

Carpe Diem cum Spiritu

Seize the Day with Spirit



January – June 2001 Newsletter Issues

By

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Dear Friends,

The Carpe Diem cum Spiritu (Seize the Day with Spirit) is my weekly inspirational email newsletter. This volume includes the archived issues for the year 2001 published in January through June.



I believe that all are called to live a Life Full of Spirit ~ fully alive, energized, inspired and living courageously with integrity and character.

Great achievements (no matter in which area of your life they occur) are possible when balance and fullness of spirit are maintained. You have unique talents, abilities and creative potentials, which you try to utilize in some purposeful way to make a difference and get a feeling of satisfaction from life. The power of purpose is the energy that carries you forth in life and gives you direction. Maintaining a balanced life allows you to accomplish great things without depleting your self in the process. A highly motivated, inspired attitude can accomplish almost anything. Imagine your life full of that kind of spirit.

As a Personal Life Coach, I coach people to help them make the changes in their lives that they desire so that they may live with more of that kind of spirit. I help individuals to live their lives with a deeper commitment and conviction that is true to their values, talents and God-given abilities. I truly do want them to live their Life ~ Full of Spirit.

I hope that you enjoy these short reflections and put them to use in your life. Also, please feel free to forward this e-book on to others you think might enjoy it.

Thank you.

God Bless you.

Mike

**If you would like to receive my weekly newsletter by email,
or to find out more about Life Coaching,
please visit my web site at:**

<http://www.hinzdocs.com>

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Get To Know Mike

I am a life coach and counseling psychologist. I was in the US Air Force for five years. I have also worked with children and families. All my life I have helped people and it is wonderful to be able to do so.



I am married and have two children. I enjoy reading, watching movies, camping and the outdoors. I am a handyman and like the challenge of building and fixing things. I have been a draftsman in home construction and in a factory setting. I have been a fast food store manager, school maintenance man, school bus driver and self-employed. I am interested in computers, electronic technology and all aspects related to building construction, including solar energy and earth contact housing. I have been active in the Boy Scouts for over 13 years. I am an Eagle Scout.



I am active in my Catholic parish and am on the school board of the Catholic school that my children attend. I spent two of the most rewarding years of my life at Conception Seminary College (1984-86). I was a volunteer child-care worker at Covenant House in NYC (a crisis center for homeless and runaway children).

As you can see, I have been called to travel in many different directions so far in my life. But, it is interesting and challenging to see how my life continues to unfold. Through it all, one of my greatest enjoyments has always been in working with "ideas" and helping others "create" with their ideas. Creativity is a wonderful thing and it is truly wonderful to share in it with others.

My Life experience helps me be a great Life Coach

My varied life experiences help me to connect with other's ideas, challenges, struggles and gives me a deeper understanding of their personal experience. My idealistic thinking coupled with my grounded, realistic, hands-on practicality help me to see both the bigger picture as well as the details. It gives me a unique ability to think abstractly in creating hopes, visions and dreams, and then turn them into concrete, detailed, very practical, organized and planned strategies to get the job done.



I have been blessed with many talents, abilities and skills, which has made me keenly aware of that struggle in our lives of discovering our 'true' purpose. I take great pleasure in sharing in that discovery process with others. I also have a sometimes, very dry, sense of humor. I have often found that some of the most important things in life are very subtle.

My Personal Life Mission

I enjoy inspiring a person to step into their greatness. I believe we all have greatness hiding within, just waiting to bust out and do wonderful things. It is a great pleasure to help someone to do that and see the wonderful changes that unfold in their life.

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My newsletter is sent each week to a list of subscribers who have requested it. My purpose is to provide a brief inspirational thought that is useful to people who are interested in change, growth and living a great life Full of Spirit. Carpe Diem!

Specialness and Blemishes

January 3, 2001

Rise up in splendor, Jerusalem! Your light has come, the glory of the Lord shines upon you.... Nations shall walk by your light, and kings by your shining radiance. Isaiah 60: 1, 3

At the end of this Christmas season in which we celebrate the presence of God in our lives ~ this prophetic passage describes the splendor of the holy city of Jerusalem. Throughout history it has always stood as a sign of hope and salvation to the entire world.

That is great, but what has that to do with me? It is a reminder that each of us is also called to live in the radiant glory of God, to shine with radiant beauty and to be a beacon of hope, reassurance and of gentle love to those we meet.

I am sure you have been in a crowd of people and noticed that certain individuals stand out from the rest. It might be a tangible charisma that radiates from them, or it might be their warm beaming smile, or it might be their kind words and gentle touch, or it might be the way they show respect to others. Who knows what it is, but there is something about them that attracts your attention.

Most people just kind of fade into the background ~ nothing about them stands out. Why is that? Well, most of us are average. That might be true, but nonetheless is still a lame excuse. I think it is because we work so hard to hide our talents, our abilities and our specialness. We let our insecurities take over and they busily defend us from that 'attention' that we think will be focused on our weaknesses, failures and all those aspects about ourselves that we want to keep hidden. So that makes us average, because at the same time, we end up hiding away all those aspects about us that make us uniquely special and 'attractive' to others.

What about you attracts others' attention? What are those things about you that you really want others to notice and to pay attention? Most of us feel uncomfortable when asked questions like this. But, if you really want to live your **Life ~ Full of Spirit** ~ you have got to face the music and do something about it.

We each have both the special 'stuff' and the blemishes. If you prominently display the good stuff, the blemishes just kind of fade into the background. If you hold back and don't really display anything ~ be average ~ why then, the blemishes are the things most people notice first.

I offered some homework last week ~ spending a few moments on attending to yourself and making a **deeper commitment to Life** ~ and I must admit that I would have to give myself a 'C' so far. But I promise to try and do better! I challenge each of you to spend this new year displaying your specialness ~ your splendor ~ and making a deeper commitment to the Life you want to Live. I guarantee you will find it refreshing and enjoyable and so will everyone else.

You see ~ you will be **Living your Life ~ Full of Spirit** ~ and others will notice and want it, too.

God Blesses you!

Splendor of Specialness

January 10, 2001

There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit. To one is given through the Spirit the expression of wisdom; to another, the expression of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another, faith by the same Spirit; to another, gifts of healing by the one Spirit; to another, mighty deeds; to another, prophecy; to another, discernment of spirits; to another, varieties of tongues; to another, interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit produces all of these, distributing them individually to each person as he wishes. 1 Corinthians 12: 4-11

Wow! Talk about a **Life ~ Full of Spirit.**

The above passage is a beautiful reminder to each of us as we start off a new year. None of us know what challenges we will face this new year, we just know that we will have them to face. Let us not forget that we are already prepared for them.

When we are hit by new challenges and surprises in life, we frequently get wrapped up in them and quickly lose perspective. We might convince ourselves that we are not going to make it or we are not up to the challenge, etc. And of course, that is a legitimate feeling, but it is not quite accurate of the reality. Because as the above passage reminds us, we have special gifts of Spirit lying within us ~ just waiting to be put to work.

Other people often see these gifts within us, while we are blind to them ourselves. But they are there, nonetheless! Within those special gifts lies a power and strength to make a tremendous difference within your own life and in all the lives that you touch.

I received the following comment last week from one reader: "...the fruit of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. It is by these observations that others have of us that they will know that our life is Spirit filled and Spirit controlled." [B.B.]

Okay, it is time to pause for a moment. I repeat the challenge of last week ~ allow the 'splendor' of your specialness to shine forth from within and renew your commitment to **Live your Life ~ Full of Spirit.**

What are your special gifts from the Spirit? ...wisdom ...knowledge ...communication ...kindness ...patience ...? (Ask someone else if you need help with this, or ask anyway, it is nice to be validated.)

I have been Blessed with the gift(s) of _____.

I remind myself that with these gifts I am called to Live a Life ~ Full of Spirit; to live a Life deeply committed to allowing the Spirit within to shine forth in my Life as it gracefully navigates me through any challenge placed in my path.

God Blesses you!

Gift of Honoring Self

January 17, 2001

Indeed, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are all the more necessary, and those parts of the body that we consider less honorable we surround with greater honor, and our less presentable parts are treated with greater propriety, whereas our more presentable parts do not need this.

1 Corinthians 12: 22-24

We have been focusing on the splendor and the gifts of the spirit present in our lives. The above passage talks about body parts. Think about it. The human body is a splendid construction of integrated parts. Any one part by itself would have little value, but when fully assembled into a human being, it becomes a fantastic and amazing creation.

There are parts of our human bodies that we don't like to display or talk about, etc. We feel insecure or embarrassed or ashamed-but we certainly would not want to do without them. There are parts of our personality that we might feel similarly about. Each of these many unique parts contribute to making each of us the unique person that we are. If we took away even just one of those parts, then we would be a slightly different person.

In the above passage, there is a message for how we are to treat others in the community in which we live. We are each one part of the larger body or community in which we live and all are necessary parts. We are called to honor and respect all members of the community and to treat each member as a worthy and important member of the body.

Sometimes we do a better job of that with others than with ourselves. Meaning, we find it easier to overlook 'flaws' in others than in ourselves. We see 'good' in others but overlook it in ourselves. When we do that, we are dishonoring a member of the community.

It is a great gift to be able to share joy, peace, hope, encouragement ~ the various gifts of the spirit ~ with others in the community. We cannot do that, however, if we are not nurturing ourselves, first.

Living your Life ~ Full of Spirit ~ is a great gift. Think of yourself like a savings account. If you do not invest in yourself, there will be nothing in your savings account. To maintain a healthy balance, every time you give something away, you have to put something back in. You can see that if you are not honoring yourself with nurturing care, you will soon be broke and have nothing to give.

To live a healthy balanced life, you must take good care of yourself. Make time for yourself, everyday, some quiet time, prayer time, fun time ~ take some time to rejuvenate and invest something back into your self. This is necessary to live **Life ~ Full of Spirit**. Take time to honor and respect yourself today ~ your "life" account balance could probably use it.

God Blesses you!

Well Fitting Talents

January 24, 2001

Strive eagerly for the greatest spiritual gifts. But I shall show you a still more excellent way. If I speak in human and angelic tongues, but do not have love, I am a resounding gong or a clashing cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy, and comprehend all mysteries and all knowledge; if I have all faith so as to move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away everything I own, and if I hand my body over so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. 1 Corinthians 12:31-13:1-3

Okay, no secrets. Are you something or are you nothing?

We have been focusing on our own personal splendor, on the gifts we have been given to use as we walk our path in life and on honoring and respecting all aspects of ourselves. What holds these all together is spoken above as 'love'.

Love is like wearing your favorite clothes that fit you perfectly and present you at your best. Love is like being startled by the unexpected glowing smile of a stranger and their kind words. Love is like that unconditional love that your pet expects from you no matter how they have been treated before. Love is like that curious look that watches you from the eyes of a baby. Love is life itself.

So how comfortable are you with your special gifts, abilities, talents, etc.? Do you wear them as a well fitting glove? Do you allow them to serve you well or do you get in their way?

We could think of our life as a sailboat on a journey through the oceans of time. We can go anywhere, do anything, there are unlimited possibilities. We are provided with the necessary provisions and resources to make the journey. A sailboat is propelled by the wind behind its sails. All your own uniqueness, your talents, strengths, weaknesses, abilities, knowledge, friends, time, treasure... all of those things are the wind behind your sails on your journey through life.

So I ask again, do you allow them to serve you well or do you get in their way? If you are comfortable with them, then you are allowing them to gently take you on the journey and are enjoying yourself along the way. You are permitting them to be the wind behind your sails and propel you forward along the path. Or, you might be resisting and getting in the way. Maybe you are not quite familiar enough with some of your special gifts, and they are responding like that sail that is not properly trimmed, and your sailboat is struggling to stay on course. Or, maybe you are so uncomfortable or out of awareness of your special gifts, that they are not the wind behind your sails at all, but rather, are out front trying to pull you forward. Now, you know that doesn't work very well for a boat, and nor does it work for you.

I leave you with one last question to ponder. Where do you stand in your **Life Full of Spirit** ~ and how well are you doing? I hope the wind is behind your sails, blowing strongly, and that you are sailing smoothly on towards your unlimited possibilities.

God Blesses you!

Wind Behind your Sails

January 31, 2001

After he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch." Simon said in reply, "Master, we have worked hard all night and have caught nothing, but at your command I will lower the nets." When they had done this, they caught a great number of fish and their nets were tearing. Luke 5: 4-6

How's your life sailing? I hope the wind is blowing strongly behind your sails. In the above passage we are reminded that sometimes we work very hard and seem to reap nothing for our efforts. We are also reminded that sometimes that means we just have to try again-we have to keep sailing along to get anywhere.

I wonder what you are trying to 'catch' in your life and how you are going about it? We often desire the darndest things when so many blessings are all around us. Maybe some times we are not trying to catch the right things.

Sometimes we work so hard that we just get tired and give up. We need to catch a little hope, a little trust, a little dab of faith that everything will work out okay. And you know what.... **it does!**

We have been exploring how comfortable we are with our 'ships' and the 'resources' we have been outfitted with. We are each sailing very unique and special courses in life. We each have a mission to accomplish. We each spend a lifetime trying to get it right, trying to figure it out, trying to make sense of it all, trying to get somewhere, and trying to do it ~ RIGHT NOW.

Maybe it is time to take a minute to slow down, to enjoy the journey along the way, to give yourself a break, to even stop and smell the roses. Don't worry you will still get there on time (where ever that might be).

What I want for you is for you to ~ Live your Life ~ Full of Spirit. I have no idea how that would play out in your life. I don't know how you have been outfitted or where you are going. I don't know what you are trying to catch. But I do know that all these things are happening. I do know that it is possible for you to live your life in a deeply fulfilling and satisfying way. I do know that if you cast your nets they will be filled to overflowing with blessings. But you have to cast your net and then you have to accept and make use of the resources you are given.

A **Life Full of Spirit** is waiting for you. You have it when you know you are fully ALIVE... when you wake up in the morning and can't wait to see what your new day has in store for you... when your face is a beacon of smiles and good cheer for those looking for a safe harbor... when you give of yourself because you feel great joy in the giving... when you receive from others with gracious humility and thanksgiving... when you are never satisfied with the journey but eagerly seek more as you enjoy the journey along the way... when you yearn to uncover your hidden resources so they can be utilized fully as intended... when your life is a great adventure that you can't wait to share with others... when you have that gentle balance in your life ~ that comfortableness that all is well, all is going according to plan and you are doing your best, but that you must cast your net yet again because the journey continues.

God Blesses you!

Gifts of Possibilities

February 7, 2001

"Blessed are you who are poor, for the kingdom of God is yours. Blessed are you who are now hungry, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who are now weeping, for you will laugh. Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude and insult you, and denounce your name as evil on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice and leap for joy on that day! Behold, your reward will be great in heaven..." Luke 6:20-23

What did you catch in your net this past week? Did you catch any of the above blessings? These are not the usual ones we wish for ~ to be poor, hungry, sorrowful, hated and denounced. And yet, there are times in our lives where we are 'blessed' with difficulties to overcome or to persevere through.

Even when our lives are going reasonably well, we often tend to look on the negative side of things. There are two sides to each coin, and if you don't like the side you are looking at, flip it over and look at the other side. When we are troubled with difficulties in life ~ and we will be ~ then it is time to flip the coin and see what other ways we can view the situation.

Our negative thinking guarantees negative outcomes. A more positive perspective pulls for a more positive outcome. There is something positive in every negative aspect and vice versa.

To live your Life ~ Full of Spirit ~ requires you to have an attitude of fullness of purpose, of rightness, of blessings, of Life. It means you are constantly flipping coins to see what is on the other side so that your choices are not so limited. It means you are always looking for the positive within the negative. It means you find a purpose in all 'blessings' ~ even the ones you did not ask for. It means you make the best of each situation and continue the journey.

So when you catch something this week that you didn't ask for ~ make the best of it and continue on. When you do not catch what you hoped for ~ make the best of it (perhaps cast your net again) and continue on.

Our lives are full of surprises. We are blessed in many ways that we do not understand and with blessings of which we are unaware. **Living your Life ~ Full of Spirit** ~ is all about living in a world of possibilities and making the best of your own gifts of possibilities.

God Blesses you!

More than Possible

February 14, 2001

"Stop judging and you will not be judged. Stop condemning and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven. Give, and gifts will be given to you; a good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing, will be poured into your lap. For the measure with which you measure will in return be measured out to you." Luke 6:37-38

This message calls us to be more than we thought possible. The measure of our success will be based in our measure of risk. If we give nothing, then we will get nothing in return. If we plant no seeds, then we should expect no harvest.

But when we give of ourselves in even a small way, we are frequently surprised by the abundance of what we receive in return.

Have you ever noticed that when you 'expect' something in return for something you have given ~ that what you often receive is disappointment. Your expectation is not satisfied in the manner you intended. When you give freely from your heart with a spirit that expects nothing in return ~ it is then that your expectation is far exceeded with a generosity that you did not anticipate.

We each have been given a spectacular gift that we misuse, waste, allow to deteriorate, and for which we really have very little appreciation. Now you might be searching your mind for what is this gift. And that is it ~ your mind.

We each have one, and none of us comes anywhere close to tapping its full potential. Instead we engage in petty thoughts of jealousy, condemning, judging... And so forth. Oh yes, we also do good things with it, such as love and care for other people, offer a kind word here, or a smile there, or a needed gift of kindness every now and then.

How have you used your mind so far today? Have you used it today to kick either yourself or someone else in the butt? Have you used it to pat yourself or someone else on the back or give some kindness, some gentleness, some gift of a **life-giving spirit**?

Are you using this greatest of physical gifts to **Live your Life ~ Full of Spirit** ~ and sharing that Spirit with everyone you meet?

Maybe it is time to expand your viewpoint about Life. Maybe it is time to start cutting back on some of those negative judgments and start judging the possibilities. Maybe it is time to present everyone you meet with a smile, or to offer someone a word of encouragement, of appreciation, of recognition for something they have accomplished, or to offer a needed hand, or share your creativity on some task, or offer a listening ear to someone who needs to be heard...

And, don't forget to include yourself in these endeavors ~ after all, you have to preserve and maintain this special gift ~ your very life depends on it.

Your mind ~ your Life ~ a good measure that is overflowing with possibilities...

God Blesses you!

Blind Leading the Blind

February 21, 2001

"Can a blind person guide a blind person? Will not both fall into a pit? ... Why do you notice the splinter in your brother's eye, but do not perceive the wooden beam in your own? How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me remove that splinter in your eye,' when you do not even notice the wooden beam in your own eye? You hypocrite! Remove the wooden beam from your eye first; then you will see clearly to remove the splinter in your brother's eye." Luke 6:39-42

Okay, how many of you had trouble reading this because there is something in your eye or you have some impairment in your vision? Is the feeling of the blind leading the blind a common feeling for you? And, are you doing the leading or being led?

Before we go any further ~ line up and let's get the beams from our own eyes first. I think this might require some help ~ I don't think I want to be removing any beams from my own eyes with out having someone who can see to help with this operation.

This is where the blind leading the blind enters in. Frequently the person doing the leading has blinders on, which of course gives them tunnel vision. They can see quite well straight ahead, but they have no peripheral vision. This means they are not capable of seeing the full picture ~ they focus on a few individual trees and don't see the forest. They can see the splinter in your eye but their blinders block the forest from their own vision.

If you are to truly live your **Life ~ Full of Spirit** ~ then you must be able to see both, the trees and the forest. You must be able to shift your perspective back and forth between the important details without losing sight of the vision of the big picture.

If you are unable to do both ~ then it is similar to trying to see with a wooden beam in your eye. But you know what, we are so used to it being there, that we don't even notice it anymore. At various times in each of our lives, we are the 'blind leading the blind.' We also stumble and fall because of the obstacles along the way that we did not happen to see. What is worse, sometimes, because we have already fallen before and we already know that the obstacle is there ~ we stumble and fall anyway.

If you are down in one of those 'familiar' holes now ~ maybe it is time to remove the blinders so that you can see the other options that are available, choose a different path and get on with the wonderful adventure of Life.

You might say, but I like this path. I know this path. It is comfortable to me because I know what to expect. I'm used to falling into this hole and would miss it....

Very well, that is your choice and it is your Life to live. But let me offer to remove for just one moment, the beam from your eye. Take a good look around and really see the rest of the forest around you and get a glimpse of the bigger picture in which you are immersed. Then ask yourself this question: **"Is this where I want to be and is this the 'spirit' in which I want my life to be lived?"**

The choice is yours ... remove the beam or allow it to remain....

God Blesses you!

Fitting your Beliefs

February 28, 2001

For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved. For the Scripture says, No one who believes in him will be put to shame. For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all, enriching all who call upon him. Romans 10:10-12

Last week we discussed our wearing of 'blindness'. This passage fits nicely with that theme. It discusses 'beliefs' and how our beliefs are lived out in our life and save us or condemn us. The true distinction between individuals lies in the differences between their beliefs.

We each live our lives by a belief system, which can be defined as the system of thoughts that govern our behavior. We have a collection of thoughts, values and morals that form our view of what is right and true in the world and becomes the foundation for how we make sense of all that occurs in our lives. Each of us has a 'belief system' that we live by.

Most people have specific religious or spiritual beliefs that play significant roles within their individual belief systems. The collective 'beliefs' form the body of human understanding that the individual uses to live their life.

Naturally, this means that we all wear blinders. All those beliefs that do not fit within your belief system are excluded and you are 'blind' to them. That does not necessarily mean that those beliefs are wrong or not good values to live by ~ but it does mean that they are not a part of your own belief system.

This notion may challenge some of your 'beliefs' but that is a healthy thing to do from time to time. Beliefs do not have to be 'reality' based and frequently are not. If not reality based, they are at least based upon our perceptions of what is right or wrong, true or false, which is of course what we perceive as 'reality'.

The danger that this leads to is that we frequently "believe" that my 'beliefs' are right and if your beliefs are different from mine, then your 'beliefs' are wrong. We put a judgment on beliefs as if they are reality based, as if they are factual.

A fact is something based in 'truth' and has objective, undisputable reality. Even if you argue that something factual is not factual, its truth is easily proven. Much of the belief system that we live our lives by is not 'factual' in basis, but is rather 'opinion' based. Many of the things we 'believe' as truth or factual in life are really our opinions of the right way to do something or how things should be done. But the reality and truth is that there are usually many 'right' ways something could be done and many ways to understand and make sense of something that happens.

In life, it becomes our task to find some sort of balance that works for each of us. To establish and live by the belief system that works for you ~ including spiritual beliefs as well as all the other beliefs that form the creed by which you live your life.

It is one of my beliefs that each of us is called to **Live our Life ~ Full of Spirit**. I also believe that there is no single right way to do that. The Lord has outfitted us each with different tools and invites each of us ~ to creatively and uniquely find the way ~ the way to some greater truth perhaps.

Perhaps you have one troublesome belief that you have been struggling to make 'fit' into your worldview. Maybe it is time to examine it more closely and tweak it a bit, modify it, change it somehow, or even let it go for another belief that makes more sense. Maybe the Lord is inviting you to remove your blinders for a moment and see a different truth.

God Blesses you!

Awaiting Transformation

March 7, 2001

Jesus took Peter, John, and James and went up the mountain to pray. While he was praying his face changed in appearance and his clothing became dazzling white... Then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my chosen Son; listen to him." Luke 9:28b-29, 35

This transformation passage revealed a hidden truth about Jesus, a truth that was always there but was hidden from sight due to his disciples' blinders. Their belief systems did not allow them to see until a remarkable transformation had taken place ~ so remarkable that they could not help but see.

Within your own life there are hidden transformations waiting to be revealed, waiting to be seen, waiting for the blinders to be removed. And, you too, have been chosen in a most special way, with a most special purpose for your life.

Perhaps your own personal transformation has already revealed the splendor of your life purpose and mission and you are already deeply immersed in living your **Life Full of Spirit**. Or, perhaps, you are still waiting for that transformation to occur and wondering if it ever will.

When we are dealt some terrible blow in life, we often ask "Why me?" An equally valid question is "Why not me?" When we see some one else receive some wonderful blessing in life, we might ask "Why not me?" and again, we could ask, "Why me?"

Why me indeed. Because each of us has been truly blessed in some wonderful and truly unique ways. We may be blind to them; we may still be waiting for the transformation to occur to reveal them to us. But they are there nonetheless and have always been so.

Much like a seed that has been planted, watered, and is waiting to grow and bloom, waiting to be seen by others in its full beauty ~ we wait and hope.

We are currently in a season of waiting for a transformation to happen. The dead of winter is diminishing as life prepares to burst forth in a fresh abundance of a new spring. Within our hearts, we are reminded that our faith, too, withers in decay so that it too, may burst forth with new vigor, new hope, a new rebirth.

It is time to take a moment to examine your own life and ask yourself this question: **"What am I missing in my own life? What am I overlooking ~ what is already there that I am not seeing?"**

A splendid transformation awaits for each of us ~ as we, too, have been chosen to **Live our Life ~ Full of Spirit**.

God Blesses you!

Cultivate your Blessings

March 14, 2001

"There once was a person who had a fig tree planted in his orchard, and when he came in search of fruit on it but found none, he said to the gardener, 'For three years now I have come in search of fruit on this fig tree but have found none. So cut it down. Why should it exhaust the soil?' He said to him in reply, 'Sir, leave it for this year also, and I shall cultivate the ground around it and fertilize it; it may bear fruit in the future. If not you can cut it down.'" Luke 13:6-9

You are the fig tree. Should you be cut down? Or, are you about to transform and bear fruit?

We go through life searching for the fruit of our efforts and frequently find few or none. How discouraged we sometimes become! But there is always hope for a change that will produce growth and abundance ~ yes, fruit on the barren fig tree.

Step back in time with me for a moment. It's just a fig tree, what's the big deal? In the Middle East in the time of our Lord, fig trees were a big deal. They were one of the main agricultural products that grew well in that climate. A good fig harvest could mean the difference between living well versus going hungry. Life versus Death.

So what do fig trees have to do with me? You may plod through life without ever bearing much fruit and your life will still have some meaning and importance and you will still accomplish things. That is true. Or your Life may bear an abundance of fruitfulness as you **Live your Life ~ Full of Spirit**. The difference is in the quality of your Life.

I believe that if we cultivate and nurture our talents, abilities, skills, resources ... our blessings ~ then they will produce an amazing richness within our lives. You can plod through life or you can sail through Life with the winds of Spirit filling your sails.

What are these winds of Spirit? Your attitude towards life ~ is it flickering or is it full of energy and vitality and unwavering? Your energy level ~ is it sputtering or vigorous. Creativity ~ used, shared and enjoyed or 'don't have time for that'. Laughter ~ joyous and energy giving or 'that's a waste of time.' Compassion ~ loving, caring and concerned or 'they deserved that.' Time ~ using a limited commodity wisely or stuck in the rat race and not getting anywhere. Friendship ~ alive and well, comforting, renewing, belonging, community...or 'I can do it myself.' The list could go on forever. Choose to **Live your Life ~ Full of Spirit**.

Fill it with quality (and move forward rather than remaining stuck or going backwards). Make it life giving rather than draining. Strive for a balance in a world that is trying to do everything. Share yourself and your gifts ~ sure you could do it by yourself, but then you would be - alone. Laugh and enjoy life ~ you will accomplish so much more and be healthier, too.

So grab the ax and let's begin chopping away the branches of your life that are not bearing fruit. It is time for some judicious pruning, watering and fertilizing. Let's give it another year and see what kind of fruit your life can produce with some proper care.

Cut away the life barren of fruit and prepare and choose to **Live your Life ~ Full of Spirit**.

God Blesses you!

Blindsided 20/20 Vision

March 21, 2001

He said to him, 'My son, you are here with me always; everything I have is yours. But now we must celebrate and rejoice, because your brother was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.'

Luke 15:31-32

The above passage is the last line from the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32). What a story about your life and mine. It is about you and I. We get blindsided about what we should be seeking in life. We sometimes waste our resources on foolishness. We sometimes want the wrong things. We get confused about what we deserve in life. We take family and community for granted and stray from them. Our pride gets in the way. We realize our mistakes and turn back to make amends. We forgive. We celebrate and rejoice in finding and living new Life.

Life is full of ups and downs. We go through these cycles numerous times in life. You would think that if we make a mistake once that we would never repeat it again. But no, people are creatures of habit. One habit we have is that we tend to repeat our mistakes over and over again.

Why is that? There are several very good reasons. At the time we make our decision, it looks like a perfectly good one and it appears to us that it would serve us well. Nothing wrong with that-that is how it is supposed to work. But, often times that decision was made without having some very important facts that might have changed our minds if we had had that information at the time. We get so busy, that we don't take sufficient time to gather all the crucial details so we can make the best and most informed decision. We don't take the time to make what appears to be a good decision-the very best informed decision. We commit the mistakes of 'blindness' and laziness.

Sometimes, the opportunity is so inviting, so glamorous, so enticing-that we get sucked in and don't stop to really think about some of the consequences that might go with it. We make the mistake of letting our greed make our decision for us. Sometimes, all our friends are doing it so it must be okay. We jump aboard and do it, too. We make the mistake of not being faithful to our own personal values and making the best decision for me, rather than allowing others to make my decisions for me.

So you see, it is rather easy to get blindsided and to make mistakes. But that is okay, because that is part of Life. You cannot really live life without participating in the cycles of ups and downs that goes with it.

However, there is also another important message that goes here. We also have the opportunity to learn from our 'natural' mistakes and improve our lives. **Living one's Life ~ Full of Spirit** ~ means that we do make mistakes because we are fully immersed in our daily lives. But we are also fully immersed in uncovering our blindness and making better decisions. It means that we celebrate Life and rejoice when we discover one of our mistakes and correct it.

It means **Living Life** to the very best of your abilities, remaining **Faithful** to your values and principles, and getting down in the trenches and giving it the best you've got. It means you actively participate in the ups and downs of Life and strive to enjoy the ride.

But we must never think that Life is just like any other roller coaster ride with its ups and downs. No, it is a ride equipped with a steering wheel. We must always remember to grab the steering wheel and strive to give our ride the best direction that we possibly can.

Live your Life ~ Full of Spirit ~ Full of Purpose ~ Full of Direction ~ Full of the wonder of Life ~ and then enjoy the ride.

God Blesses you!

Blind Condemnation

March 28, 2001

"Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." ... "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" She replied, "No one, sir." Then Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go, and from now on do not sin any more." John 8: 7, 10-11

Frequently, we are very quick to judge and pass sentence on something that doesn't quite fit into our worldview. Eyewitness testimonies are frequently unreliable portrayals of what really happened. Yet our justice system relies heavily upon it.

It reminds me of the story of the 10 blind men and the elephant. Each man's portrayal of what the elephant really looked like was extremely limited based upon his small amount of personal experience with that elephant. Now they had a legitimate limitation, they really were blind.

What about you and I? We are not really blind, but sometimes our decisions, criticisms and judgments seem to be based in such a limited view of reality, that we might as well be blind.

I challenge you to look beyond what seems to be most obvious to you. When you are about to make a big decision, stop and take some time to explore the issue from all possible angles. Look to see what you are missing; broaden your perspective as much as possible. You might be surprised at what you had been overlooking. It could make an extremely important difference in the choices you make.

Take a moment to look at the one person in the world that you tend to condemn most frequently. Does that person really deserve such harsh criticism? Might that person deserve a break? I suspect that person might be you. We are frequently our worst enemy and harshest critic.

The next time you are lambasting yourself about something. Stop for a moment and ask yourself which part of the elephant you have a hold of in that moment. Are you being unfair to yourself? Is your eyewitness testimony on what you did - reliable and accurate? Would you want others to judge you in the same way you are judging yourself? Would you want to go to court seeking justice and have that be the only evidence given in your defense?

Kind of scary isn't it? Yet, you and I frequently don't treat our selves very fairly. Sometimes, we really are blinded to what is best and we make some pretty poor choices that have big impacts upon our lives.

The challenge is to strive to always see as much as possible of what there is to see. Choose as wisely as possible. Live life to the best of your ability, but realize that no matter how much you see of the picture, you never see it all.

Do me a favor - give yourself a break today. Do something nice for yourself, or say a kind word about yourself or laugh and smile at your little foibles. Sure you make mistakes, we all do. A mistake is a sign of progress, it means you are doing something and moving in the right direction. So, ease up just a little bit.

Neither do I condemn you. Go, and from now on... **Live your Life ~ Full of Spirit.**

God Blesses you!

Live Purposeful

April 4, 2001

Rather, let the greatest among you be as the youngest, and the leader as the servant... I am among you as the one who serves. It is you who have stood by me in my trials... "I tell you, Peter, before the cock crows this day, you will deny three times that you know me." ... "Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me; still, not my will but yours be done." ... "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do."... "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit"... "This man was innocent beyond doubt." Luke 22:14--23:56

These excerpts from Luke's Passion text are rich with food for thought for our daily lives. I have highlighted a few words to focus your attention today.

It is an extremely worthwhile endeavor to examine your life periodically and take score if you will. To see where you are now, where you have been and where it appears that you are going ~ and see if the journey is to your liking. I doubt that many of us would so willingly have continued the journey if we had been in Jesus' place and knew what was coming. During his last supper, he reminded us of our call to serve others and to stand by each other through trials and tribulations. How have you done so far in your life on that one?

He told us that there would be times that we would deny the very principles that we value the most. There would be times that out of fear and insecurity, we would sale out our values or go against our given word. Where do you stand on this ~ are you truly living your life according to the values you respect and claim to hold sacred? How often we try to get out of the 'dirty' jobs in life ~ let someone else do that. But we are reminded that we don't always know what is best and have to have faith enough to leave it in the hands of a greater power. Frequently, we act without perceiving the possible consequences ~ and how could we know? We must act and continue forward the best we know how ~ that is life. But the reality is that we frequently ~ know not what we do.

Yes, Jesus was an innocent man and surely did not deserve to be crucified. But, he was guilty of having a purpose, a mission in Life, of having values and principles on which he lived his life, of adhering to the journey no matter what turn it took, of persevering to the end, of not selling out and of remaining faithful to what he believed even in the face of overwhelming opposition. He truly lived his life with a power of purpose from which he could not be diverted.

The above passage began at the Last Supper. One of these days, you too, will sit at your own last supper. What words do you want to be remembered by and what do you hope others will say about your Life? What is your purpose in Life and how faithful have you remained? What do you value? What beliefs do you live your Life by?

We don't know when our last supper will be. We have a wonderful opportunity to live the journey one day at a time for how ever long we have. We can approach each day with a vigor and enthusiasm to accomplish today all that we can and to do our best in whatever direction that it might take us. Each day has its ups and downs, but through it all there is a pathway of purpose, an unfolding journey. It is full of possibilities.

Remember, we must do our part in this Life and we are responsible for our accomplishments, but with God's grace, we truly can **live our Life ~ Full of Spirit.**

God Blesses you!

Unleavened Strengths

April 11, 2001

Do you not know that a little yeast leavens all the dough? Clear out the old yeast, so that you may become a fresh batch of dough, inasmuch as you are unleavened. For our paschal lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed. Therefore, let us celebrate the feast, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. 1 Corinthians 5:6b-8

Sometimes we need some new yeast in our lives. Our life becomes rather flat and nothing comes of it. It is time for renewal. Spring is springing. New growth is becoming abundant to our eyes. It is time to put some new growth in our own lives.

In the unleavened portion of our lives is found the core of truth, the core of what makes each of us unique and special. From this foundation will raise our new life of leavened bread ~ filled with growth. Imagine for a moment that special smell of fresh baked bread and how your mouth begins to water with anticipation and hope.

We certainly hope for the final raising at the end of time, but each and every day of our life is another day to rise up and produce abundant works of a spirit filled life. It is my constant hope that your life is truly filled with a special spirit ~ an energy source that allows you to take the next step and keep on going until the job is done and then go on to the next job. I hope that your spirit will be like that aroma of fresh baked bread that draws you onward.

Let's begin to bake some freshness into your Life:

1. My spirit ~ what is one kind of 'yeast' that motivates me and keeps me going?
2. How do I use this special gift each and every day of my life to keep me renewed and going?
3. What is one flat (unleavened) area of my life that I want to experience some new growth in?
4. Take some time to describe this concern and really get a handle on what is missing and what you are tired of tolerating about it.
5. Ok, now for some brainstorming: What are some possible replacements for it? How do I want this one thing to be different? No judgments, just be creative and see what you can come up with...
6. You should have a list now of some possible ideas, some that are realistic and some that are not. Pick one that you can begin today, right now! Pick one that is simple enough to get started with but will still be different from what you normally do, even if just a small one. I pick this one: _____
7. Do it right now. Do it again tomorrow... and the next day...
8. Take a moment afterwards to notice any differences (like savoring the aroma of fresh bread) ~ they will probably be small differences, but note them. Again no judgments on how good or bad, big or small they may be. I noticed: _____
9. Remind yourself of these differences several times each day, but especially when you are feeling flat and need a little pick me up.
10. Keep this process of renewal going each new day. As you become ready to tackle another one of your 'flat' zones, repeat these steps for it. Before you know it ~ you will have new life rising up all over the place.

The above exercise is for you to DO, not just read and then forget about. Our lives are like dough, sometimes they need a little kneading and sometimes we need to get some fresh yeast. Sometimes we need a reminder that those unleavened portions, those flat areas of our lives are only flat because we have not added the yeast to make them rise. We have unlimited potential to create our dough into whatever kind of bread we want.

Maybe it is time to play a little and begin to do some new baking. You have tons of ingredients available to use however you want. I believe that you are ready to 'raise' some freshness in your day and to

Fill your Life with Spirit.

God Blesses you!

Hidden Empowerment

April 18, 2001

Many signs and wonders were done among the people at the hands of the apostles... Thus they even carried the sick out into the streets and laid them on cots and mats so that when Peter came by, at least his shadow might fall on one or another of them... and they were all cured. Acts 5:12-16 (NAB)

Following Jesus' death and resurrection, the apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit and with this new empowerment, went about curing the sick and performing signs and wonders among the people. As the news spread, some of the people hoped to merely catch the shadow of one of the apostles.

What is happening in your shadow? We each cast our shadow in this world, among our friends, our families, co-workers, etc. What does the passing of your shadow bring to those it falls upon? What signs and wonders do you leave in your wake?

Perhaps a kind word, or a smile, or a warm friendliness. Perhaps good works of charity, of gentleness, of inspiration. You fill in the blank. What affect does your life have on those around you? _____

Last week I suggested an exercise of exploration of some of your hidden, unleavened strengths. Did you take the time to do it? If you did, then you know some of the seeds of the spirit within your shadow. If you meant to do it later and forgot to go back and do so, maybe you should do it now.

One of the intents of last weeks exercise was to uncover some of the 'Spirit' within you that empowers you. Some of these might be faith, grace, and beliefs. Others might include your ability to laugh and put a smile on your face when you really might feel like crying or frowning. Or perhaps taking a moment of quiet reflection, or reading quietly, or to sing your heart out in joy filling refreshment. The list of possibilities is endless.

What empowers you to get up each day and to cast your shadow in this world? _____
What affect do you want your passing shadow to have on those lives you touch? _____
What is one thing you can do right now to help your unleavened bread begin to raise a little? _____

You see the apostles were the same men following the resurrection as they were before, but with one difference. They were empowered to make a difference; their unleavened qualities had risen.

While it is unlikely that 2000 years from now, the world will still be talking about the signs and wonders that you and I have left behind. But you better believe that there is a world right now in which you walk as a key player, that will talk about and notice the signs and wonders and shadow that you impress upon them in their daily associations with you.

As you journey through this world, you walk each day with a gift of spirit. Some of these gifts are what empowers you through each day, some of these are getting frayed and worn around the edges, many of them remain unleavened and hidden from you ~ just waiting to be raised into your day to become a part of your passing shadow.

Ponder these words a moment to examine your own life. Maybe tonight when you lay your head down on your pillow to rejuvenate for tomorrow, think about your passing shadow today and the signs and wonders you left behind. They are like a pebble dropped into the lake, sending ripples out to touch the world in ways you will never know and could never imagine.

May your passing shadow give a moment of something special to someone it touches.

God Blesses you!

Use your Inner Wisdom

April 25, 2001

Jesus said to them, "Children, have you caught anything to eat?" They answered him, "No." So he said to them, "Cast the net over the right side of the boat and you will find something." So they cast it, and were not able to pull it in because of the number of fish. John 21:5-6 (NAB)

This passage is in keeping with the theme of exploring our hidden potentials that we have been pondering about for the last couple of weeks. We spend much of our lives fishing or searching for something. Often times we never find it. Frequently, we are not even sure about what it is that we are searching.

In the above passage, the apostles were fishing. They were fishermen. They were skilled at that task and yet were catching nothing. Sometimes we go about doing a task that we think we know how to do, but we take the wrong approach and are unsuccessful. In those cases, often times just a slight modification makes all the difference. But we are creatures of habit and therefore, we do it the same way that we always have, even if it doesn't work.

We are frequently closed minded about things. We really don't want to hear what anyone else thinks about a topic. We know what we think and how we want to approach it and we don't want to be distracted by anyone else. Sometimes that works great and sometimes it fails miserably. Even the simplest task has many angles that it can be approached from and many facets of which we are probably unaware. Have you ever been stumped about something and someone came along and spoke the obvious and suddenly the whole thing fell into place? Until that moment, you were blinded by your own perceptions about the task and not able to see outside of the box in which you had trapped yourself.

We go through life missing so much. The faster the pace, the more we miss and the more we are blind-sided. We think we know best. The apostles probably didn't think they would catch any fish just by throwing the nets off the other side of the boat, but they were willing to try it anyway. They were probably thinking something like: "let's just humor him so he will leave us alone." What a difference it made.

How often have you had the feeling that you should do something even though you didn't know why at the time? Call it intuition, a gut feeling, or whatever you want. That is part of your inner wisdom. It is usually right if you will only listen to it. But you have to be willing to risk doing something that may not seem to make sense on the surface, or is a different approach from the way you normally do things.

Stop for a moment and think about something you have been doing where you just seem to be going through the motions and not getting anywhere.

1. Jot it down: _____
2. Now step out of the box. Take a look at it from an outsider's perspective. Maybe look at it through the eyes of a child and ask yourself some questions. What is the purpose of doing that? Why do it that way? What is happening? A child is full of questions, play detective for a little while and see what you come up with.
3. Now do something creative. Make suggestions and ask others for ideas. Get as many as you can. It doesn't make any difference if they make sense or not.
4. Try one of the suggestions just to experiment and see what happens. Hey, why don't you pick the one that you are convinced won't work and try it anyway.
5. Did it work? If yes, great! If not, it was worth a try and I am glad you at least tried it. Most of the things in life that we value the most, by rights, we should not even have. Why? Because we were stuck in our little box going through the motions and not getting anywhere ~ and somehow they were just dropped into our laps.

You can choose to **Live your Life ~ Full of Spirit** ~ and it is a choice. When you are feeling stumped, frustrated or irritated and things just aren't working out the way you wanted ~ throw out your nets one more time in a different direction, and you might just be surprised at how ...

God Blesses you!

Passionate About Life

May 2, 2001

The Jews, however, incited the women of prominence who were worshipers and the leading men of the city, stirred up a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their territory. So they shook the dust from their feet in protest against them, and went to Iconium. The disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit. Acts 13:50-52 (NAB)

Paul and Barnabas were on a mission and would not let anything dampen their spirit. Even though they were rejected, thrown out, and even persecuted ~ they went on their way filled with joy and spirit.

They believed passionately in the message and mission and would not let anything prevent them from delivering it. It became their very life to spread the word.

Do you have any kind of passion like that in your life? What drives you forward and keeps you going? When you run into obstacles, do you press on filled with joy and spirit?

Over the last few weeks, we have been playing with the notions of casting our nets in a different direction, or finding the richness of our unleavened bread and allowing it to rise. Life truly is a journey filled with many stumbling blocks. We can resist the journey and hold back in fear, not wanting to take another step, grumbling and complaining...or we can take that next step and see where it leads us, look on the bright side and keep going, smile maybe even laugh and rally our energy reserves and make the best of journey.

Easier said than done ~ well, maybe. Within each of us is some will, some passion, some desire, some something that keeps us going. When we lose touch with that energy source, the going gets rocky and difficult. When we are solidly connected to that source, no matter how difficult the journey may become, we are driven on filled with joy and spirit.

If you are feeling disconnected from that source, it is time to stop and reconnect and nurture it.

If you are not sure about what that source within you is ~ it is time to find it.

To begin to identify this passion within yourself, ponder these questions:

1. What things do I really get excited about?
2. What do I enjoy doing the most?
3. When I am feeling discouraged, what do I do, or what gets me going again?
4. What are my dreams? (It doesn't matter if you ever do them or if they are even possible, just identify them).
5. What do I admire most?
6. What qualities do I respect, admire, or like the most in others and also in myself?
7. If I could do anything in the world...what would that be?

These few questions will begin to help you uncover that spirit, that passion, that source of Life within you that drives you onward ~ so that you, too, can ~ **Live your Life ~ Full of Spirit.**

God Blesses you!

Life: Pieces of Love

May 9, 2001

I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. John 13:34-35 (NAB)

Here are two 4-letter words that it is safe to say in any company: Love Life. Life is all about loving and loving is all about life. If you live life by only one principal, let it be by loving.

Last week we briefly explored your passion in Life, that energy source that keeps you going and constantly renews you. Another way of describing your passion in life is by describing what you love in life. We all know that love comes in many forms, and each serves an important role in filling our **Lives with Spirit.**

You can have a love of many things, of a boyfriend or girlfriend, of a special companion, of God, of a friend, of a pet, of a beautiful work of art, of something you have created, of a piece of music, of yourself, of your child, of work, of play, of life... Each of these loves touches a unique depth and place in each of us. Each of them plays a special role in the uniqueness that lies within us.

Think of Love as a puzzle. As you place each unique piece into the puzzle, the total picture evolves until you see it in its entirety. And yet, if even one puzzle piece is missing, then the picture is incomplete and we find ourselves wanting to find that missing piece. The pieces are different forms of love, and the puzzle created is your Life.

Let's take a moment to look more closely at some of those individual puzzle pieces in your life. Begin to make a list of some of the things that are important to you in your Life, some of the things that you care deeply about, some of the things that form the foundation of your life, some of those things that if they were missing ~ they would leave an emptiness that you would hunger to fill.

As an example, some of the loves of my life (in no particular order): companionship, friendship, family, accomplishment, fulfillment, spiritual direction, integrity, humor, solitude, idealism, creativity, possibilities, and centeredness. These represent just a few of the things I value most in life, principles that I strive to live my life by, and elements that when they are missing ~ make me feel incomplete and out of balance or out of whack.

Please, take a few moments to identify some of these parts of yourself, because they are crucial. They are the guiding forces by which you live your Life. They are the Loves that others identify and recognize you by.

They are the pieces of your incomplete puzzle of Life. Never are all the pieces in place, some are always missing, some have been placed but then lost, some are still in the box, some you don't know where they fit yet, and some you just haven't gotten to yet. Throughout your journey in life, you are constantly putting more pieces into place as the total picture of your life continues to develop and unfold. There is always a sense of incompleteness drawing you forward.

So familiarize yourself with the pieces of your Life ~ they are the loves, the passions, the parts of you that ~ **Fill your Life with Spirit.**

God Blesses you!

3 Minutes for Yourself

May 16, 2001

The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid. John 14:26-27 (NAB)

As Jesus was preparing to ascend to heaven, he spoke the above words to the apostles. He knew there were troubling times ahead for his disciples. He knows that you and I face difficult times every day of our lives. It is easy to find ourselves worrying about a ton of things. It might be about work, finding a job, paying the bills, a medical illness, car troubles, difficulties in raising children, how to be a good parent, how to be a good spouse, about a friend's problems, relationships, not enough time, not enough money, putting food on the table, etc.

So many worries, but we are told not to be troubled and not to be afraid. Easier said than done. We have a resource, an Advocate to help see us through the difficult times. We have true peace of mind and heart to be our strength, our courage and our hope. Big Deal, so what, what good is that? It may not seem like much and while peace won't directly pay the bills, it truly is a big deal. Last week we explored some of the 'loves' of our lives, some of the passions, some of our devotions in life ~ the things we value that give direction and purpose to our lives. These are some of the things that renew us and give us courage to face the day.

Maybe you don't have time to notice that first flower in the springtime, or the joyful songs of the birds at sunrise, or the beauty of a sunrise or sunset, or the budding of the trees, or the smile of a child, or the laughter in the air, or the stranger who offers a helping hand, or . . . It is through these little loves in our lives that our spirit is renewed and refreshed so that we can cope with the difficulties to come. It is through them that we realize a sense of serenity, of peacefulness, of relaxation and of renewal. I call that ~ **Fullness of Spirit**.

Now, if you truly believe that this is nothing and is no big deal, then I would say that it is time to reexamine your values and purpose in life. Because if you haven't crashed already, you are certainly on a collision course headed for trouble. What is so all-fired important to you that you don't have time to slow down and enjoy life along the way? Peacefulness can be found everywhere you look. You just need to take a moment to look, to savor, to enjoy, to renew yourself.

How much do you matter? I hope your answer is: a lot. On a scale from 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest, I hope you are somewhere close to the 10 end of the scale. Because you really do matter a lot, and your life is very significant. So I think that you must be worth at least 3 minutes of time. What do you think?

Give yourself 3 minutes of time, right now, to renew and refresh and to find a moment of peace. Surely you can afford to stop for only 3 minutes and give yourself a little time and attention. You can use your 3 minutes however you like. Listen to a favorite piece of music, sing a song, close your eyes and remember one of your favorite memories, meditate, or just close your eyes and quietly, breathe deeply and let go and relax for a few minutes.

You can rehearse an imagery exercise to use in your 3 minutes each and every day. It is simple; you either pick a favorite memory or create one to fit your tastes. It might be a walk on a beach, sitting by a mountain spring or waterfall, enjoying a sunlit garden that is in full bloom, walking hand in hand with a loved one, etc. Just pick one, then plug in all the senses that go with it, the sounds, the light, the touch, tastes, smells, feelings, etc.

When you are ready, just close your eyes and step into your 'imagery scene' and bask in the brief journey of peacefulness. Really soak up as much as you can for the short time you have. Remember that you can visit this place frequently, whenever you need to, it will never go away or change unless you want it to. Now when you open your eyes and continue on with the day, I think you will find it a little more ~ **Filled with Spirit**.

God Blesses you!

What do you Seek?

May 23, 2001

May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give you a Spirit of wisdom and revelation resulting in knowledge of him. May the eyes of your hearts be enlightened, that you may know what is the hope that belongs to his call, what are the riches of glory in his inheritance among the holy ones, and what is the surpassing greatness of his power for us who believe... Ephesians 1:17-19 (NAB)

Homework check. Did you give yourself 3 minutes each day since last week? Don't tell me you didn't think you could spare yourself 3 minutes. Oh, you forgot? You were going to do it later and then didn't get back to it? Well that does happen. For those of you who did give yourself the gift of 3 minutes to refresh your spirit, how did it go? Keep up the great work!

In the above passage we are refreshed with hope and power and belief. Some of the words are filled with a release of imagery. The eyes of your heart ~ If you could see within your own heart or within the heart of others, what might you see? Hopefully you would see a wellspring of energy, of life, of spirit, of enlightenment, of wisdom and truth. Enlightened is another great word. How often do we look at something and not really see it? We have not been enlightened yet.

I have some music playing in the background right now, and the words are saying, "So seek ye first the kingdom of God and the wealth of His righteousness, for wherever your treasure lies, there will you find your heart." These words fit well with today's theme.

We can find our heart wherever those things that we truly value will be found. Sometimes we seek the right path and sometimes we get sidetracked. Sometimes we think we are seeking our treasure, but it is only because we have not been enlightened yet and the eyes of our heart are blind in the darkness.

What do you seek in your life? Is it greatness of some kind? Is it wealth, all that money can buy? Is it friendship and fellowship? Is it the openness of heart so that you may love all of creation and also allow yourself to be loved in return? Do you seek a greater understanding of Life? Or of yourself? What is it you really seek?

According to the above words, whatever it is that you seek, that is where you will find your heart. That is where your renewal of spirit, of energy, of attitude, of power, of knowledge, of everything in Life ~ will spring from. Those things that are the heart of your value system, will lead you on, draw you on, be the wind behind your sails.

The 3 minute exercise of last week is an important one because it gives you the opportunity to do a 'course check'. It provides you a wonderful opportunity to enlighten the eyes of your heart and to see where you truly stand at that moment. Perhaps you will find that you have strayed off course slightly and you will need to make a correction. Or, perhaps you will find that you are right on course, and you can continue to enjoy the thrill and refreshment of knowing that your journey is true.

I truly believe that you are worth at least 3 minutes of time each and every day of your life. From those brief moments you will be able to connect with the spring of hope flowing within your heart, the spirit of life within you. In the above analogy of sailing, this internal source is the compass which guides you on your journey. It pays to pay attention to this compass if you do not want to get lost or wander off course.

It is not too late. Give yourself 3 minutes today to do a 'course check'. Enlighten the eyes of your heart so that you may see more truly the power and greatness within your own life. May you have enlightenment, wisdom, hope, and richness of the power that flows from the belief that your journey is true and that you are following the right path. **May your Life be Filled with Spirit.**

God Blesses you!

Taking Life for Granted

May 30, 2001

There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit. As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ. 1 Corinthians 12:4-7, 12 (NAB)

On Pentecost we are reminded that each and every one of us is special with some destiny, some purpose, some benefit chosen for us and that we are filled with a special spirit to help us get the job done. Furthermore, that same spirit ties us to one another as a community in service to each other. The benefit ~ even though it may be very large and difficult to achieve ~ when shared among so many, it is easily accomplished and enjoyed by all. I believe that is what LIFE is all about. You know that life is a truly amazing compilation of so many parts and yet we all share in the same one LIFE. Working together, we all benefit from Life, working separately, we still share in LIFE, but we don't benefit as much and Life is so much harder.

Look at your own body, your own life. It is a complicated and amazing compilation of parts that all operate as one entity. Each part has a special job to do. What would your life be like if you were missing a finger, or a toe, or an eye, or ear, or tongue, or your heart, or brain, or a rib, or a leg, or your skin, or ... I bet you can't even imagine what you would do without all your parts being intact. Oh sure, some of them seem more important than some of the others, and it might be easier to do without a finger than say, your brain. But I bet, if given the choice, you would not choose to give up any of your many parts, because together, they are YOU. You would not be the same if even one were missing. **You are special in that you have unique talents, abilities, knowledge, skills, thoughts, and a uniqueness in how you experience and share in LIFE.**

Now, think for a moment about some of the people who you rub elbows with day in and day out. Sure we sometimes think we would be happier without this person or that one being around. But you know what, the world would just not be the same without them. Maybe your purposes are not complementary, but you each still have unique and important contributions to make to the community in which we all share. How different your life would be if you didn't have all those individuals to help you live life. What if you had to do everything yourself: make your own clothes, raise all your own food, etc. What if you literally were responsible for making everything you use in your life each day? WOW! We would have to live without most of the things that we now take for granted.

It is easy to take ourselves for granted. "That's no big deal ~ anyone could do that." Yeah, but anyone isn't doing it, you are. If you stop doing it, I guarantee it would make a difference to some one, and probably to a lot of some ones. Likely, you might not ever know for sure who some of those some ones are, but the difference would be there. In your 3-minutes today for yourself, take stock of some of the things you do everyday that you just take for granted. But also think how different your own life might be if you stopped doing some of them. Think for a moment what if some of the things you enjoy were suddenly no longer there. Maybe it's your morning coffee. Do you produce your own coffee beans? What if suddenly there were no coffee beans? If that someone somewhere decided they weren't going to do it anymore. You don't know who that person is, but you would notice the difference.

The truth is that you make a PROFOUND difference in this one LIFE that we all share. You may find that hard to believe but it is true nonetheless. Now I don't know how my life would be different if you were no longer here, but I know it would not be quite the same. I take so many things for granted, that I might not even notice the difference at first. If it meant no coffee, I would notice. If it meant a close friend or family member were gone, I'd notice. If it meant that one of those I drive by everyday no longer waved or smiled at me, I might not notice right away, but in time I would miss that little connection. Who knows, maybe I would notice the difference, maybe not. I don't think I want to risk it. I am quite happy that all of you, whoever you are, wherever you are, are part of the LIFE I share. You being there, helps ~ **Fill my Life with Spirit** ~ and I don't want that to change.

God Blesses you!

Faith: Hope for Success

June 6, 2001

Brothers and sisters: Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith to this grace in which we stand, and we boast in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we even boast of our afflictions, knowing that affliction produces endurance, and endurance, proven character, and proven character, hope, and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us. Romans 5:1-5 (NAB)

In today's message we hear words of hope, faith, peace, grace, glory, afflictions, endurance, proven character, disappointment and love. These words describe what life is all about. If we but have faith and hope, then we can endure the afflictions until we again reconnect with the peace, love and grace within our lives.

Some might say that life is like a poker game and that each individual is dealt a hand of cards and that some will win and some will lose. But it is also true that you have to play the hand you are dealt. You have to know when to hold them, when to fold, when to bet and when to draw. In other words, you play a very active role in this hand you are dealt.

It is also true that there is a lot of faith in playing poker. If you do not believe that you can win, if you do not have some faith in your own card playing ability, then you most likely will never pick up the cards in the first place. Now that doesn't mean you truly have any card playing ability, it only means that you believe you do.

When you believe in yourself and your abilities and the blessings you have received, when you have faith, then you are able to have hope that things will work out. Beliefs and faith connect us to other things and people in life. It connects us to grace which provides us strength to endure afflictions that might come our way. It connects us to the peace that helps renew us each day. It opens our eyes to the glory that is bursting from the seams everywhere in the world around us.

The passage says affliction produces endurance, which develops our character, which connects us to that foundation of hope within, which is our connection to that Fullness of Spirit that we have all been given.

Take a moment to reflect on your own life:

What cards have you been dealt in Life?

What do you believe? List some of them here:

What do each of your beliefs connect you to?

What are some of the afflictions that you tolerate?

List the strengths that help you endure each affliction?

How has this shaped your character, made you the person you are?

What role does hope play in your life?

How do you keep hope alive and well in your life?

I think that probably brings us back to beliefs. Our lives are filled with beliefs. We can't live without them. Everything we do in life is connected to our belief systems, which determine our values, our morals, our judgments, our decisions, how we think and what we do.

So what did you discover in the few moments while you examined your own Life? I hope you discovered some hope, faith, peace, grace, glory, endurance, proven character and love. I also hope that you draw on these to

Fill your Life with Spirit.

God Blesses you!

Cope with any Obstacle

June 13, 2001

He said to them, "Give them some food yourselves." They replied, "Five loaves and two fish are all we have, unless we ourselves go and buy food for all these people." Now the men there numbered about five thousand. Then he said to his disciples, "Have them sit down in groups of about fifty." They did so and made them all sit down. Then taking the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, he said the blessing over them, broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd. They all ate and were satisfied. And when the leftover fragments were picked up, they filled twelve wicker baskets. Luke 9:11b-17 (NAB)

What a wonderful passage this is! It has an important message for us for each and every day of our lives. First, it reminds us of one value that frequently gets us into trouble: do it yourselves. Second, it points out that we frequently doubt our ability to meet the demands and responsibilities placed upon us. Third, there is an underlying message that gives us the secret to how to cope with almost any obstacle.

Let's see if we can figure it out. Okay, be honest with yourself-how many times have you fallen into the trap that you have to do something all by yourself? That if you can't do it by yourself, that if you can't be independent, that if you have to rely upon someone else, that you are less of a person because of it. Isn't that ridiculous? Okay, now how many times have you helped someone else out that was struggling with something, or you just wanted to help them get the job done faster so you could do something else together, etc. Did you think less of that person for helping them? Sounds like a double standard to me, and that you just aren't playing fair with yourself when you make yourself do it all by yourself.

The second point is that it is human nature to doubt. We frequently feel insecure in our ability to do all the things that we are responsible for. We hold ourselves to a standard that might not be reasonable. We compare ourselves to someone else who might be much better at something than we are, and we don't come out looking so good in comparison. All this means that we simply aren't playing fair with ourselves. We get overwhelmed in the impracticality of something and see things as impossible for me to be able to accomplish. Yet, most things are possible when viewed in the right light, at the right angle, with the right perspective and with the right creative use of resources.

In the parable, the disciples panicked and were feeling overwhelmed and saw nothing but impossibilities. There is no way we can feed all these people, we don't have the resources. The solution was to calm down, and begin to take action. They sat the crowd down in smaller groups (break down the big problem into smaller pieces). Give thanks for what you have (acknowledge your resources and be grateful for what you have rather than panicking and getting fixated on what you don't have). Then get busy by putting your current resources to work for you. That's when the miracle happened. The impossible became possible.

Did you get the secret to overcoming any obstacle? First, calm down and take stock of your available resources. Second, don't try to do it by yourself, get everyone to help. Third, appreciate what you have and don't worry about what you don't have. Fourth, trust and believe that it will work out even though it looks like the odds are against you. Fifth, take reasonable action - get started. If you wait until you think you have the resources necessary to do it, you will never even get started.

So when you are doubting yourself and don't know how you are going to get the job done, don't forget to remind yourself that "thank God, I don't have to do it all by myself." Look around to see who you can get to help. The necessary resources are usually available if you get other people involved. Remember, everyone else comes equipped with resources of their own that you probably don't even know about. When you combine all these available resources, they amass to a considerable quantity ~ perhaps even twelve baskets worth left over.

So don't forget the secret ~ and use it today ~ to **Fill your Life with Spirit.**

God Blesses you!

Magical Moments

June 20, 2001

When the time arrived for Elizabeth to have her child she gave birth to a son. Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy toward her, and they rejoiced with her. When they came on the eighth day to circumcise the child, they were going to call him Zechariah after his father, but his mother said in reply, "No. He will be called John." Luke 1:57-60 (NAB)

Isn't life full of surprises. In the above passage, Elizabeth who was an old woman well past the typical child bearing years, gave birth to a son. Then she surprised everyone by giving him a name that no one in the family had. Zechariah who had been struck dumb at his unbelief that his wife would have a son, was able to speak when he and his wife had fulfilled God's purpose in their lives.

Last week we played with the idea of our own self doubts. Yes, life is full of doubts and full of surprises, too. Our lives have so much more meaning when we are open to the surprises in spite of our doubts, fears and uncertainties. Surprises are placed along our pathways to facilitate our journey in life.

I bet you have walked past many surprises in your own life but you never recognized their true value, and they were lost to you. You walked right past them and kept going and they faded into the past. You will never know how different your life might have been if you had recognized that blessing and allowed it to work its magic in your life.

Now I am not suggesting that you go out and have a baby. Babies truly are blessings, frequently do come as surprises, and do have their magical moments. But I know there are other magical moments in your life that you are not making the best of.

Such as? For instance, I know you had a thought yesterday of someone that you haven't talked to in a while and you could have called them, wrote them a quick note or email, or crossed the street for a moment of time with them. Or how about that time when you could have given that special someone in your life a quick hug, kiss, or just an affectionate touch and say I love you.

No, I am not talking about winning the lottery, getting a raise, or suddenly that job that you have been waiting forever for suddenly drops into your lap. Those things do happen, but I was thinking on a smaller and yet much grander scale. How many of those simpler things similar to those I mentioned above do you walk past every single day of your life? They are some of the roses in your life, put there for you to stop and savor their magical fragrance, and to make a small difference, a magical moment in your busy day.

Too busy, too hectic, just forgot, it wasn't in my schedule... It is time. Zechariah was struck dumb to get his attention. What will it take to get yours?

Your life is full of surprises, make the best of them. They are there to **Fill your Life with Spirit**. You have heard me use that phrase over and over. What does it mean? This is just the tip of the iceberg, but for me, it means, every day should be like a fresh breeze, like the air after a cleansing rain, filled with vitality, newness, creativity, inspiration, and new and exciting opportunities to be revitalized, refreshed and renewed as I embrace my life more and more fully. Of course, it means more, much more, and it continues to unfold and take on a deeper and richer meaning each day with each step I take along the journey. I want that for you, too.

God Blesses you!

Got Time?

June 27, 2001

Brothers and sisters: For freedom Christ set us free; so stand firm and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery. For you were called for freedom, brothers and sisters. ... For the whole law is fulfilled in one statement, namely, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. But if you go on biting and devouring one another, beware that you are not consumed by one another. Galatians 5:1, 13-15 (NAB)

Do you ever get the feeling that the older you get, the faster time goes by? It is almost like we are stuck in a time warp. Time can certainly be a yoke of slavery. Take a moment to look at all the responsibilities and commitments you have competing for your time. It is overwhelming at times. There are many ways in which we are each still trapped in bonds of slavery. Our time commitments are one such trap of slavery. As we become more and more consumed by our responsibilities and obligations, we may find ourselves being consumed by one another. We become more and more frustrated and irritable and the common pleasantries that we value begin to slip and erode away. Our fullness of spirit becomes a fullness of drudgery, draining away that core of energy that we rely on to sustain us.

As the above passage proclaims, YOU were called for **FREEDOM**. You were called to **live your life ~ Full of Spirit**. What is consuming you and your life right now? Yes, it is time to make a list. Don't have time? I am sorry, then you will remain trapped in your slavery to time commitments.

You would be surprised at where your time goes if you started to keep track of how much you spend on each task, and you would also be surprised at how many things you do. We do so many things on automatic pilot that we are completely unaware of what we are doing. That is both a blessing and a danger. It is a blessing, because it really does free us to do a lot of simple tasks without really paying much attention to them. While we are doing them automatically, we can be concentrating on something else and solving some other concern. But it can also be a danger because some of those things we are doing and not paying attention to are a waste of our time. If we were truly aware of them, we would probably not be wasting our time on them.

Okay, the purpose of making a list is to not waste more of your time or to overwhelm you with all the 'stuff' going on in your life right now. The purpose is to maximize your control over your time, to put you back in the drivers seat rather than being the back seat driver that you have been. By loosening the chains of slavery, you increase your freedom of choice and put more spirit into your life.

Is that something you are interested in? Then read on. Yes, you must really make that list. Now you are not going to list every single thing, you would never get done. But list some of the big things you spend time on and some of the little things, too. I bet you spend much more time on little things than the big ones. Little things like picking up after yourself or someone else, doing chores, etc. all those little things that must be done, but keep you from enjoying life. I also bet that if you make a list, you will have no or almost no items there that fit in the leisure category, the 'stress buster' category, or whatever you call that special time for yourself. I'm talking about spending some quality time doing something for yourself to recharge your batteries and keep you going. You see you are not the Eveready Bunny rabbit. You cannot just keep on going and going and going.

So when you have your list started, the next step is to do something about it. Get rid of some of the tasks that are wasting your time and add little or no value to your life. Alter some of them, do them less, at a different time, get some help with them, change their schedule, etc. - do something different about them so they do not overly consume you. Readjust your priorities, move the tasks around. You have some of the tasks prioritized incorrectly. Some of them should be in the 'round to it' category and some of them already in that category should be moved higher on the list. 'Round to it', you know all those things you say you will do when you get a round to it, but you never quite make it to them. All of those things you will do in your spare time, yeah right. And the most important step is to put some time for yourself at the very top of the list so that you do it every single day of your life. That's the time you need to recharge your own batteries so you really can keep on going and so that you also **Live your Life ~ Full of Spirit**.

God Blesses you!