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New Site

Well, it's finally happened. I have a new site. From now on, my blog will reside on the new joshharris.com.

All this is the result of the hard work of my assistant Katherine Reynolds and a lot of help from our friend Tim Challies. Thanks, guys!

Note: If your site links to this blog, please be sure to change the link to www.joshharris.com, and don't forget to update your RSS feeder.

[Go to the new site.](#)

<http://joshharrisblogson.blogspot.com/2007/03/new-site.html>

Sledding

We went sledding on Monday with the Lees. This is a shot of JQ launching off a little jump that some kids had built.

<http://joshharrisblogson.blogspot.com/2007/02/sledding.html>

Holiness Requires Putting Off Sin

Today, I continue this series of posts related to my message on cultivating holiness, drawn from Romans 13:11-14:

Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires. (ESV) I have shared that holiness requires urgency, and that it requires starving our flesh. Here's a third point:

Holiness requires putting off sin.

That's what verse 12 urges us to do. It reasons that, since the night is far gone, since the day is at hand... "let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light." Verse 13 gets more specific about the works of darkness. It says, "Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy."

The works of darkness are the opposite of godly behavior. John Stott sums up the list by describing it as "a lack of self-control in the areas of drink, sex and social relationships."

God says, don't escape into alcohol and partying to solve your problems. Don't try to find meaning in immoral sex or in living for sexual pleasure. Don't ruin your relationships by fighting and destroying others to get what you want.

He calls us to cast off this sinful behavior. To throw it away. This is what real repentance is all about. It's putting off sin--casting it off, throwing it away. We're called to drastic action.

Many times, when we find an area of sin in our lives, we don't trash it. Instead, we file it away. Instead of throwing it away--really getting it out of our lives--we just relocate it to another drawer, as it were. We shuffle it out of sight for a little while. We don't cultivate real conviction, we don't mourn over it, we don't hate it. We just hide it until our conviction passes.

Casting off sin means to totally reject it--to change your lifestyle so that it's no longer an option. Where is God calling you to cast off sin? Is there an area in which you continue to stumble over and over again? Is there a particular sin you keep coming back to again and again? What radical action could you take to throw this sin out of your life for good? How can you make a decisive break with it?

<http://joshharrisblogson.blogspot.com/2007/02/holiness-requires-putting-off-sin.html>

Holiness Requires Urgency

I shared part of the message I did about the importance of not "feeding our flesh." In the same message, there were three other aspects of cultivating holiness that I highlighted. Over the next week I'll share them here.

Romans 13:11-14 says:

Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires. (ESV) One of the greatest enemies of holiness is apathy and complacency--the sense that pursuing godliness is something that can wait till tomorrow, that there's no rush. Paul attacks this wrong view and shows us that we need to see holiness as a crucial need--one that requires immediate, prompt attention. So here's the key point I want to consider today:

Holiness requires urgency.

This passage begins by addressing the issue of the time that we're in. Verse 11 and the first part of verse 12 pile up words and images that press on us the high priority of holiness. It says, "You know the time..." and "the hour has come" and "salvation is nearer to us now" and in verse 12 "the night is far gone; the day is at hand."

What does all this mean?

Paul is addressing the fact that we're living in the end times or the last days. In the Bible, the end times refer to the age between the first and second coming of Jesus. So, everything after his resurrection and ascension--including our own day and age--is part of the last days.

The last days are a time of overlap--Jesus has inaugurated his kingdom, but we're still waiting for the full expression of his salvation. We're still waiting for his final return and the glorification of our bodies.

That's what he refers to when he says "our salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed." He's saying that the time of Jesus return is closer. Every day takes us nearer to the day when we'll see Him face to face and be utterly freed from the effects of sin. When Paul says, "You know the time," he's setting the pursuit of holiness in the context of the age that we're living in. He's saying "holiness matters because the clock is ticking...this sinful world is on the way out."

Paul uses several vivid metaphors for illustration:

First the imagery of "night" refers to the world ruled by the devil and ravaged by human sin.

Second, the imagery of "sleep" is a symbol of sinful behavior. In this passage, to be asleep as a Christian means to be indulging in sinful thoughts and desires; it means to compromise. It's the spiritual equivalent of lazily sleeping in when you should be awake.

Have you ever slept in and forgotten a really important appointment you had? The alarm rings, but you forget all about where you need to be. You turn it off nonchalantly roll over. You're snuggled up in those nice warm covers. You have no intention of leaving your cocoon. You're in no rush. You don't have a care in the world. And then, all of the sudden, you remember. Or maybe someone else remembers for you and pounds on your door and says, "What are you doing asleep! You're going to be late! You can't miss this meeting!"

Suddenly everything changes. Sleepy bliss turns to panic. Adrenaline surges through your body. You're awake, you're running, and you're trying to shower, brush your teeth and put your clothes on all at the same

time.

Sometimes, as Christians, we are groggy and lazy in our pursuit of holiness because we've forgotten the time. We've stopped thinking about the fact that Jesus is going to return. We've stopped thinking about our meeting with him. And so, instead of watching for the coming day, we're snuggling up with sin. Paul would say, "Stop sleeping! Stop hitting the snooze button, spiritually. Shake off your grogginess and your apathy toward godliness. Rouse yourself! Wake up!"

If someone were to examine your life for a month--how you spend your time, what you give your attention to, the choices you make--would they say that you pursue holiness with a sense of urgency? Would they say that you're focused, intent and aggressive in obeying God?

Also, consider--are there other parts of your life that you're more urgently pursuing than holiness? What about entertainment? I'm sad to say that there have been many times in my life when I've approached the next movie or DVD or TV show with more urgency than I did my relationship with God. And when I'm wrapped up in the endless pursuit of entertainment, I'm sluggish toward the things of God.

In this passage, I believe the Holy Spirit is calling us to wake up, rouse ourselves from sleep and pursue righteousness.

<http://joshharrisblogson.blogspot.com/2007/02/holiness-requires-urgency.html>

Miscellaneous (in three life-changing points)

Here's some random stuff:

1. Thanks for all the feedback on the Romans 13:14 cartoons. I've been amazed at all the encouragement I've received from these drawings. Several people at my church have communicated something along the lines of "you should do this all the time." Of course if I did, I think it would get old after about two weeks. "Let me try to explain what the Apostle Paul meant by 'food sacrificed to idols' by showing you a doodle I did of a big hunk of steak..." The truth is that most passages or biblical concepts don't lend themselves to cartoon explanation quite so easily as "feeding the flesh." We'll see. I'm sure a cartoon will crop up again some time.
2. Someone recently asked if we could organize the posts on the blog into categories. Yes, that is coming very soon. My assistant Katherine has been working hard (with the help of our friend Tim Challies) on moving everything from this blog and my old website into a new, combined, neatly organized blog/website. It's going to be a big improvement from what we have now. It should be here in the next couple weeks.
3. I don't really have a third point, but as a preacher I don't feel comfortable ending this post with only two. Why do I so often have three points? Seriously, I'm not trying to. It might be some sort of subconscious trinitarian thing. Hmmm, I'll have to think about that more.

Have a great day.

<http://joshharrisblogson.blogspot.com/2007/02/miscellaneous-in-three-life-changing.html>

9 Marks Interview

I'm a big fan of [9 Marks Ministries](#). And have really enjoyed listening to the different interviews they've done with some of my heroes in the faith. So the fact that they [featured me this month](#) is a serious drop in standards on their part. But I was honored to be included and it was great to be able to talk with Mark Dever, who I deeply respect, and share the story of how God brought me into ministry through CJ Mahaney.

If you're not familiar with these interviews, 9 Marks publishes them every few months. I highly recommend checking out [past interviews](#) they've done, especially if you're a leader.

<http://joshharrisblogson.blogspot.com/2007/02/9-marks-interview.html>

Purity Series

We're now doing a series on purity at Covenant Life. In the last 3 weeks:

["God's Good Plan for Sex"](#) considered a biblical view of God's good plan for our sexuality, and how we can flee temptation to go outside of God's boundaries.

["Resisting Lust"](#) examined how lust deceives us and how we can learn to resist it.

["Marital Intimacy"](#) discussed the role that intimacy in marriage plays in protecting men and women from sexual immorality, and a proper view of a husband's and wife's obligation to each other in marital intimacy. For the next two weeks, the Purity series extends to cover the topics of holiness (this Sunday), and then issues related to media in our pursuit of holiness.

<http://joshharrisblogson.blogspot.com/2007/01/purity-series.html>

West Coast Revival

Here's a band I've been enjoying lately.

[West Coast Revival](#) grew out of our [sister church in Pasadena, CA](#). Their first full-length album was recently released by [UGG Records](#) (you can buy it there). For more info, check out their [interview on the New Attitude blog](#).

http://joshharrisblogson.blogspot.com/2007/01/west-coast-revival_18.html

NA Promo Video--Update

Now it's on YouTube:

See Friday's post below if your church wants to promote New Attitude.

<http://joshharrisblogson.blogspot.com/2007/01/na-promo-video-update.html>

New Attitude Video

NA has posted a new [promo video](#).

If you are a church leader who would like to use the video to promote NA at your church, you can request the promo DVD and/or promotional package [here](#).

<http://joshharrisblogson.blogspot.com/2007/01/new-attitude-video.html>

A Heart of Wisdom: Conclusion

"The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty...
So teach us to number our days, that we may get a heart of wisdom."
-Psalm 90:10, 12

Over the last week, I've been posting thoughts on [Psalm 90](#), covering 4 characteristics of a heart of wisdom:

1. Stands in awe of the eternal God
2. Recognizes man's insignificance
3. Acknowledges God as holy Judge
4. Runs to God for mercy

Every year, I make a list on a piece of paper, numbering 1-80. I use it to jot down milestones of God's grace in the past, and look ahead and prayerfully consider what will be most important in the upcoming stretch of my life. I do know that I've got two driving priorities the next 15 years: to faithfully care for my family, and faithfully teach God's word in this church.

I'd encourage you to do this, to sit down and consider where you are on your way to 70 or 80 years. Consider where God has brought you from. Consider how quickly your life will be over. Consider the holiness of God. How does that reality adjust your plans for 2007?

I don't know what resolutions you've made (and which ones you've already broken) by now, 9 days into the New Year, but here's something for consideration--**How will we live this year if we number our days and have a heart of wisdom?**

Here are some thoughts:

1. We will pursue satisfaction in God alone.

[\(Verse 14\)](#) What have you sought satisfaction in apart from God in the past year? When we see the fleeting nature of life, we see that knowing and being satisfied in the steadfast love of God is our greatest purpose. Let's commit ourselves to being people who love and study and memorize God's word. Let's be people who pursue private communion with God. Who attend each Sunday meeting expecting to hear and be changed by God's word. Let us be a people who pursue God in prayer.

[For those looking for a good Bible-reading plan, [Discipleship Journal](#) has a good one I've used.]

2. We will pursue holiness and cast off the sin that so easily entangles.

If we really see how short our time is on earth, if we see God in his holiness, would we make such allowance for sin? [Verse 8](#) reminds us that there is no sin hidden from God. Where are you trifling with sin? Where are you harboring it? Where are you toying with temptation? Number your days and hate your sin. Flee from it.

3. We will be passionate about God's work around us.

[\(Verse 16\)](#) If we number our days, our hearts are going to beat for the work of God in our local church. For the work of God in other countries. For the spread of the gospel.

4. We will spend ourselves for God's glory.

Numbering our days doesn't lead to timidity and fearful conservation of our life. It leads to boldness. To faith-filled risk taking. It leads to mountain-moving prayer. The missionary Jim Elliot said "Wherever you are be all there. Live to the hilt every situation that you believe to be the will of God." What season are you in? Live it to the hilt.

There's certainly a place for caution...but not when it's motivated by desire to preserve our comfort and advance our selfish desires. Let's attempt great things for our great King this year! What if we worried more about the lost than our comfort? What if we spoke with humble boldness instead of remaining silent. What if we attempted what only God's power could enable?

Consider [v. 17](#)? Only what we do for him will last.

5. We will be humble, grateful and joyful because of the gospel!

In Psalm 90, we see Moses looking ahead with faith for God's future salvation. Friends, we have seen it. And it's more wonderful than words can express!

When we number our days, we will be humbled and will live in holy fear of our Holy God, but we will also run to and receive and rejoice in the glorious salvation that He has provided for us in Jesus Christ. This coming year will be marked by toil and trouble. For some of us, it will be our final year on earth, but because Jesus has come we can have joy and hope in it. Because Jesus shed his blood as the perfect once for all sacrifice in our place, our iniquities have been removed from us and God's wrath has turned to favor. He is for us!

Lord, teach us to number our days in this life. Teach us to long for the day when we see you. Teach us to live our life for you and your glory!

<http://joshharrisblogson.blogspot.com/2007/01/heart-of-wisdom-conclusion.html>

A Heart of Wisdom: Runs to God for Mercy

"So teach us to number our days, that we may get a heart of wisdom."
-Psalm 90:12

Today I post my 4th and final quality of a "heart of wisdom:"

A heart of wisdom runs to God for mercy.

In the past several posts, we've been discussing how short and insignificant our lives are, especially in light of God's eternity. We have acknowledged God as our Holy Judge, sovereign over our lives, and filled with righteous anger toward our sin. Seeing death as God's judgment on human sin is meant to humble us but it needn't end in despair. A heart of wisdom sees that life is fleeting, that sin has earned God's judgment and that only God himself can save us.

That's what verses 13-17 of [Psalm 90](#) model for us. Moses has been describing man's frailty and God's wrath, and then in verse 13 he turns to God and begins to plead for mercy. He says, "Have pity on your servants! He doesn't turn to entertainment or sexual pleasure or money or power or fame. He turns to God and cries, "Only you can give my life meaning." He says, "You satisfy us, God, you make us glad, you reveal yourself to us. Unless you bless us, we have nothing and our lives have no meaning."

God doesn't want us to "number our days" so that we'll be morbid and despairing. He wants us to number our days so that we'll escape the illusion of human independence and pride. He wants us humble so that we can throw ourselves on him for mercy. He wants us to number our days so that we'll forsake the fleeting and the meaningless, and live for his praise.

As I've mentioned in previous posts, the key truth we need to take from this passage is this:

We can only live our days wisely when we see God clearly.

And when we see God clearly, we see how little time we have, and we see that pleasing and honoring him with our lives is what truly matters. We see that only in Him do we find satisfaction and joy, and only in the eternal God do we find eternal life.

<http://joshharrisblogson.blogspot.com/2007/01/heart-of-wisdom-runs-to-god-for-mercy.html>

A Heart of Wisdom: Seeing God as Holy Judge

This is part 4 (and point 3?confusing already) on my series of posts on [Psalm 90](#)?learning to "number our days, that we may get a heart of wisdom." I'm exploring 4 qualities of the "heart of wisdom." The first was that a heart of wisdom stands in awe of the eternal God; the second, that it recognizes man?s insignificance. For today, a third quality is this:

A heart of wisdom acknowledges God as Holy Judge.

It?s not enough to know that you?ll die. It?s not enough to know that your life will pass quickly. To gain a heart of wisdom requires that we rightly see ourselves in relationship to God. He is over us. He is our judge. He is the one who decides when we die.

Look at verse 3. It says of God, "YOU return man to dust and say, 'Return, O children of man!'"

Genesis tells us that God created Adam from the dust of the earth. And when Adam and Eve sinned against God and ate the forbidden fruit the punishment, all they and the rest of mankind received was death. Death returns man to dust. This wasn?t God?s original design. We were made to live forever in fellowship with God, but our sin ruined this plan. Our sin brought death into the world.

Verse 7 says, "For we are brought to an end by your anger; by your wrath we are dismayed." Death is God?s judgment on human sin. It is God?s sentence on sinful mankind. It is God?s way of humbling us, of judging us for our attempts to usurp his authority. Death is divine limitation on human pride.

In verse 8, "You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence."

Acknowledging God as our Holy Judge is essential to being able to rightly interpret and understand life. Death points us to the reality of God?s holiness. He is a righteous judge who is angered by our sin. Death points us to our guilt before God. A heart of wisdom understands that?s man?s greatest need is to find peace with God.

<http://joshharrisblogson.blogspot.com/2007/01/heart-of-wisdom-seeing-god-as-holy.html>

A Heart of Wisdom: The Insignificance of Man

If you're just joining in, I'm in the midst of posting some reflections on [Psalm 90](#), exploring how we can learn to "number our days, that we may get a heart of wisdom" (v.12). We can only live our days wisely when we see God clearly, and this series of posts is covering four qualities of a "heart of wisdom" based on my Dec. 31 [sermon on Psalm 90](#). In my last post, I discussed the first: **"A person with a heart of wisdom stands in awe of the eternal God."** The second quality of a "heart of wisdom" is this:

A heart of wisdom recognizes man's insignificance.

Pastor James Montgomery Boice once wrote that Psalm 90 is "probably the greatest passage in the Bible contrasting the grandeur of God with man's frailty." And what a contrast it is!

God exists outside the confines of human measurements of time. Verse 4 says "For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past..." A millennium, a massive length of time in human history, is like a day to him.

But we measure our lives in decades. Verse 10 points out that we're doing well if we live 70 or 80 years. Compared to God, we're like a gnat that lives for a day. Our days, Moses says, are "soon gone and we fly away."

It might not sound pleasant or uplifting to think about how quickly life is going to be over, but coming to grips with this fact is what it means to number your days. You'll only have wisdom if you only live skillfully if you face the reality that human life is fleeting.

Have you ever noticed that one of the marks of maturity and wisdom is the ability to rightly perceive lengths of time? You know how some people have bad depth perception? Well, many people have really bad "time perception."

When you're a kid you have zero time perception. I'm sure your parents out there have noticed this? you call your kids and say, "We're leaving the house in 2 minutes!" and they say, "Oh, great. 2 minutes. Let's get Monopoly out," or "Let's build a tree fort." They have no idea how quickly 2 minutes will go by. If you tell them Christmas is in 8 days, it's an eternity to them. "8 days! That's going to take forever."

But the older and wiser a person becomes, the more he sees that life flies by. You see this when you look back on a season of your life that is past. Numbering our days involves seeing that human life is over in an instant. Do you see how this makes us wise? It points us to the fact that God is significant and man is not. It humbles us.

We like to live our lives in the delicious illusion of self-importance. We think of ourselves as strong, as powerful, as significant. We humans compare ourselves to images of greatness? mankind is like a mighty towering tree, or maybe a skyscraper stretching into the sky. Or man is like a huge rocket blasting into the sky leaving the earth behind as we conquer unknown corners of the universe...

But God picks other analogies to describe man. Verse 5 says that we're like a dream. "You mean? like a really nice dream?" No, like a dream that you don't really remember in the morning. It gets better. He says we're grass. Not very flattering. "Like grass that is renewed in the morning; in the morning it flourishes and is renewed; in the evening it fades and withers." Man at his most impressive is like grass that lasts for a day. It's grows up in the morning but by the end of the day it has faded.

Last week we witnessed the death of a former President of our country and the death of the dictator Saddam Hussein. For two years Gerald Ford was the most powerful man in America. For decades Saddam Hussein held absolute power over millions of Iraqis. But now they're gone. They've been "[swept] away as with a flood; they are like a dream." For awhile they'll be remembered and written about, but very quickly they'll be a distant and forgotten memory. So will we all.

Do you have great thoughts of yourself? Are you caught up in the legacy you're hoping to build? Are you ignoring God as you live for your own glory? DON'T BE A FOOL. Man is insignificant. Life is fleeting. Wisdom comes from numbering one's days and seeing how small our time on earth really is in light of God's eternal glory.

<http://joshharrisblogson.blogspot.com/2007/01/heart-of-wisdom-insignificance-of-man.html>

A Heart of Wisdom: In Awe of the Eternal God

A couple days ago I shared that I yearly reflect on Psalm 90 in order to be reminded of and humbled by the brevity and unimpressiveness of my life. I also said I'd be posting on 4 qualities of the "heart of wisdom" we should seek to cultivate (v.12). These four qualities are based on this truth:

We can only live our days wisely when we see God clearly.

So then, the first point is this:

A person with a heart of wisdom stands in awe of the eternal God.

Wisdom doesn't start with self-evaluation. It starts with worship. It begins by considering the character and nature of God.

That's where Moses begins in verse 1 of Psalm 90. He's leading a million people through the desert. They are nomads wandering without a true home. But he says, "Lord, you are our dwelling place." You are our refuge and you've been our refuge.

He goes on to consider God's eternity. Verse 2 brings us before a God who is "from everlasting to everlasting."

The proper perspective comes from focusing on God. Moses and the Israelites really wanted a place to live. They wanted a homeland. They wanted a few mountains and some earth to call their own. But Moses remembers that there's something far more significant—they worship the one true God who existed before creation, before the mountains were brought forth.

In the brilliance of the glory of the eternal God, Moses turns his attention to man...

(To be continued next post)

For a spoiler, [listen to my sermon](#) from December 31, which is the source of these posts.

<http://joshharrisblogson.blogspot.com/2007/01/heart-of-wisdom-in-awe-of-eternal-god.html>

?Teach Us To Number Our Days?

Yesterday was my birthday. I turned 32. When I was a kid, I resented the timing of my birthday. December 30th is not the best day to be born if you're hoping for a truckload of birthday presents. I often got presents that said, "Merry Christmas and Happy Birthday," which I figured was pretty much a criminal act. But that's just the way it works--5 days after Christmas, people are tired of shopping and/or broke. And the day before New Years Eve, no one really wants another party. So I used to think that I had the worst birthday possible.

But I don't think that anymore. I no longer resent my birth date. In fact, I actually like it. The reason is that I've found spiritual benefit in the timing of my birthday. Having my birthday and New Year's so close helps me to feel more acutely the passing of time. And that's very good for my soul, because I need to be reminded that I'm getting older. I need to be reminded that I have a limited amount of time on this earth.

For this reason, every year I have a little birthday tradition: I study [Psalm 90](#)--a Psalm that helps me meditate on the fleeting nature of life. And as I look ahead to a new year, I ask God to give me "a heart of wisdom."

Fittingly, today I preached on Psalm 90. The passing of a year is a chance for us to humbly reflect on the brevity of life and, in doing so, to see more clearly what matters most.

Verse 4 says, "For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past," and "The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty? So teach us to number our days, that we may get a heart of wisdom." (10, 12)

I remember my dad teaching me as a young boy to pray for wisdom. He said, "Son, God promises to give wisdom to those who ask?so don't forget to ask."

Coming to a start of a new year is a reminder that we need wisdom. We're given a fresh slate?a brand new span of time and the question we all face is "What will we do with it? How do we make the most of it?"

We need wisdom. Wisdom is the ownership of insight. It's seeing what is most important, and then living accordingly. Eugene Peterson defines wisdom as "the art of living skillfully in whatever actual conditions we find ourselves."

The Bible teaches us that true wisdom comes from seeing all of life in light of who God is. Proverbs 1:7 says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." In other words, the only way to have insight and perspective and skill in living is to make God your primary concern?to see him and his word and his commands and his reward and his judgment as the issues of utmost importance.

And that's what Psalm 90 calls us to do. Again, "Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom."

This Psalm does more than just encourage us to count off how many years we have left in life. By showing us who God is and our relationship to him, it sharpens our vision of what is truly important in life.

I built my message today around this key truth: **We can only live our days wisely when we see God clearly.**

Over the next several days, I'm going to be posting on four qualities of a "heart of wisdom" that I covered in the sermon, which I'll link when it becomes available online. For now, enjoy the last few hours of 2006, and may God give you grace to cultivate a heart of wisdom in the year to come.

UPDATE--Listen to the sermon [here](#).

<http://joshharrisblogson.blogspot.com/2006/12/teach-us-to-number-our-days.html>

A Year of Grace at Covenant Life Church

Each December, my family tries to sit down and recap the year that is almost gone. We list the big and little events that defined the year. It's a chance to reflect on answered prayers and give thanks for God's goodness. This month, I did the same for our church family's year, which I shared in our December "Family News." Here's a short list of highlights in no particular order:

1. The look on everyone's face when we did a "reverse offering" at the end of our [Affluenza series](#) and gave out money to invest in God's kingdom.
2. Changing our meeting times to 9 and 11:30am. Boy, did 8:30am feel early!
3. Encountering Jesus' love and compassion for sinners in our [series through the Gospel of Luke](#).
4. Karin Layman, Valori Maresco and my wife Shannon led their first series of [Titus 2 meetings](#).
5. Emma attended Summer Celebration led by Mike Bradshaw and asked me the day after it ended how long it would be till the next one!
6. Grant Layman and his team launched the [Family Room](#) meetings and had so many parents and couples say, "Why didn't we start this years ago?" Good question!
7. John Loftness and Robin Boisvert began [Covenant Life College](#), where members can go deeper in theological study every Wednesday night.
8. Attending [Together for the Gospel](#) and seeing CJ's friendship with and leadership alongside men like Al Mohler, Mark Dever, Ligon Duncan, John Piper, R.C. Sproul, and John MacArthur.
9. Having [New Attitude](#) back and better than ever under [Eric Simmons?](#) leadership and the creativity of our amazing singles.
10. After many years of prayer, we sent out Chris Silard and many Covenant Life members to plant a [church in Frederick, Maryland](#).
11. In February, the children's ministry at Covenant Live grew with the addition of Mary Kate Harris. (Okay, I so snuck in a personal one. I couldn't help it!)

God has been very kind to us, and we say goodbye to 2006 with grateful hearts for all His mercy.

<http://joshharrisblogson.blogspot.com/2006/12/year-of-grace-at-covenant-life-church.html>

Runny Nose and the Incarnation

Today I'm working on my sermon for this Sunday. My words and sentences are so feeble in the face of the reality I'm trying to preach about. I'm preaching from Matthew 1, "And they shall call his name Immanuel (which means God with us)."

If this weren't already too much for my small mind, I have a cold. And then the thought hits me, "Jesus had colds." Wow. God became man. He dealt with all our weaknesses, all the inconveniences of a body. He had a runny, sore nose from time to time. And he did this without Kleenex and without sin, which is pretty incredible, if you think about it.

I hope your soul is reveling in the glorious, mind-boggling truth of the incarnation. This quote from Charles Spurgeon can help increase your Christmas exultation:
Infinite, and an infant. Eternal, and yet born of a woman. Almighty, and yet hanging on a woman's breast. Supporting a universe, and yet needing to be carried in a mother's arms. King of angels, and yet the reputed son of Joseph. Heir of all things, and yet the carpenter's despised son. Amen! Hallelujah! Jesus is our Immanuel!

<http://joshharrisblogson.blogspot.com/2006/12/runny-nose-and-incarnation.html>

Elijah, Baal...Merry Christmas!

I just learned that this past Sunday the lesson plan for the children's ministry had them studying [1 Kings 18:1-39](#), the story of the prophet Elijah (who I happened to dress up as for this year's Harvest Party...see picture). One member of our church named Drew Jones--one of the funniest, most creative and insane people I know--thought that it was very strange to have kids studying Elijah and the prophets of Baal the week before Christmas. So, he took it upon himself to write and perform a song for the kids that both taught the Old Testament story and was appropriate to the Christmas season. Well, I'll let you decide for yourself whether or not what he came up with was appropriate in any sense of the word...But I think it's pretty funny!

(To the tune of "Deck the Halls")

Gather everyone in Israel
Fa la la la, la la la.
Bring some bulls and prophets of Baal
Fa la la la, la la la.
Kill the bulls and make an alter
Fa la la, la la la, la la la.
If Baal is god he will not Falter
Fa la la la, la la la la.

Dance like fools don't be so haughty,
Fa la la la la, la la la la.
Where is Baal he's on the Potty
Fa la la la la, la la la la.
Thrash around kick up some mud
Fa la la la la, la la la la.
Cut yourself and make some blood,
Fa la la la la, la la la la.

Baal's an idol nothing real,
Fa la la la la, la la la la.
Fire came, God made a meal
Fa la la la la, la la la la.
Even drenched in lots of water,
Fa la la la la, la la la la.
God has spoken start the slaughter
Fa la la la la, la la la la.

<http://joshharrisblogson.blogspot.com/2006/12/elijah-baalmerry-christmas.html>

Justin Taylor on John Owen

New Attitude just did a [short interview](#) with [Justin Taylor](#) about the new edition of [Overcoming Sin and Temptation](#), which he edited with edited Kelly Kopic. It's worth checking out.

<http://joshharrisblogson.blogspot.com/2006/12/justin-taylor-on-john-owen.html>

Nothing is Impossible with God

In studying for upcoming sermons on the birth of Christ, I came across a quote by John Calvin, cited by John Nunes in an article in Modern Reformation (Nov/Dec '06, p.36) based on Luke 1:37, in which Mary states, "For nothing will be impossible with God."

Let us remember that we are all in the same condition...Our circumstances are all in opposition to the promises of God. He promises us eternal life, yet we are surrounded by death; He declares that He considers us justified, yet we are still covered with sins. He testifies that He is forgiving and good towards us; yet outwardly all we see is His anger. What then are we to do? We must close our eyes, and disregard ourselves so that nothing may prevent us from believing that God is true. Isn't this another way to describe gospel-centered living? We close our eyes to ourselves, our circumstances, our feelings and our performance, and instead look to and believe in the promises of God fulfilled in our Savior's life, death and resurrection. God, help me disregard myself and believe that you and your glorious gospel are true for me!

<http://joshharrisblogson.blogspot.com/2006/12/nothing-is-impossible-with-god.html>

The Privilege of Sharing the Gospel

I wanted to share a letter that one of my fellow pastors, Kenneth Maresco, recently received from a former member of our church. It's a powerful reminder of how important it is for all of us to use every opportunity to share the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ.

Kenneth ?

I wanted to write a note to thank you for your dedication to the Lord, your passion for spreading the Gospel & teaching us to do the same. Your teaching & preaching has positively affected more lives for the good than you can possibly imagine! One of those lives was Ellen Ann McWilliams, a former co-worker of mine from Fannie Mae.

Joyce & I invited Ellen to attend the Alpha course in the fall of 2002. Although Ellen was actively attending a local Catholic church at the time she accepted our invitation. Ellen was involved in counseling divorcees and wanted a better understanding of the Bible and understanding how to have a relationship with Jesus. By the end of the course, Ellen had accepted Jesus as her savior & re-dedicated her life to the Lord.

Ellen was a kind & lovely woman. We were blessed to have her as a guest in our home for Christmas Supper and again at Easter Supper in 2003. On more than one occasion she told us she had never felt such joy in her life. We loved her as a friend & a member of the body of Christ. Even after Ellen moved to the Philadelphia area for a new job, we kept in contact by phone & email until this past Spring 2006.

Sadly, though, I had a recent conversation with another former co-worker who informed me that Ellen died Memorial Day weekend in a skydiving accident. The circumstances were so unusual that the story was reported in the national & international [newscasts](#).

We have since learned from the same co-worker, the coroner's report states that due to evidence of a heart attack, Ellen probably died before striking the ground. If that is true, I can only imagine that as she called to God for help, He mercifully pulled Ellen from this life to come home with Him.

The circumstances of her death were a shock to us, but we are comforted in knowing we will one day have the opportunity to worship with her at the feet of the Lord.

-Russell Please pray for Ellen's family. And please consider who God has placed in your life at this time. Don't pass up an opportunity to speak them about the hope you have because of Jesus Christ.

<http://joshharrisblogson.blogspot.com/2006/12/privilege-of-sharing-gospel.html>
