-leash in a virtual fish-bowl she will soon break free.

With God's help live magnanimously every day. This means overlooking injury or insult and rising above pettiness and meanness. Mr. Perfect sees insurmountable flaws in others and as such has a beam in his own eye and has not looked in the mirror. Forsake hypercritical attitudes and replace a hair-trigger temper with patience and kindness. Fault-finding produces super-size insecure victims who may develop the nervous habit of medicating emotions with food that goes from lip to hip. We soon wear what we eat.

I picked up a stone in a stream and marvelled how smooth it had become, yet it remained so hard. Some have gone to church for years in the stream of God's grace but their hearts remain hard with hell-fire in their tongues (James 3:6). Ezekiel spoke of hearts of stone and the need to be tender-hearted and forgiving. You might be dysfunctional if married late in life after having your own way for so long.

In Los-Angeles a certain city block with many psychiatrists and others is known as the Mental Block. They invented a new way to resolve conflicts by exchanging glasses with your spouse. He will then see everything from her point of view and she will see things from his perspective which guarantees bliss ever after.

Jesus taught life lessons by pointing to simple things such as fowls of the air. God feeds birds but they are up early gathering worms. Snow melted and the sun shone as a flock of geese honked while flying north to nesting grounds. The lead goose kept his mouth shut while breaking through snow, rain, and darkness, while others followed, honking encouragement. Do you know why they honk? In goose language it means, "You are doing a good job; we are proud of you; thanks for staying on the right path, Honk!"

Followers did not pull out the leader's tail feathers or cause disunity in the flock but worked as a team. The husband leads in his role and so does the wife. If you nitpick and don't honk support in your family and church your goose is cooked! Try walking a mile in the other person's shoes. Do not resist God when he tempts you to do good.

Anxiety disorders can originate with people who project their internal chaos in words and actions leaving nervous wrecks in their wake. Just call Nanny 911 to check out the parents. We should not wring our hands with anxiety and claim to know Jesus, The Prince of Peace.

We need three homes: The home where we live, a church home, and a heavenly home. Some intended to raise a family but raise hell instead. Beware of tattlers, busy-bodies and in-laws who shower you with advice but do more harm than good (1 Tim. 5). A good idea is for all to mind their own business. If discipline is inconsistent, where one acts like a drill

Sergeant and the other is lenient, children will be frustrated. The work-place of a stay-at-home mom is more demanding than working outside the home. There is no higher calling than raising children to love the Lord. Living on earth with heaven in mind can give meaning to a meaningless routine.

7. STOP Suicidal Lifestyles

We self-destruct by drinking alcohol, smoking, worrying, raging, allowing drug & food addiction, creating stress, and aggressive driving. Using cell phones and texting is the new drunk-driving since they provide maximum distraction. The human race is suicidal in this stoned age. The Bible says, "You shall not murder" but suicide is self-murder. The heart of most problems is the human heart.

The #1 killer in America is smoking which causes cancer and heart disease. #2 ticking time-bomb is obesity as heart-clogging fat affects every organ. #3 killer is alcohol which is lethal affects vital organs and results in drunk-driving. Eve, in The Garden of Eden, fell from grace after eating forbidden food. Esau sold his birthright for food and the devil tempted Jesus to make stones into bread. A doctor said, "Most that come to this morgue should not be here."

Our fast-food, pill-popping, self-destructing culture is suffering from both a health and health-care crisis so both are on life supports. Some have bad genetic cards dealt to them. Obese children develop adult diseases such as heart problems, stroke and diabetes as fat destroys insulin and clogs arteries. Food is more addictive than cocaine for one can live without cocaine but not without food. Drug dealers get rich by destroying the lives of others. One lacks self-control if drugs or food control him. We see food before eating it so keeping it out of sight reduces temptation. In losing weight be more concerned with ounces than pounds for an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

"If you don't curb your obsession for food you will go blind from diabetes," said a doctor while checking a patient's blood pressure. "I have seen enough!" said the super-size man who continued on his hedonistic treadmill drinking beer and eating hamburgers. Let's learn to live without a food crutch. Downsizing fat starts in the kitchen not in the gym.

Oprah said, "Losing and gaining weight in a yo-yo fashion by dieting must be exchanged for a lifestyle of eating healthily and exercise." This is not easy for the undisciplined, inactive, or physically challenged if they self-medicate emotions with food and alcohol. Prayer is needed in this trial of faith. Avoid will-power-busting food options.

One study showed smaller plates and smaller food portions resulted in weight loss. The more we eat the greater our appetite. The pendulum swings the opposite way for some with eating disorders who say, "Thin is in." God does not rain on our parade but wants to give us his best.

Second and third-hand smoke refers to poisonous residue: lead, arsenic and carbon monoxide left on the clothing and hands we expose to others. Do you expect to get to heaven sooner by smoking? Are you pro-life or pro-death? Abortion stops a beating heart. Imagine the pain inflicted by pulling a living person apart in the womb. As a former foetus I am against abortion. How about you? A foetus is a child not a choice but atheists say it is just a blob of cells. Abortion is not unpardonable in God's sight so we can receive forgiveness and move forward but most cannot handle this alone and need a church support group.

Alcoholics started as social drinkers who could "control their drinking." An ex-alcoholic once said, "I went from the sauce to the cross, from the bottle to the Bible." Alcohol is a depressant for each drop destroys brain cells therefore the victim becomes progressively more brain-dead. Pregnant women avoid alcohol for fear of destroying their child's brain then after birth they may drink and vaporize their own. "Wine is a mocker; strong drink is raging and whosoever is deceived by it is not wise" (Pr 20). Martinis with olives in a posh neighbourhood or shoe polish and rice wine on skid row are all the same alcohol.

If you try to drown your sorrows the devils will swim. The Lord giveth the liver but alcohol taketh away. A saloon is called a bar, a bar to all that's true and brave, a door to every drunkard's grave, a bar to heaven, a door to Hell, whoever named it, named it well. It gives a temporary escape from reality. A line in a song: "There stands the glass that will ease all my pain." The road of pleasure looks appealing but is a dead-end street.

If someone claimed predisposition to alcohol or drugs from birth would you act as an enabler to normalize his satanic impulses by filling the fridge with booze or find treatment? Be born-again by accepting Christ as your Forgiver and be loosed from the death grip of addictions.

A man in an alternate lifestyle (deathstyle) said, "I can't help it for God made me this way." In reality, it was not God but Adam who sinned and passed imperfections unto us so we all have issues to work out. If you have an inclination toward adultery, laziness, shop-lifting or pride you do not have to stay that way. The law is a form of external control but Jesus in our hearts gives victory from within. The human body can become our undisciplined master not our servant if we are driven by lusts of the mind, flesh, eyes and pride of life. Some people will not live out half their days (Psalm 55:23). A man jumped from the top of the Empire State Building in New York and halfway down said, "All is OK, so far!" Is your life OK, so far?

Some think freedom is found by cutting themselves off from God but this vain attempt to fill their God-shaped vacuum with a substitute leaves them bound in self-destructing habits with self-inflicted wounds. Gambling destroys incentive for its principle is to get money that is not earned. Cyber sex by Internet or other pornographic channels destroys both souls and marriages for it represents a perverted intimacy with no human relationship. In this low-life the cyber pedophile experiences shame and the spouse feels rejection. Sow wind and reap the whirlwind.

Others will never stiffen up with arthritis for they carry extra joints with them. Material things briefly satisfy the body but only Jesus satisfies the soul. A man intended to accept Jesus as his Saviour at his eleventh hour but died at 10:30. After three score and ten, 70 years, we are in sudden-death overtime. At that time in a hockey game, a coach wants the best goalie. In our game of life our best goalie is Jesus who made the most saves (Mt 1:21). Birthdays are good for you – the more you have the longer you live.

8. STOP Living on Credit

"I might buy a new car that produces less pollution. Money is available on my credit card," said John, fixated on brochures while suffering from debt fatigue. The Almighty dollar became Almighty debt as the economy tanked.

Mary exploded like a hand grenade, "Don't forget our New Year's resolution: If You Are in the Hole, Stop Digging! Until Debt we do Part is the epitaph of many. Make a U-turn by trading your Hummer for a Hybrid."

"Sorry Honey!" said John. "I'll put the brakes on spending and drive less to decrease red ink and pollution. Mother Earth is sick with toxic substances so let's make every day Earth Day!"

Financial suicide is a sure bet if narcotically addicted to things, to gambling, and to pleasure. King Solomon said, "He that loves pleasure shall be a poor man." Hedonists view life as one big amusement park - eat, drink and be merry, all play and no work. In our self-indulgent culture we want everything now but don't want to pay for it. There is no saving for a rainy day as most have never had one and as such have a sense of entitlement.

The New American and Canadian dreams are down-sizing not hoarding more money and more stuff. A version of Psalm 23: "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of debt..." Jesus said, "Beware of greed for our lives do not consist of an abundance of things we possess." Debt is often caused by materialism and can be reversed by sacrifice. Money talks - it says, "Goodbye!"

I was born during the 1930s depression before Hitler, World War II and the bomb. The rallying post-war cry: "Go north and make your pile." I rode a freight train 400 miles north in winter and became a diamond driller in mosquito-infested swamps and underground mines. We lived in tents in 40 below zero with wolves and fires for seven years. In the 1960s, the call changed: "Go west, young man. Go west."

I worked as a communications technician after training in Toronto and later attended Bible College for three years studying Greek, Theology, and other things. I then preached in churches and worked in counter-cult ministry for years. I smuggled Bibles into Russia on ships while working as a sweat drenched longshoreman in Vancouver. If it wasn't for the Lord on my side I would drift like a ship without a sail. God's mercy rewrote my life. Praise God!

Making a living is like playing golf, driving hard for the green and ending up in the hole. Life is like a coin - spend it any way you wish, but you spend it only once. The way you spend your days is how you spend your life.

Common sense tells us that the money in-flow must be like Niagara Falls if the out-flow is like the Niagara River. This is basic math not rocket science. One way to get a 25% return on money is to pay off credit cards. Hard financial times teach us to live thriftily so our wasteful ways will likely change in this post-materialism era. Let's consume less, conserve more, and buy what we need to have, not what is nice to have. Raising the debt ceiling is not the answer.

Dogs can lift a person out of poverty. I had one that picked up money along the street, a scent here and there. Some spend like there is no tomorrow but tomorrow shows up and is followed by financial Armageddon and bankruptcy. Do not waste life by "earning wages then putting it into a bag with holes" (Haggai 1:6). My dad spoke of stingy people: "You can hold a nickel so close to your eye it blots out the sun." Repeating negative acts and expecting different results is a sure way to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory.

A tidal wave of spending and unsustainable debt leads to a train wreck and assures future poverty. Has your train left the station? To freeze an account, put credit cards into water in the freezer and the urge to buy will evaporate before they thaw out! Noah let his stock float when others went under and Rome fell from within with declining moral values and no fiscal control.

I left a mall one day and passed an obsessive, compulsive shopaholic in desperate need of retail therapy:

"There is nothing left to buy; the shelves are empty." The frumpy fashionista said, "I'll buy the shelves!"

Obviously she had a black belt in shopping and was ready to shop until she dropped. Those with shopping bulimia buy and then return goods to avoid paying. The best way to increase face value is to smile. Marriage means you wish to share hopes for the future and not waste your life time and money. If spending is out of control, remember - if we cannot pay today's bills today, how can we pay today's and tomorrow's bills tomorrow? Living beyond our means is like a high-wire act without a net. A man said, "God never gave me a helping hand." He could not see that God gave him one on the end of each arm. If you are pushing age 25 or 30 quit mooching and get some ambition.

9. STOP Living without Jesus

(He Is The Super-natural Lifeline!)

Shintoists in Japan have god shelves in their homes with small statuettes of many gods including Jesus. But Jesus is the only way of salvation not one of many equally good ways so the shelves should be cleared of all except Jesus. Hinduism teaches "All gods are ONE." They liken it unto a wheel where each spoke represents a different religion and all point to the center of the wheel which represents the one true God. In contrast, Jesus pointed to himself saying, "I am the way, truth and life. Nobody comes to the Father in Heaven but by me" (John 14:6).

We inherited rebellious hearts from Adam and Eve that chase after the forbidden. The lure and love of money, pleasure, fame and false gods can lead to quagmires of degradation. After accepting Christ, we change from within so salvation is an inside job. Old people can also be born again by looking to the One who was lifted up on the cross as Moses lifted up the serpent on a pole (Jn 3:3-16; Num 21:9).

God helps those who help themselves. Just as you help yourself to food at dinner help yourself to forgiveness of sins and eternal life. You can lead a horse to water but you cannot make him drink. If you are satisfied with the husks of the world and do not thirst after righteousness you will continue running on empty. Jesus paid it all - all to Him I owe - sin left a crimson stain but He washed it white as snow. Jesus spoke from the cross, "It is finished." Tetelestai in Greek means paid in full (Jn 19:30). Merchants stamped bills of sale with that word after final payment. Jesus did not make partial payment for our sins with more purging required. True purgatory is the cross where Jesus purged our sins. Confess your sins and invite Jesus into your life.

A father went to a bar after a snow storm. Soon his young son showed up and said, "Your footprints in the snow led me here." Some parents have modeled for wayward children teaching them how to walk but not where to walk. Will the

footprints we leave lead others to believe or down a slippery slope to a Christ-less eternity? Others had the best role-models at home but ended in a downward spiral after making wrong choices and conforming to situation ethics of worldly stereotypes. Children learn better by visuals than a sound track so let's realign our priorities. Some return to the straight and narrow way later in life so patience is needed.

I talked to a confused man who didn't know what to believe. A neighbour had a disconnect between his words and his works by talking Christianity by the mile but living it by the inch. Meanwhile, the deeds of Mr. Clean were in step with his creeds. He complained about the hypocrite and wanted nothing to do with God because of him. Why do we overlook good role models, concentrate on poor ones and continue life in free-fall without God? Don't expect too much from a recently saved Christian just as a two year-old does not go to university. He needs spiritual training wheels.

Others have beer in the fridge and take their children into liquor stores but never bring them to Sunday school. Remember, you are raising adults not children. We say, "Boys will be boys," but in reality they will be men. They see thousands of TV ads by first grade and so are spoiled at an early age in the orgy of consumption and instant gratification of our affluen-za epidemic. Over-stimulation by pleasure and gifts leads to boredom. In Disneyland, the world's entertainment capital, we ate breakfast with Donald Duck and Goofy. Nearby a child bawled and as tears flowed said, "I am bored." Elsewhere a Christmas shopper said, "My kids think I am a bank machine!"

In this Stoned Age the generation gap is between the ears of both young and old. Some rebel against good while others rebel against evil so stand for Christ or fall for anything. In the Bible, Daniel rebelled and was determined to not defile himself by either drinking the King's wine or bowing to his images. He prayed when prayer was banned and was thrown into a den but God closed the lion's mouth.

All schools are open for prayer so pray silently and God will hear. To get ahead in life use the head on your shoulders, rebel against negative peer pressure and serve Jesus. Drug-binged, methed-up people with no moral compass are destined for a grim life but God gives the power to change and restore lost years. Even with a bad start you can have a good finish. A politician said, "Don't let failures define you but let them teach you to try harder. You cannot drop out of school and drop into a good job."

Close minded academics with heads in the sand of intellectualism suffer from an information overload and a famine of truth. Let's not criticize the Bible but rather let it critique us. The Big Bang Theory suggests there is a Banger so it leaves the door open for a Creator God. Bodies function only when all parts are working but Darwin's cosmogenic myth says we evolved one organ at a time over millions of years. We no longer swung from trees with our tails so they fell off from atrophy leaving just a tail-bone!

Transitional forms and missing links are missing so we have no proof of evolution from one species to another. How can there be creation without a creator or design in the universe without an intelligent designer? Only God can create life. Romans 1, 2 & 3 reveal that God gave us the inner witness of conscience, external witnesses of creation and scripture, and then came in human flesh - Christ. There is sufficient light but some prefer darkness (John 3). There are no atheists in fox-holes but plenty in universities.

Students conduct experiments by going through various steps: reading directions, collecting materials and finally reaching a conclusion. But with spiritual things they make the conclusion first by saying, "There is no God" and dismiss all the evidence in the book of nature (Rom 1:20). If you want to prove Christianity just try it. The proof of the pudding is in the eating. Taste and see that the Lord is good.

A pilot sighted a U.F.O. while flying over Canadian mountains. It was confirmed by his co-pilot who was the Sasquatch. Some say Noah's boat is a myth but they have mythed the boat. Tech-savvy Internet addicts need balance in their lives. Logging-on to school work does not give instant success but role-playing and conquering someone in a video game gives satisfaction with little effort. 90,000 sex offenders were found on My Space. The path of least resistance is downhill but hard work was the formula for success in the past and it has not changed. Hedonist's brains are wired for pleasure only but the world is not just a big amusement park. Don't make decisions you will regret later.

Why burn rubber in the fast lane if you travel the wrong way? Jesus is the Way and the Truth so truth is a Person (Jn 14:6). Do you look for truth in all the wrong places? People with no boundaries or discipline at home have difficulty later adjusting to a workplace with a boss and to any code of decency. Get on-line with Jesus!

There are X-rated parents without any sense of right and wrong who live the low life using below-the-belt humour and reach altered states of consciousness from alcohol. Then they laugh, self destruct and glory in their shame. "In laughter their hearts are heavy and sorrowful" (Proverbs 14). "We expect better from you, things that accompany salvation" (He 6). "She that lives in pleasure is dead while she lives" (1 Tim 5:6). Unbelievers have no spiritual pulse (Ep. 2:1).

In the midst of moral decay, corrosive influences and compromise take the high road in thought, word and deed. One who does not obey the Word of God can be won to Christ "without the Word" by examples of others (1 Pet 3). Actions speak loudly so do not force-feed with scripture but preach all the time using words only when necessary. Some become Christians after hearing the gospel for years and then expect others to respond immediately so testify by your life.

The strength in a teabag is brought out with hot water and our inner strength should show up in difficult situations. Jesus, the Master Potter, desires to fashion us into vessels he can use. Junk fast-food clogs arteries and no spiritual food hardens hearts. People respond in different ways to the gospel just as the same sun that melts butter hardens clay. For most, the first step to finding Christ is the church step.

Addiction to violent video games and drugs result in no work ethic and plummeting grades in school.

Parents set the example with television addiction and little exercise. Abraham Lincoln said, "I will prepare myself and some day my opportunity will come." A four-letter word vocabulary shows mouths are like open sewers flowing from an unclean heart. We complain that Big Brother is watching us but what about Big Father in heaven with His all-seeing eye? Sowing wild oats is temporary fun but consequences follow like night follows day so shed tears and face the music later. Never mind Rock & Roll; get Jesus in your soul.

"There are so many belief systems around today. So, which church saves?" inquired John. "I am a Protestant and my friend is Catholic while others are Mormons and Atheists. So, who is right?" Christian answered, "No church or cult in the world can claim to be the only way. At best, a church is the way-shower pointing exclusively to Jesus. Mormons say Jesus is a brother of the Devil and atheists say everything came from nothing and life came from non-life. Their theories are based on blind faith but biblical faith is based on evidences: archaeological artifacts, maps, manuscripts, fulfilled prophecy, history, an empty tomb, hundreds of eye-witnesses and millions of changed lives, including mine." I know there is hope for Atheists for I once told my Dad, "There is no God." He replied, "You can't be like that!" April Fools Day reflects atheism: "A fool says in his heart there is no God" (Ps 14:1). Luke 12 tells of a rich fool.

We have a referral ministry referring people to Jesus who alone can forgive sins. Forgiveness is possible by praying to a priest if we have the right Priest, Jesus Christ our Great High Priest (He 4:14; 7:24, 25).

Which came first, the real \$100 bill or the counterfeit? Christianity was first dating back to The Garden of Eden and all fakes came later (See Gen. 3:15). There are two kinds of Christians: Institutional Christians join some institution, Protestant or Catholic, take on a label and presto...instant Christian. True Christians have a real relationship with Christ as Savior. Christians often say, "I have Jesus in my heart." What does that mean? If you went alone on a trip you might say to your husband or wife, "I have you in my heart." It expresses your loving relationship.

I met a man in Dallas, Texas, who worked as a pastor for 50 years. He said his newly born kittens were Methodist but eight days later they became Baptist after their eyes opened. Baptizing an unbeliever changes him from a dry sinner into a wet sinner so he must confess Christ as Saviour before baptism (Acts 2:38; 8:26-38). Baptism is something we do but salvation is based on what Jesus has done for us.

A golf ball landed on an ant hill. Then, the next swing missed the ball but killed thousands of ants. One ant said to the others, "We better get on the ball or we'll all be dead." If your life is a mess, running on empty, and need a faith lift, download your sins on Jesus. God is High-Tech and will high-light and delete them on His heavenly computer. The death rate is one per person so today is the day of salvation. Jesus, the Super-natural Lifeline, can calm stormy seas and give

eternal life. Missionaries are not made by crossing the sea but by seeing the cross. All churches have one thing in common, none can save from sin, only Jesus saves (Mt. 1:21).

10. STOP Listening To Cults

In New York City, Wayne left Ground Zero, boarded a train at Grand Central Station, and headed to Times Square. Yellow Taxis were everywhere as multi-taskers rushed to maintain the rat race. A headline told of a decrease in city crime. Mayor Lindsay spoke to gang leaders, drug pushers and others on streets so they asked him, "Does your presence have anything to do with less crime?"

He replied, "We need visible government. It is not enough to be caged in my office with no contact with the real world." Secret agents should blow their cover with visible Christianity. Does anyone in your work place know you are saved? If we were arrested as Christians would there be evidence to convict us? Jesus said to let your light shine before men. We do not stumble along behind Jesus as we follow him for we are his temple and he rules from within us by his spirit. Because He lives we can face tomorrow.

Babe Ruth hit hundreds of home runs but in spite of many strike-outs continued to step up to the plate. Our resolve should be the same so do not settle for defeat. The Christian race in the beginning looks like a sprint, then a Marathon and later it is like a relay as we pass the torch. Jesus showed up for us at Calvary so let's show up for him.

God's agents are disguised as mothers looking after children, students, office workers, farmers, soldiers, teachers, nurses, laborers and others. Let's get the salt out of the salt-shaker, leave the role of disgruntled spectator, get on the playing field and put the Go in the Gospel. One with God is a majority. Feuding churches fight each other but do not fight against wickedness. In such a time as this, light a candle rather than curse the darkness. C.S. Lewis said, "Evil will triumph when good people do nothing." Activist, Rosa Parks (1955), took a stand by sitting and refused to give up her bus seat for a white person.

If you have gospel inflow but no outflow to the world you will stagnate and become like The Dead Sea. We will not grow spiritually unless we exercise our faith in some ministry. You are not a failure as long as you keep on trying.

The church is like a human body with many members with Jesus as the head. Each has a different function: The eye sees and the ear hears (1 Cor 12 & Rom. 12). Each person has different abilities so to find the individual will of God we must determine our own spiritual gifts: teaching, preaching, helping, giving, encouraging, working miracles etc. If you think you are a preacher, try preaching. You will soon find out if that is your calling. Think outside the x-box.

"I like big dogs, especially Newfoundlanders," said a man as a big dog looked out of his car window. "But there is one problem with them. You have to keep them on a leash at the beach for they are good swimmers used in search and rescue and want to go into the water and save everyone."

I answered, "That is my passion but the Devil wants to keep me on a leash preoccupied with temporal things."

Few find the narrow way because laborers are few but God can save by many or by the few that march to the sound of a different drummer (1 Sam 14:6). Witches and others become violent when their Kingdom of Darkness is threatened by the light of Jesus so put on the whole armour of God and tune up your baloney detector to separate truth from error. Far-fetched fantasies of cultists are the skin of truth stuffed with lies. Quoting isolated Bible verses is like analyzing a great symphony by a single note so interpret all in the wider context of the whole Bible. Words can take on different meanings so interpret them in context.

No Christian today or in the Bible was ever demon-possessed for God does not share his temple with demons. False teachers speak of believers with curses but Jesus, the only Bondage Breaker, broke them all on the cross becoming a curse for us (Gal 3:13). Curses apply only to God-haters (Deut 5:9). Demon spirits cannot cast shadows since they are invisible fallen angels with no power to create physical form. Put a frog in boiling water and it will jump out but if you place it in cold water and gradually turn up the heat it will boil to death. Cultists gradually boil your conscience and cobweb you with lies as inmates run the asylum.

Reprint this document all or in part.

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Your comments are appreciated. Thanks!