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*January is here,
With eyes that keenly glow—
A frost-mailed warrior striding
A shadowy steed of snow.
—Edgar Fawcett, American poet
(1847–1904)*



To read a poem in January is as lovely as to go for a walk in June. After New Year's Eve, that's about all the activity I care to do anyway. Welcome to the January newsletter.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

When I changed the date to 2012 at the top of the page, it felt funny somehow. I know I'll mess up a check or two when I go shopping, before I get used to the New Year. I hear a lot of people have that same feeling each year, so I'm not alone. There's just something about change to begin with and then changing the year just doesn't feel right. After all, it just feels like another day.

This year will be special though. There will be one story after another about the end of the world this year. The Mayan calendar ends at 12-21-2012 and people have been working diligently to figure out why. After all, their calendar was written many years ago. Were the Mayan's all prophets? It will be like Y2K all over again until 12-22-2012. We'll all be another year older and Christmas will be a few days away.

I'm not making light of the Mayans and their calendar. Their part of the world just might come to an end due to any natural disaster and maybe the rest of the world will be destroyed as well. Maybe they have it right and I won't see 12-22-2012 but I refuse to lose sleep over it. Only time will tell who's right. I've given my life to the Lord and I'm ready for anything.

It will be a tiresome year because people will be obsessed with the end of the world scenarios. There was a movie about it already, full of volcanoes and entire cities falling into the sea. It apparently was a success at the box office. I'm sure there will be more of the same as the year progresses.

Then there is the fact that 2012 is an election year. The media will be too busy trying to destroy any opposition they fear. That will feel like the end of the world until the election is over. Then they will start their usual routine of making fun of

whoever is elected. They really like their jobs so they will keep our minds on politics until the end of the world.

Perhaps the world will end because the Chicago Cubs say they will do what it takes to win the World Series and most people believe that hell will freeze over before that happens. I can already hear Cub fans saying, "Wait 'till next year" so there has to be a next year to prove them right. So, you can't really predict the future by what the Cubs do.

The Farmer's Almanac predicts a wet winter with above average temperatures for the Chicago area. That will bring out all of those who believe in global warming and they will all jump on the Mayan bandwagon and preach the world is ending. That's okay as long as they leave me out of it. You see, the Farmer's almanac predicts warmer and colder weather to particular areas and it all averages out to be a normal year.

I pray quite earnestly, that the world doesn't end; no wars or natural disasters. I will be prepared either way. I will praise the Lord each day and give my best effort to please Him and put the future in His hands. I'm not a theologian, a prophet or psychic and I would never claim to be able to say for certain, what tomorrow brings, but each night when I go to bed, I am content that the Lord is watching over me and I'll be okay, no matter what happens.

The problem I have with the entire end of the world scenarios is that only God knows when that will happen and He hasn't told us any definite date. I say, make all of your New Year's resolutions and stick with what you can control. Repent from anything bad in your life and praise God daily. Live life to the fullest; maybe do some charitable acts along the way. Take all of your best efforts each day and offer them to the Lord. The rest will take care of itself.

Have a Happy New Year!

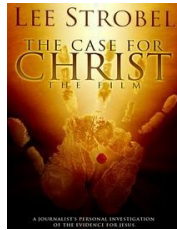
*But, since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.
1 Thessalonians 5:8*



MOVIE CORNER

By the time you read this, Christmas will be past and some will be hung over from a rowdy New Year's Eve celebration. I'll try not to recommend any noisy movies for the sake of suffering fools. I used to be one and could barely watch any football games on the 1st of January. Happy New Year to all!

I finally broke down and watched the documentary by Lee Strobel, **The Case for Christ**. I don't usually watch documentaries and I never felt that a case for Christ was necessary. Give it a look; you won't regret it.



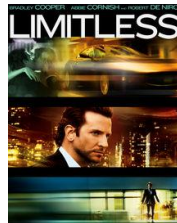
In this thought-provoking program, Lee Strobel, a former legal editor for the Chicago Tribune and a self-described atheist who became a Christian, shares the details of his spiritual quest and asks tough questions of a wide range of experts. Is the New Testament a reliable source? Did Jesus Christ in fact exist? Was he really the Son of God? And could Christ's resurrection have actually occurred?

In this inspirational drama, **Secret at Arrow Lake**, Mia loses her mother in an unexpected tragedy, leaving her alone to tend to the family's bed and breakfast. But when a stranger from New York comes to stay, Mia wonders whether he's her long-lost father. At times, it feels like the movie is going nowhere, but when it all comes together, you'll be glad you saw it. I won't say any more or else it would be too much.



Wait a few days after your party to watch **Limitless**. This one was an action movie.

With his writing career dragging and his girlfriend casting him off, Eddie Morra's life turns around when he runs into an old acquaintance who turns him onto a new drug that provides astonishing mental focus, but its deadly side effects threaten his future.



If you saw the movie, Phenomenon, starring John Travolta, you'll more than likely have pondered what using 100% of your brain might be like, but after watching this movie, you might say it's not worth it; or would you? The ending cries for a sequel. Good for the science fiction fans but a warning; it's not a family movie as Phenomenon was.

Behold, how good and how pleasant [it is] for brethren to dwell together in unity!
Psalms 133:1
(Especially on movie night!)

FOOLISHNESS OR WISDOM

(Read 1 Corinthians 2:6-16 and Psalm 106)

The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him.
1 Corinthians 2:14

All Christians preaching must speak God's wisdom. However, many pulpits have discarded the Gospel, the blessed word of salvation, and have substituted the foolishness of human thought by encouraging people to trust their own wisdom.

The world has made unbelievable progress in many fields, such as biology, chemistry, medicine, and technology, but has it progressed in real wisdom? Is it wisdom to live only for this life and ignore eternity? Is it wisdom to follow man-made religions that dictate to God the terms by which He should accept us? The world in its wisdom does not know the true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, so in folly it makes its own gods.

True wisdom comes only from God and is received only in faith. The Gospel, the way of salvation, the foolishness of God, is true wisdom to those who believe. Humankind in all its wisdom never could have created a gracious God who would come to us and offer His Son to die for our sins. But the one true God has come to us and died to save us in Christ, Jesus. In Christ, our heavenly Father imparted to us His eternal, saving wisdom, ordained before the world unto our glory. May God strengthen us to be His witnesses.

Dear God, may Your wisdom be our strength and stay throughout this life. Amen.

The following is an excerpt from an email from a friend.

**Hi Lord, it's me.
We are getting older and things are getting bad here.
Gas prices are too high, no jobs, food and clothing costs too high. I know some have taken you out of our schools, government and even Christmas, but Lord I'm asking you to come back and re-bless America. We really need you!
There are more of us who want you than those who don't!
Thank You Lord,
I Love you.**

It may be simplistic but I like it.

Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring [it] to pass.
Psalms 37:5

TOLERANCE

I usually shy away from politics unless it crosses a line. Since 9-11, I hear time and time again, the liberal left saying we need religious tolerance. I had no problem with that on the surface until I saw them showing gross intolerance for anyone showing their love for Jesus. I guess they didn't include that in the rules of the game.

Still, I prayed for them, that they would someday bend a little and respect Christians. Now, even if you are not a football fan, you probably know who Tim Tebow is. With every win and every big accomplishment on the field, he gives thanks to the Lord. Surprisingly, there are many Christians in the NFL, but they are less vocal.

Tim is the quarterback of the Denver Bronco's and he recently orchestrated a winning streak that put his team into playoff contention. After each game, before addressing the press, he thanked the Lord. In fact, during a game he often goes down on one knee and it's not to tie his shoe laces. He doesn't just pray and read the Bible; he lives the Bible. On and off the field, he offers his best effort up to the Lord and it shows in the results. You see, Tim Tebow thanks the Lord on camera before interviews and that makes the liberal left insane and they are given platforms show their anger publicly.

I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.

Psalms 22:22

I've seen other players as well, do similar things. In Chicago, we have a young player that has found his way into the end zone often after a record setting number of punt and kickoff returns. Some said Devin Hester was too small for the NFL but he certainly proved everyone wrong. I've seen him say the same words Tim Tebow says before an interview, plus he has a simple but direct prayer he says before a runback attempt. He asks the Lord to protect him from his head to his toes (he does it more eloquently than my description) as he points to his head and touches his toes. To some, it may sound corny but I admire it. He too, gives his best effort and offers it to the Lord and fans watch with breathless emotion each time he takes off down the field. The results speak for themselves.

Still, the media focuses on Tim Tebow and mocks him each time his name is mentioned. Recently, an article from the internet site, World Net Daily (WND.com) cited bigotry from the liberals, focusing on Tim. Here's an excerpt:

"People, especially the media, root against him because of what he stands for." Vilifying someone simply because of their beliefs ... sounds a lot like what the left has called bigotry, doesn't it?

As Tebow's successes on the field accumulated, the bitterness and hatred of the left became uncontrollable, culminating with liberal radio host Bill Press (the same man who ironically just authored a book called "Toxic Talk")

mocking Tebow for always thanking, "my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." This before Press went on to spew, "You know what I want to say? S.T.F.U. [shut the f up]. I'm tired of hearing Tim Tebow and all this Jesus talk." Press wasn't done, later calling Tebow a "disgrace" and "embarrassment."***

But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.

Matthew 12:36

My first thought was, would any of the liberal left say a single word if Tebow was a Muslim? Of course not; that is the real reason laws regarding religious tolerance was brought up after 9-11. Still, did you ever wonder what the left fears so much when they see a man embracing Christ in his life? Why is there such hatred towards Christians today? The article ended with:

What causes it? Given that Tebow has preached no sermon, written no scathing op-ed blasting the practice of abortion, taken no public stand on the issue of gay marriage nor endorsed the eventual presidential nominee of the Republican Party, the only plausible explanation for such absurdity is that he dares to boldly utter the name of Christ, unreserved and unashamed. If that be not bigotry, the word has no meaning.

If liberals want a real reason to despise Tim Tebow, it should be because his mere presence in the national spotlight has pulled the veil off of their seething and self-evident anti-Christian bigotry.

Last night, on TV, I saw Bill Maher going off on one of his rants when the Packers ended the Bronco's win streak. He smirked and said loudly, "I guess Jesus f.... Tebow for once". He was excited by the chance to mock Tebow, Christians and God on his TV show. Is that really good viewing? Morals, good taste and decency have left the building and will never return. The liberal left has spoken!

The liberal left is angered by Christians and they fear that their public might listen to what the Christians say and do, but they should fear for their future instead. The Lord is watching.

For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.

Matthew 12:37

They preach religious tolerance but do their utmost to tear down anyone who lives by example. Mr. Tebow and others of faith in the spotlight are a beacon of light in this dark world. All I can say is let their light shine.

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Matthew 5:16

The following two stories I found interesting. The government in China is experiencing growing pains in dealing with Christianity. We should all pray for new Christians in the world and keep an eye on such stories.

China Sees New Surge in Christmas Tradition

BEIJING -- It's been a hectic few weeks for Wang San Ping.

Ping owns a small Christmas shop near the U.S. embassy in Beijing. She, like so many other merchants on this street, is trying to entice shoppers to spend this Christmas season.

The last couple of years, Christmas in China has been a huge money-making business, but this year, many are not feeling too merry about the season.

This is traditionally one of the busiest times in China's economic calendar, as factories rush to export billions of dollars worth of goods made in China, most of which will end up under Christmas trees around the world.

But the global economic crisis has hit us in China and foreigners are not spending like they used to. Still, it hasn't stopped the Chinese from getting into the holiday spirit.

"Many people around the world are celebrating this holiday and we are more than happy to join in the festivities," one resident said.

From hotels to restaurants, homes to shopping malls, the traditionally western holiday is increasingly becoming a yearly tradition with its own Chinese flavor.

"It is part of China's embrace of all things Western," one couple explained. "Christmas is just one more thing to add to the list."

Typically, the Chinese will celebrate by decorating their houses with Christmas trees, cooking and eating special foods and spending time with family and friends.

"I'm planning to have a couple of friends over for dinner. We'll exchange gifts and sing songs. It will be a good time," one Chinese woman shared.

For many who celebrate Christmas in China, the holiday has little to do with the birth of Christ. In fact, many CBN News spoke to on the streets of Beijing aren't aware of the meaning of Christmas.

"Do you know why people in the west celebrate Christmas?" CBN News asked.

One woman responded, laughing, "I don't know."

Christmas store owner Ping was asked the same question.

"Not really," she responded. "I've heard that it has something to do with a person called Jesus, but I'm not too sure."

While most Chinese are interested in the secular and economic aspects of Christmas, many have in recent years flocked to government-sanctioned churches and so-called underground house churches to celebrate the birth of Christ.

Twenty years ago, few people in China even knew what Christmas was. Today, across China's big cities, and even in some parts of the countryside, more and more people are happily embracing this Western tradition. And some are coming to understand its true meaning as well.

Chinese Police Shut Down Christmas Celebration

Chinese police in the village of Xintan broke up a public Christmas celebration before it even started. In a video posted to YouTube, the Xintan Village Church said it had permission to hold an outdoor event on the village square.

A local official said the church was told to cancel its celebration after local Buddhists complained to authorities. Church members said the police officers rushed the stage, wrecked a mixing console, turned over an electric piano and pushed and punched worshippers amid the Christmas decorations. Five believers were injured in the scuffle.

"There were a few hundred of us. And the village heads were there too, and they were even more violent," said Wang Jingfeng, one of the Christians present. "This is like a dog biting a rat."

The church posted a video online that showed people putting up decorations on a stage with a red backdrop that says

"Silent Night" in Chinese and English and below that "2011 Christmas Village Christmas Party" while Christmas music plays in the background. Uniformed police then cut the electricity, killing the sound, while people flood the stage pushing and shoving.

The Xintan church is not registered and is considered illegal by the Chinese government.

"We told them that any outdoors event of a religious nature is strictly banned from being organized, and that's what it states in the government rule on religion," said Zeng Jianhua, deputy director of religious affairs in Ruian city, which oversees Xintan.

Xintan bills itself as "Christmas village." Local factories produced more than \$78 billion in Christmas products this year, which prompted local officials to stage a Christmas arts and culture fair last week.

Coming to a U.S. city near you! If you thought the ACLU was a problem, watch these people if they get their way. This is real and I'm not being an alarmist; Christianity will be under serious attacks soon. It's time to pray.

'Muslim Mafia' Targeting Religious Freedom?

WASHINGTON -- Free speech and religious liberty are two of America's most cherished protections. But if the Organization of Islamic Cooperation gets its way, that could change not only in the United States, but around the world.

The Muslim group is pushing a United Nations resolution that would criminalize criticism of religions.

Speaking at a recent international religious conference intended to advance the resolution, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton tried to convey that freedom of religion and expression go hand-in-hand.

"There is no contradiction between having strong religious beliefs and having the freedom to exercise them, and to speak about them and to even have a good debate with others," she said.

Frank Gaffney, president of the American Center for Security Policy, didn't mince words against the group -- likening the OIC to a "multi-national Muslim mafia."

"It is 57 states and Palestine that have come together to promote what is fundamentally the agenda that is known as Sharia," he explained.

Religious rights groups say the U.N. resolution is really designed to prevent criticism of Islam and give cover to Islamic Sharia-based blasphemy laws like those in Pakistan.

"The countries pushing this resolution -- their populations are 90-99 percent one single religious group," said Jordan Sekulow, director of policy and international operations for the American Center for Law and Justice.

"What is the problem here with the 1 percent speaking out and why is that such an issue that needs to be handled at the international level?"

Asia Bibi, a Christian mother of two, has been sentenced to death under Pakistan's blasphemy laws. And public officials in the country who have spoken out against the laws have been killed.

The OIC eventually dropped the defamation effort in favor of U.N. Resolution 16/18. But some believe the measure could also be used to introduce blasphemy laws in Europe and the United States.

"They are asking the West to enforce criminal punishments for blasphemy against Islam within Western borders against their

own citizens," explained Nina Shea, author of **Silenced: How Apostasy and Blasphemy Codes are Choking Freedom Worldwide**.

"And the frightening thing is we're starting to see this actually be adopted in places like Western Europe, Canada and Australia," she told CBN News.

Sekulow says his organization is fighting to keep the resolution from becoming adopted because it could backfire and be broadly misinterpreted country by country.

"Just the building of churches ... having a cross outside your door can be inciting violence," Sekulow explained.

"So if you let them define these definitions when there is no problem coming from the minority faiths, this is somehow going to 'green light' their suppression," he added.

Tenn. Town Sued for Keeping Crosses on Display

The town of Whiteville, Tenn., is being sued over crosses on public land.

Last year, the Wisconsin-based Freedom from Religion Foundation sent several letters to Whiteville Mayor James Bellar, complaining about a cross on top of the local water tower.

After receiving no response, the group threatened to sue the town, located 50 miles east of Memphis, if the cross wasn't removed.

"We have a godless and secular Constitution. There is no Jesus. There is no Ten Commandments. There is no crosses. There is no God in our Constitution," Annie Laurie Gaylor, the foundation's co-president, said during an interview.

"You would have to take a jack hammer and blow up the city of Washington, D.C., with all the Christian principles that are all over the place," said Jack Sedory, a Whiteville resident.

Instead of removing the cross, the town removed just one arm from it in protest. They also placed two more crosses in front of City Hall.

The Jackson Sun reported Monday that the lawsuit was filed on behalf of a Freedom From Religion Foundation member who is "non-religious" and who regularly does business in Whiteville.

The plaintiff, referred to as John Doe, is asking the court to remain anonymous for fear of "physical and economic reprisals," according to the suit.

The mayor said he has not received a lawsuit yet, but he says the town plans to answer it.

IN MY LIFE

At the start of every New Year, I like to take time to look back. I look at the friends I've made and remember the ones long past and give thanks for them all. It makes me feel melancholy in a way and joyous as well. I realize how old I'm getting when the list of the dead is greater than those still living, but age isn't all bad. They all shaped my life and made me who I am. In my life, I've seen some great ones die way too young and some wasted their time on earth but they are all friends forever and deserve to be remembered and I thank God for having made our paths cross; even if for only a moment.

Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.

Proverbs 27:17

Even enemies deserve to be remembered if you learned from their mistakes. I grew up in a part of Chicago that was more like the fictional town of Mayberry, from the Andy Griffith Show. For the most part, they were all good kids with a strong sense of right and wrong. However, there was one kid who lived on the next block who had no discernable good inside. He was the first example of a bully I ever heard of. One day, I saw him teasing a blind man by stepping on his heels as he walked and pushing him as he taunted him with the words, "Hey eagle eyes! Why can't you walk straight?" I never felt unbridled rage before. The bully was bigger and older, but I didn't care. It was in that instant when I learned that might doesn't make right and I attacked the bully with every fiber of my being. The blind man thanked me and when I helped him up from the ground, it was the first time I saw a man cry. I thank the bully for his lesson. He made me strong.

Thou shalt not curse the deaf, nor put a stumblingblock before the blind, but shalt fear thy God: I [am] the Lord.

Leviticus 19:14

When I served in combat in Vietnam, I made some friends I will never forget. They'd still be with me today if they were alive. In them, I saw examples of undying love for a brother when they would sacrifice their lives to save a buddy. I saw boys turn into men in an instant, only to die in that same instant. One such kid saw the enemy, during a lull in a battle, try to take advantage of two of his own buddies, who were unaware of the VC's deadly presence. The kid, ran and tackled his buddies and got up to empty his M-16 towards the ambush site. As he was firing, he took many rounds of enemy fire but he continued firing until his rifle was empty. He fell, dead, but his buddies were saved and that was all that mattered to him. The boy had the face of a child but the fortitude of a raging bull. We all learned to cry when he was awarded a medal posthumously. I still cry when I see his name on the Wall in D.C. He taught me love for a brother in Christ and I thank him for that. Also, I was one of the two he pushed to the ground.

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

John 15:13

Time and geography have taken its toll on friendships of the past, but without them, and the lessons they taught, I would not have the friends I do today and I would not know how to be a friend to others. Some of the dead, like Mike, Rob, Sarah, Nancy and others taught me unconditional love. There are others that crossed my path temporarily that left an indelible mark on my character, and they may still be alive somewhere but have gone on a different path now. I thank God and pray we meet again in Heaven. From past friends and the dead, I learned that it's healthy to laugh and cry without shame. They helped me to move forward in dark times.

A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.

Proverbs 17:17

My list of current friends is smaller, only because of my lack of mobility, but they are a great bunch and wiser because they share much of the same years. Also, they have the same love for the Lord and stand taller for that. They love the Lord because my newer friends are those I met in church; friends such as Chip, Mark, Sonya, Pam and too many others to name. They have a thirst for Biblical knowledge and a deep sense of commitment to the Lord that inspires me all of the time. They open their homes and their hearts to spread the Good News and to revive the soul. I know that when I'm with them, the Lord is watching and I thank Him for allowing me to be there among them.

For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

Matthew 18:20

There are friends in my life that I don't get to see often. Their lifestyles are different, fast paced or live far away. But when we see each other, it feels like only moments ago we last embraced and shared a good laugh. Barb, Jan, Paul, Root and many others; I know God watches over them because I pray every day for His protection and I have faith.

Most of all, I have a wonderful wife. Mary has seen me through some tough times and helped me stay spiritually strong through all of it. She's my editor as well and she keeps me in line. She's a good kid and I wouldn't be long for this world without her.

Yes, with each New Year, I thank the Lord for all the people that have shared time with me. I recommend it for everyone. We cross paths for a reason. Sometimes we don't even get to remember the name of those we meet but you admit that you remember them just the same. Coincidences? There are none. It's all part of God's plan so make it a habit to start the year praising God for the people in your life. It's really a good way to jump start the New Year.

THE LIGHTER SIDE



PUNS and other stuff.

A woman has twins, and gives them up for adoption. One of them goes to a family in Egypt and is named 'Ahmal.' The other goes to a family in Spain ; they name him 'Juan.'

Years later, Juan sends a picture of himself to his birth mother. Upon receiving the picture, she tells her husband that she wishes she also had a picture of Ahmal. Her husband responds,

"They're twins! If you've seen Juan, you've seen Ahmal."

A dwarf, who was a mystic, escaped from jail. The call went out that there was a small medium at large.

"Doc, I can't stop singing The Green, Green Grass of Home."

"That sounds like Tom Jones Syndrome."

"Is it common?"

"Well, It's Not Unusual."

An invisible man marries an invisible woman.
The kids were nothing to look at either.

I went to buy some camouflage trousers the other day, but I couldn't find any.

I Wonder:

Why do I have to swear on the Bible in court when the Ten Commandments cannot be displayed outside?

Why is it that our children can't read a Bible in school, but they can in prison?

Wouldn't you know it....Brain cells come and brain cells go, but FAT cells live forever.

And Finally:

I have been in many places, but I have never been in Cahoots. Apparently you can't go there alone. You have to be in Cahoots with someone.

I've also never been in Cognito. I hear no one recognizes you there.

I would like to go to Conclusions, but you have to jump and I am not too much on physical activity anymore.

I've been in Flexible, but only when it was very important to stand firm.

Sometimes I'm in Capable, and I go there more often as I'm getting older.

One of my favorite places to be is in Suspense, It really gets the adrenalin flowing and pumps up the old heart. At my age I need all of the stimuli I can get.

