

The South Florida Avenue MESSENGER

A Friendly Church With a Vital Message Proclaiming the Unsearchable Riches of the Lord Jesus.
The Messenger is published weekly by the South Florida Ave. Church of Christ meeting at 1807 South Florida Ave - Lakeland, FL 33803 Vol. 70 No. 24 06-13-17

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SUNDAY SERVICES

Bible Study.....9:30 a.m.
Worship.....10:30 a.m.
Evening Worship.....6:00 p.m.

WEDNESDAY

Ladies Class.....10:00 a.m.
Bible Study.....7:00 p.m.

HOME OF

Florida School of Preaching

MISSION FIELDS

Dub Hill.....Russia
Don Iverson.....India
Marc Veary.....Malawi, Africa
Graham McDonald..Scotland
J. Paguaga.....Honduras, C.A.
Joey Treat.....Pacific Islands
Ted Wheeler.....Ghana, W.A.

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IN
SEARCH
OF THE LORD'S WAY

Sundays @ 8:30 a.m. Check local listings

You Don't Want To Follow Jesus If . . .

By Hiram Kemp

The thrust of Christianity is to make disciples (Mt. 28:18-20). The basic meaning of a disciple is someone who follows Jesus Christ. When Jesus came into first century Palestine, he encouraged people to follow him and become his disciples (Mt. 4:18-22). From the first century until now, Christians have been persuading the world to follow Jesus. Sometimes, in our efforts to convert our family and friends, we may fail to tell them the difficulty of being a Christian. While Jesus was interested in the souls of men, he sometimes taught hard things that turned people away from him (Jn. 6:60-66). Christianity is not for the lukewarm or those who are wishy-washy in their commitments. To follow Jesus involves commitment (Mt. 16:24). Jesus seemingly even talked some people out of following him when they were not willing to count the cost (Lk. 14:28). So, we may not want to follow Jesus if ...

Comfort and Ease Are High Priorities

Following Jesus is sometimes extremely uncomfortable. On one occasion a man attempted to follow Jesus and Jesus impressed him with the difficulty of discipleship: "As they were going along the road, someone said to him, 'I will follow you wherever you go.' And Jesus said to him, 'Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head'" (Lk. 9:57-58). This man wanted to follow Jesus and Jesus told the man that He was homeless. The birds and foxes had it better than Jesus when it concerned shelter. If this man wanted to follow Jesus, he had to face the fact that he might not always enjoy the comfort of a nice place to lay his head. While Jesus does not command his disciples to take a vow of poverty, it is important to realize that following Jesus may result in loss of comfort. Christianity is often inconvenient. Those who would follow Jesus must prepare for schedule interruptions, loss of material wealth, and possible abandonment from family and friends (Lk. 14:33). Those in the Bible who followed Jesus faced difficult circumstances and were often in danger, hunger, and discomfort (2 Cor. 11:22-31). If we present a problem-free, lackadaisical Christianity to the world, we present them with a false view. If you must always be comfortable and always operate on a smooth schedule, you might not want to follow Jesus.

(continued on page 2)

You Don't Want To Follow Jesus If . . .

God is Not a Priority

Some people are simply too busy for Christianity. It has been said, "God does not want weekend visitations as our father, but full custody." There are those who have sports, shopping, hobbies, and many other activities ahead of their relationship to God. While one may not quit Christianity altogether, the attempt to squeeze in a little Jesus when convenient is not going to work. Jesus often stressed the total commitment necessary to be his disciple. A divided allegiance simply will not do (Mt. 6:24; 13:44-46; 22:37-40). There have been those who wanted to follow Jesus but wanted to do other things first. Jesus would not accept it: "To another he said, 'Follow me.' But he said, 'Lord, let me first go and bury my father.' And Jesus said to him, 'Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God'" (Lk. 9:50-60). Jesus was not harsh or insensitive to someone burying his deceased loved one. This man seemed to be wanting to go back and be home just in case his father died. He was delaying his discipleship for another event that he wanted to put first. Jesus was saying, let the spiritually dead bury the dead, but you should get busy proclaiming the kingdom. If I have many other priorities like becoming successful in business, getting my degree, or finding the right mate ahead of being a Christian, I might not want to follow Jesus. While those things are not inherently sinful, they need to take a back seat to my relationship with God. The Jesus who left the glories of heaven and came to earth to be spat upon, beaten, tempted, and mocked on our behalf will not take second place to my calculus homework or my fairytale love story (see Phil. 2:5-11). If you believe you have more important things to do, Jesus is not the one to follow.

The Past Is Priority

The Bible has a lot to say about looking back. The Bible encourages us to have a healthy handle on our past as sinners (Eph. 2:1-9). We were sinners and have been saved. We need to remember this so that we can reach out to others without a proud and arrogant spirit. However, the Bible also warns against being so stuck in past success or failure that we fail to live for the future (Phil. 3:13-14). Some people are so wrapped up in how bad they were that they never look ahead to see how bright their future can be with God. Others, are so enamored with their former days of service to Jesus that they forget that life must be lived in the present. Jesus discouraged people from looking back when they wanted to follow him: "Yet another said, 'I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home.' Jesus said to him, 'No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God'" (Lk. 9:61-62). Again, Jesus told this man not to worry about the family left behind, but to face forward and follow Him. Turning back is not an option for the disciple of Jesus. If there is something in your past more important than your future with Jesus, you do not want to follow him. The calendar of the Bible always reads today; not yesterday or tomorrow (Pr. 27:1; Mt. 6:34). If we assume we had it better when we served sin in the past and Christianity has only made our lives boring, we will eventually turn back and be in a worse condition than before (2 Pet. 2:20-22).

Conclusion

In Luke 9:58-62, three times people wanted to follow Jesus and three times Jesus just about talked them out of it. We should not make Christianity harder than Jesus did, but we also should not make it easier. We should not lead people to think following Jesus will erase all their problems, make life smoother, and always be expedient. The way to Jesus is still narrow (Mt. 7:13-14). Some people treasure comfort, hobbies, and the past so much that they may not want to follow Jesus.



Three Guiding Principles

1st "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful."

2nd "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

3rd "Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him."

Colossians 3:15-17

SFA FAMILY MATTERS

Prayer List

Our Members: Please continue to pray for Jim Turner, Ginny Hamby, Margaret Coone, Sharon Mathis Washington, Josephine Bowman and Taleah Anderson.

Relatives: Benny Martin, Paula Geiger, (Brenda Murray's daughter) and the nieces and nephew of Carla Moore.

Shut In Members: Virginia Plumlee, Dick & Joyce Burbage, Don Starks, Sharon Edler and Duane Nelson.

Others: Joyce Stearsman, Chrissi Fuesner, Connie Hyer and Jack Pinckert.

Upcoming Events

Saturday June 17th: Men's breakfast at the Central Church of Christ in Haines City at 8:00 a.m.

Saturday June 17th: Wedding for Elizabeth Tubbs and Richard Dean at the College Road Church of Christ in Palatka, FL. Reception to follow. Please R.S.V.P. at 863-381-1511.

June 22nd-24th: Weeki Wachee K-5 camp. If interested contact Orange St. Church of Christ, Chad or Sabrina Tagtow at 863-286-5811 or 863-412-0022.

Congratulations

Congratulations to Darlene Thompson on the birth of her new great-grandson born June 5th. Also Carla Moore had a great niece born on Sunday June 11th!

Sympathy

Sympathy goes out to Chuck & Evelyn Wyatt in the loss of Evelyn's sister in Texas. Also Carla Moore's, nieces and nephew who lost their mother. Please pray for these families during this difficult time. Pray for safe travels for all these families too!

Church Directory

If you have not reviewed your page for the pictorial directory, next Sunday June 18th will be your last opportunity to do so. The directory will go to print after the 18th.

Hither, Thither and Yon

Brenda Mask and Darlene Thompson will be traveling the next few weeks. Please pray for safe travels.

Visitors

D. Reginald Pugh, Bill Cline and Pauline Gilmore



Tune into AM 1330 (station WWAB) with your friends and neighbors every Monday from 5:00-5:30 p.m. for the "Way of Truth" program. Let's influence Lakeland!

SCHEDULED TO SERVE

June

Bobby Sheumaker **Table** C.J. Grimes
Ken Walker **Assist** Tucker Sweeney

Sunday, June 18, 2017

9:30 A.M.

Song at Bible Class Frank Hamby
Prayer..... Tucker Sweeney

10:30 A.M.

Announcements..... Matt Willcut
Song Leader Jason Hendrix
Opening Prayer Kenny French
Sermon..... Hiram Kemp
Closing Prayer Tyler Anderson

6:00 P.M.

Song Leader David Williams
Opening Prayer Steve Hunley
Sermon..... Hiram Kemp
Closing Prayer Ken Walker

Greeters The Bingles
Att. Cards..... Willcut boys
Open & Close Building..... Tim Croson

Wed. June 21, 2017

Song Leader Kyle Bingle
Opening Prayer Kenny French
Closing Prayer Paul Romine

Please meet in the library. If you cannot serve, please call Chuck Wyatt so he can get a replacement - (863) 602-9005

Sunday, June 25, 2017

9:30 A.M.

Song at Bible Class Kyle Bingle
Prayer..... Paul Romine

10:30 A.M.

Announcements..... Matt Willcut
Song Leader Jason Hendrix
Opening Prayer Fred Strickland
Sermon..... Hiram Kemp
Closing Prayer Paul Romine

6:00 P.M.

Song Leader David Williams
Opening Prayer David Anderson
Sermon..... Hiram Kemp
Closing Prayer Jim Turner

Greeters The Pratts
Att. Cards..... Paul and Ian
Open & Close Building..... Tim Croson

Wed. June 28, 2017

Song Leader Matt Willcut
Opening Prayer Jeff Bingle
Closing Prayer Jason Hendrix

~ HOW ARE WE GIVING ~

May 21	\$5,163.29
May 28.....	\$4,431.30
June 04.....	\$7,164.00
June 11.....	\$4,986.00
Contribution Average	\$5,403.29
2017 Weekly Budget	\$4,716.51

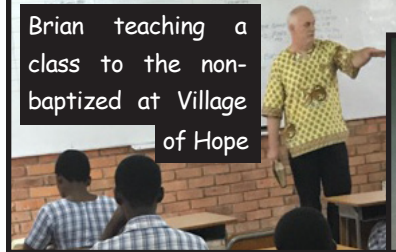
Scenes from Ghana! Thanks for Your Prayers!



5 girls baptized



Hiram "street preaching"



Brian teaching a class to the non-baptized at Village of Hope



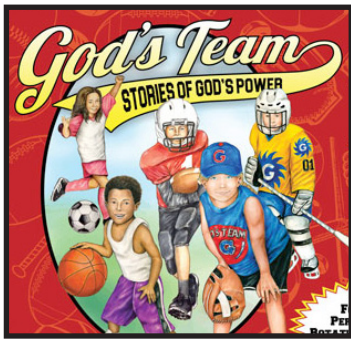
The entire immediate Ghana team (minus Bob Bauer, who took the picture), including five Americans and seven Ghanaians. The three women worked very hard preparing meals and hand-washing laundry. They were valuable team members.



South Florida Avenue
CHURCH OF CHRIST
1807 South Florida Avenue
Lakeland, FL 33803-2653

Return Service Requested

The End of Your Search for a Friendly Church . . .



"Super Saturday"
VBS July 29
Classes for all ages including adults!

Terrance Brownlow-Dindy, preacher from the 6th Street church of Christ, will teach the adult class!



Continue praying for our YES II campaign to Penonome, Panama, July 1-9, 2017. Our young people and their chaperones will be passing out tracts, inviting people to the Gospel meeting, and conducting personal Bible studies.

CONTINUE PRAYING

that the Gospel seed planted by Hiram, Brian, and the Orange Street team will continue to germinate and bring forth Christians and stronger congregations!



Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Mt. 6:33)