

Noteworthy

Prayer Requests: Jo Anderson, Karen Berry (*broken finger*), Joe Brown (*cancer*), Marian Church, Mildred Church, Charles Goodall, Linda James, Butch Morgan (*ongoing medical*), Paul Lloyd, Trent Stevens (*Will be in school on Wednesday evenings this fall*).

Family and friends: Ned Hicks (*ongoing medical*), Chuck Goodall (*Charles and Vernita's son's*), Anita Nix (*Charles Goodall's sister, who had a stroke last week*), Rowena Lawson's mother (*Congestive heart failure*), Ardis Tucker, and Bob Waldron (*is recovering well from procedure*).

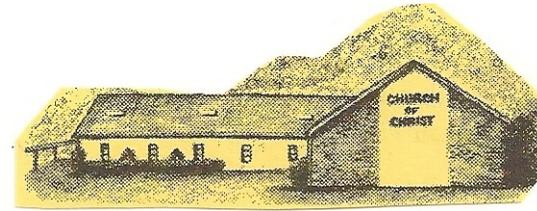
Out of Town: Jim Abram (*in Washington state*), Audrey Davis, Paula Sullivan.

Group Meeting: Group 1 will meet tonight after the evening worship service.

Kids' Review: Class will be September 10th in classroom number 5, shortly after the evening worship service.

Fourth Sunday: Today is the 4th Sunday of the month, and Colby Sadler is scheduled to preach during the pm service.

Gospel Meeting: Our gospel meeting will be held October 15th-20th, with Joseph Casimier. (*Please mark your calendar*)



**Lakeland Hills
Leader**

LAKELAND HILLS CHURCH OF CHRIST

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ELDERS

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SERVICES

Sunday
Bible Study 9:00 A.M.
Morning Services 9:50 A.M.
Evening Services 6:00 P.M.
Wednesday
Bible Study 7:30 P.M.

DEACONS:

Robert Marschall
Michael Sadler
Moses Stevens
David Williams

EVANGELIST:

Ian Rice (863) 213-9795

The Gap Between the Real and The Ideal

Since we live in an imperfect environment, there is always a gap between the real and the ideal — between things as they are and as they ought to be.

All responsible people sin, even Christians (Romans 3:10,11,21; 1 John 1:8,10). Paul described his struggle with sin while under the law (of Moses) in Romans 7:14-25. His conflict is typical of every conscientious person's struggle to bridge the gap between the real and the ideal.

We know all too well that while there are a lot of *good* people, there are no absolutely *perfect* people. There are many good marriages, good churches, good businesses — but no perfect ones.

People make a variety of attempts, good and bad, to cope with the gap between things as they are and things as we know they ought to be.

Assignments for Worship Service

Wednesday Night: 8/30/17

Song Leader: OPEN
Opening Prayer: Jerry Williams
Invitation: Larry Wisdom
Announcements: Leon Miller
Closing Prayer: Bucky Day
Recordings: Bob Marschall
Usher: Larry Hicks

Sunday Evening: 9/3/17

Song Leader: Bob Marschall
Opening Prayer: Ronnie Henderson
Lord's Table: Nick Ross
Announcements: Larry Hicks
Closing Prayer: Eric Stevens
Recordings: Clay Sadler
Usher: Gus Johnson

Sunday Morning: 9/3/17

Lord's Table: Nick Ross (B)
Bucky Day (C)
Serving: Ed Lawson
Jim Abram
Song Leader: Larry Wisdom

Opening Prayer: Jordan Lawson
Announcements: Larry Hicks
Closing Prayer: Mike Sadler
Recordings: Trent Stevens
Usher: Gus Johnson

To some, the solution is to *abolish the ideal*. These deny that there is a perfect or ideal standard to which man is to be held accountable.

There is a perfect standard for living in the world — the Holy Scriptures (2 Timothy 3:16,17). This standard is called “the perfect law of liberty” (James 1:25). We are expected to look into it and to measure and correct our lives by it. Many, who do not deny it outright, pervert and water it down until it is meaningless as a perfect standard of living. (Cf. Gal. 1:8,9).

To many, the solution is to *accept the real without improvement*. These are aware of their imperfections. They freely acknowledge their sinfulness. Yet, they have no desire to correct themselves. While a Christian must not wilfully continue in sin (Rom. 6:1; Heb. 10:26), he does sin from time to time. He knows that as he sins he must correct the matter by obeying God's conditions for forgiveness. (1 John 1:7-9).

There are many areas in our lives where we fall short of the ideal, so we must continue to press on toward perfection. (Hebrews 5:12-6:1; 2 Peter 3:17,18; Philippians 3:12-15). Yet, there are many who resist improvement. They are kind of like country comedienne Minnie Pearl's brother. She said “Brother is no failure, he just started at the bottom and liked it

there.” Many Christians, so-called, show no desire to improve their spiritual skills.

To others, the solution is to *abandon the struggle for the ideal*. The great apostle, Paul, knew that he had not yet attained the ideal for which he had been struggling so long, but he kept right on striving. He said, “Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.” (Philippians 3:12).

Many abandon the struggle for the ideal within themselves. They know they have not reached perfection and are not likely to in this life, so they cease all efforts to improve the moral and spiritual quality of their lives. They may accept the status quo and drift along, satisfied with their present level of development, without any further effort to improve. Or they may turn to some form of escapism, such as substance abuses and hedonism, trying to avoid the pressure to improve their lives. Some even turn to suicide to get away from what they consider a hopeless struggle.

Many forsake the struggle for the ideal in their personal relationships. Since their families, their jobs, and their brethren are not ideal, they just walk off and leave them. Or, as often happens, they jump out of one relationship into another in an end-

less search for the ideal marriage, ideal job or ideal congregation until they finally realize there are no completely ideal situations; and that they must take their imperfect predicament and try to improve upon it or they become so dejected that they virtually become dropouts from life.

To still others, the solution is to *patiently strive for the ideal*. A Christian works on himself to that end. He strives to avoid sin, yet he does sin, so he repents, asks God's forgiveness, and tries again. (Cf. 1 John 2:1-3). He works within his various personal relationships to bring them ever-closer to the ideal.

A good sister may be married to a non-Christian. This is not an ideal situation, but rather than leave it, she patiently sets the proper example of a Christian before her skeptical husband, hoping to influence him to obey the Lord. (1 Peter 3:1,2). A father has children who are far from perfect, he patiently “bring(s) them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.” (Ephesians 6:4). This involves teaching and discipline.

A Christian is a member of a “less than ideal” congregation, but one in which he can remain and maintain his personal faithfulness. So he through “lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit” (Ephesians 4:3, 4), preaches the word, reproving, rebuking and

exhorting with all longsuffering and teaching (2 Timothy 4:1-4). He hangs in there making improvement where and when he can.

Impatience has a tendency to wreck rather than to build ideal situations. Nagging and coercing may force external changes, but teaching changes men from the inside out. The former may produce noticeable changes faster, but the latter produces real and lasting changes for the better. If we are not careful, our desire for instant results may cause us to lower the standard so that it can be more readily met. Impatience can also cause one to simply give up on others too quickly.

At the same time, we need to realize that patience and longsuffering have their limits. We cannot become a partaker of other men's sins in the name of patience (1 Timothy 5:22). There comes a time when stronger measures must be taken and one has to withdraw himself from those who persist in sin.

Yes, there will always be a gap between the real and ideal that must be bridged by the grace of God. We must cope with this fact. While it may be true that we will not be lost for not reaching the absolutely ideal in this life — we may very well be lost for not *reaching for* it.

Edward O. Bragwell, Sr.