

Dear Friends,

Susanna, now eight years old, on our recent date, said, "Daddy, I wish those men who hurt all those people, could come back to life and tell everybody that they really didn't go to heaven and that they were sorry for the people they hurt." In Luke 16 our Lord describes the rich man who wanted Lazarus to come back from the grave to warn his brothers that there really was a hell. But just as in the days when Jesus walked this earth, the communication of truth was in the hands of the living, and not the dead.

As we mourn the horrific tragedy of September 11th, and trust God for the additional losses of life, possessions, and individual freedoms that may be around the corner, here are three thoughts for us:

1. In a verse pivotal to each one of us in the faith, Gal. 2:20, Paul said ". . . it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God. . ." We have had to battle much pain, some fear, and some anger, and our key has been, to let Him live through us, and yes, let Him have responsibility for our nation's future, her people, and economy, and our own. Fear and faith cannot operate out of my heart at the same time. If we are going to be available to Him to do a spiritual work, we must be self-controlled to be living in His spirit, "For God has not given us a spirit of timidity (fear), but of power and love and discipline." II Timothy 1:7

2. We must avoid spiritual pablum, being so removed from the pain that we appear uncaring and uninvolved. In short, our temptation to throw around Romans 8:28 must be guarded against. Two days ago, our neighbor prayed to receive Christ in our home. He was not in tears over the events of September 11th, but over his crumbling marriage.

3. I must be willing to die to self and I don't mean that we should rely on self-defense (although it is true that when a Delta employee asked me what seat I wanted, thinking about protecting the pilot, I said, "Up front on the aisle.") Rather, as impossible as it seems to do, we all want to be willing to hold our lives, family, friends, companies, property, and freedom of movement, with an open hand, saying, "Here, Lord, this is yours. Do to me what you will. Allow in your sovereignty what may come, but please Lord, let my faith in you be such a predominance in my life that your peace, your love, and your sincerity be expressed in my every thought, word, and deed as never before."

As I am dictating this letter to Susy, I am packing for a church-wide men's retreat at Gene Getz's Fellowship Bible Church North, in Plano, Texas. Pray that the men will gain a greater glimpse of how Jesus seeks to use us in His kingdom plan. Not only does the Lord want to demonstrate His peace, love, and forgiveness through us, but also wants us to walk with men, such as my friend who just prayed to receive Christ this week and who needed to declare war on the selfishness in his life and marriage.

One day after returning from Dallas, I'll be heading to share my testimony with a wonderful group of CBMCers who have set aside their pain, uncertainty, and busy lives, to share Jesus Christ with their community in a noon outreach meeting. I will also be discussing with them the night before, encouragement in follow-up and discipleship through Operation Timothy. Then 24 hours later, Susy

and I will be flying to New England to meet with friends and to conduct a couples weekend retreat focused on godly marriage, parenting and how we might be more equipped and more motivated to disciple people in our family, neighborhood, church, and workplace.

The highlights of the last two months have been where we have had the privilege of ministering as a family. At Maranatha Bible Conference, we spoke 16 times in five days on the following topics:

- 1 We Are Watchmen Over Our Souls, Marriages, Family, and Mission
- 2 The Results of Teenage Years Without Training – Phil and Susy's Testimony
- 3 Building Godly Character Through Proper Discipline - #1
- 4 Teaching Your Children to Love God's Word
- 5 Building Relationships with Peers and Parents
- 6 Successful Homeschooling #1
- 7 Building Godly Character Through Proper Discipline - #2
- 8 Teaching Your Children How to Work
- 9 Solving Conflicts Through Truth in Love
- 10 Giving Teens a Vision to Change the World
- 11 Purity and Accountability – Men Only
- 12 Family Ministry that is Fun and Fruitful
- 13 Sexuality to Accountability – 8 to 18
- 14 Finding Victory in the Dating Dilemma
- 15 Homeschooling #2 – Answering the Hard Questions
- 16 A Call to Commitment and Action – Discipling Others

Through the gifts of some of you receiving this, we were able to employ a professional video team to capture the week, and will be producing audio and videotapes this fall. Susy went through the evaluations and chose some of the comments to share with you – not to focus on or give any glory to ourselves, but to encourage those of you who are investing in what we are doing:

"Your lectures and your example have been like a wake up call for me with regard to my family interaction responsibilities (I am a 1st generation Christian so I had no role model - thanks for the kick in the pants!). I personally have always been very strong in my own relationship with Jesus and in teaching/disciplining and ministering to others outside my family. But now, after seeing your example and praying over the material you presented I have purposed to bring it home, as I should have all along. I guess I thought it would just naturally take place but it wasn't and I needed to become much more intentional about it."

"It already has started to impact my relationship with my children and helped to give us focus to help them grow strong in the Lord. That my wife and I need to raise children that are radically different so they can stand up against the world or it will gobble them up."

"What comes shining through in this exemplary ministry is the concept of discipleship being based upon carefully cultivated relationships. These are the trophies of a life lived wisely. What's more is the concept that these disciples of Christ through us would go on to reproduce through many others."

"Any one can talk the walk but you and your family definitely walk it as I would watch very closely with your kids when they were away from you and with other teens. Thanks for being very open with us."

"Finally, a family conference when you were able to see and hear from the family members of the speaker."

" I hope to incorporate the principles learned to once again become the leader of my family as God ordained. Pray for me."

In response to the question of what new thoughts the Lord had given during the week:

"It's never too late to start a change in the family. Children will respond to open and honest concern and those relationships are immensely important to everything we want to accomplish in our family. I thank God for your family and how you have ministered to me."

"The Lord led me to say 'yes' to mentoring a young lady from our church. 'Date' my 13 year old unsaved son."

"Giving teens a vision to change the world" and " Family ministry using our home as an outreach"

"How crucial it is to dig deep into our kids lives rather than just sharing life with them"

"Will unplug the TV and look for ways to 'walk' with my children"

"I need to relate on a much deeper level with my kids and that it's possible. Also, it's time to get busy in winning and discipling others in the Lord."

"1) I need to stop playing with fire. I need to be pure; to strive to be pure and pursue God all the time 2) Train my kids, teach them – don't take it for granted that they know how to do anything 3) be open and straight forward with my kids; share my struggles and failures and success and lessons and life with my kids."

Three days following our return, Joshua and I went to California and did a one-day, six-session conference for couples and their older children for their annual training for HIS Academy, a homeschool organization in Walnut Creek. Some of the comments:

"Validated the importance of discipling our own children – gave me practical ideas for discipling our oldest son."

"Best message on evangelism I ever heard and I've heard MANY. Pray I respond."

"Encouragement to focus more on discipleship and loving the unsaved."

"Encouraging, practical – most importantly, Phil really talks from the heart. Real life examples and testimonies are wonderful and impactful."

"Josh helped to manifest the 'realness' of what his Dad said – validation."

"It was one of the best conferences. I need to pray about not putting so many expectations on my husband and work on me alone!"

"I thank God for bringing your ministry to us today. I thank you and your son for spending time with us and sharing your personal experiences with us. You guys are truly being God's hands and feet. Thank you."

"Your message is great. Very helpful in real life issues that are so often overlooked>"

"The poignant transparency in the content of this meeting truly helps me to face important issues."

New thoughts:

"I didn't realize the importance of consistency in disciplining the children. I didn't know that inconsistency breeds resentment."

"The need to really love my kids, to put them before projects, to get along with each, to lower expectations, to share my failures. I purpose to let God show me how to love them unconditionally - to speak truth in love."

"I was encouraged to be real – to freely admit my sin and clean up things as they come up – with my wife and kids"

PRAYER REQUESTS:

1. For Christians who are dangerously close to losing their companies, jobs, and life work through which their livelihood and so much ministry of the gospel is funded.

2. For the support of Christ-centered ministries involved in delivering the only truth to the needs of the world, Jesus.

3. For those who have lost loved ones in our national tragedy.

4. For George Bush, the leader of the free world, who seems to me to be growing in stature, character, and strength right before our eyes.

5. For the Muslim/Arab world that their hearts might be touched by our country's condemnation of evil, but carefully calculated compassion for their countrymen who are law-abiding citizens.

6. For those who are lost and facing eternal damnation without Jesus Christ throughout the world.

7. For healing for some of our precious friends battling cancer and specifically for our dear friend, R.B. for perfect stem cell collection this week – quick, bountiful and cancer free.

8. For the marriages all around us that are under major stress.

During these times of uncertainty, more and more we need to share the eternal love and security that is only available through Jesus Christ.

Because He lives,

Phil for the family