Outreach Center Network News Letter

January 2017

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### Hope for the Cynical

January 6 was Epiphany. This remembers and honors the wisemen who came from the Far East looking for Jesus, the new born king. When they found him they gave him gifts.

The word epiphany means shine upon, like a spotlight on a person. The spotlight shines on Jesus as the savior; not of just a few people, but the savior of the world. To emphasize this Bible readings are used for the next few weeks in church in which people are invited to come to Jesus and see him as the savior.

45 Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote--Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." 46 "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked. "Come and see," said Philip. John 1:45-46 (NIV)

A person who is sarcastic is sometimes said to be cynical. Nathanael certainly seems to hold Nazareth in disdain as he didn’t think much of this village. His cynicism almost kept him from seeing Jesus. But Philip persisted, "Come and See." And so Nathanael came to see and thereby came to faith in Jesus.

Do you know someone who is always cynical, questioning and doubting? Maybe you are like that at times or today.

How did Philip deal with Nathanael's cynicism? Was it Philip's clever words spoken to him? Was it Philip's strong and over powering faith that did the trick? No.

The dictionary says that a cynic is someone who is inclined to question the sincerity and goodness of people's motives and actions, or who, more pessimistically, questions the value of living.

One type of cynicism is of general but unfocused hope. Some people,, like Nathanael, have not given up hope in general, but only in the particular. It might be a job setback. It might be an illness or loss of a close friend or eye sight. It might be, well any kind of dream that is shattered, causing a doubt in a God who cares.

Philip's response: is really the best for general cynicism, "Come and see." Philip knew that the best argument was simply to challenge Nathanael to meet Jesus. Our best argument also is to challenge serious cynics in our world to "come and see" Christ at work.

God has promised to be found in his Word. There he reveals himself as the Savior who died for our sins and the sins of the whole world. Through them he creates the faith that receives forgiveness and new life.

It is despair which leads people to become cynics. Again, Philip teaches us the patient response: invite them once more to hope. Keep telling them, "Come and see.")

What will they see? The church, sinful Christians who receive forgiveness and strength to then change and hope. Our invitation to others must regularly remind us to take our own advice. We, like Philip , need to keep coming and seeing Jesus, faithfully trusting his promise to be present with his people in their worship, prayer, and service. If we do not come, cynicism will strike at us as well. We will find disappointment, we will look to ourselves and there too find shortcomings. While looking for truth we may try this and that, go here and there but we will still be disappointed. When we keep coming back to God, to Jesus, we will find the ice of cynicism melt like snow and ice on a warm spring day.

The single most important thing we can do for cynicism in ourselves and others is to issue Philip's invitation: "Come and see." In this way, we will understand that there is specific hope, not in ourselves but in Jesus, and that we will find meaning and purpose in the truth of life, eternal life.

### A new Network for the New Year

When someone comes to me with a new idea, I am always interested. I listen and pray with them and about it. When two people suggest a similar idea, I sit up and pay attention. It’s an answer to the first prayer and the Holy Spirit moving God’s people. Martha and Trish brought an idea and an opportunity.

An outreach center gives people who are blind the chance to gather, encourage, support and share with one another. But what does a person do between the gatherings? What does a person do when they are not near one of the 53 outreach centers? Sadly, they are often left without support—until now.

Certainly there are support groups for people with sight loss all over the country. Certainly there are chat lines full of people who are blind. Martha and Trish however have proposed that it be Christian, with encouragement from God, along with the tips, suggestions and general encouragement.

What is needed? What are we looking for?

We are looking for two things. First we are looking for people who are blind who:

1 Are at peace with who they are and who want to help other people

2 Are willing to listen and receive some training

3 Are able to phone a person once a week for a six month period

We are also looking for those people who are blind and not connected or doing well with adjusting to blindness. These are the people who would benefit from a phone friend. We all probably know such a person. These contacts will be important once we have trained the “Phone Friend listeners.”

Please contact me, Pastor Dave, if you are willing to be a “Phone Friend Listener.”

### Christmas Aftermath Diet

'Twas the month after Christmas, and all through the house,

Nothing would fit me, not even a blouse.

The cookies I'd nibbled, the chocolate I'd taste

At the holiday parties had gone to my waist.

When I got on the scales there arose such a number!

When I walked to the store (less a walk than a lumber),

I'd remember the marvelous meals I'd prepared;

The gravies and sauces and beef nicely rared,

The wine and the rum balls, the bread and the cheese

And the way I'd never said, "No thank you, please."

As I dressed myself in my husband's old shirt

And prepared once again to do battle with dirt ...

I said to myself, as I only can,

"You can't spend a winter, disguised as a man!"

So, away with the last of the sour cream dip.

Get rid of the fruit cake, every cracker and chip.

Every last bit of food that I like must be banished

Till all the additional ounces have vanished.

I won't have a cookie, not even a lick

I'll want only to chew on a long celery stick.

I won't have hot biscuits, or corn bread, or pie.

I'll much on a carrot and quietly cry.

I'm hungry, I'm lonesome, and life is a bore ...

But isn't that what January is for?

Unable to giggle, no longer a riot

HAPPY NEW YEAR to all, and to all a good diet.

### A Dog's Letters to God

You may be familiar with children’s letters written to God. This month we bring you some of the letters written by dogs.

Dear God,

 How come people love to smell flowers, but seldom, if ever, smell one another? Where are their priorities?

Dear God,

 When we get to Heaven, can we dogs sit on your couch? Or is it the same old story?

Dear God,

 Excuse me, but why are there cars named after the jaguar, the cougar, the mustang, the colt, the stingray, and the rabbit, but not one named for

a dog? How often do you see a cougar riding around? We dogs love a nice ride! I know every breed cannot have its own model, but it would be easy to rename

The Chrysler Eagle the Chrysler Beagle!

Dear God,

 If a dog barks his head off in the forest and no human hears him, is he still a bad dog?

Dear God,

 When my foster mom's friend comes over to our house, he smells like musk! What's he been rolling around in?

Dear God,

 Is it true that in Heaven, dining room tables have on-ramps?

Dear God,

 More meatballs, less spaghetti, please.

### Final Thoughts

In upcoming issues we can and will look at many of the same topics as well as others. If you have questions, thoughts or suggestions, please send them to me or post them on the blind ministry email list.

Pastor Dave