



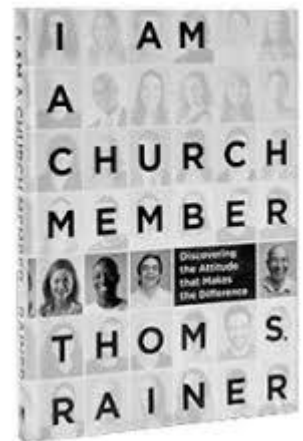
Expectations. Love them. Hate them. It doesn't matter. There are expectations in life.

When Beth and I were in college, she invited me to go with her to a “famous Scottish restaurant.” Wanting to impress her, I asked her some important questions. “What should I wear? What kind of food do they have? Do we need to leave early to find parking? What if the food is weird?” I guess my chances to impress her went out the window with the second question, if not the first. Of course, the “famous Scottish restaurant” turned out to be McDonalds, which at the time was still in the “serving millions” stage. Sigh. Expectations.

I have been thinking about expectations lately. And I came across a book last year that will guide our thinking in the first sermon series of the year. The book is called “I Am a Church Member” by Dr. Thom Rainer. Rainer is the president of Lifeway Publishing, a seminary president, a former pastor, and a church-growth consultant. I liked the book immediately, as it was short, inexpensive, and insightful. (No pictures, sorry.)

Often when people join a church, there is an introductory class or series of meetings. In those, we talk about the particular church's history, its beliefs, and its practices. These are important matters. And yet, no one talks about expectations. What is expected of me as a church member? What behaviors and attitudes should I exhibit? Where do I fit in? These are what Rainer addresses in the book. Here are the chapters:

1. I Will Be a Functioning Church Member
2. I Will Be a Unifying Church Member
3. I Will Be a Not Let My Church Be about My Preferences and Desires
4. I Will Pray for My Church Leaders
5. I Will Lead My Family to be Healthy Church Members
6. I Will Treasure Church Membership as a Gift



If you would like a copy of the book to read for yourself, I have some available for \$5 each.

This will be helpful, I think, whether you have been a member of Harvest for 50 years or are just considering membership. There will be a New Members Class on Saturday, January 16th from 9:00 a.m., to noon at the Stochl home.

I should report that I exceeded my walking goal for 2015. My original goal was to walk 2,000 miles during 2015, and I actually met that goal. But I also rode my bike an additional 600 miles. This new year, I hope to again walk 2,000 miles, but also to bike 1,000 miles. I'd be glad to join you for your own walk sometime, let me know.

I am also picking up a challenge from my friend, Pastor Russell Smith in Cincinnati. It is to read a book a week for the year. I will try and keep you informed about what I am reading. I already have a jump start on a book or two, so here is my goals for reading in January-February:

1. The Songs of Jesus—Tim Keller (This is a brief devotional book on The Psalms, and will take me through May, and really won't count as the book a week until I finish it.)
2. The Chronicles of Narnia: The Last Battle.—C. S. Lewis (Children, Fiction, Adventure)
3. In the Garden of Beasts.—Erik Larsen (History. Pre-WWII)
4. Creativity, Inc.— Ed Catmull (Leadership/Creativity) The story of Pixar.
5. Dictator: A novel (Cicero Trilogy)—Robert Harris (Historical Fiction) The long-awaited third volume of this trilogy, describing the rise of Julius Caesar.
6. I Am a Church Member— Ed Rainier (Church Growth)
7. Bandersnatch—Diana Glyer (Biography of C. S. Lewis' group, The Inkings) [I taught with Diana at Azusa Pacific University, and she is a terrific C. S. Lewis scholar!]
8. The Listening Life—Adam McHugh (Spiritual Growth) (Adam's first book was "Introverts in the Church", and he has been a good friend for years.)

Would you like to read a book a week with me? What book(s) are you reading? Let me know, I will add it to my list.

Finally, Happy New Year! The new year will bring new challenges, and new opportunities to grow in our faith in Jesus and serve those whom He loves.

SDG

Pastor Jim



Upcoming dates:

- 1) January 9<sup>th</sup>, Church Work Day (if it isn't raining), 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon
- 2) January 10<sup>th</sup>, congregational meeting to elect additional deacons/elders
- 3) January 12<sup>th</sup>, GriefShare group begins at 6:30 p.m. in the Youth Room. (See article on page 4.)
- 4) January 16<sup>th</sup>, New Member Class, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon, Stochl Home
- 5) January 17<sup>th</sup>, ordination and installation of new elders and deacons
- 6) January 31<sup>st</sup>, Congregational Meeting right after church, and an end of month potluck to follow

# JANUARY 2016



SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					1  Happy New Year!	2
3 10:30 a.m.— Communion	4  6:00 p.m.— Church Prayer Meeting	5	6	7 9:30 a.m.— Alpha Circle  5:30 p.m.— Praise Team  6:30 pm—Choir	8 10:00 a.m.— Bible Study at Kuglin's  12:00 p.m.— Deacons	9 9:00 a.m.— Church Work Day  10:00 a.m. — Girl Scout Cookie Rally
10 10:30 a.m.— Worship & Cong. Mtg.  1:00 p.m.— Youth Ice Skating	11  6:00 p.m.— Church Prayer Meeting	12  6:30-8:00 p.m. —GriefShare (Youth Room)	13   National Rubber Ducky Day Jan. 13 Hope it's just ducky!	14  5:30 p.m.— Praise Practice  6:30 p.m.— Choir Practice	15 10:00 a.m.— Bible Study at Kuglin's	16 9:00 a.m.— New Members Meeting
17 10:30 a.m.— Worship/ Ordination & Installation of Church Officers	18  Martin Luther King Jr. DAY  6:00 p.m.— Church Prayer Meeting	19  6:30-8:00 p.m. —GriefShare (Youth Room)	20  1:15-3:15 p.m. —Session (Youth Room)	21  5:30 p.m.— Praise Practice  6:30 p.m.— Choir Practice	22 10:00 a.m.— Bible Study at Kuglin's  6:00—Mariners	23
24 10:30 a.m.— Worship/ Receive New Members	25  6:00 p.m.— Church Prayer Meeting	26  6:30-8:00 p.m. —GriefShare (Youth Room)	27  NATIONAL CHOCOLATE CAKE DAY January 27	28  5:30 p.m.— Praise Practice  6:30 p.m.— Choir Practice	29 10:00 a.m.— Bible Study at Kuglin's	30
31 10:30 a.m.— Worship and Congregation Meeting  End of Month Potluck	1  6:00 p.m.— Church Prayer Meeting	2  6:30-8:00 p.m. —GriefShare (Youth Room)	3	4  5:30 p.m.— Praise Practice  6:30 p.m.— Choir Practice	5 10:00 a.m.— Bible Study at Kuglin's	6

## GriefShare Begins January 12th

The GriefShare program features biblical, Christ-centered teaching that focuses on grief topics associated with the death of a loved one. The DVD seminar features nationally respected grief experts and real-life stories of people, followed by a small group discussion about what was viewed. Past participants have related how helpful the information and follow-up discussions were to them.



Many grieving people find they are only beginning the work of healing when friends or family have returned to their daily life routines. Too often people, including Christians, tend to stuff their grief instead of allowing it to do the God given work for which it is intended. Don't allow fear of what others may think to keep you from what could help you. Confidentiality is very much a part of this program.

Your bereavement experience may be recent or not so recent. You will find encouragement, comfort and help in grieving the death of a spouse, child, parent, sibling, other family member, or friend. No matter what the cause of your loved one's death, this is an opportunity to be around people who understand what you are feeling. You will learn how to recognize the symptoms of being stuck in grief and that you do not need to live in bondage to certain emotions. You will learn valuable information about facing your new normal in life and renewing your hope for the future.

Too often people, including Christians, tend to stuff their grief instead of allowing it to do the God given work for which it is intended.

GriefShare will be held Tuesdays from 6:30-8:00 p.m. in the Youth Room at Harvest Presbyterian Church

Cost: \$15.00 includes workbook

Child care: no

Any questions, call Pastor Jim Stochl @ 209-537-3519

To register, call the church office 209-537-3519 by January 11, 2016 © MMXII by Church Initiative. All rights reserved

## Winter Wonderland Ice Skating Youth Group Event

Join the new Harvest Youth Group on Sunday, January 10, 2016, as we go ice skating!

This event is **FREE** for all Jr. High and High School students. If you are interested in joining us, we will be meeting at Harvest Presbyterian Church at 1:00 p.m. to drive down to the Fields of Ice rink in Turlock. You can also meet up the group down at the ice rink at 1:30 p.m. (Fields of Ice: 716 N. Daubenberger Rd. Turlock, CA 95380)

Our ice skating session begins at 2:00 p.m., so don't be late!

Call the church office if you have any questions at (209) 537-3519



# The Scandal of Biblical Illiteracy: It's Our Problem

By Albert Mohler

While America's evangelical Christians are rightly concerned about the secular worldview's rejection of biblical Christianity, we ought to give some urgent attention to a problem much closer to home--biblical illiteracy in the church. This scandalous problem is our own, and it's up to us to fix it.

Researchers George Gallup and Jim Castelli put the problem squarely: "Americans revere the Bible--but, by and large, they don't read it. And because they don't read it, they have become a nation of biblical illiterates." How bad is it? Researchers tell us that it's worse than most could imagine.

Fewer than half of all adults can name the four gospels. Many Christians cannot identify more than two or three of the disciples. According to data from the Barna Research Group, 60 percent of Americans can't name even five of the Ten Commandments. "No wonder people break the Ten Commandments all the time. They don't know what they are," said George Barna, president of the firm. The bottom line? "Increasingly, America is biblically illiterate."

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Multiple surveys reveal the problem in stark terms. According to 82 percent of Americans, "God helps those who help themselves," is a Bible verse. Those identified as born-again Christians did better--by one percent. A majority of adults think the Bible teaches that the most important purpose in life is taking care of one's family.

Some of the statistics are enough to perplex even those aware of the problem. A Barna poll indicated that at least 12 percent of adults believe that Joan of Arc was Noah's wife. Another survey of graduating high school seniors revealed that over 50 percent thought that Sodom and Gomorrah were husband and wife. A considerable number of respondents to one poll indicated that the Sermon on the Mount was preached by Billy Graham. We are in big trouble.

Secularized Americans should not be expected to be knowledgeable about the Bible. As the nation's civic conversation is stripped of all biblical references and content, Americans increasingly live in a Scripture-free public space. Confusion and ignorance of the Bible's content should be assumed in post-Christian America.

The larger scandal is biblical ignorance among Christians. Choose whichever statistic or survey you like, the general pattern is the same. America's Christians know less and less about the Bible. It shows.

How can a generation be biblically shaped in its understanding of human sexuality when it believes Sodom and Gomorrah to be a married couple? No wonder Christians show a growing tendency to compromise on the issue of homosexuality. Many who identify themselves as Christians are similarly confused about the Gospel itself. An individual who believes that "God helps those who help themselves" will find salvation by grace and justification by faith to be alien concepts.

Christians who lack biblical knowledge are the products of churches that marginalize biblical knowledge. Bible teaching now often accounts for only a diminishing fraction of the local congregation's time and attention. The move to small group ministry has certainly increased opportunities for fellowship, but many of these groups never get beyond superficial Bible study.

Youth ministries are asked to fix problems, provide entertainment, and keep kids busy. How many local-church youth programs actually produce substantial Bible knowledge in young people?

Even the pulpit has been sidelined in many congregations. Preaching has taken a back seat to other concerns in corporate worship. The centrality of biblical preaching to the formation of disciples is lost, and Christian ignorance leads to Christian indolence and worse.

This really is our problem, and it is up to this generation of Christians to reverse course. Recovery starts at home. Parents are to be the first and most important educators of their own children, diligently teaching them the Word of God. [See Deuteronomy 6:4-9.] Parents cannot franchise their responsibility to the congregation, no matter how faithful and biblical its may be. God assigned parents this non-negotiable responsibility, and children must see their Christian parents as teachers and fellow students of God's Word.

According to 82 percent of Americans, "God helps those who help themselves," is a Bible verse.

Churches must recover the centrality and urgency of biblical teaching and preaching, and refuse to sideline the teaching ministry of the preacher. Pastors and churches too busy--or too distracted--to make biblical knowledge a central aim of ministry will produce believers who simply do not know enough to be faithful disciples.

We will not believe more than we know, and we will not live higher than our beliefs. The many fronts of Christian compromise in this generation can be directly traced to biblical illiteracy in the pews and the absence of biblical preaching and teaching in our homes and churches.

This generation must get deadly serious about the problem of biblical illiteracy, or a frighteningly large number of Americans--Christians included--will go on thinking that Sodom and Gomorrah lived happily ever after.

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R. Albert Mohler, Jr. is President of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, and host of "The Albert Mohler Program," a daily national radio program broadcast on the Salem Radio Network.



## JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

1—Michael Cousins

5—Alice Visser



15—Frank and  
Nawatha Reed

*If your birthday or anniversary has not been listed, please call the office and let us know.*

## Regular Prayer List

### *Assisted Living:*

Mildred Vine— *Paramount Court*

Donna McRae— *Golden Age Home Care, (memory care)*

Mabel Cronan— *The Stratford Place*

### *Health Issues:*

Virginia Irons

Roger Morrow

Dorothy Nelson

Bill Sperry

Margaret Kuglin (eye)

Patti Arbizu (knee)

Alice Visser (English Oaks)

Grace Olds (Patti Arbizu's mom)



## **Stockton Presbytery Prayer List for January 2016**

January 3—Community Presbyterian Church  
Pastor: Mark Hollingsworth  
AND: Mike McLellan, HR

January 10—Grace Presbyterian Church  
Pastor: Carrie Lane (Interim)  
AND: Jeff Hawley  
AND: Nancy Clegg, S. Clerk

January 17—Manteca Presbyterian Church  
Pastor: Karl Hauser  
AND: John Russell-Curry

January 24—Mission Committee  
AND: Lee Heim

January 31—Zephyr Point Conference Center  
Director: Bedford Holmes  
AND: Jay Olson



## **Ceres School's Prayer List for January 2016**

January 3—Whitmore Charter High  
Director: Mary Gonzales

January 10—Whitmore Charter High  
Director: Sara Olsen

January 17—Ceres Superintendent  
Scott Siegel

January 24—District Head Nurse  
Dianne Dahlstrom

January 31—Board Member  
President: Valli Wigt



Mission Statement ~ With God in control, the mission of the Harvest Presbyterian Church is to proclaim and bear witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ and nurture the faith of our church family.

**Church Information**

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**POSTAGE**