

Midweek Messages - 2023

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December 28th - Gifts that Should Continue to be Given

Two days before Christmas I ventured out early to our nearby Dollar Store to get a few last-minute items. I arrived in the parking lot just before 8:00 a.m. wanting to get in and out before the store really got busy. There were six of us with the same idea. As we entered, I held open the door for the man standing behind me, and he in turn did the same for me when it came to the next door leading inside. We each thanked the other for the kind gestures and manners being shown. We wished each other a Merry Christmas and then he commented, "I have already forgotten what I came in to buy!" I shared with him how I have the tendency of forgetting one thing on my list whenever I go into a store.

We each made our way around the store and ended up at the checkout at the same time. It was only the two of us in line when one of the store employees ran over to the cashier and said, "I have found the last roll of Scotch tape in the store." When this other man heard this he said, "I don't need it but I will buy it." At that moment I realized that Scotch tape was on my list of things to get at the store, and I had forgotten all about it. I have come to realize it never hurts to ask so picking up on his words I said to him, "If you really don't need that roll of tape, I truly do." He smiled and said, "I was just buying it as a joke. Here you have it." With that he gave me the roll of tape to buy, so I would have enough to wrap our presents with later that morning.

It was a fun and pleasant interaction I had with this man on Saturday morning. Both of us were going in for items we needed in preparation for Christmas, but I came away with three special gifts:

1. Being reciprocated with kind gestures and manners,
2. Being helped to remember something important I was forgetting,
3. Being able to experience sharing instead of selfishness.

As I spent the rest of Saturday morning wrapping gifts, I thought a lot about this interaction and the gifts we both gave to each other. What stood out to me was how the gifts I was wrapping that morning not only cost money, but they were meant only to be given on one specific day of the year. I contrasted this with the three gifts from

earlier that morning and how they did not cost anything to give and should be given throughout an entire year. [Read more](#)

December 21st - It Brought a Tear to His Eye

While I was standing in line at Tim Hortons on Monday morning waiting for my coffee a man came in to pick up a box of donuts and coffee he had ordered for his coworkers. I noticed that he was wearing a baseball cap that said on it, *hockey dad*. Seeing it reminded me how I have two shirts that say *basketball dad* on them.

I got my coffee before him and held the door open as he was exiting because his hands were full carrying several coffees and the box of donuts. When he thanked me for holding the door open, I said to him, "I see that you are a hockey dad." He smiled right away and told me how his son played his very first hockey game that past weekend. He did not share with me how old his son is, but he said, "It brought tears to my eyes seeing him out on the ice."

Most men do not admit when they shed a tear, but this proud dad was more than willing to share with me the tears of joy he experienced this past weekend seeing his son play hockey. I was happy for him, and on the drive home it got me thinking about some of the tears of joy I have shed at special moments in my daughter's life.

So often the tears we shed nowadays are a result of sadness and loss. Depending on the suffering associated with the loss, the tears we have shed may have been plentiful. As much as we may try to hold these tears in, at some point they eventually come out. One of the comforts we have as believers is knowing that God is very much aware of our tears and comes to comfort us. Mary Magdalene discovered this as she cried tears of sadness outside Jesus' tomb. [Read more](#)

December 14th - An Aid to Help with *Almosts*

It was a weekend of *almost* in Canadian sports. It started with the Toronto Blue Jays pursuing free agent Shohei Ohtani. He was the most coveted free agent this year being a rare superstar who can both pitch and hit. Going into free agency many teams sought after this superstar knowing the price to sign him would be upwards of \$500-million or more.

During the past week we started hearing reports the Blue Jays were in serious contention of landing this coveted free agent. By Friday, baseball analysts were saying it was between the Dodgers and Blue Jays as to which team he would sign with. Reports came out that Shohei would make a decision by the weekend. Many people on Friday thought he was flying up to Toronto, but those reports proved false. On Saturday, Shohei Ohtani made his decision deciding to sign with the Los Angeles Dodgers. It *almost* happened that the Blue Jays signed the biggest name in free agency.

Over the weekend we *almost* saw a Canadian golf duo win a tournament. Canadian golfers Brooke Henderson and Corey Connors were competing against other duos from various countries in a match play tournament. This Canadian duo was near the top of the leader board going into the final day. I watched a bit on Sunday hoping this Canadian duo might pull off the victory. They *almost* did, but unfortunately ended up one shot back of the leaders.

It really was a weekend of *almost* when it came to Canadian sports. Sometimes we find ourselves in the position of *almost*. I find this with coaching basketball when it comes to recruiting players or playing games against other teams. Sometimes we can give it our best effort and yet come out on the losing end saying *almost*.

This can happen too in other areas of our lives such as when we interview for a job, place an offer on a house, or seek a promotion at work. We can experience disappointment, heart break, or hurt feelings and begin to flood our mind with a whole array of *what if* questions in these moments. [Read more](#)

December 7th - Being Passionate About Something

When we were on vacation in Las Vegas back in August there were many signs displaying the Formula One Grand Prix race that would be taking place in November. I was told by a resident how some of the major hotels on the Las Vegas strip would be charging at least one million dollars a night for rooms providing views of the actual racecourse. As crazy as this amount seemed I knew some people would actually pay this price for access to such a room.

When the Las Vegas Grand Prix weekend finally came around we were kind of anxious to see it. The race did not start until 1:00 in the morning our time so with having church the next day I did not stay up to watch it. My teenage daughter stayed up to watch it and loved every minute of it. What I did not know at the time is a passion would begin to ignite in her for Formula One racing.

During the course of the next week, she began doing research on various teams and their drivers. She even began watching a television series that has been done on Formula One racing. The very next Sunday was the final Formula One race of the season. The drivers and their teams had left Las Vegas and were now in Abu Dhabi. The race was to start at 8:00 a.m. and as the time got closer, I was not sure whether to wake my daughter or not. If you have ever tried to wake up a teenager, you know how risky it can be.

Thankfully, I did not have to take on this challenge. Five minutes before the race started, I heard her alarm go off and her feet hit the floor. [Read more](#)

November 30th - Affected By Loss

When I pulled into my driveway on Saturday morning and got out of the car, I could hear somebody laughing. I looked across the street and discovered it was my neighbour laughing and pointing at me shouting, "ha, ha, ha." I knew right away why he was laughing at me. He is a Chicago Black Hawks' fan and the day before they

beat the Toronto Maple Leafs in overtime. There I stood taking some ribbing from him because my hockey team lost.

The Leafs were in Pittsburgh Saturday night to play the Penguins. I saw part of the game but was not able to watch the end to see who won. So before going to bed I asked "Google" who won. My wife Nadine was on the couch at the time and when Google told me the Leafs had lost it was her turn to laugh at me.

Being laughed at when the Leafs lose has become a reality for me. If the Leafs should lose to Boston, Ottawa, Chicago, or heaven forbid, Montreal I can always count on somebody laughing at my expense. The irony of this is that I experience the consequences of a Leaf loss even though it is beyond my control. As I thought about this, I began thinking how some losses we experience in life are beyond our control.

[Read more](#)

November 23rd - It Made Her Happy

I stopped into the grocery store on Monday morning after dropping my daughter off at school in order to get a few items we were out of. One item I needed was a certain brand of cereal and I was hoping that it was on sale otherwise I would be heading up to Walmart at some point during the week to get it there. Thankfully it was on sale and even though it was 16 cents more than what it would have been at Walmart I didn't mind because I was saving on my time and gas by not having to go up there.

While I was grabbing two boxes of the cereal from the shelf another customer came up from behind and shared with me how happy she was that it was on sale this week. It was easy to understand why she was excited considering how much prices have risen at the grocery store during these past few years. It was nice to see somebody happy in the grocery store for once instead of frustrated by the rising prices. On the car ride home, I began thinking about how her happiness will only be temporary as opposed to lasting. By the time I got home and unpacked my groceries I found God leading me to open my Bible and search for references about experiencing a lasting joy and happiness. The first passage God led me to was these words found in Psalm 119:35: **Make me walk along the path of your commands, for that is where my happiness is found.**

It might seem strange to some people reading this that true happiness can be found in following God's ways. Some people believe God's commands are meant to limit and restrict us, but the psalmist understood how the **Lord's ways free us in order to experience His best for us.** [Read more](#)

November 16th - Way Too Soon

I learned about a young woman's passing recently, still in her 20's, from health-related issues. The person who informed me about her death acknowledged the reality that she died "way too soon." I could not agree more. This is the way we often feel when

we lose somebody at such a young age. Stories like this remind us just how fragile and unpredictable life can be. As I reflected upon this truth, I found God leading me to open my Bible so He could remind me of these words written by Jesus' half brother James in his New Testament letter:

How do you know what your life will be like tomorrow? Your life is like the morning fog - it's here a little while, then it's gone (James 4:14).

Upon reading it I could see how God was reminding me just how short life can be no matter how many years we live. As I examined these words even more closely, I could see how God was also reminding me through James' message that we should appreciate life now instead of being deceived into thinking that we may still have lots of time remaining to appreciate the people and things we have in our lives.

I encounter this so often in my walk as a pastor. Some people are filled with regrets after a loved one's passing because they did not fully appreciate them while they were still alive. [Read more](#)

November 9th - Time(s) Change

This past weekend we experienced another time change. The phrase *fall back and spring forward* reminds us which direction we need to change our clocks at this time of year. Regardless, whether we move our clocks back or forward an hour, we have experienced a change in our time. These time changes can affect us in different ways. One person shared with me on Monday how he showed up to church one hour early on Sunday morning, at 9:30 as opposed to 10:30 a.m. I have seen the opposite happen in spring when a person showed up near the end of a church service having forgotten to move their clock ahead.

When my father was alive, he used to struggle with the time change often complaining how it disrupted his sleep patterns. Apparently, the time change has an impact on drivers as well. A commentator on the radio reminded listeners that the likelihood of drivers being involved in an accident increases shortly after the time change. What I notice most about the time change is the impact it has on peoples' daily routines. For instance, when we "fall back" I notice:

- how children are no longer at the park after supper playing with friends,
- how people are getting out for their walks in the day earlier rather than taking a stroll after supper,
- how people settle in for the night earlier and pull their blinds down.

Time changes can have these and other effects on us. However, time changes do not always have to do with keeping up with day-light-saving. Time itself can see us undergo certain changes. [Read more](#)

November 2nd - Special Treats to Give Out After Halloween

Before I started typing this message, I noticed the two boxes of Halloween candy sitting on our kitchen counter to hand out on Tuesday night. I thought I better count the one box of candy to ensure I would have enough because I used some of them in a recent story at church but also have snacked on a few Coffee Crisp bars from the box as well. I am glad I counted because 16 chocolate bars are now gone from the box. I think half of them were given to the kids who were part of my story at church so doing the math it means the other 8 ended up in my belly. I rarely eat chocolate bars through the course of a year, but these small sized ones we find at Halloween are too tempting to pass over. As much as I enjoy one of these small sized treats, I enjoy even more giving them out to the kids on Halloween and seeing their smiles and expressions after receiving them.

Counting these chocolate bars reminded me about some other small-sized treats I passed out in the days leading up to Halloween. The small-sized treat I have been handing out quite a bit of late are wrapped as words of encouragement. I have done this twice in the past few days at the Tim Hortons I frequent. The first day I did this I happened to arrive shortly after an irate customer had thrown their coffee at the employee working at the drive-through window. Naturally some of the staff were upset and still talking about this unfortunate incident while I was getting my coffee. I told them how sorry I was for what had happened and how much I appreciate the service they provide me. That got a couple of them smiling and one said, "That is what we like about you. You are always so nice to us!" It was a small treat of encouragement given on my part that turned their frowns back into smiles.

The next day I treated the manager there with words of encouragement, too. I had been waiting at the counter for a few minutes to place my order, but nobody came over to serve me. The manager spotted me and stopped what she was doing to run over and take my order. I thanked her and took the opportunity to say to her, "I have always been impressed by how you manage everything around here!" The biggest smile appeared on her face, and she thanked me for the compliment. It was these two small-sized treats of encouragement I handed out that I was reminded of as I counted the Halloween candy still left in the box on Monday morning.

One of the sad realities that I am aware of when I interact with those who deal with the public is how often they are on the receiving end of complaints and criticism. [Read more](#)

October 26th - Reminded of Joy

When I took our dog Daisy for a walk on Sunday night, I began thinking about what my mid-week message would be. Usually something from the past week serves as my inspiration, but my mind was blank which happens from time to time, so I prayed and asked God to place an idea on my heart.

As soon as I finished praying my eyes were drawn toward the leaf bags that several neighbours had placed out front of their homes. Some homes I passed had only a few leaf bags for collection while others I counted had upwards of ten or more. Seeing this reminded me of something Coral enjoyed doing when she was younger.

Our property backs onto bush so I usually have upwards of 45-50 bags of leaves to rake up every fall. The weeks when I would have 12 or more bags, we would line them up out front so Coral could run and make a Superman landing on them. She would start from the neighbour's driveway and run full speed at the bags and try to leap across as many as she could. After a successful landing Coral would emerge with leaves in the hood of her jacket with the biggest smile on her face. Nadine and I would set the leaf bags back up so Coral could run and jump into them safely again.

By the end of the night the leaf bags were in pretty bad shape and some of the leaves that had been bagged would now be sitting on my front yard. None of this mattered because our daughter was having fun and enjoyment from these bags of leaves. When I finished walking Daisy around the block, I realized God had just provided me with inspiration for this week's message by filling me with these joyful memories.

As I began to sit down to write this message, I started thinking about the journey these leaves took, thanks to God's hand at work, before my daughter could joyfully play in them. [Read more](#)

October 19th - Reliability is on My Mind

Ever since I ended my last midweek message questioning the reliability of my Toronto Maple Leafs watch, this desired attribute of keeping proper time has been at the forefront of my thinking. It started last Thursday when somebody noticed my back tire was almost flat. I was able to inflate the tire but realized it obviously has a slow leak and that I need to get it looked at. With Nadine away in Nova Scotia, I still had our other car so I decided not to drive the vehicle with the slow leaking tire until I could ensure its reliability.

On Saturday I had to drive my daughter and two of her friends to the east side of Toronto to attend a concert. I apologized to her friends that I had to cram them into our smaller car for the journey because I could not guarantee the reliability of driving our other vehicle with the slow leak in the tire. I don't think they had a lot of leg room in the back of our car, but they did not care as long as I got them to the concert on time.

On Sunday morning I decided to wear my Leafs watch for the first time in a while. I looked at it as the time to start church was approaching and second guessed if it was the right time. I decided to ask somebody else to tell me the proper time because I still did not trust the reliability of my Leafs watch.

On Monday when it came time to decide which watch to wear, I decided to put on my more reliable Blue Jays one because I had a few appointments that morning that I could not be late for. You can now understand why reliability has been on my mind so much these days.

Before sitting down to write this message I asked Google to provide me with various synonyms for the word *reliability*. Google told me it could provide me with 51 different ones if I desired, but I decided to ask for the first five. It provided me with synonyms like trustworthy, dependable, decent, tried and tested, and honest. Reliability is something we desire in others whether it is in finding a contractor, a mechanic, a person to handle our finances, or in a friend or spouse. God knows how much we desire *reliability*. [Read more](#)

October 11th - You Cannot Wear That

On Saturday morning I went to the market early to get potatoes and apples before it got busy. I had not had a chance to shower before going so I put on my Toronto Blue Jays baseball cap to cover my messy hair. I did not think much of it when I put the ball cap on, but somebody at the market did when he saw me wearing it.

If you are a baseball fan you know that the Toronto Blue Jays were eliminated from post season action last week after two disappointing losses to the Minnesota Twins. As I was walking by this one vendor he said to me, "You can't wear that hat anymore." Like many of us he too was disappointed by the Jays early exit from the playoffs and felt I should put away my hat until the start of another season.

As I said, I did not think about this before putting it on and was more concerned that it covered my messy hair. I do have a Leafs hat, but it has been sitting on the top shelf of our closet since they lost in the second round of the playoffs last spring. I am glad this vendor did not see my watch because I was wearing my Toronto Blue Jays' one at the time. I guess it is time for me to put away my Blue Jays hat and pull out my Leaf one now that the baseball season is over.

This vendor's words to me got me thinking about similar words spoken by Paul when it comes to certain attitudes and behaviours we can no longer wear once we become Christians. In **Colossians 3**, Paul shares with Christians the new nature we should be wearing and living once we accept Christ as our Savior. [Read more](#)

October 5th - Picking Out My Outfit

The time is fast approaching for my daughter and me to go to Toronto to see Adam Lambert and Queen in concert. We bought the tickets when they first came on sale in late March and have been looking forward to this event ever since. When I reminded my daughter that the concert was coming up, she mentioned how she has not planned out her outfit yet. I understand this is a big deal for teenagers when it comes to going to concerts, but it is not for 59-year-old fathers like me. My main concern

when choosing an outfit to wear is whether or not it is clean and that it is appropriate for the weather conditions on that day.

Since it is her dad she will be hanging out with at the concert as opposed to a friend, my daughter informed me she was going to pick out my clothes. I told her it was going to be quite a challenge to make this already hip 59-year-old dad look even hipper. On Sunday afternoon she went through my closet and came down the stairs with the shirt I am to wear that night. She chose an old long sleeve shirt of mine that is black with brown stripes. She chose it because she said it would match with what she was planning to wear. I was also informed that I will be wearing either a pair of black or brown pants to the concert to match the top. When Sunday night comes this already hip 59-year-old pastor will look even hipper thanks to my daughter choosing my outfit.

This whole experience with my daughter picking out my clothes for the concert reminded me how God chooses our wardrobe for us at times. [Read more](#)

September 28th - A Rare Sign of Loyalty

A quality that I often saw displayed when I was growing up was loyalty. I would see it being displayed:

- in places of work between employers and employees,
- in pro sports between athletes and owners,
- in friendships, families, and other relationships,
- in commitments and promises made to one another.

It is a quality that I admired so much that I have always tried to pattern and embrace it in my own life. Sadly, we have seen a decline in this admirable attribute over time. One person attributed the start of this decline in the sports world to the time when Wayne Gretzky was traded from the Edmonton Oilers to the Los Angeles Kings. When this decline with respect to displaying loyalty began to occur in other aspects of life is harder to put an exact finger on.

Loyalty may not be as common today as it once was, but I did see a sign of it last week. I was contacted by a player of another basketball team who was inquiring whether there might be the possibility of my players coming over to their organization. This player shared how she has played for the same coach for five years and how much she respects and admires him. She is hoping that she can play one more year for him, but the challenge is they only have three players at the moment. My first impression as I read her e-mail was how proud this other coach would be to see the loyalty and respect she has developed for him over the past five years. I admired this person's loyalty and I shared that with her when I responded by e-mail. I was touched and encouraged to see her loyalty, especially when I find it lacking so much in these days and times.

Perhaps many of you have had the same observation over the years that loyalty is becoming more of a rarity. As we reflect upon this change, we may want to take time

to consider if we have fallen into this trend when it comes to our relationship with our Heavenly Father. One thing that Jesus makes very clear to us in His teachings in the Sermon on the Mount is how our Father examines our heart to see if our loyalty toward Him has changed. [Read more](#)

September 21st - A Blast From the Past

Something my daughter and I would often do on Saturday mornings when she was younger was to stop into our Brantford Market. I did not usually buy a lot on our visits. Often it was just to buy some meat and a few items like apples, potatoes, or turnip. While we shopped for these items, we also got to enjoy some free samples. There was a pizza place that we always scouted out for whatever sample they were offering that day. We would also make our way over to get a free sample of garlic bread, and then end up at one of the bakeries that often-had nice loaf breads, or other treats to sample.

Our visit to the market would never be complete until we purchased a chocolate swirl cookie on our way out. It must have seemed odd to the vendor at this bakery stall that we would only spend 75 cents on a cookie every week. My daughter looked forward to that cookie and even if we had our fill of samples, she still had room to eat it once she got to the car. It has probably been 4-5 years since the last time my daughter and I bought a chocolate swirl cookie together at the market. She tends to sleep in now on Saturdays and is not awake when I go to the market.

This past Saturday I found myself purchasing some of these cookies even though I did not plan to do so. I was just about to exit the market when the vendor from this bakery came running over to me and said, *I have a package of two chocolate swirl cookies that I just did up. Would you like them for your daughter?* I could not believe she remembered our preference for this kind of cookie after so many years. How could I possibly say *no* to this vendor? I purchased the cookies and quickly realized they have risen in price from the 75 cents we once paid for them. When my daughter got up, I told her the story of what the vendor said. A huge smile came across my daughter's face and it continued as she ate a chocolate swirl cookie after a hiatus of many years. Having this cookie was a "blast from the past" for my daughter that brought her good memories and joy.

It is a real blessing when we receive reminders or *blasts from the past* like we did on Saturday of things that brought us joy. [Read more](#)

September 14th - Trouble With Opening Locks

One of the biggest challenges my daughter has experienced during her first three years of high school is with the lock on her locker. In Grade 11 she went through three different locks. Even though they were all quality locks, it seemed every three months they would no longer close properly. Grade 10 was not quite as bad as Grade 11 because she only went through two locks that year. Grade 9 saw the same thing

happen even though students were not in the classroom the entire year due to interruptions with COVID.

My daughter bought a new lock to start off Grade 12. She tested it several times before the first day of school to make sure it would properly open and close. She had no problem with the lock on the first day until it was time to leave. I was sitting out in my car waiting to drive her home and saw no sign of her even though most students had left for the day.

Around 3:15 p.m. I received a message from her that her lock was not opening. She had tried several times but to no avail. I met her at the front of the school and went in with her to see if I could open it. It had been 40 years since I have tried to open a lock on a locker at BCI. I said a quick prayer before trying the combination and thankfully it did open. Since it was the end of the day, we took the lock home with us to make sure it would consistently open. The only time it opened is when I said that prayer. We tried the combination again in the car, and many times later at home, but the lock never again opened.

This story is a reminder how sometimes we might have difficulty with opening certain things. Locks can pose this challenge for us, but so too can lids on jars. Something else we may struggle with opening is our hearts to receiving God's messages. [Read more](#)

September 7th - Those Days

Sometimes we have what I refer to as one of **those days!** These are the kinds of days when it seems we are feeling:

- unlucky rather than lucky,
- discouraged rather than encouraged,
- weak rather than strong,
- fearful and anxious rather than at peace,
- unhappy rather than happy.

We all have **those days**. When we do we think nothing is going to change our feelings or outlook. On one of **those days** recently God found a creative way to make me feel better. A few weeks ago, while I was greeting people at the door after the church service a person handed me a piece of paper upon which was written a passage of Scripture. I looked at the note at the time and thanked the person for doing this. I put it in the pocket of my shirt and forgot all about it.

On one of **those days** recently I reached for that shirt and rediscovered the passage that had been given to me. I read it more closely this time and realized God meant for me to find this note when I did in order to encourage me. The passage that had been given to me was Joshua 1:9: **Have I not commanded you, be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.**

This passage is a favourite of mine and God realized I needed to be reminded about its assurances on one of **those days** I was experiencing. My frown quickly turned to a smile and my discouragement changed into encouragement seeing God's presence and love being shown at a much-needed moment. [Read more](#)

August 31st - Lucky or Blessed?

I shared with everyone in last week's message how my family was on vacation in Las Vegas from August 15-20th. What none of the travel guides shared about a vacation in Las Vegas is to expect a hurricane to occur there every 84 years. There was no mention of Hurricane Hilary before we left Brantford, but by Friday we were beginning to see warnings and experiencing some rainfall and flooding in parts of Las Vegas.

On Saturday the local news was predicting the worst of the hurricane's impact would occur on Sunday and to expect delays and interruptions with respect to travel. Our flight was booked to leave Las Vegas Sunday night at 11:15 p.m. We considered leaving a day early, but we had tickets to a show on Saturday night that we were all looking forward to. We would have been truly disappointed to miss seeing it. I am glad we did not miss it because afterward my daughter said it was the best show she has ever seen.

Having made the decision to stay through to the Sunday as originally planned, we began doing some serious praying hoping we would still be able to leave Las Vegas on our scheduled flight. On Sunday morning we began to see that many of the flights were either delayed or cancelled. This was a surprise considering the weather was actually quite nice in Las Vegas. The rain was holding off and we were able to spend a portion of the afternoon doing a few last things on the Las Vegas strip. We kept checking our flight status throughout the day and it kept showing that it was on time.

When we got to the airport that night, we were told by the WestJet staff that our flight was still on time and how it was the only one all day that had not been cancelled or delayed. Thankfully we were able to leave Las Vegas as scheduled and arrived in Toronto Monday morning at 6:30 a.m. Nadine and I realized how blessed we were by God to help us arrive home safely and on time despite the rare occurrence of a hurricane hitting the area while we were there. [Read more](#)

August 24th - Loss and Gain on My Trip

If you were wondering why there was no midweek message last week it was because we were away on vacation. We flew to Las Vegas last week for a five-day holiday. Before we went, I met up with a friend who has gone to Las Vegas many times in order to get some insights from him about this city I had never visited before.

One of the things he shared with me is how Las Vegas is a city that is designed for people to lose. When he said this, he was referring to gambling in the casinos. I do

not gamble so I was not worried about losing in this manner in Las Vegas. However, my friend's advice became a reality for one person I met at a show we attended on Friday night.

As we awaited the beginning of the show, I started up a conversation with the gentleman seated beside me who happened to be from North Carolina. He shared with me how earlier that day he lost \$300.00 at the casino. But, his loss in Vegas did not end there. Afterwards he went to a nearby Walgreens to purchase a few things he needed. When he pulled out his wallet to pay, he did not realize somebody in the store was watching him closely. He shared that when he put his wallet back into his pocket, he did not zip it up like he normally does.

The person who was watching him must have seen this because as this man made his way back to the hotel he was pick-pocketed. This was a bigger loss for him than the \$300.00 he lost earlier at the casino because all his identification and credit cards were taken. He admitted that after losing his wallet in this manner, he lost his temper and was not very pleasant to be around that afternoon. [Read more](#)

August 10th - Different Perspectives

Something my daughter and I have been doing this summer is playing tennis. I used to play tennis quite a bit as a teenager and made it onto my high school team one year. Even when I went off to university, I would find time to play tennis with some of my friends there. Nadine and I have played from time to time over the years but nothing on a consistent basis. It was actually while Nadine and I were playing tennis one day 18 years ago that we picked up on the fact she might be pregnant.

Eighteen years later I am now playing tennis with my daughter, and I am quite impressed how quickly she is picking up on the game. She has a natural serve that lands in the service box on a consistent basis. We have not played games against each other yet, but we do engage in some pretty intense rallies. When I used to play in my teens I was in pretty good shape and could get to balls quite easily. Now I tend to sweat more profusely and breathe more heavily.

Something that Coral has been noticing is that after every rally I will walk over slowly to retrieve the ball we just played even though we may still have one or two more in our pockets to hit out. From her perspective she sees this as a sign that I am getting slower in my old age. I have a different perspective however when it comes to my actions. I see it as wisdom on my part conserving my energy so I can come back and start the next rally breathing less heavily. My actions on the tennis court are a reminder of how two people can see the very same thing but have a different perspective of it.

Being reminded of this got me thinking how sometimes God has a different perspective of a reality than we do. One of the best examples we find in Scripture is God's call to Moses found in Exodus chapters 3 and 4. When Moses approached the

burning bush and discovered he was standing on holy ground God shared with him what His plan was. [Read more](#)

August 3rd - It is Nice to See a Little Excitement

I usually film our online worship service on Friday mornings at our house. Our dog Daisy gets really excited when it comes time to film worship. As soon as I hit record on the camera and sit down in my chair to begin speaking, Daisy runs to get her basketball. For the first few moments of recording, I can count on Daisy to place the ball at my feet and begin to play around with it. By the time I begin my prayer of praise and confession Daisy has moved to the living room to roll over onto her back and wiggle back and forth. Sometimes while doing this, she will let out a bark in her excitement. It is not long before she comes back in to where I am filming and starts eating her food. By the time I get to the sermon she settles down and sometimes lays at my feet while I preach. If I should get up at any time during filming, Daisy will start these routines all over again.

This past Friday my wife Nadine was home when I was about to start filming. She decided to take Daisy for a walk so that she would not be a distraction. As soon as they headed out the door for the walk, I hit the record button. Apparently, Daisy did not want to miss out on the excitement she experiences while I record the worship service. She plopped herself down on the front step and would not budge for Nadine at all. Her tail wagged immediately when Nadine conceded and let her back into the house so she would not miss worship. While it can be challenging at times to film an online worship service with a dog scurrying around me, it is refreshing to see her excitement.

Wouldn't it be nice to see this kind of excitement from people again when it comes to experiencing worship? Prior to COVID, congregations in many denominations were beginning to see a decline in attendance at worship services. One of the things COVID did was to motivate many churches like ours to offer online services when restrictions prevented us from worshipping in person.

Many congregations have not seen everyone return to in-person worship after the restrictions were lifted. Many pastors I have talked to have commented that only fifty percent of their congregation have returned. There are many reasons to explain why we have seen these declines in in-person worship. It would be wonderful to see this trend reverse. I can't help but wonder if one of the ways to reverse this trend will be for people to gain the same excitement for worship as is expressed by Daisy. [Read more](#)

July 28th - Sometimes We get an Answer, and Other Times We Do Not

A warning light appeared on the dash of our Toyota Prius on Thursday afternoon. Thankfully I was not too far from home when it first appeared. When I got home, I pulled out the vehicle manual from my glove compartment and discovered the

warning light was indicating the coolant temperature was too high. I opened the hood, hoping all I needed to do was add some coolant, but peering in I could see fluid resting on top of the radiator. I was able to book an appointment for Friday morning with my garage, hoping it might be repaired that day.

My daughter was also hoping for a quick fix to the car because she wanted to use it Saturday for something special she was planning to do in Ancaster. Around 11:00 a.m. on Friday morning the garage called to say they found two holes in my radiator, and it could not be driven until it was replaced. Unfortunately, the radiator was not in stock and it would not come in until the following Tuesday.

Receiving this news was devastating. I know many of you might be thinking I was devastated to have to open my wallet and pay for a pricey repair. You are not totally wrong as I was hoping for a simple fix. What devastated me more was knowing how disappointed my daughter would be not being able to drive our Toyota Prius on Saturday to Ancaster. Even though we have two vehicles, my daughter has basically driven our Prius up until this point. She has only driven our Nissan Sentra on one previous occasion. Saturday was going to be the first time she would be driving out of town to Ancaster on her own. We knew she would be more confident driving the Prius than the Sentra.

The timing of all of this was not great to say the least. Naturally, being a person of faith, I vented to God and said, "**Why could this not have happened earlier in the week so there was enough time to get a new radiator in? If not earlier in the week God, then why not next week so my daughter could drive her preferred car to Ancaster?**" I had questions as you can see in this vent, and it did not take long for God to provide me with an answer. [Read more](#)

July 20th - A Constant, Regardless of the Day

I celebrated my 59th birthday on Sunday. With my birthday falling on a Sunday this year I got the privilege of having the congregation sing "Happy Birthday" to me on the actual day. I even took advantage of my birthday being on a Sunday to incorporate it into my children story. It is not every Sunday I can make those participating in the children's story put on hats, make noise with party horns, and blow out candles. My birthday celebration continued later that day with friends coming over to my mother's house for dinner.

While I was celebrating on Sunday, I was also aware of somebody else who was experiencing a very rough day dealing with grief. My heart was breaking for this person, and I wished there was something I could do in order to turn it into a better day for them.

Sunday was a day where there was celebrating happening for me but unfortunately sadness and tears occurring for somebody else. This is a reality of life. Some days we

find ourselves happy and joyful but other days can be very difficult to get through. We have all experienced being on both sides of this pendulum.

This was not the only reality I was reminded about on my birthday. The other reality I was reminded about on my special day is that we can consistently count on God being there for us on either of these two kinds of days.

The first reminder of these realities came from two cards I received on my birthday. I was handed a birthday card by a congregation member on Sunday morning before the service. When I opened it later, I was surprised to see it said: **Five Things God Wants You to Remember In Trying Times**. At first it seemed like an odd card to receive on my birthday. [Read more](#)

July 13th - Not Luck at All

We are blessed to have a considerable amount of bush at the back of our property that contains many mature trees. Around 3:00 a.m. on Sunday July 2nd, I heard a loud crash that woke me from my sleep. It is surprising the sound woke me because I can sleep through the loudest of storms, and even my loudest snores. When I heard the sound, I thought it might have been thunder.

When I took Daisy out for her morning business around 7:00 a.m., it was then when I discovered what made the loud sound earlier. I found that a large portion of a tree from my neighbour's property had fallen onto my side of the bush taking several other trees, branches and limbs with it. The debris was not only on my lawn and in my bush but continued into my other neighbour's lawn also. The fallen tree had just missed landing on my shed and came a few inches short from hitting my neighbour's, too.

While there was a considerable quantity of branches and limbs all over our two backyards there was nothing I could do about it at that time because I had to get ready for church. It was not until late that Sunday morning that my neighbour spotted the fallen tree out back. He sent us a text thinking at first the tree damaged our shed, but then messaged back shortly after that he was wrong and there was no damage to it. It was not until 3:00 p.m. when I could finally go out back to survey the damage up close, and begin to start cleaning up all the foliage.

All I had was a hand saw to begin cutting away at all the branches. My neighbour saw me from his window and came out with a better tool for cutting branches into smaller pieces. He also told me to place all of the cut-up branches into his trailer and once it was full, he would take it to the dump to dispose of. He even offered to come over one night with his chain saw during the week to cut away the bigger pieces of wood. I was grateful for all the help he was offering.

We stood there for a moment assessing all the damage. [Read more](#)

July 6th - A Much Needed Break

School is out for another summer. I know kids and teachers enjoy having this break, but as a parent, so do I. For the next two months I am going to enjoy having a break from:

- trying to wake a teenager up at 7:00 a.m. each morning,
- trying to figure out what different things I can include in her lunch each day for school,
- making sure any books or binders brought home the day before get put back into her backpack for school that day,
- trying to get out the door each morning by 8:35 and then navigating through the busy traffic on the Lorne Bridge and Brant Avenue in order to get my daughter to school before the bell rings,
- stopping what I am doing at 2:30 p.m. each weekday to make the same trek across the Lorne Bridge and Brant Ave. to pick her up at day's end and then navigate through heavier traffic heading home.

I do not begrudge or mind in the least doing these things for my daughter during a school year, but as a parent it is nice to have a break from these weekday routines, just as it is for the students and teachers.

Summer is a time when we look forward to some much-needed rest and breaks from our normal routines. Just as it is nice to get a break from the routines of school during summer, we also look forward at this time of year to travel and vacation in order to get away from the realities of day-to-day life. Perhaps you still remember some of your summer vacations that provided you with this opportunity for rest.

Growing up, many of our family vacations would be spent staying at a motel in Niagara Falls. Even though we were not far from home on these vacations I still enjoyed doing different things like swimming in the motel pool, eating out at restaurants, playing mini-golf, going to some of the museums, or visiting the Skyline tower where they had bumper cars.

My wife Nadine and I have spent some of our summer vacations traveling through the maritime and western provinces of Canada, seeing parts of England and Germany, staying in resorts up north, and exploring parts of the United States. [Read more](#)

June 29th - What the Wind Blew My Way

In last week's message I shared how I can feel a bit anxious some Monday mornings when I place my garbage out for pickup, especially when I have large amounts of cardboard included in my recycling or am exceeding the number of bags I am allowed. I had no anxious feelings at all this Monday because I only had a few bags of garbage to put out and my recycling bins just had normal items included in them.

When I put my garbage out, something unusual turned the corner that caught my attention. It was not a car, nor a person, nor an animal but rather a balloon being carried along by a slight wind. While it was surprising to see, it was not shocking as I quickly remembered how there was a birthday party going on Sunday night not far from us and it probably came from their yard. The wind was gentle at that time of morning, so it just kept the balloon slowly moving along the opposite side of the street.

Two hours later the wind picked up as it poured down rain around 8:00 a.m. If the balloon was anywhere near our house at the time, I am sure it got quickly whisked away by the high winds. I did not see the balloon when I drove my daughter to school at 8:30, nor when I returned home. The winds must have changed direction two hours later. When I went back out at 10:30 the balloon was once again across the street close to where I first saw it at 6:00 a.m. I returned home again around 11:45 to find the wind had now carried the balloon across the street to our lawn and halfway up our driveway. This balloon started off at a birthday party celebration on Sunday, but the winds on Monday took it on quite a journey.

Seeing the journey the wind took this balloon on got me thinking about the various directions life's storms and high winds can try to blow us in. [Read more](#)

June 22nd - Out With the Trash

Mondays are garbage pickup days in my neighbourhood. Some Monday mornings I feel a bit anxious when I place my items out front. I notice I tend to feel this anxiousness on those Monday when I put leaf bags out for collection. Part of my anxiety comes from wondering if I will find a pile of leaves or dirt to be cleaned up afterward because some have fallen out as they threw the bags onto their truck. Usually, I find myself out front later that day cleaning up.

I also get a bit anxious whenever I have to place a large amount of cardboard out front for recycling. I do my best to cut up these boxes and tie them up in bundles but there have been times they have not been taken away because I did not cut the cardboard up small enough. So there is always a bit of anxiousness whenever I put bundles of cardboard out front.

Usually, I only have 2-3 bags of garbage to place out front each week for pickup. Sometimes I may have 5 or more bags and, on those occasions, naturally I have a little bit of anxiety hoping they will throw all the bags on and not leave any because I am past the limit. On those even rarer occasions when I have to use a few contractor-sized garbage bags to dispose of a few things I find myself anxious too, hoping they will take away these larger amounts.

The apprehension I feel on these particular Mondays usually begins at 6:00 a.m. when I tend to put my garbage out for that day and subsides by lunchtime when everything has typically been picked up. There was one Monday recently however when my anxiety lingered late into the afternoon. The garbage truck had picked up

across the street from my house but by 3:00 p.m. had not come back down our side. I began to wonder if the truck driver had forgotten our side of the road, or whether they had experienced mechanical issues. On that particular Monday I had six bags out front. I did not want to be left holding those bags if you know what I mean. Finally, around 4:30 p.m. the garbage truck came and my apprehension was gone.

I know it may seem strange to some people to think I have anxious feelings at times around this weekly event, but this observation got me thinking about a different kind of garbage that we need to consider putting out at the curb. [Read more](#)

June 15th - Fathers

With Father's Day approaching this Sunday I began thinking about the gifts I gave my father on this day. I'll be honest, I had a hard time remembering any of them. I do remember giving him a homemade gift that my kindergarten teacher had us make, but that is because my mother saved it and gave it to me a couple of years ago as a keepsake. I am sure I made my dad a card each year and wished him a happy Father's Day, but I cannot remember anything else I may have given him on his special day. I do not know if the reason I am struggling to remember is because I am now 58 years old, or because my father passed away 24 years ago.

This Sunday will mark my eighteenth Father's Day as a dad. I have been blessed over these years to be given some very special gifts on this annual day. On my first Father's Day I received a pendant for my necklace that said, "#1 Dad" on the front and had Coral's name engraved on the back. Several years on Father's Day I received shirts as my gift. A couple of these shirts Coral designed herself. One shirt had her handprints and footprints done in paint on the front and back. On another shirt she included crosses, so I wore it to church on that Father's Day Sunday and led the service wearing it. She also got me a shirt one year that said, "Blessed to be a dad". One of my favourite Father's Day gifts was a tie that had three pictures of my daughter at different ages in her life. I get complimented so often when I wear this tie whether I am in church or having Sunday brunch after the service at a restaurant. Last year I received a framed picture of Coral and I together after we played our final game at the provincial championships for basketball. I always smile when I see this picture. I definitely have been blessed by the gifts I have received.

I mentioned earlier how I cannot remember the gifts that I gave to my father in past Father's Days. I do not know if other people have a better memory than I do when it comes to gifts they have given but what I have frequently observed is how quickly people remember the special things they did with their fathers on this annual day. I can recall several times when I have sat with somebody after their father passed away and they shared with me how it was their tradition to go golfing with their dad every Fathers Day. Others have told me how they would celebrate Fathers Day by having a barbeque with their dad. Some people have even shared how they would spend that weekend camping with their dads. [Read more](#)

June 8th - A Thank You for Asking

I ran into an acquaintance on Saturday morning at the grocery store. I knew this person had been going through some struggles over the past few years and took this opportunity to ask them how they were doing. For the next 5-10 minutes we stood in the aisle as this person shared their feelings around this difficult struggle. During the conversation I acknowledged the person's feelings, listened attentively, and showed sincerity and compassion.

After the conversation ended, we each went down different aisles and continued our shopping. A few minutes later this person saw me at the end of the aisle and shouted, "Thank you for asking!" Probably five minutes had passed since our conversation ended when the person said this. Obviously during those five minutes the person was realizing how good it made them feel that somebody took the time to ask how they were doing.

This is something I try to do whenever I run into somebody unexpectedly that I am aware of who has been struggling. I often see these as "God encounters" and respond to His nudge by going over to the person and asking how they are doing. It always amazes me afterward how God divinely arranged for the encounter to happen at a time when the person needed to know somebody cared.

Perhaps we have experienced the same thing as I did on Saturday where God purposely had us run into somebody unexpectedly so we could strike up a conversation with them and bless them by asking how they are doing. Or maybe we have been the recipient of such an encounter arranged by God where somebody we knew took the time to ask and listen to us in our moments of struggle. It is nice to have somebody sincerely ask how we are doing, and it is humbling when we realize God chose us to be the person to do this for somebody in need. [Read more](#)

June 1st - Loving Our Neighbour

My neighbour's cat got loose just over a week ago. This cat had been a stray prior to Covid. My neighbour befriended this stray cat who would frequently come into their backyard. At first, they would put food out for it. Once the cat became comfortable with them, they would sit on the back porch and spend time petting it. Finally, after six months of doing this, the cat trusted them enough to come into their home as a pet. This cat adjusted well to its new home over the past few years.

When a garage door was accidentally left open recently, this cat seized the opportunity to sneak out and began roaming the neighbourhood again. My neighbour told me what had happened about 10 days ago. All last week my neighbours have been putting up signs around the area asking people to let them know if they see the missing cat. I have been amazed at the level of neighbourly love I have seen offered to this couple.

My neighbour two doors down spotted the missing cat three nights in a row in her driveway and contacted this couple each time she saw it. My neighbour directly across the road from me spotted the cat in his yard a few times at 4:00 a.m. before heading off to work. He came and knocked on my neighbour's door to let them know. Several other neighbours have been doing the same thing after spotting the cat in their yards. Our neighbour on the right side of us helped them out by posting a picture of their cat on Facebook in our neighbourhood group to help them try to find it. These sightings provided my neighbours with so much hope knowing their cat was still in the area.

My neighbour stopped in at a pet store last week not far from where I live and told the owner about her missing cat. The owner of the pet store spent a good hour talking with my neighbour about where to look for the cat and agencies out there that actually send volunteers to help search for missing animals. In fact, a few nights ago, a group of people from one of these agencies spent a couple of hours looking for this cat. I have been keeping an eye out as well for their cat every time I am working in my back yard or taking our dog Daisy for a walk around the block. I have also spent time each day checking in with my neighbours to see how they are doing emotionally. As one would expect, there have been days when their hopes were lifted and others when they were feeling down and discouraged. I have shared with them in my conversations how I have been also praying for them asking for God's help in finding their missing cat.

So much love is being shown right now for my neighbours. Seeing all of this love and support has touched them so much. This outpouring of neighbourly love has reminded me of the obligation we have as believers to be doing this on a daily basis. [Read more](#)

May 26th - Choosing Our Seats

My daughter Coral and I attended a concert at the Sanderson Centre on Thursday night. As we were entering, I was surprised to see that our neighbours who live right across from us were there too. He had booked his seats a year prior for this show. He told me how he purposely chose seats two rows up in the upper section, center with the stage. The reason why he selected these seats was not only for the good sight line it provided but also because it allowed them quick access to the bathrooms and to the bar. It was my wife Nadine who selected the tickets for Coral and me. She got us great seats just eight rows from stage right in the middle.

My neighbour's comment got me thinking about some of the criteria I use at times when it comes to selecting seats. Whenever Coral and I attend basketball games at McMaster University we always try to get in the section where there are plastic seats with backs on them. If you have ever sat through a basketball game on stands with no back rest, you will understand why we prefer this kind of seating. Whenever we have purchased tickets for Toronto Blue Jays games, I have gotten seats in areas where we might catch a foul ball. When it comes to selecting seats at the movie theater, we tend to look for them in the back row, or second to back and preferably right in the

middle. During COVID we would also look for seats far away from where others were seated. When it comes to concerts, usually price is the biggest factor in determining which seats we select. Because of the high prices being charged at some concerts, we tend to find ourselves very high up in seats quite a distance from the stage. My brother has his own strategy when it comes to selecting seats at a theater. Because of his height, he prefers to get a seat on the aisle so that he has more leg room. If my mother is going to a live theatre performance, we try to get her seats close to the front so that she can hear and see the show better.

We all have our own criteria when it comes to selecting seats at events like these. Whether we have considered it before or not, we also have criteria when it comes to being seated with Jesus. The story where Jesus and His disciples spent the night at the home of Lazarus and his two sisters Martha and Mary reveals the criteria they used in being seated with Jesus. We find this story in **Luke 10**. [Read more](#)

May 18th - Shining the Light of God When on the Losing End

I found myself in a situation for the second time after my daughter's basketball team lost in the bronze medal game at the Ontario Basketball championships. The first time was back in 2019 when my daughter was just 13 years old. I was not her coach at the time, and it was her first season of competitive basketball. The bronze medal game that year was a close contest and our team ended up losing by two points. After the game both teams were asked to line up so the bronze medals could be awarded to the winning team. The convenor at that championship said, "Unfortunately there has to be a winner and a loser in these games." He was right in what he said, but as a parent sitting in the stands at the time and seeing the disappointment on the faces of the players on my daughter's team it was hard to hear. I wish he could have used some other way to acknowledge my daughter's team had not won.

Four years later I was the coach of my daughter's team when we played in the bronze medal game at the Ontario Basketball championships. My players gave it their all but unfortunately fell just short at the end. Once again, we were asked to line up for the medal ceremony. Standing there I was hoping the convenor would use some other expression to convey we did not win. Once again, I heard those words, "There has to be a winner and a loser." I took the words with grace and dignity even though it was hard to hear and experience. What I did not know at the time was how God would soon use my reactions to our loss to shine His light into another coach's behaviour to losing.

Thirty minutes after we lost in the bronze medal game I was still at the gym when it was half time in the gold medal game. One team was losing by 15 points at that time. When the players got to the bench the assistant coach of the team that was losing slammed things on the ground and shouted at the girls in a loud voice telling them how disappointed he was in them. Next, the female head coach began swearing at her players loud enough for everyone to hear in the gym. She kept swearing

constantly at her players for the next two minutes. I could not believe what I was seeing taking place.

I happened to be standing beside the stands where the parents from that team were sitting. After seeing how this coach was responding to her team losing, I felt God nudging me to say something. I turned to one of the parents in the stands and asked if they were okay with the language being used by the coach. The parent shook his head indicating no. I then pointed at my team jersey and said, "You saw me on the court 30 minutes ago after my team lost. Did you see me act in that way toward my players?" Then I said to him, "I was a goalie when I was 16 years old, and I had a coach who used this same kind of abusive language toward me whenever we lost. Let me tell you from personal experience how damaging it is emotionally to be treated that way after a loss or any time." He looked at me and said, "You are right. You did not act that way. I am going to have the other parents join me after the game and express our displeasure to the coach."

I realized afterward I would not have been able to say that to this parent if I had acted in the same manner as this other coach did after our loss. [Read more](#)

May 11th - A Demand for Smiles

Last week Tim Hortons was selling their Smile Cookies for charity. These cookies are always popular when they come on sale. I went into my nearby Tim Hortons one morning to get a coffee. Some of you who read this message will be shocked by that news. One of the changes that the pandemic has had on me is enjoying drinking their coffee once again. When I placed my order for a large coffee the person taking it asked if I wanted to buy a Smile Cookie too. I told her, "If I bought a Smile Cookie without my teenage daughter present, she would be very upset with me." That brought a smile to her face, and she shared how her teenager would respond the exact same way. I did tell her that I would be back after school with my daughter to buy some Smile Cookies.

True to my word dad and daughter enjoyed eating our first Smile Cookies of the week that afternoon. It was interesting to see during the course of the week how much demand there was for Smile Cookies. Several days last week I saw people walking out with a box containing a dozen Smile Cookies. One person I spotted doing this worked at a nearby bank. Another person appeared to be a teacher. She carried out several boxes of Smile Cookies, so I assumed her students were going to be smiling when she gave them out. There were plenty of Smile Cookies available to be purchased the first few days last week.

By Friday I began to notice there were fewer of them in the trays behind the counter to purchase. On Sunday my daughter and her friend tried to get some when they stopped into a Tim Hortons while shopping but discovered they were all sold out. When she told me about this, I decided to go over to my nearby Tim Hortons to see if I could surprise my daughter and her friend with Smile Cookies while they were

watching a movie downstairs in our house. I could not surprise them as they were sold out at this location too. It would seem there was a high demand and desire for smiles last week, even if they were on the front of a cookie.

It is always nice and uplifting to see a smile. I remember one person from my congregation who would always smile at me just before I started the service. I would smile back and found these interactions a comforting way to begin. [Read more](#)

May 4th - A Lesson in Living from a Wonderful Woman

The mother of a dear friend of mine passed away last week. I met her on several occasions and always came away smiling and uplifted after spending time with her. She had such a sweet, kind nature about her. A wonderful tribute was written by her son last week that included some of his mom's thoughts as she lived out her final days. He shared how his mom was actually anxious in a good way during her final days to get to heaven and find out what it would be like. Her anxiousness about heaven provided her with a true sense of peace knowing she was going to be reunited with her family and live with God there.

One of the things she was curious about was what she would be wearing when she got there. Her ability to focus on heaven and eternity allowed her to face her passing with grace, dignity, calmness, and also with a healthy dose of humour. In fact, she wanted her cause of death to be listed as "too many birthdays". She had seen this reading somebody else's obituary one time.

She was quite intrigued during the course of her life by reading obituaries. I remember one time after I began my ministry in Petrolia, she was worried when she saw my name listed in an obituary in The London Free Press and thought I was the deceased. It took her reading it again to realize the reason my name was in the obituary was because I was officiating the funeral.

Her ability to be able to live out her remaining days with such dignity, comfort, and grace had to do with her faith. Her son wrote how his mom was devoted to her church and God. It was her faith and love for God that allowed her to live each day embracing the values of kindness, honesty, forgiveness, generosity and love. I was saddened to learn of this wonderful woman's passing and the grief and loss it would be for my dear friends and the rest of her family. I was also inspired by how she lived out her faith in her final days focusing on eternity which helped her to be comfortable and have a non-anxious presence.

After I read the obituary my friend wrote about his mother, I got thinking that we should be following her example by focusing on eternity when we face challenges in life. [Read more](#)

April 27th - The Difference a Day Can Make

This past weekend we had to drive to Thornhill for basketball games on both days. Saturday was a very stressful day to say the least. The stress began when it seemed like we were hitting every red light in Brantford making our way to get onto the 403. It was raining very heavily at times on Saturday morning which made the drive a bit more stressful. Traffic seemed to slow down at spots along the way putting us a little behind schedule. Then as we transitioned from the 427 to the 401 everything slowed down as traffic had to merge due to construction.

Usually, I try to get to games one hour before tipoff but by 11:00 a.m. we were still at least 15-20 minutes away. Then we started receiving texts from my players that they were caught in traffic and would not get there until 10 minutes before the game. It was a stressful half hour before the game having players, parents, officials, and even the opposing team question me as to whether we would have enough players to start on time. All 8 of my players finally arrived but with less than 10 minutes before the start of the game.

I talked with many of the parents after our first game and they too shared how stressful the trip was for them. Our second game was very stressful as well. We had the lead late in the game but let the other team back in to tie it in the final minute. Then in overtime it became even more stressful as we let another lead slip away and found ourselves behind by 1 with just 15 seconds left. After a timeout one of my players was fouled and went to the line for two free throws. I was stressed watching her take each shot, but she was successful at both attempts and we won by 1 point. It was a stressful game, but an exciting one, too.

After a stressful drive to the gym, and two intense games it was time for us to drive back home. I was hoping the drive home would not be as stressful, but it was. There were several accidents along the way which added another 60 minutes to our drive home. Saturday was a very stressful day.

Sunday was a very different day. [Read more](#)

April 20th - Ahead of Plans

We were blessed last week with some unseasonable weather. The warm weather allowed us to get a head start on many outdoor activities. I took full advantage of this gift last week. I started by picking up the limbs and branches that had come down during the winter in our front and backyard. Next, I focused on the leaves. I was able to get all of the leaves cleaned up that gather under my carport during winter. I then focused on cleaning up the leaves that congregate in our pool area. After purchasing a few more leaf bags I started raking up under some of the bushes in our yard. I even made it to our front flower bed and got it raked.

With the raking done I noticed a few weeds beginning to pop up in my grass so I found my trusty digger in the shed and got my hands and knees a bit dirty attacking the weeds before they get the better of my lawn. I even found time to put away my

snow shovels hoping I was not being premature in doing so. I am never this far ahead at this point of time when it comes to the outdoor work. I would say I am a good month ahead of schedule right now. It feels good to be so ahead of schedule.

I imagine many of us were taking advantage of the beautiful weather this past week to do many of the same things. There are quite a few things for us to do around our places as we transition out of winter into spring. Getting a head-start on those plans either allows us to add to what we hope to get done, or gives us more time later on to enjoy spring and summer. As I was thinking about being ahead with my outdoor work it got me wondering if I am ahead when it comes to God's desires and plans for me.

Coming out of Easter we have been reminded that it has always been God's plan for us to choose to have a relationship with Him. [Read more](#)

April 13th - Getting My Tickets

My daughter and I were very excited when we heard that one of our favourite musical groups would be coming to Toronto on tour. Even though the concert is not until October, tickets were to go on sale Friday, March 31st at 10:00 a.m. on Ticketmaster.

It is not an easy process to get tickets for some concerts through Ticketmaster, especially if the group is very popular. Ticketmaster encourages everyone to sign into their accounts with them at least 10 minutes before the tickets go on sale. Once signed in, you are placed in their waiting room before being assigned a random spot in a queue as soon as the sale begins. Your spot in the queue will appear once the sale starts. On a previous attempt I was informed there were 2000 plus people ahead of me in the queue. Once you are in the queue you have to wait and watch as the number of people ahead of you begins to dwindle down. Finally, you will see that you will be the next one to leave the queue and be able to select seats.

Two weeks prior to March 31st I tried this process for another concert my daughter wanted to go see. Once it became my turn, every time I tried to click on certain seats that matched our price limit, I was informed that somebody else beat me to those tickets. I kept trying for 30 minutes but every time I got this same response. Finally, I got a message that all of the tickets had been sold. That was my experience on Ticketmaster on Friday, March 17th.

On March 31st I was informed at 10:00 a.m. that I was in spot 1753 in the queue. It was a stressful few minutes while I watched my spot in the queue get closer to being able to select tickets. [Read more](#)

April 6th - Why It Turned Out Good

I received a compliment recently for doing a good job from one of the parents on my basketball team. The compliment was a result of being able to arrange three upcoming exhibition games. It may sound easy to do but it is very complicated in my

case because most teams want to have these games on Sunday mornings. It might be convenient for these teams to play on Sunday mornings but not for this pastor who happens to coach as well.

I had been trying to arrange exhibition games since January with various teams but to no avail. I sent out an e-mail to my players and parents in mid-March explaining to them my lack of success in finding exhibition games to play. After I sent the e-mail I prayed and asked God to help me fulfill my players' wishes to have a few exhibition games. It did not take long for this prayer to be answered.

The very next day I received an e-mail from a coach in Guelph who was interested in playing us. We found a Monday night in April that worked for both teams. The very next day I received another e-mail from a coach in Hamilton looking for games. I had never heard of this basketball team before. A few e-mails later we had arranged for two exhibition games. A few days earlier I had no exhibition games, and now I had three. Many of the parents commented how surprised they were to see the follow up e-mail sharing with them this good news. This led to the one parent complimenting me for doing a good job. I appreciated the compliment, but I realized it was God who did the good job. All I did was pray. God did the good job in answering the prayer by making these three games happen.

It should not come as a surprise to anyone of us how prayer can result in good things happening. In fact, we would not have "Good Friday" if it were not for prayer. [Read more](#)

March 30th - The Bags We Carry

My daughter turned 17 last Friday. Every year on the eve of my daughter's birthday Nadine and I will reminisce about the events that transpired on the day before her birth. We always recount how we went on a walk that night and talked about packing the bag we would take to the hospital when the time came. We planned on packing the bag the next day even though Nadine was only just past the 33-week mark at the time. Little did we know at that time that we would need the bag packed sooner.

We had just settled into bed that night when Nadine's water broke. We had to pack a bag very quickly and head right away to the hospital. We spent the next 17 days at London's Sick Kids' Hospital until we could finally bring our daughter home. On the eve of my daughter's birthday, we always remember talking about the need of getting that bag ready.

Last Thursday night on the eve of my daughter's 17th birthday I found myself carrying basketball bags out to the car heading off to practice. Carrying these bags got me thinking back to the night before our daughter was born and of the many changes we have experienced in these 17 years with her.

This walk down memory lane last week not only got me thinking about some of the bags I have carried for Coral through the years but reminded me how we all carry many bags through the course of our lives. The kinds of bags we have carried through the seasons of life are many. Parents may remember the bags they took with them to the hospital for the birth of their child and the diaper bags they carried for a few years after that. Having children, chances are we have packed and carried our fair share of backpacks and school lunches over the years. Parents with children in sports have had to carry their hockey bags or gym bags. Then there are the many bags and suitcases we have carried navigating through airports or hotels while on vacation. We have all carried our fair share of grocery bags and sometimes have had them rip in our hands. Golfers may have carried their golf bags around a course before getting wise and using a cart. During the Christmas season, we have carried bags coming out of the mall containing our gift purchases. Then there are the purses that have to be carried, or the brief cases and computer bags we take to work. We may even carry a few bags under our eyes at times depending on how little sleep we are getting. These are just some of the bags we carry during the course of our lives.

Sometimes the bags we carry are heavy and other times they are light. If the bags we are carrying are filled with burdens, then they become extremely heavy. Think of some of the burdens we have had to carry at times. [Read more](#)

March 23rd - Working on the List

My daughter Coral loves movies. She was really excited about the Academy Awards a week ago and made sure leading up to that event she watched every movie that was nominated for a major award. She even had a prediction list made out ahead of time picking who she believed would win each category.

I am not a film buff like my daughter. I enjoy watching movies but over the years I have not seen what some people consider to be some of the best ones of all time. Realizing this, my daughter gave me a list of six movies back in January that I should watch so I would become more enlightened about some of the best films ever made.

By March I had only watched one of the movies on her list and half of another one. It was not that I had forgotten about her list during those two months, but rather other things just took a priority over watching those movies during that time. Last week I turned on a movie that was not on her list. She happened to come into the living room while I was watching the movie and commented how it was not on her list.

Guilty as charged and with a guilty conscious added to it, I decided to start watching a few movies on her list. It was a good week for me to do it because I had no evening basketball practices with it being March Break. I was able to watch two of the movies that were on my daughter's list and enjoyed both thoroughly. A couple of times my daughter walked in while I was watching her movies. She smiled each time and commented how anxious she would be to hear what I thought about it later. Afterward I did seek her out so I could debrief with her my thoughts about the movie.

I have been working on one of my lists during this past week after ignoring it for the previous two months. Doing this got me thinking about a list that God has given to us in the Bible to work on. [Read more](#)

March 16th - It Has Been Three Years

It is hard to believe we have arrived at the three-year anniversary of COVID-19 shutting the world down. I can still remember the week before all of this happened. My daughter's basketball team played a tournament in Hamilton the weekend before and won the gold medal. During that next week we started hearing about more cases of people being infected with COVID. The NBA shut down games and other professional sport leagues were talking about doing the same. We had a basketball practice on the Thursday night and the girls were told to keep conditioned if things shut down as it would probably only be for 2-3 weeks. Little did we know at that time it would be 18 months later before they would play again. We went to the library on the Saturday and stocked up on as many books as we could in case things did shut down. We were not sure whether to hold a service that Sunday, but decided to go ahead in case it would be the last in-person one for awhile.

My memories of the days leading into the lockdown are still very vivid. Every one of us experienced loss and changes to our lives as a result of the pandemic. I took time on this three-year anniversary to think about some of the losses and changes I experienced. It is funny how one of the changes I began to reflect upon was my view towards toilet paper. Prior to COVID I used to be embarrassed buying toilet paper at the store. Even though it is a necessity, I always worried about running into somebody I knew when buying it. It may seem silly, but I was always conscious of this.

Our view toward toilet paper changed during COVID. It became a highly sought after and prized possession to purchase. My attitude toward this necessity changed as a result of this reality. I was no longer embarrassed when purchasing it, and in fact carried it like a prized possession. I remember running into my neighbour at Shoppers Drug Mart early in the pandemic. I was in line proudly holding up my success in finding toilet paper and encouraging him to hurry to the back of the store and get some before it was all gone. I found it amusing reflecting on how one of the changes I have experienced during these three years is my comfort level toward purchasing toilet paper.

A lot of things have changed for all of us during these past three years. Some of the changes we have experienced are unlike any we have ever seen before. [Read more](#)

March 9th - Being Reminded of the Need to Forgive

One responsibility I have currently is being the clerk of the Presbytery of Paris. There are a lot of administrative aspects to this position including registering clergy with Service Ontario to perform weddings. I was contacted by a minister a month ago

asking for my help to get him a temporary licence to perform a wedding in May. He gave me all of the details pertaining to the wedding, so I typed up a letter supporting his application for a temporary licence and mailed it to him to include in his correspondence with Service Ontario.

A week after sending the letter I received a phone call from him that he had given me the wrong date for the wedding. He apologized for the mistake and asked if I would send a new letter of endorsement with the proper date on it. I was glad to do it for him.

Another week passed and I received a call again from this same minister. When he received my second letter, he realized he had given me the wrong date again. He felt so bad and said, "I hope you can forgive me for all of the trouble I am causing you." He could not see me smiling on the other end of the phone, but I replied, "I am a minister. Forgiveness is part of the job." I sent the letter of endorsement off a third time thinking this minister finally had everything he needed to submit his application.

The following week I received another phone call from this minister. He told me he had made a mistake in filling out certain dates on one of the applications I had forwarded to him, and asked if I could send another one to him. Four times I heard apologies and each time I forgave, despite the inconvenience and cost each mistake created for me. What helped me to forgive him each time was being conscious of the reality that forgiveness goes with the job.

This same awareness helped me to be forgiving at the bank in the midst of that same four week period. [Read more](#)

March 2nd - Giving Some Inspiration

The basketball team I coach has played their first six games of the season. So far, our record is 2 wins and 4 losses. Some people would look at our record and think we are not one of the stronger teams in the league. I do not believe the wins and losses at this point of the season truly tell the story of how well my players have done. In one game we did lose by over 20 points to the opposing team but we only had 6 players and two of them were very close to fouling out so we had to play conservatively. In the other three games however, we only lost by 5 points or less. We played these 3 games at times with just six players due to injury, illness, and vacations. In fact, in our last game in which we lost by 5 points one of my best players became ill during the first quarter and could not play the rest of the game.

While our record is 2 wins and 4 losses, I think we are a far better team than the results show. I could not be prouder of my players and how they have competed and played this year. I am not a coach who gets obsessed about wins and losses, but it is hard not to feel for my players at the end of a game when they have come up on the losing end.

I realized after our last set of games I needed to provide my players with some inspiration as we move forward into the remaining 2-3 months of the season. I am planning to take a few moments at the beginning of our next practice to share with them how I believe our current record does not tell the true story about our team. I want to remind them how close we were to winning three of the games we lost despite the obstacles we were facing. After telling them these things, I am going to write the following word on a whiteboard and hold it up for my players to see: **BELIEVE!**

I want them to move forward in this season believing what I believe. [Read more](#)

February 22nd - What I Find

I went to Shoppers Drug Mart on Thursday to pick up a prescription for my mother, and when I got out of the car, I happened to find a nickel in the parking lot. It had been a while since I found any money on the ground. I used to find a lot of pennies left on the ground, but now that they are no longer in circulation that is not the case for me anymore. Naturally, the reason why I picked up the nickel and put it in my pocket was in order to clean up the parking lot and not for the gain it would provide to this cheap, frugal, Presbyterian minister's savings account.

Little did I realize at the time I picked that nickel up that God was using it to make His presence and help known to me a few days later. Early Monday morning I was beginning to ponder what my mid-week message would be. As I always do, I prayed and asked God for inspiration. After doing these weekly messages for almost three years now, I need all the inspiration I can get.

I was thinking about a few ideas for the message while I was walking our dog, Daisy. When we got back home, I came up our front steps and found another coin on the ground, just like I did on Thursday. This time it was not a nickel, but rather a penny. I had gone up and down those same steps probably five times the day before. If it was there, I did not see that penny any of those times. Yet, there it was, waiting to be found by me on Monday morning much to my surprise considering neither Nadine nor I carry any pennies with us anymore.

When I found the penny, I instantly remembered how on Thursday I had picked up the nickel thinking about how I no longer found pennies anymore. I realized right away this was all of God's doing in order to make His presence known to me and remind me He is always there to help me even when it comes to finding inspiration for these messages. If anyone is wondering if I picked the penny up, of course I did, for the same reasons I gave for the nickel.

With prices going up as they are I would not mind finding a few more nickels, dimes, quarters and loonies on the ground. While it is rare for me to find nickels or pennies on the ground anymore, I do find a lot of subtle signs like this from God allowing me to see His presence and help in my life. [Read more](#)

February 16th - How I Know

Two weeks ago, we went out for brunch after the Sunday service with my mother and when it came time to pay the bill, I had to go up to the front counter to do so. When I got there, I happened to overhear a conversation some of the waitresses were having. The one waitress was suggesting that their restaurant should really promote pancakes on Shrove Tuesday. Her colleagues were confused as to the connection between Shrove Tuesday and pancakes. She began to explain to them and after doing so looked over at me and asked, "You knew that didn't you?" I smiled and said yes but did not reveal how I knew because I wanted to wait and see if a certain something was mentioned. It did not take long for what I was hoping for to be mentioned. When her colleagues asked her how she knew this she replied, "At church when I used to go and serve at some of the pancake suppers there!" I smiled when I heard this and replied, "That is how I knew too!"

It is nice to see how some people still know things they have learned while in church. It is so easy for us to forget certain things we learned in the past. I am constantly reminded of this whenever I am asked by my daughter for help with her homework. I shared with you a few months ago how I had to teach myself again how to do functions and trigonometry in order to help her with math. I used to know how to do it in high school and university, but the years have not been kind to me remembering how to do this kind of math. I found the same thing with French when my daughter was taking it in Grade 10. I was really good at it in my high school years. It took me a little time to figure it out, but I was pleased how I was able to help my daughter understand certain tenses in French better.

Just as we have learned at school, we have also experienced this over the years at church. Over the years we have heard many sermons preached and have had various lessons taught to us in Sunday School and sitting in the pews. How much do we still know and remember over all of this time? Are we able to recall certain truths and teachings from our years at church like the waitress at the restaurant was able to do? For instance, do we truly know in our heart of hearts and with complete certainty:

[Read more](#)

February 9th - Reminded of My Youth

On Saturday morning I happened to look out my window while waiting for my coffee to brew and noticed a young boy skating on the ice at our park with a hockey stick in hand. When I saw this my first thought was how crazy it was for him to be out on such a cold morning, but then I remembered how I used to do the same thing at his age. Our family home backed onto a park which always had ice in the winter to skate on. I used to spend hours and hours on that ice even on the coldest of winter days. I usually would not get off the ice until I had to come home for supper, or until I saw the porch light turned on which was my parents' signal to me it was getting late, and it was time to come home.

I am sure some of those winter days were extremely cold out on that ice, but it did not stop me from being out there as long as I could. Now that I am 58 years old, I would not be able to stay out there very long. I get annoyed with the dog on extremely cold days if she takes too long to do her business while we are outside. Even if the temperature was just below zero, after 30-45 minutes on the ice my ankles would be hurting, my upper thighs would be screaming at me, and the rest of my body would be telling me it is time to get off.

As I looked out the window on Saturday morning at the boy skating on the ice on one of the coldest days of this winter, I was reminded of what I could do in my youth, but also what I am capable of now. Some days, we see things that remind us of our youth. These reminders quickly make us realize some of the many ways we have changed over the years. These changes in us may include: [Read more](#)

February 2nd - Was it Good or Bad?

I needed to do some banking on Monday morning and was pleased to see there were only two other customers ahead of me in the line when I arrived. When I got to the teller and told him I needed to make a deposit he proceeded to ask me how my weekend was. I must have hesitated for a second, or perhaps my tone was not convincing, but I replied, *It was good!* He looked at me strangely and replied, *Based on that I would say it was 50-50 whether it was good or bad!* Instead of thinking about what he said at the time, I asked him in return how his weekend was. He was far quicker and more convincing with his response. He smiled and shared how it was a really good weekend for him because he got to do a lot of the things he had hoped to do. I was glad it was a good weekend for him.

After I left, I began thinking about my weekend and why, despite saying it was good, it did not come across as convincing. It did not take me long to realize if I had really thought about my response, I would have had to admit it was not a very good weekend. The reason why it was not so good was because over the course of the two days, Nadine and I learned about several people we know going through difficult losses and challenges.

On Saturday we received a phone call that somebody we knew passed away earlier that morning in hospital. We were also informed on Saturday about somebody needing prayer after they were told that their cancer had returned more aggressively. Later that same day I was also asked to remember in prayer a family who was going through a very difficult day emotionally. On Sunday morning I was informed of another individual who needed prayer as a result of a battle with cancer. On Sunday afternoon I learned of another young person we knew having died the day before. I remember saying to Nadine on Sunday night how we received so much bad news over the course of the weekend. I realized this explained why my response to the teller at the bank did not come across as enthusiastic when he asked about my weekend.

It is hard to view a weekend as being good when I hear about people suffering and going through difficult times physically, emotionally, and spiritually. I paused many times through the course of the weekend to pray for these people. I also found my thoughts turning toward them often on Saturday and Sunday. I think we all wish that every weekend, and every day for that matter, was good. [Read more](#)

January 26th - Canadians and Believers

Right after church on Sunday the snow started falling very quickly for a few hours. While I was shovelling my driveway on Sunday afternoon a lady walked by out for her daily walk. I have seen her many times before, but I do not know her name because we usually greet each other with a smile or hello and keep going. I do not know if the snow put her in a good mood, but this time after I said hello, she stopped for a short conversation.

She started off by saying, "Isn't it great that it is snowing. This is Canada we should expect snow at this time of year." Remember this comment came from the one who did not have a shovel in their hand at the moment. I smiled and replied that it is always so pretty to see the snow on the trees and ground, but how I do not like it when it affects driving. I thought she might agree with what I said, but instead she replied, "It's Canada! We Canadians should be good at driving in the snow!" I do not know if she drives or not, but that very afternoon the 403 was backed up due to several accidents as a result of the wintry conditions.

After she made this comment, she continued on with her walk down a snow-covered road on a Sunday afternoon in Canada. I still had shovelling to do after our conversation, and as I continued, I began to think more about her comments how we do have certain expectations when it comes to being Canadian and experiencing winters. I began thinking about how people from the United States or other countries view Canadians and life here. Canadians are sometimes portrayed as:

- using the word "Eh" a lot in our vocabulary,
- being very polite and kind,
- being very good at playing hockey (I wish the Toronto Maple Leafs would remember that some nights),
- having a love for maple syrup.

These are just some of the ways people portray Canadians. My reflections while shovelling did not stop with just how people perceive these character traits we may have as Canadians. As I was finishing up, I began thinking about some of the **traits that should describe us as believers**, too. [Read more](#)

January 18th - A Different Kind of Lesson

Most Sundays I can be found at church teaching a truth from God's Word to the children and congregation. This is where I prefer to be on a Sunday morning. Instead,

this past Sunday found me on a basketball court in Unionville teaching another important truth. I do not like having to take a Sunday off for basketball, but it sometimes happens.

I knew heading to Unionville that morning that it would be two very challenging games for our team. Normally I have nine players for each game. Because one player was on holidays, another was ill, and another was limited in the number of minutes she could play, I would have only 6 players to play the majority of these two games.

Before the first game I reminded the girls about the importance of believing in one's self and maintaining hope even when we go into situations where we are outnumbered. I was so proud of how our girls played. Despite the disadvantage we were at, the girls competed right to the end and won 35-32. I thought this was the lesson that I was meant to teach them on Sunday about the importance of character.

Little did I know at the time there was a greater lesson to be taught on that subject. In the second game our girls competed very well against a more experienced team for the first 12 minutes. The other team played a very aggressive style of basketball. I wish this style on their part was just physical, but it crossed over into the emotional realm as well. Many disrespectful and profane comments were being made by their players to mine while on the court.

By half time I could see the impact these hurtful comments were having on my players. Their comments were taking away the fun and enjoyment my players usually have when playing. The other team's behaviour and comments just got worse as the game continued and did not stop even when they opened up a 20-point lead on us toward the end.

At the end of the game players will meet at center court to shake hands. When my players got back to the bench after the final whistle, they did not want to go shake hands with the other team. [Read more](#)

January 12th - Reminded of My Blessings

On Monday morning I had to get back into my normal weekday routines with school starting again after a two week break for Christmas. My morning routine started with finding my daughter's lunch bag and filling it with healthy snacks. It continued with making sure breakfast was made on time for all three of us. My daughter slept in most days during the break, so I only had to think about making two breakfasts those mornings.

After breakfast, my normal school day routine continues by checking her school bag and making sure no books or items are missing. After all of this it is my routine to drive her to school each morning. I was glad to see that on this first day back we were three minutes ahead of schedule pulling out of our driveway.

Getting back into these normal routines on Monday allowed me to stop into the grocery store after I dropped my daughter off at school. Yes, this is sometimes part of my routine as well during the school year. I do this because I find it quicker and easier to pick up a few items at the grocery store when it is not busy. The other reason why I sometimes make groceries a part of my morning routine is sometimes I will find items reduced and can snatch them up before other shoppers beat me to them.

I decided to stop in at Sobeys on Monday and found some deals (No I am not getting paid to advertise for them). One item I found was \$2.00 off, another was \$3.00, and still another was reduced by \$4.00. I was quite proud of myself on Monday morning finding these savings. I went to the self checkout and showed the clerk on duty how much each item was reduced. I had to scan each reduced item first before she could apply the discount from her terminal. Because my cheap ways required a little extra work on her part, I made sure to thank this clerk for her assistance.

As I thanked her, I already felt blessed by the fact that I had found these three items and saved \$9.00 in the process. The best blessing of all was about to come. After I thanked her and wished her a good day, she said to me, **God bless you**. The tone of her voice conveyed it was very heartfelt and sincere. I turned and replied, **May God bless you too!**

As I walked out to my car, I began to reflect upon her words to me and began to think about the many things God had already blessed me with that morning. [Read more](#)

January 4th - Let Us Not Put This Away

With Christmas now over and the new year upon us we are beginning to see people putting things away. I was reminded of this after seeing several real Christmas trees being put out at the side of the road for pick up when I walked our dog Daisy on New Year's Day. That meant these people had to put away the ornaments that once decorated those trees and the gifts that once were placed under them. I do not know if these people put away the rest of their Christmas decorations at the same time as they were doing the tree, but it makes sense if they did.

We have an artificial tree, so we have not put away any of our decorations yet. That will probably be on our list of things to do this weekend. It's not just our trees and decorations that we put away at this time of year. Soon we will be putting away singing the songs we love during the Christmas season. We may also put away some of our favourite memories of Christmas and hope to remember them next year. We may also put away our Christmas spirit that has touched our hearts in this season and we might replace it with the usual feelings that arise as our lives return to normal day to day living. The only reminders some may soon have of Christmas are when their Visa or Mastercard bills come in, or if the Hallmark channel continues to show some of their movies about this season.

With the new year here, as we begin to put away our Christmas decorations and related items, some people may also put away all thoughts of Christ now that Christmas is over and never think about Him again until Easter or next December. I hope this is something we are not doing at this time of year. We just have to focus on the Good Friday story to be reminded of what happens when we try to put our belief in Jesus away for any period of time.

In three months, our attention will be drawn toward Good Friday and Easter Sunday.

[Read more](#)