

Week 13 - A Clean Wash

By Pastor Palmer Wold

Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow. – Psalm 51:7

One day, a pastor made a call on one of his parishioners. He arrived just as she finished hanging a number of sheets on the clothesline in her back yard. Impressed by the whiteness, he complimented her on the excellent work that she had done. "I have never seen such an absolutely spotless wash!" he remarked.

She accepted his kind words and invited the pastor in for a cup of coffee. As they chatted and drank their steaming beverages, the sky began to cloud over and soon large flakes of snow began to blanket the yard. As he left the house, he looked at the sparkling crystals that covered the trees and the grass and thoughtlessly commented, "Your sheets don't look quite as clean as they did before."

The woman simply smiled as she replied, "Nothing can stand against the purity of the Almighty."

Whatever your sins are, confess them to Christ and before God and you will be whiter than snow! Think of it, my friend, you are whiter than snow!

Question: Why do some people feel guilty even after they have confessed their sins? Do we really trust that God has forgiven us?

Week 14 – Life Connection

By Pastor Darrin Vick

I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. – John 15:5-6

Nothing works without connection. I've always had an interest in audio/video equipment so every time my family has moved into a new house, my first job is to make sure the entertainment center is properly connected. Because of this, I've collected a vast assortment of cables to get the job done. Each one serves a purpose in making the system work. And sometimes, the cables wear-out and I have to spend time hunting for a new one. Without good connections, nothing will look or sound the way it is intended to.

Staying connected to Jesus is absolutely essential if we are to live and work as his disciples. It is common for me to hear people say things like, "I'm a Christian but I just don't go to church anymore." But the church is the Body of Christ! If you are disconnected from the body, how do you expect to stay spiritually alive? If you are cut-off from the "vine", how do you expect to bear spiritual fruit? We should seek to remain connected to Jesus through the church as if our life depended on it. Because...it does!

Question: What gets in the way of your regular connection to Jesus?

Week 15 – A Box of Life

By Pastor Palmer Wold

When the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful...then Jesus said to his disciples, "It is almost impossible for a rich man to get into the kingdom...it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God." – Matthew 19:22-23

A young man who was very rich came to Jesus one day, asking what he should do to inherit eternal life. Jesus told him to obey all the commandments. The young man seemed to think that he had done just that. The Jesus told him to sell all he had and give it to the poor. When he was unwilling to do that, it revealed that he had not even kept the first commandment. He walked away dejectedly.

It 1975, six armed gunmen broke into deposit boxes in a London bank and stole valuables worth more than seven million dollars. One lady whose jewelry was appraised at \$500,000 said, "everything I had was in there. My whole life was in that box!" What a sad commentary on her values!

Wealth or status should not be what defines a life. Wealth can be beneficial; but when it becomes a first love, it can destroy. And when an unhealthy attachment to material things exists, it can keep a person who is not a Christian away from the Lord and can cause a Christian to slip away from Christ. We need to make Christ our first love and everything else will fall into place!

Question: If you were given a million dollars, how would you spend it?

Week 16 – Around the Fire

By Pastor Darrin Vick

Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our "God is a consuming fire." – Hebrews 12:28-29

When I was a child, I was fascinated by fire. One summer, while staying at our family lake home, I took a pack of matches from the kitchen to my bedroom and began lighting them one-by-one. As the flame approached my fingers, I would blow them out and toss the used match under my bed. A few days later, my father found the used matches and called me into the room. When he held the burned matches in front of me, I confessed to playing with matches. I expected he would be angry with me but instead, he got down next to me and shared how dangerous and destructive fire could be if it wasn't handled with care. He then showed me how to properly build a fire in our outdoor fire-pit.

To this day, I still love to build a good fire in a fire pit. I love the warmth and the way it brings others around for good food and good conversation. But I also have a healthy respect for fire and its awesome power to consume anything that comes too close.

The author of Hebrews is mindful of God's awesome power when he reminds us to worship God with reverence and awe. God is not a "book of matches" that we can play with and then cast aside. The Bible regularly refers to God as fire that leads us, tests us, purifies us, and even fills us so that we can show his character in the world and draw others to Him in worship. He is a loving father who wants to "stoke the fire" in our hearts and teach us how to "light a fire" in the lives of others. May we always stand in awe of God's power and be drawn to his light.

Question: How do you "keep the fire burning" in your relationship with Jesus?