

Independent Evangelist

LE it's happening



Follow the Leader

By Phil Conybear

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Last month, I told you about my father and promised to reveal more about myself in this issue. Even though I am called to evangelize, I'm not the true definition of an evangelist. I'm sure not like Billy Graham or Pat Robertson but here is what I need to tell you about myself.

I wasn't given a proper religious upbringing. I went to a Baptist Sunday school with a neighbor kid when I was about five and accompanied my grandmother on her church's picnics at the Church of the Nazarene on Kedzie Avenue in Chicago. My best friend was Catholic and I would go with him to his church functions at St. Christina, also in Chicago. However, I never went to any actual services when I was young.

In those days, I was the kind of kid you told your kids not to hang out with. I went to school but rarely came home before late night. I wasn't really bad but **I had no sense of purpose in life.** Football was my life and school and church took a distant back seat. I could always hear my father's words, "Christianity was wasted on the church" but I didn't really blame my parents. Without church in their lives they had no one to guide them after all.

I did feel like **I was missing something** however and I was curious about religion, so one day I made the plunge.

I began attending the church where my grandmother said I had been baptized; Mt. Greenwood Lutheran Church. It was a Missouri Synod church and they were still very old world. In fact, my friend from St. Christina came with me to a service once, and he said it was just like the old fashioned Catholic service except for a few words here and there.

At home I was used to old ways. I came along late in my parent's lives and I had grandparents living in our home. Because my whole household was old, I grew up with very conservative ideals. I never flinched at an old fashioned church, even though it was the 60's and the times were "a changin'"

When I met the pastor, he was very energetic and he really got the youth involved as much as possible. He put me in a confirmation class with adults because I was already too old for the regular confirmation class. It turned out good because I got to know him as more than a teacher; he became a friend.

This pastor jump started my existence. I became very active and never missed a service. I was a fixture in the church and the pastor could count on me for anything. He even lived a block away and I saw him often as a neighbor and friend. Things were going fine and that should have been the end of the story.

As I said, it was the 60's and my draft number was 99. Since I lost my football scholarship to a knee injury, there was no way I wasn't going to serve. The idea of serving my country didn't bother me but because of my new found Christian faith, I enlisted as a conscientious objector.

That was an epitome of an oxymoron to the drill sergeants who thought I would be trouble and everyone watched me. But I did okay except for going AWOL whenever I could for the weekend.

The first few days of basic training are spent being tested to see how you can best serve the Army. I remember a sign that appeared often from one office to another. It said, **God, Duty and Country.** It would be accompanied by different pictures from our nation's history. I was struck by the fact that **God was always listed first.**

I talked with the chaplain about the signs I saw and he pointed out that our country was founded on Christianity with an attitude of religious freedom. The chaplain was a kind and straight talking man and suggested I ask to be placed somewhere where I could follow my Christian ways. He gave me a pocket bible and a pocket prayer book that I carried with me everywhere and still have today

After basic, God answered my prayers and I became a Medic assigned to a unit going to Viet Nam. Medics were in short supply because they were usually shot first but I felt I could save lives whenever possible and that sat well with me.

"In country" I experienced the real horrors of war first hand. To name a few things, I was shot, stabbed, was captured and escaped, had malaria twice and was in two helicopter crashes. The Vietnamese girl I married and the little girl we were planning to adopt were brutally murdered by the Viet Cong.

When I came home, I was an outcast as all Nam vets were and I was called a baby killer. I was a living oxymoron again.

If that wasn't enough, I went back to Mt. Greenwood Lutheran Church, thinking I could see **my old pastor.** If anyone could help me through these tough times, he could. He had been relieved of his duties and the church wouldn't tell me where I could find him.

A council member told me he tried to introduce guitar music and more modern ideas in services to involve the youth more. They destroyed the man for that. I was told he was given a desk job somewhere in the church.

Then, I was told I was no longer a member because of money. I hadn't contributed any money in the last two years. I reminded them in the new manner I had become accustomed to, where I had been during that time. It didn't matter; I was no longer a part of the Lutheran church. I could hear echoes of my father's words that Christianity was wasted on the church.

That was 1972 and I never went inside a church again, except for an event like a wedding or whatever. The 70's were spent with the Devil in a bottle of rum and getting into fights with anyone who looked at me wrong.

In 1983, I was told I would die from the cancer that Agent Orange caused. I would have died except that God wanted me around for a while. **I had more of life's lessons to learn.**



The effects of chemotherapy

In 1993, Agent Orange led me to suffer a stroke. It was a bad one and I wasn't expected to live. The recovery was long and hard and what you see is what you get. **Just another one of life's lessons.**



Peak of Mt. Washington after the stroke

I had always believed that it is the **duty** of everyone to **pass on that which they have learned.** What had I learned?

- * Let's see. I learned that Christianity is wasted on churches but believing that made me feel like I was missing something.
- * I had no sense of purpose until I let Christ in my life.
- * I learned about God, Duty and Country.
- * I saw Hell first hand.
- * I saw my old pastor taken down by misguided lost souls.
- * I saw Christianity wasted on the church again and went back to visit Hell in a bottle.
- * I visited death twice more in my life...but the story didn't end there.

I can't remember the time span here, but we moved to Woodridge in '97. Shortly after we moved in, Pastor Paul came to our house with a loaf of bread and we visited a while. He invited us to Prince of Peace church just down the street.

Because of nagging bitterness towards churches, it would take five years before we entered the doors of his church. Pastor Paul was talking to someone as we walked in the door but he stopped and turned to us and said, "Phil and Mary, welcome!" He remembered our names after only a short visit five years earlier. Mary was talking with him and I quietly made my way into the sanctuary. As I stood in the middle of it, I felt a powerful feeling I can't describe too well. All I can say is that years of anger washed away in an instant and I really believe **I felt the presence of God.**

Again, I was asking Jesus to come back into my life. He's given me more chances at life than I deserve and He's come back into my life.

*I've seen way too much in life but I realize that no matter how hard you have it, the next guy may have it worse. **Give that person your hand.**

*No matter where you go to hide **God's already been there and He will guide you back.**

I may have had a troubled past but I've always searched for answers. I'll stand by the fact that I'm no Billy Graham or Pat Robertson and could never hope to be, but I'll do my best to pass on that which I have learned and that, I believe, is true **evangelism.**

Now, I'm sorry about going on about my past but I think it needed to be said. Thank you for listening.

Let's get back to my newsletter.



Let Your Light Shine

Astronomers and astrophysicists study a phenomenon in outer space called "black holes." These are areas in space that pull in all the surrounding energy and light from any stars venturing near them and they do not release any light of their own back into the universe. Some Christian churches develop a "black hole" in the congregation. This small core within the church feeds on negativity rather than releasing the light of Christ back into the world through forgiveness and reconciliation. The answer to this problem is letting the light of Christ shine in our hearts.

For God, who said, "Let **light** shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the **light** of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

2 Corinthians 4:6

This is the verdict: **Light** has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of **light** because their deeds were evil.

John 3:19

While I am in the world, I am the **light** of the world.

John 9:5

In the same way, let your **light** shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

Matthew 5:16



Give Ourselves to Christ

We must **trust** Jesus Christ to forgive our sins and determine to obey Him for the rest of our lives. That way we can know God and find peace again.

The Bible says: *So you will be saved, if you honestly say, Jesus is Lord, and if you believe with all your heart that God raised Him from death. God will accept you and save you, if you truly believe this. (Romans 10:9-10)*

Is there any good reason why you cannot turn your life over to Jesus Christ right now?

How to give your life to Christ:

1. Admit you are a sinner and need forgiveness.
2. Believe that Jesus Christ died for you on the Cross and rose from the grave.
3. Through prayer, confess that Jesus Christ is the only way to God and commit to live for Him for the rest of your life.

What to Pray:

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins and rose from the grave to give me life. I know You are the only way to God so now I want to quit disobeying You and start living for You. Please forgive me, change my life and show me how to know You. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Follow up to Church Burnings in Alabama



Taken from the Chicago Tribune last week, was this picture of members of one of the burned out churches. I don't know which church this is, but I haven't been so moved by a picture in a long time. It just goes to show you, you can knock a Christian down and kick him around some but you can't take away his faith. Amen.

Finding a Penny

I just read "Pennies from Heaven" it reminded me of another story that is truly dear to my heart. Before my mother went into a nursing home she told me a little poem, which is as follows:

"When you see a penny on the ground,
Stop and pick it up cause an angel has tossed it down."

Now every time I see a penny I pick it up and she comes into my mind.
What a blessing it is to have her in my heart all the time.

Could Jesus Have Visited The Native Americans?

None of us really have the answer to that since we have no eye witnesses. There have been stories, however and oddly enough, the Mormons made the "white man" wonder about it. Also, many famous Native Americans either were Christians or demonstrated Christian values.

I'm not just talking about the "Indians" of the old western movies; I mean South, Central and North American Natives have stories of being visited after Christ's resurrection. True or not, I wish someone would research it and make a movie. I like to believe it happened. That would be cool.

The Bible states that Jesus "showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days" and that this witness of Christ would be "unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1:3-8) and that Jesus would indeed visit "other sheep" (John 10:16).

The Book of Mormon makes the bold statement that Jesus Christ, shortly following His resurrection, visited people in the New World and invited them to "feel the prints of the nails in my hands and in my feet, that ye may know that I am...the God of the whole earth, and have been slain for the sins of the world. ... Ye are they of whom I said: Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice..." (3 Nephi 11:14, 15:21).

I included Native American versions of the Ten Commandments and the Chinook version of the Lord's Prayer. There were so many things I had to leave out that it left me frustrated. I even had to leave out Amazing Grace written in Micmac. There were hundreds of Native American web sites when I searched, Native American religion on Google. I recommend it if you're curious. If nothing else, its food for thought and some cool history. I hope you enjoy it.



**The Mayan Deity Itzamna
(Notice the holes in the hands)**

**"I cannot think that we are useless or God would not have created us.
There is one God looking down on us all.
We are all the children of one God."
~ Geronimo**



**Jade Plaque. Altun Ha Belize. Circa 600 A.D.
(Note the hole in the right hand)**

**"O Great Spirit whose voice I hear in the winds,
I come to you as one of your many children.
I need your strength and your wisdom.
Make me strong not to be superior to my brother,
but to be able to fight my greatest enemy Myself"
~ Chief Dan George**

An Aztec Prayer

Reportedly translated from an original dating from the 1500's

Lord most giving and resourceful, I implore you; make it your will that this people enjoy the goods and riches you naturally give, that naturally issue from you, that are pleasing and savory, that delight and comfort, though lasting but briefly, passing away as if in a dream.

The Ten Commandments Version 1

- The Earth is our Mother; care for Her
- Honor all your relations.
- Open your heart and soul to the Great Spirit.
- All life is sacred; treat all beings with respect.
- Take from the Earth what is needed and nothing more.
- Do what needs to be done for the good of all.
- Give constant thanks to the Great Spirit for each day.
- Speak the truth but only for the good in others.
- Follow the rhythms of Nature.
- Enjoy life's journey; but leave no tracks.

The Ten Commandments Version 2

- Treat the earth and all that dwell thereon with respect
- Remain close to the Great Spirit
- Show great respect for your fellow beings
- Work together for the benefit of all humankind
- Give assistance and kindness wherever needed
- Do what you know to be right
- Look after the well-being of mind and body
- Dedicate a share of your efforts to the greater good
- Be truthful and honest at all times
- Take full responsibility for your actions

Chinook Lord's Prayer

Nesika papa klaksta mitlite kopa saghalie
(Our Father Who dwells on High)

Kloshe kopa nesika tumtum mika nem.
(Good for our hearts Your Name.)

Kloshe mika tyee kopa konaway tillikum;
(Good you Chief of all people ;)

Kloshe mika tumtum kopa illahee kahkwa kopa saghalie;
(Good Your heart to make our country such as Yours up above ;)

Potlatch konaway sun nesika muckamuck,
(Give us all days our food.)

Pee kopet-kumtux donaway nesika mesachie,
(And stop remembering all our sins we make to them.)

Kahkwa nesilka mamook kopa klaksta spose mamook
mesachie kopa nesia;
(As we suppose not their sin against us ;)

Mahah siah kopa nesika konaway mesachie.
(Throw far away from us all evil)

Kloshe kahkwa.
(Amen.)

The Gospel of Judas

We were all blissfully unaware of the Gospel of Judas until the recent special on TV. I, for one, will never lose sleep about any gospels outside the Bible. I've read the Gnostic Gospels and I liked what they had to say. I especially liked the gospels of Thomas and Mary Magdalene.

They have not and will not shake my faith in God and Jesus nor do I believe I'm a bad person for reading them. I wasn't there, with Jesus so I can't know exactly what was said or done. As Christians we only need to believe that the Bible, as it is, is the Word of God.

I saw the special on TV and all I can say is that if you think about it, Judas had no choice in what he did. It was a path God set out for him. Some people think of him as evil and some say he was a close friend of Jesus. I'm convinced that he did what he did because he had no choice in the matter. That's my opinion, nothing more. The point is, watch the special or read any of the Gnostic Gospels you want. If your faith is strong, it won't matter. It's all part of history and none of us were there to dispute it. There are worse things in this world to lose sleep about.

The National Geographic Society Publishes 2nd Century 'Gospel of Judas'



- The National Geographic Society has made public the English translation of a document it is calling the "Gospel of Judas."

The text centers on Judas Iscariot - the man the Bible tells us betrayed Jesus. But, the account departs—drastically—from the commonly-held picture of the disgraced disciple.

It was the first public glimpse of what is known as the "Gospel of Judas." A document verified as being 1,700 years old. The manuscript dates back to the third century and is sure to set off debate. Unlike the Gospels of the Bible, this account offers a very different picture of the relationship between Judas and Jesus. It even suggests that Judas betrayed Jesus only after Jesus asked him to do it.

It is not known who wrote this text. But in it, Jesus privately tells Judas 'you will exceed all of them, for you will sacrifice the man that clothes me.' While it's being called a major archaeological find, early Christian leaders discounted its text, centuries ago. It is not likely to change Christian belief today, either. Rev Donald Senior is with the Catholic Theological Union. He said, "Does the 'gospel of Judas' positive portrayal of Judas and his relationship with Jesus—so different from that from the canonical Gospel—have any claims to historical reliability to the Jesus of history? I doubt it."

Once the final work is complete, the documents will return to Egypt - the country in which they were originally found. One scholar, from Asbury Theological Seminary, tells the New York Times that the documents tell us nothing about the historical Jesus or the historical Judas. But, he said, they do tell us a lot about people who were labeled heretics even in their own day.

Book Corner

Once in a while this old man actually reads some books. If they're good reading or just fun to read, I'll let you know.

* **Dinner with a Perfect Stranger**, by David Gregory, is a remarkable book, to say the least. It will make your faith stronger or jump start a cold hearted soul. A cynical yuppie working 70 hours a week finds an invitation to dinner with Jesus of Nazareth on his desk with credit card applications and other junk mail. He thinks it's a prank by one of his friends but out of curiosity, he goes.

The dialogue that ensues with the mysterious host at the restaurant is astounding.

It's a small book that could be missed on the shelf except that you can find it next to my next choice; **The Five People You Meet in Heaven**, by Mitch Albom.

* A maintenance man at a small amusement park feels trapped in his life. He's wounded in the war and returns to the job he thought he was ready to leave. An accident at the park ends his life and he meets 5 people that were significant in his life (none of which you would expect). They show that his life had meaning, and I won't say more than that (even though I want to).

If you don't want to read it, it's on the shelf of video stores among older movies.

* **90 Minutes in Heaven**, by Don Piper was a surprise joy to me. It relates the true story of a minister who was declared dead in a terrible car crash. He was clinically dead for 90 minutes and came to life again.

He tells of his struggles of recovery and gets his answer to why he was sent back to his Earthly existence. To anyone who has ever asked, "Why me Lord" or said, "Woe is me" better read this book.

It's also a good follow up for all of us who followed Rick Warren's 40 Days of The Purpose Driven Life. I'm not reviewing that book but if you haven't read it please do so.

Truthfully, I don't read a lot now but I used to. I was an English major in college and, ironically I didn't like to read then. It's amazing, though how the words of any good book stick with you throughout your life. That's why I encourage reading, especially for your kids.

*Witness to Darfur Atrocities
Saw 'Brutality Beyond
Imagination'*



By Sarah Hoffman-Pollack CWNews

CWNews.com – Christians around the world have been praying for Darfur, Sudan this week.

They are praying for an end to the brutality there and that refugees from the attacks will receive food and medical relief.

One American who has seen the atrocities first hand is former Marine Captain Brian Steidle. He served as the U.S. Representative to the African Union's Peacekeeping Mission in Darfur from September 2004 to February 2005.

As one of only three Americans serving with a Coalition of African Representatives, Steidle witnessed brutality beyond imagination.

He told us about the violence he saw:

"It stems from a tremendous amount of hate. These Arab individuals feel they are superior to the black African population. They call them slaves; they call them dogs when they kill them. They try to avoid shooting donkeys because the donkeys are valuable to them, but these people are not. I think it has to do with people -- they don't look at other individuals, they don't look at these Africans as human beings, they look at them as dogs. They've raided the south for several thousands of years for slaves and they don't consider these people to be humans. We saw villages of up to 20 thousand people burned down in front of us; scores and scores of people that had been killed [and] tortured before being killed -- eyes removed, ears cut off. People had been burnt alive -- locked in their huts before being burnt alive. These are just a few examples."

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The Whole World is Watching!
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*Every reader, if he has a strong mind, reads himself
into the book, and amalgamates his thoughts with those
of the author*

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Here's a cool closing shot sent by a friend of astronomers everywhere.



It's called the Eye of God. It can be found on astronomy.com along with other creations of God.

Here I am! I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and he with me.

- Rev. 3; 20

ACTUAL KIDS PRAYERS

Dear God,
I read the bible. What does beget mean? Nobody will tell me.

Love Alison

Dear God,
I like the story about Noah the best of all of them. You really made up some good ones. I like walking on water, too.

Glenn

Dear God,
How did you know you were God? Who told you?
Charlene

Dear God,
Thank you for the baby brother but what I asked for was a puppy. I never asked for anything before. You can look it up.

Joyce

Dear God,
Please put another holiday between Christmas and Easter. There is nothing good in there now.

Amanda



The grass of spring covers the prairies,
The bean bursts noiselessly through the mould in the garden,
The delicate spear of the onion pierces upward,
The apple-buds cluster together on the apple-branches.
-- Walt Whitman, American poet (1819-1892)

Include the troops in your prayers, please.



Dust storm in Iraq!

