

The Alarm Went Off: Get Up or Hit the Snooze Button?

This is a rewrite of the first essay I ever wrote. I wrote it the week after we celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles back in 2016. This was the first Feast we kept as First Century Fellowship. Andrea and I had been keeping the Sabbaths and Holy Days for the previous four years at our prior place of study, but never did we do a daily study. We learned about God's Plan of Salvation for mankind and it sparked new avenues of understanding. The growth since then has been awesome and led by God's Holy Spirit. I've filled in the scriptures and made an edit or two, but it reflects the stirring of God's calling for each of us. What we learned that week in 2016 was new motivation and clarity. It emphasized the importance of hearing God's calling, getting into His Word and waking up to prepare for what's coming. The great plan of His salvation became clear for all who come to Him. We truly became a family of God that first year.

Just a quick comment on last week:

In Deuteronomy 16, we are commanded to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. "You shall keep the Feast of Tabernacles seven days, after you have gathered in from your threshing floor and your wine press. And you shall rejoice in your feast, you, and your son, and your daughter, and your male servants, and your female

servants, and the Levite, the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow within your gates. Seven days you shall keep a solemn feast to the LORD your God in the place which the LORD shall choose. Because the LORD your God shall bless you in all your increase, and in all the works of your hands, therefore you shall surely rejoice.”- **Deuteronomy 16:13-15.**

Well, this past week we celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles and The Last Great Day and I'd have to say, Our Lord certainly knows how to pick the location. We stayed at a perfect place called the Shamrock Thistle and Crown Bed and Breakfast in Weirsdale, FL. God certainly chose this place for us as it was so calm, relaxing and fit for a post card. “And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the result of righteousness shall be quietness and confidence forever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable home, and in secure dwellings and quiet resting places.”-

Isaiah 32:17-18.

Of the four years, we've been keeping God's Holy Days, this year was by far the best. Chauncey led us in a study every day and the fellowship that followed we all felt gave us all more spiritual growth than we'd had in previous years. If you weren't there, you missed a great week.

In addition to the great fellowship and presence of God's Holy Spirit, we were able to spend some time with my dear friend and mentor, Kris Brommeland and his

wife Janet. Kris was my role model when I first started in law enforcement way back in 1986. For those of you who have never met him he is the consummate “old school” cop. No nonsense, all business, with the job knowledge and integrity that is legendary. I know he’ll give me crap for this but that’s what you get for being on my hero list. Sharing stories, lots of laughs and reminiscing along with great food definitely highlighted the week as well. Kris made a few comments on the porch one night that jabbed me in the brain that inspired this essay. I credit him for the motivation that started my wheels turning. But as we all know, it is never “my wheels” ... “I can do all things through Christ, Who empowers me.”- **Philippians 4:13.**

So, Kris, thanks my brother, you will always be a role model to me.

Life is winding down. It seems the pages on the calendar are spinning past like a Rolodex in the wind (for those who know what a Rolodex is (*see? I’ve used this reference before!*), faster by the month. Time is flying by. It seems like yesterday we were in our teens and BAM! We’re senior citizens! People view the passage of time in various ways.

As corny as it might seem, I always envisioned life to climbing the ladder to the high dive at the neighborhood swim club. When we were kids, sometimes we would go to the neighborhood swim club during summer vacation. We were never members as it cost too much money for a membership. However, if my brother and

I pestered our mom enough she would give us enough money to go as guests once and awhile with our friend who was a member. Doing as many cannonballs off the high dive was the highlight of the outing.

Always crowded as you can imagine, you'd stand in line, dance around on the hot concrete (if it were early in the day), wait your turn to climb the ladder, stare at the butt of the person above you, finally you make it to the top. Then you'd slowly walk out to the end of the board, you know the water is going to be cold (in PA the pool water doesn't warm up til August) (but it's still better than Detroit...) bounce up and down a few times, jump off with a cannonball and splash! That wait in line seemed to take forever, even slower for the ladder climb, but once at the top things sped up and SNAP! It was over. We were so focused on the person in front of us and getting up that ladder, we didn't pay attention to what was going on around us. Once out on the end of the high dive, you could see the whole swim club and what a great view and just how much we were missing standing in line. How much time was spent? Didn't matter, we weren't focused on time, it was endless then.

Not much changes when we get older and make the transition to Disney, Sea World and any other theme park or another major event. Those places really have the "people herding" down to a science with all the zig-zag que lines. You can stand in line for 90 minutes for a 90 second ride...oh but it's worth it! Right? (All for \$150 admission price). We move through life pretty much the same way and it

passes almost as quickly. We miss so much for not paying attention as we're caught up in the hustle. We tend not to notice so many things until we see a finish line. It can really be difficult to see details of something in the rearview mirror if you've already passed it.

Some or most of us may have hit retirement. (Some are now considered ancient).

We're certainly blessed if we have made it this far and in good health with maybe only a few bumps and scrapes along the way. Maybe some of us have had a bout with the dreaded big "C" but by the grace and mercy of God Almighty we were delivered and healed. "O LORD my God, I cried to You, and You have healed me."- **Psalm 30:2**. We are quite fortunate to have come so far when so many never got the chance.

Did you ever stop and wonder why or how we got to where we are? Why did we make it so far in life when so many didn't? Was there a reason? Could there be a Divine purpose? Or just dumb luck? The majority would say just dumb luck or perhaps "good fortune" without any acknowledgment of God. However, some of us may have had a few "whispers" or "nudges" along the way. Call it conscience, fate, guidance or providence but something you consider to be a "Higher Power" guided you. What was it that made us hit the brake instead of the gas and avoid being "t-boned" in the intersection when a speeding motorist ran the red light? Or the stories we've heard of those who for whatever reasons didn't go to work on the

morning of 9-11 at the World Trade Center? I'm sure these types of "whispers" or "nudges" happen throughout our lives but it appears we only begin to pay attention to them as we get closer to the end of the diving board. We only realize what we have when it is about to be taken away. Not always true, but sometimes we only begin to fully appreciate life when there is so little of it left.

In retrospect, having coming to a place of knowing God, He was actually setting off an alarm clock trying to wake me up. "How long will you sleep, O sluggard? When will you arise out of your sleep?"- **Proverbs 6:9**.

I, in my prideful ignorance kept hitting the snooze button, rolling over a going back to sleep. It's by far easier to deny the presence of God and acknowledging dependence on Him and His ways than to submit to His will. Coincidence is an easier excuse for such things happening and in younger years we never think of death and the end of life as we believe we are indestructible. Covering our eyes and ignoring something and maybe it will go away might work when playing peek-a-boo with an infant but don't do it standing in the middle of a railroad track with a train coming. Won't work. "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I will also reject you from being as a priest to Me. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I will also forget your children."- **Hosea 4:6**.

Looking back, I can recall there were numerous times when the alarm clock did go off but for whatever reason, it was more convenient to hit the snooze button and continue the path and keep God “out there”. “I will hear what God the LORD will speak; for He will speak peace to His people, and to His saints, but let them not turn again to folly. Surely His salvation is near to those who fear Him, so that glory may dwell in our land.”- **Psalm 85:8-9**.

Proverbs 14:18- “The simple inherit folly, but the prudent are crowned with knowledge.”

Even in my childhood, there had always been questions. Things in church that didn't add up to what was in the Bible. Things like, “if Jesus was crucified on Good Friday and was buried and in the ground three days, how could He be resurrected on Easter Sunday?” At 9 years of age, I could count and that was NOT three days. “For just as Jonah was in the belly of the whale three days and three nights, in like manner the Son of man shall be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights.”- **Matthew 12:40**.

Later, other things began to bother me as well. How could a man in a red suit represent the birth of Jesus? Where was that in the Bible? How could colored chicks and ducks and candy represent the Resurrection of Our Savior? Not one thing! Neither do the pagan holidays they represent! **Jeremiah 10:3-4**- “For the

customs of the people *are* vain; for one cuts a tree out of the forest with the axe, the work of the hands of the workman. They adorn it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and hammers, so that it will not move.”

It wasn't in my plan to buckle down and do it God's way, although I acknowledged and believed in Him as far back as I can remember (so does the devil). Sure, I went to church, I wanted to be a good person, I wanted to go to heaven and the whole scope of man-made Christianity we were all taught.

Proverbs 14:12- “There is a way which seems right to a man, but the end thereof *is* the way of death.” As the years past, the responsibilities grew; family, children, career and so on, a greater reliance on wisdom was taking place. I placed more of a focus on church than what was being taught.

These alarms kept going off but I kept hitting the snooze button. From youth to adulthood, I had attended several churches whether by marriage (yep, got a couple of t-shirts) or just curiosity. I've been to Methodist, Presbyterian, Catholic, Pentecostal and Baptist. All variations of the same theme and all missing the mark, at least by sifting their doctrine through the words and Commandments written in the Bible.

I wondered why so many churches? Well, I wasn't the only who asked this question and not so recently. **I Corinthians 1:10-14-** “Now I exhort you, brethren,

by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you; rather, *that* you be knit together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For my brethren, it has been declared to me concerning you, by those of *the house* of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, since everyone among you says, “I *am* of Paul”; or, “I *am* of Apollos”; or, “I *am* of Cephas”; or “I *am* of Christ.” Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized into the name of Paul?” *Satan doesn't want you to know God's truth, His REAL truth that's in His Bible.*

No matter what domination church I visited, I always came away with questions or felt there was something missing. Basically, they were all the same format. They had a pastor who would read a line or two from the Bible and preach a warm and fuzzy sermon, you'd throw a buck or two in the plate, some would have an altar call so you could be “saved” and that's it. Off you go. We know there is nothing new under the sun. So many “cut and paste” doctrines that chop up scripture to fit whatever bill of goods they are trying to sell. Turning churches into businesses. It is very easy to see why Jesus turned over tables. **Mark 11:15-17-** “Then they came into Jerusalem; and after entering the temple, Jesus began to cast out those who were buying and selling in the temple; and He overthrew the tables of the money exchangers and the seats of those who were selling doves. Moreover, He did not

allow anyone to carry a vessel through the temple. And He taught, saying to them, “Is it not written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations’? But you have made it a den of robbers.”

A major alarm for me occurred when I was in my 40’s and attending a Pentecostal Church. I got angry at God, literally, and I threw the Bible against the wall and cursed at God. It was around the time of Jim and Tammy Bakker and Jimmy Swaggart and all the other Televangelists who were getting busted for fraudulent practices. I had thought they were religious folks like most and was shocked when the allegations surfaced. Even one of the local pastors as well had been fired in disgrace a year or two before and it seemed everywhere I was turning these so called “holy rollers” were nothing but snake oil salesmen. My problem was I was not looking at the One who wrote the Book. But like many, I was deceived (**Rev. 12:9**) After slamming the Bible against the wall, I yelled at God and said “If you’re God show me who you are! I want to know you, not the Baptist, Methodist, Catholic, or Pentecostal, I want to know You!” Well, sometimes you have to be careful what you ask for because you just might get it. I did. All hell broke loose for several years. But through it all, God revealed Himself just like I asked. **2 Sam.7:27-** “For You, O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, have revealed to Your

servant, saying, 'I will build you a house.' Therefore Your servant has found in his heart to pray this prayer to You. And now, O Lord GOD, You *are* that God, and Your words are true, and You have promised this goodness to Your servant."

Romans 1:17- "For therein *the* righteousness of God is revealed from faith unto faith, according as it is written: "The just shall live by faith"

1 Peter 1:5- "Who are being safeguarded by *the* power of God through faith, for salvation *that is* ready to be revealed in *the* last time."

I could easily turn this into a novel with all the alarms I ignored and hits on the snooze button through the years but for time's sake we'll keep it short this week. The moment when we get the nudge, the whisper, the tug on the heart string, God is stirring it in us. It is our wake-up call. There was some catalyst in our life (probably more than one) that shaped and directed our walk in seeking God, His truth, His Son and His Word. We may not know it; we may not recognize and for some we may refuse to acknowledge it. How tragic is that?

For some of us (actually most of us) it's typically later in our adult years as in our youth we do not readily think of our own mortality. Some of us just may beginning to take those first steps onto that path of truth. No matter. Better late than never. If you have been presented the truth, God's truth, how can you continue in the wrong path? How long can you deny doing things according to God's Way? **Joshua**

24:15- “And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, *choose this day* whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you live. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”

Once you know you are doing something wrong, why would anyone of good conscience continue to do it wrong? Especially if it something like **God’s Commandments?** When you read it for yourself, it becomes undeniable, the Sabbath isn’t Sunday and we do not go to heaven when we die, just to name a couple.

Genesis 2:2-3- “And by *the beginning* of the seventh day God finished His work which He had made. And He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it because on it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.” (**Exodus 20:8**).

Genesis 3:19- “In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you *are*, and to dust you shall return.”

John 3:13- “And no one has ascended into heaven, except He Who came down from heaven, even the Son of man, Who is in heaven.”

These are not my words they’re in the Bible. Sorry, no guilt trips, this isn’t a Catholic sermon...So, if you are asking yourself questions about your church or

your church's doctrine, that's easy, sift them through the Bible. "Prove all things, hold fast to that which is good." – **1 Thessalonian 5:21**

If you're wondering "why am I having thoughts of mending fences or making amends with relatives or friends and why now in the sunset years", it's probably a good thing. It is an alarm going off that you are *finally* hearing. It could be the first one you have actually received or it could be the one millionth one. But you are at that place in your life where God is speaking to you because He loves you. (**John 3:16**) It may be in your mind or it may be in your heart but more than likely it is in your spirit.

He no longer wants you to carry the burden. **1 Peter 5:6-7**- "Be humbled therefore under the mighty hand of God so that He may exalt you in due time; Casting all your cares upon Him, because He cares for you."

Psalms 55:22- "Cast your burden upon the LORD, and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be moved."

It's a time for peace. Christ forgave those who nailed Him to the cross, we can do no less. All the church sermons in your life, all the tambourine thumpers dancing in the aisles, all the Jesus freaks handing out pamphlets, all the "door knockers" telling you to say the sinner's prayer, all the TV preachers telling you that you need to be saved and send your hard earned dollars to them for their CD's (so they

can buy more double breasted suits and diamond rings), all the evangelists hustling their miracle spring water and countless other gimmicks and false prophets (**Matthew 24:11, 24, Mark 13:22, 2 Cor 11:13, 1 John 4:1**) mean absolutely nothing to you ever learning the truth unless God calls you!

“No Man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day”- **John 6:44**

Essentially Jesus is saying that unless God is calling you, you won't hear one word of this essay. You won't hear the alarm going off and you will keep hitting the snooze button until He tells you it's time to get up and you finally roll out of bed. If you are getting these “stirrings” or these feelings, I would encourage you **not** to hit the snooze button and roll over and go back to sleep. Sleep will come soon enough and longer than you may want to. Get up and get ready for what God has in store for you in the days ahead. Read His book, find out what it says, find out who He really is. Ask Him prayerfully and He will show you. “Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you,”- **Isaiah 60:1**.

As we celebrate this Feast Week, remember to rejoice in the Lord. Think on the things He has done for you, for your family, not only in this present life but our

roles in the eternal life He has promised to come. May this week motivate you all as that first Feast week did for the few of us in 2016. We are awake and in motion to His calling. Enjoy your family and fellowship and may you all look back next week and reflect on what we are learning with a smile!

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