

SIEZE the day!



Vision and Purpose for 2010



We are about to say *goodbye* to 2009, and *welcome* to 2010.

And, I wonder how 2009 has been for you.

Here are some *ponderisms* I want to share with you – that I have learnt or questioned over 2009:

Taking back harsh words is the same as trying to stuff toothpaste back into the tube!

How is it, that it takes one careless match to start a forest fire, but a whole box to start a camp-fire!

Does pushing the elevator button more than once – get you there any faster?

Why doesn't glue stick to the inside of the bottle?

The only difference between a rut and a grave – is the depth!

As I look back on 2009, and forward to 2010, there is one thing I have confidence in.

Just as God has been faithful in the year past – so we can trust Him to be faithful in the year to come.

You see – every day that God gives us – is a precious gift.

We need to use it wisely.

Once today is gone – we can never get it back again.

One day, for all of us – tomorrow will never come again.

While Debs and I were at Assembly several weeks ago – I was having my lunch in the cemetery beside the Rangiora Baptist Church.

I was sitting beside the tombstone of a man who was born in April 1912 – and died in 1952 – only forty years of age.

And – as strange as it seems – I verbalized my thought, and I said; ‘I hope you enjoyed your life – because it’s all over-rover.’

This reminds me of the movie Dead Poets Society – where Robin Williams played Professor John Keating.

Speaking to his first year students as they gathered in the photo room of by-gone students – he turned to his boys and whispered;

"Now I'd like you to step forward over here. They're not that different from you, are they? Same haircuts. Full of hormones, just like you. Invincible, just like you feel. The world is their oyster. They believe they're destined for great things, just like many of you. Their eyes are full of hope, just like you. Did they wait until it was too late to make from their lives even one iota of what they were capable? Because, you see gentlemen, these boys are now fertilizing daffodils. But if you listen real close, you can hear them whisper their legacy to you. Go on, lean in. Listen, you hear it? Carpe... hear it? ...Carpe, carpe diem, seize the day boys, make your lives extraordinary."

And I wonder this morning – what have you done with your life – with yesterday, last week, last month – the last year.

I hope we haven't wasted it in worry, anxiety or pain.

And if we have – I wonder what needs to change for the year to come.

Somebody once said, If we always do what we've always done – we'll always get what we've always got!

I wonder if the Lord wants to help us change some of those chains that are holding us captive.

Reminds me of the elephants in the circus.

These mighty elephants that have this mighty power and strength.

All they would have to do – is walk out of the circus tent and find their freedom.

But they can't, they won't!

Why.

You see – they are trained and conditioned.

When they are young – their trainer would tie a heavy metal chain to their leg, and attach the chain to a massive steel spike driven deep into the earth.

The elephant is trapped, and can walk no further than a few meters.

After a while, the trainer removes the chain.

And what happens – is that the elephant is conditioned to only walking in an area no larger than a few square meters.

Their legs are no longer chained – but their minds still are.

Jesus said, If the Son shall set you free – you shall be free indeed!

And yet – I wonder what the chains are – that are holding us captive.

And even more – if the Son HAS set us free – I wonder why we are still held captive in our minds, in our thought, our emotions and our actions.

If the Son has set you free – you shall be free indeed!

Many are captive to the urgent rather than the important.
Deadlines and time frames – schedules, goals and tasks.

I used to be a very driven man – with goals in every area of my life – all neatly planned and organized.

And then the Lord challenged me – that it takes a wise man to own a goal – without a goal owning him.

And so – I stopped wearing my watch,

Because in life – we can either be controlled by a clock or a compass.

A clock is all about deadlines.

Where as a compass is about destination.

Clocks often restricts us to the urgent, where as a compass lets us know what's important.

Often times living our lives by the clock causes us to live a life of reaction – where as living our lives with a destination – allows us to be proactive rather than reactionary.

Indeed, often a clock keeps us running around in circles chasing the hands, running to the next appointment.

Where as a compass sets us on a journey – a destination and a destiny.

Jesus knew where he had come from, and He knew where He was going.

Jesus set His face towards Jerusalem – towards His destiny.

Lot – when fleeing Sodom and Gomorrah – kept his face firmly pointed towards his freedom – his wife hesitated, looked back – and turned into a pillar of salt.

Don't you find it rather strange that she turned into a pillar of salt???

What's that all about???

Did God zap her and for some reason unbeknown to us – turn her into a human sized salt shaker!!??

You see – this is where we need to understand one of the most basic rules of understanding the Bible.

Read the scriptures as if you were within the culture and time-period of the person who wrote it.

Honestly, it's that easy!

If we were to understand the culture, time period and even geographical position of this story –

...we would see that in the barren landscape surrounding the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah –

...there were these large and often camouflaged – but boiling natural mineral springs and eruptions –

...scattered everywhere throughout the landscape.

And – if you didn't watch where you were heading – you would run the risk of falling into one of them – or being caught in a mineral eruption.

Lot's wife wasn't looking where she was going- she was looking back over her shoulder – at her past, at what she was leaving behind.

Not a good idea!

The result – she tripped and fell – into either a boiling or erupting mineral spring of salt and ash.

And if you want – you can just take my interpretation of these events with a grain of salt 😊

Without a progressive vision – the people dwell carelessly.

What does the new year hold for you.

What might there be that you need to change about your outlook or character.

Remember the 1 degrees.

On a clock – changing the second hand doesn't make much of a difference – you've still going around in circles!

But – on a compass – when you've on a journey – 1 degree can make the world of difference.

God sees the future, even though it is our sovereign gift to create and develop it.

Even though we have the gift of free-choice, God still knows what those choices will be.

Not only that – He also sees the complexities and eternal amount of choices and possibilities that doesn't only include us – but every *other* human in the world.

That's almost too difficult to imagine.

But – not only does He know.

He can warn, He can direct, and He can lead the way.

Just as He did to Lot and his family.

Some followed, others got lost.

And God can see those boiling mineral springs waiting in our path.

And if we listen to Him.

If we seek His face, seek His leading.

Then He will lead us in paths of safety and rest.

And even if we do end up in a situation or circumstance that was unexpected.

It didn't take God by surprise.

I can't imagine God saying, 'Wow – I sure didn't see THAT coming!!!'

And we can boldly state: God causes ALL things to work together for good, for those who love God and are called according to His purposes!

We have a Selah black-board at home in our dining room.

Selah means to pause, to rest and to ponder.

From time to time, we write on our Selah board – perhaps words of Scripture, or encouragements, questions or statements.

One that I remember, is: Sometimes to hear from God – we need to ask a question.

You see – I'm rock solid in my salvation.

I know there is NOTHING that can take me away from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

This gives me a lot of freedom to ask questions, to doubt, and to search for truth.

My degree thesis was an attempt to discover what God actually does or doesn't do in the lives of humanity.

And although there is much debate as to what God limits himself to do.

And while it might be true that God cannot come up with any answer other than two as to what does $1 + 1$ equal,

...I am utterly convinced – that God *speaks* to humanity.

God can speak into *your* heart, mind and life.

He can encourage you, convict you, lead you and correct you.

God can influence your desires, your emotions and your passions.

And not only can He influence *you*, He can do it to **others** as well.

God can speak into the lives of people who are listening!

What I've discovered over this last year, is that God answers Knee-Mail.

Just in this last month alone – I have cried out to God – and He has answered me with not just one, but two emails from two different people – containing the answers to the exact situation and question I was seeking.

And why has God answered me through others – and not *directly* into my own heart and mind.

Well – I think that this way – I can be certain, and not question whether or not I am just *making* it up.

I know God speaks!

And so – what are YOU seeking from God – what direction, what ONE little thing, what 1 degree of change does God want to make in *your* life this new year?

As your pastor – there are just a couple of things I know God wants from *each* of *us*.

He wants *us*.

That's it.

Simple as that.

He wants us as His friend.

Because, all we have to do is *surrender*.

Lord, my life came from You. The next breath I take is a gift from you.

My money Lord – it belongs to You, so does my spending.

My health Lord, it's not as good as it used to be. But Lord, I belong to You.

Lord – I struggle with church, with Sunday Services –

...but Lord, You died for the Church,

...and as hard as it is to stay committed –

...I belong to You Lord, and this means I belong to Your church as well.

This marriage and family Lord – it's not what I expected, it's hard and I don't know if I can stay.

The things I long to do Lord – but I just can't seem to make it work!

It's been said in song, that 'if you want to save the world, you'd better save yourself first.'

It's been said that it's easier to wear slippers – than it is to carpet the world.

I'd suggest just *one* small area that the Lord desires you to change.

It might be something as small as husbands opening the car door for their wife each time.

It might be reading a short Bible devotion each morning with breakfast.

For me – I believe the Lord wants me to stop interrupting people when they are talking to me.

It's just one small area, just 1 degree of change.

Because once the Lord knows He has caught your attention and you are listening to Him – it is *then* that He trusts us with a whole lot more.

Mt 25:23 "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

One thing I do know, is that God doesn't teach us to swim – and leave us to drown.

If there is something God is asking you to change or to do – I also know that He will give you the *strength* to accomplish the task.

It reminds me of the parable in the gospels – about the master giving his servants talents –

...which is the NT name for money,

...but is also applicable to the gifts, talents and abilities the Lord has blessed each of us with.

Matthew 25:15

To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey.

There is a real *gem* – a *key* in this passage that is often overlooked.

The talents were given – *according to their ability*!

Use the gifts God has given you!

YOU CAN DO IT – it IS within your ability!!!

When we are faithful in the smaller areas, God trusts us with greater.

And so – I wonder what the new year will hold.

Will it be different to 2009.

Will you have *grown* in the ways, *changed* in the ways, *improved* in the ways you want to.

What are your *dreams*, your *goals* – the *areas* God wants you to change, begin or stop doing?

What about your attitudes – towards others, towards God – towards the church or community.

What is God speaking to you about?

Tell you what.

How about we *ask* Him?

Because – sometimes to *hear* from God – we first have to ask Him a question!

Lord – what *areas* are you wanting to work on – in my life, in my finances, in my family, friends, community, education or work place?

What attitudes are You wanting to change in me?

I want to offer you a simple and yet powerful little exercise.

In a minute I am going to give each of you a pre-paid envelope and a sheet of paper.

I invite you to write out your prayers, perhaps even your goals or desires for the new year.

You might want to write a letter to yourself, or to God.

Take a minute to dream, to imagine the possibilities, the opportunities awaiting you in the new year.

If there are areas you want to change or improve about yourself, your relationships or habits – write them down as well.

And, what I want you to do – is seal them in this envelope and write your name and address on the front.

I give you my assurance as a minister – that neither myself or anyone else will have access to, or open these letters.

Rather, I will pray over them, pray for you regularly throughout the coming year.

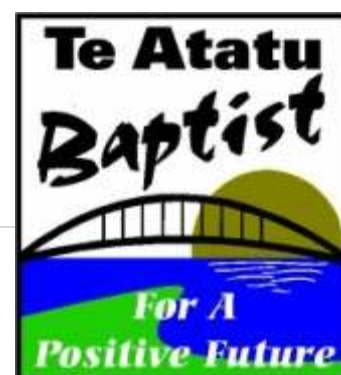
In December next year, I will post them to you – as a reminder and encouragement along your journey through life.

You might also want to write down some achievable goals – remembering that if you fail to plan, you often plan to fail.

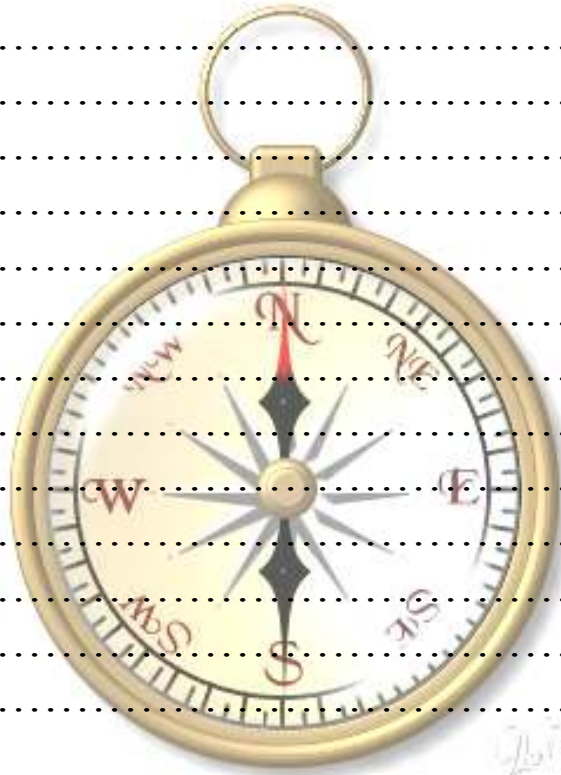
Maybe need to forgive yourself?

God believes in you – maybe you need to believe in yourself?

December 27th 2009



My dreams, hope and aspirations
for the coming year 2010



Well done good and faithful steward. As you have been faithful in the small, now I will trust you with the greater things...

God loves you with an everlasting love!