Some Things I Wish Jesus Had Never Said

Dear Friends,

If you’ve made even a cursory effort to read the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John, you will have come across some beautiful, inviting words from Jesus. I think of words from Matthew 11: “Come unto me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

And, of course, there is the beautiful passage from John 3: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life. God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.” You likely have your own favorites, highlighted in yellow or underlined in red.

But the same cursory reading will lead you to some hard words from Jesus, ones that you would not underline, but would note with a question mark. Take this one from Luke 14, for example: “If any one comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.”

Or this one from Matthew 5: “You have heard it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that every one who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away; it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell.”

These are just two of what might be called the “hard sayings” of Jesus. In the coming weeks, I will be preaching on some of these texts. I’m calling the series, “Some Things I Wish Jesus Had Never Said.” I’ve borrowed this title from a book by Victor Kiligin, Ten Things I Wish Jesus Had Never Said. I’ve not read the book, but hope to.

Until I do, I’ve got a long list of hard sayings I intend to draw upon in the weeks ahead.

If you have a text that has troubled you, why don’t you tug my sleeve or ring my phone or email me a message and let me know. I can’t guarantee you that I’ll preach about it, but I can guarantee you that we’ll sit down and talk about it. That’s something I would welcome.

Would you pray that our journey through these difficult texts will draw us nearer to Him who is, “The way, the truth, and the life,” the One who said, “No one comes to the Father but by me.”

Sneak preview … that’s one of the difficult texts we’ll be sharing.

Warmly,

Bob
The Faith Christian Choir lined up uniformly along the aisles to hand out the gift of island leis. An ocean of elementary schoolers dispersed into the Christian Arts Centre to attend an adventurous live performance by three area schools. You could sense the aroma of coconut and mango seeping through the palms hanging over the ocean choir. A giant sign above the closed, bamboo curtain read: HENOTES ISLAND.

The production of We Are United ran from March 19-23 with a whopping total attendance of 730 persons.

As the lights dimmed and the student audience simmered down, Pastor Bob Bardin climbed on-stage to open the show:

“Welcome teachers, group leaders and all of God’s children out there to our We Are United presentation. As you are viewing the stage presence of our cast of characters, please keep my interpretation of heaven-versus-hell in mind. You see, I can picture the unfortunate people in hell holding onto large (pitch)fork and spoon utensils that are too long to be able to feed themselves. On the other hand, the dignified people from the Pearly Gates were issued the same sized tableware but with the opportunity to think for themselves. The punch line of this short message, comparable to our featured playbill of the Good Company, is that the heavenly bodies developed the knack to feed each other with God’s nourishment. That would absolutely make them incorporated into one being … sharing the bond. Please hold that thought on your ‘back burner’ as the curtains are now opening wide for this incredible island adventure. Stay tuned, it’s show time!”

Master of Ceremonies Jenny United (Makenzie Ferguson) strutted out on stage, front and center, drawing a mental picture for the audience of the upcoming challenges about to unfold on Henotes Island.

“Give it up for the six contestants that I’m ready to introduce with unique characteristics of their very own…to say the least. From left to right over on the boat shore deck we have Jack Hammer (Braden Kundert), Jan Track (Adrienne Somerville), Bea Sharp (Mattie Nelson), Dr. I. C. Stars (Sarah Fields), Leigh Bonnie Petite
Musical Island Adventure  By John Motta

(Genevieve Heyward) and last but… (clearing throat) not least Senator Sarah Speaks (Meg Czarnecki)."

Then Jenny United defined the first challenge of the daylight hour for the six contestants: “Listen up fellow contestants. Your first task is to find 10 coins hidden somewhere amongst the islander’s belongings. The gold and silver must then be deposited into the Bank of Jerusalem to complete challenge #1. You have a 30-second time limit, so get on your marks and get ready to beat the clock. Whoop-de-do!”

Each contestant ventured out in their own direction, not communicating with anyone else. All of the coins were found in time, but weren’t deposited into the bank before it floated upward through the clouds. A community star light vanished on the sidelines warning the contestants that they had failed their first assigned challenge.

After the second challenge of planting seeds in the Godly Garden Center baskets, spunky Marta Stewart (Audra Ferguson) skipped into action politely mentioning to the contestants what they did wrong: "In order for your seeds to take root they should have gently been pushed down into fertile soil with a pinch of nitrates…not into a bed of rocks, clay, or straw." The contestants were defeated once again because they did not work together.

All parts of our body have equal concern for each other created by God Almighty…they all work together in unity. This is what the contestants finally realized during their last task of finding the lost sheep of two heartbroken shepherds. The important thing is not to achieve individual glory, but to work as a team as one body with dependable parts. The theme of this kid’s musical production depicts an island adventure that builds up the body of Christ.

We want to give special praise to all the soloists for a job well done, including Jonathan Fultz, Makenzie Ferguson, Anna Featherstone, Surina Kubiske, Lilly Czarnecki and Katie Stearns. Also special thanks is credited to Sandy Stearns and all of the directors for such a marvelous production. My feeling as an observer is that everyone played an important ‘equal’ part in unison. Praise the Lord for that experience!
The brain is our most important body organ, controlling emotions and behaviors. It has evolved to perform best under certain environmental conditions. Unfortunately, some advances in our modern society have altered our sleep cycles, limited our exposure to natural light, reduced our physical activity and accelerated the amount of information we are able to process. For example, the internet has vastly increased our ability to socially connect, but has physically isolated us in the process.

Now, I’m not bashing these improvements. But, sometimes, I believe we don’t exercise our brains the way God intended. And this is where a healthy lifestyle should begin. So how do we do that?

**Sleep:** The hours of sleep needed for optimum brain functioning depend on your age, roughly using these guidelines: 11-13 hours for preschoolers; 10-11 hours for adolescents, and 7-9 hours for adults. I have many clients who have difficulty getting enough sleep, including my own husband. To help, follow these basic rules: establish a consistent bedtime schedule; transition to sleep with a quiet and relaxing activity, such as reading; do not fall asleep with a television or radio on; avoid drinks that contain caffeine three hours prior to bedtime; neither go to bed hungry nor eat a big meal before bedtime, and the bedroom should be dark and a little cool. If racing thoughts at bedtime are a problem, I encourage you to pray.

**Diet:** Reduce your intake of simple carbohydrates (anything white, Dr. Oz says), consume more protein (found in lean meat, poultry and fish) and add fiber (found in whole grains and vegetables). Decrease saturated fats. Because few of us have our own garden with lots of fruits and vegetables, a multivitamin may be needed.

**Exercise:** Follow a daily 20-30 minute routine of physical activity to increase your heart rate. This can be accomplished by a brisk walk or bike ride.

**Stillness:** Set your mind on something beautiful, inspiring or peaceful for an extended period of time. From a practical standpoint, this may be the hardest brain exercise to implement because it means slowing down and accomplishing nothing, which is extremely counter-cultural given our rich, hyperactive, productivity-focused world. For many of us, even our prayer life is focused on outcome, instead of simply being still. For this reason, I like contemplative prayer, which I will be the first to admit is a challenge. However, sometimes we’re so busy talking to God that we are not quiet and still enough to hear Him. I like this prayer that Ben Johnson recently shared with me:

_O God, My Father,_
_Take me by the hand,_
_Lead me to the path,_
_Place my feet in the way,_
_And lead me into your presence_  

_As I wait before you,_
_Cleanse the dross from my soul,_
_Purify the thoughts and intentions of my heart,_
_Enlighten my eyes that in your light I may see light,_
_And fill me with yourself that_  

_I may become an icon of your presence._
_As I live in you and you live in me,_
_May the false self die and the true self arise;_  

_Let my self-shaped will dissolve_  
_Until I will one thing._  

_Engulf my consciousness so that moment by_  

_Moment I am united to you and_  

_Your kingdom comes, Your will is done,_
_Your children receive daily bread,_
_Forgiveness of sin, and the guidance of_  

_Your hand in their lives._
Don’t Miss Our 3rd Annual Fair on the Hill

By Donna Kueter

June 5 is the date for our 3rd annual craft fair, starting at 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Rain date is June 12.

This year we have more unusual and interesting artisans than ever before. Demonstrations by some of the artisans will surely help make it a day of adventure and learning experiences.

On our outdoor stage, we will feature live entertainment with Rex Wilkinson, White River Crossing, The Country Gentlemen, DJs, The RePetes, The Stumes, Full Circle Praise Band and our very own Forest Gump (a crowd pleaser if we ever saw one!)

Please plan to spend the day and catch all the entertainment. You may also hear your raffle ticket number being called. Prestigious local businesses have donated wonderful prizes for you to win. There will be people selling tickets throughout the fair, so don’t miss out.

There will be great food being served. You can’t walk very far before you catch the wonderful aroma of onions slowly simmering on the grill, waiting to go on your Herbie Burger! We will also serve huge hot dogs and normal size dogs for the kids. Our youth group will be selling kettle corn, cotton candy, soda and water. There will be a bake sale, with the ladies in the congregation bringing in some of their top prize recipes.

Did I mention the classic car rally? We are in the process of organizing a classic car exhibition. If you have a cool car to show, please contact us.

In addition, the Lakeland Animal Shelter will have kittens and puppies for you to see and possibly adopt. There also will be kid’s activities, such as Stuff-a-Bear and the jumping castle.

There are new things being added as I write this, so surprises will be coming!

Please contact the Chapel office if you have any questions or would like to participate in what is going to be our biggest and best craft fair yet.

See you at the fair!

Birthdays & Anniversaries

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

May
2 Lloyd Knutson
Tom Rohde
3 Kayla Johnson
5 Anastasia Bouras
Kelly Lindstrom
9 Donna Badtke
11 Virginia Helgerson
13 Harvey Altenburg
Tina Johnson
15 Linda Kouzes
18 Maxx Basile
19 Hailey Badtke
21 Mark Badtke
27 Lilly Regalia
28 Ed Schulz
Anthony Seyfarth-Lechner
29 William Harris, Jr.

June
1 Kim Gibbs
Elijah Jeninga
3 Duane Brellethnin
5 Theresa Blood
6 Bridget Faltis
Riley Hinners
13 Gregg Corpus
16 Gregory Corpus
17 Mary Castle
18 Ed Zwiebel
20 Mary Ann Beck
23 Sean Wallace
24 Brad Klawes
25 Rich Hinners
26 Bea Dale
28 Hannah Kohlman
29 Harold Littlejohn

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

May
1 William & Judy Maack
8 Sean & Fran Wallace
17 John & Linda Schiithelm
23 Lee & Nancy Hoef
25 Will & Cindy Brown
28 Greg & Cindy Odden

June
2 Fred & Jo Ann Jeninga
7 Gerry & Sharon Dexter
3 Brad & Sheryl Klawes
9 Bob & Sally Bardin
16 Dean & Lois Griffith
20 Jerry & Evelyn Braam
28 Paul & Wendy Regalia
I’ve been putting off writing this article, because I couldn’t choose a topic. As Mark Twain said, “Never put off until tomorrow what you can do the day after tomorrow.”

Yesterday, my buddy suggested I write about procrastination, because I know the topic so well. I thought about what she said and put the idea aside; but a devotional message provided the impetus I needed.

In One More Night with the Frogs, Susan Stitch wrote about Exodus 8:1-15. The passage tells about the plague of frogs God sent to Egypt to spur Pharaoh to free the Hebrews from slavery. Moses asked Pharaoh when he wanted the frogs removed; Pharaoh answered, “Tomorrow.”

Susan wondered why Pharaoh would wait another day to have the frogs removed. “Then I remember how often I intend to improve my poor habits. ‘Starting tomorrow,’ I tell myself, ‘I will do better. I am just too tired [or too busy] to make the change today.’ Yet when tomorrow arrives, I find an excuse to stick with my old ways.”

She continued, “How many of us choose to wait ‘just one more day’ before we change our habits? We say that tomorrow we’ll start to exercise, eat healthier foods, or spend more time reading the Bible. Like Pharaoh, we are willing to wait just a little longer before we take action. But God wants us to serve and to experience the blessings of serving today, not wait another day. God promises to give us strength in our weakness, to help us when we must change our behavior so we can do what is right.”

I found 1,640,000 websites for “top reasons for procrastination.” Top reasons for procrastination are: avoidance, fear of failure and self-doubt, feeling overwhelmed, lack of commitment, low self-esteem, not a high enough priority, perfectionism, resentment, undervaluing the rewards and you just plain don’t want to. (I plan to read the rest of that article, someday.)

Procrastination seems to be a common problem; in a survey, thousands of people listed “ending procrastination” as #2 on a list of common goals; and there are 448,000 websites for “conquering procrastination.”

The TV show, Hoarders: Buried Alive, is about people who have so much stuff, valuable and not, they are entombed by it and unable to live normal lives. Procrastinators are hoarders of ideas and tasks. Procrastinated tasks are clutter that fills the mind, like the frogs in Exodus 8 were everywhere. To better serve God, I must declutter my mind and give God the space to fill with the blessings he offers.

On Hoarders, there’s a trained therapist who helps the hoarder decide what to save and what to toss. The therapist is non-judgmental and patiently and calmly helps the hoarder reevaluate his or her possessions. One by one, each item is put away, given away or thrown away.

When our weaknesses or bad habits are overwhelming, we can call on God and ask Him to show us which habits He’d like us to change. We can also pray for the will and the courage to begin today to make the needed changes.

In 2 Corinthians 12:9 &10, Paul said, “But He [God] said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”

God’s power and love is demonstrated when
Spring Brings God’s Love  
By Anastasia Bouras

I’m very happy to be able to say that spring is here. I know all the adults love the nice weather, but there is one thing that children, even the older ones, love to do — play outside! It brings us to life again and it’s something we look forward to all winter.

But there’s much more to it than that. We find new life with God among the bugs and flowers. Emma says, “New life is in butterflies because they go into cocoons as caterpillars and come out as beautiful butterflies.” This is true for humans, too. We go to God hurt, and after He fills us and shelters us with His love, we come back out better and stronger than ever.

These things are the physical proof of God’s power for us. Now Lily says, “I think new life is in the trees because God makes the trees grow and, in the spring, He makes the leaves grow.”

All of these things make the springtime all the more powerful in meaning. So the next time you see beautiful weather outside just go enjoy it, and see if you can find one thing that shows you God’s love and life in us.

Join with me in a huge thank you to Janet Nettekoven and her homeless shelter team. Janet works tirelessly to provide a safe, warm, and inviting environment to these folks who find themselves in a frightening and lonely position. The shelter wrapped up another season at the Chapel at the end of April. Be thinking of what you might be able to do to help when it starts up again in the fall. I know Janet is always looking for male overnight chaperones, especially during the week. Watch for her wish-list of items the shelter needs when we prepare to open again.

Our Food Pantry needs your help. The shelves are looking pretty meager. Can you help? Kerry Lemuell and her food pantry team can use anything you can bring to stock the shelves. Cereal, peanut butter, jelly and canned fruit and vegetables are always appreciated. There is also a freezer in the Food Pantry that could stand to be stocked. Please see Kerry if you have any questions about what to bring.

Missions News Roundup  
By Cynthia Hoffman

Join with me in a huge thank you to Janet Nettekoven and her homeless shelter team. Janet works tirelessly to provide a safe, warm, and inviting environment to these folks who find themselves in a frightening and lonely position. The shelter wrapped up another season at the Chapel at the end of April. Be thinking of what you might be able to do to help when it starts up again in the fall. I know Janet is always looking for male overnight chaperones, especially during the week. Watch for her wish-list of items the shelter needs when we prepare to open again.

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Our puzzles. Wow. Thank you Chapel! We have been able to complete our Haiti Puzzle which was valued at $1,200. This will help Gladys Mungo continue the work she is doing in Haiti. Gladys will be back in our area at the end of May. Watch for her to pop up at the Chapel with Judy and me. She’d love to tell you more about what she is doing there.

We are moving along steadily with our Kenyan puzzle. I don’t have the exact figure for you (but will have it soon). I believe we have collected more that $2,000 of our $12,000 goal. This is a huge goal that we can only meet with your help. I will continue to be in the parlor with our puzzles. You can contribute in a number of ways. Questions? Come visit me!

Remember that our Missions work is funded exclusively by you. No Chapel funds were able to be budgeted towards Missions this year — and I am so grateful for all that you’ve done and continue to do to help us spread the Word of Jesus in our community, our state, our country and the world.
Your Stephen Ministry team hosts

**THE SHACK**

book discussion

*Four Thursdays in June*

*7:00 to 8:00 PM*

*in the Chapel Parlor*

Your Stephen Ministers have chosen *The Shack* as a spring book discussion topic.

We invite everyone in the Chapel congregation and community to join in the discussion. Pastor Bob Bardin will lead the opening session.

Since *The Shack* is so popular, and so many of us have already read it, there should be a great common interest in the discussion.

Please let us know if you would like to attend by calling the Chapel office (262-245-9122) or registering online at chapelonthehill.net.