

BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART...

Eternity is a long time.
As I grow older I am reminded of how frail life is.
I'm reminded of how frail this mortal body is
And of how really short is our earthly existence.

Like many people, my mind searches to and fro
Looking for meaning against the backdrop
Of what I've seen and what I've personally experienced.

Life as we know it is but a speck of dust
Against the backdrop of eternity.
I believe that beyond the finite reality we know...
Beyond what we can see, and touch, and feel...and prove...
Is a universe of breath and scope
That dwarfs our comprehension.

Chief among these things, I know there is a God,
And there is a spirit world that lies not only around us...but within us.
Each of us has a spirit which is connected to that spirit world.
Even though we are only marginally able to communicate with it,
To doubt its existence is to blindly ignore
A vast amount of anecdotal evidence
From both present day as well as historical witnesses.
The evidence is overwhelmingly compelling to an objective mind.
They couldn't and didn't just make up this stuff.

If these things came only from a time long ages past,
Where myths and superstition were rampant
And without benefit of the real life testimonies we know today...
Then...maybe...just maybe...an argument
For misunderstanding or fabrication could be made.

But to dismiss it amid modern day evidence
Is to bury your head in the sand.
A person with an experience is never at the mercy
Of a person with an argument.
And there are a host of modern day experiences among educated people
Who have seen the best science has to offer...and who know the truth.
Give up the arguments! It is real even if we don't understand it!

Just because, for whatever reason,
The spirit world chooses to remain nebulous
And out of our immediate grasp
Where our human consciousness cannot see and hold it at will...
In no way means it doesn't exist.

Beyond all that...
I know that God loves me.
I know that He loves me unconditionally
With a love that no human can fathom or understand.
And God loves you as well!
Why He chooses to do things the way He does...
I don't know...
And I will never know until I leave this earth
To join Him in Heaven.

Beyond that...
I believe God sent His son, Jesus,
To earth to show us what He, Himself, was like,
And to make a way that we might be reconciled to Him
By having Jesus pay the price, taking our penalty
For our sins, transgressions, and shortcomings.
He did that by dying in our place, nailed to a cross of shame.
Then God raised Jesus from the dead
In triumph over sin and human, physical death.

You doubt that?
Again...consider the evidence.
The twelve that were with Him daily
Watched Him die and met Him in His risen state.
Then they boldly traversed the known world
Proclaiming His message and His resurrection.
They willingly endured grisly deaths themselves
For His sake and that of His message...
A message of salvation and reconciliation and of God's love.
That they did this is documented, historical fact.
Would they have done that if they didn't know it was real?

Use your head!
No one does that unless they have experienced something
More important to them than life itself.
They saw and were with the risen Jesus.
They put their hands in the nail holes in His hands
And the spear hole in His side.
They watched Him ascend into Heaven.

Doubt that?
How could you?
Their actions proved their words...and His words.
If you doubt, do the research.
Let God reveal it to you as He chooses.

Do I understand? Well, no.
Do I need to understand?
No to that as well.

What I do understand
Is there is a universe larger and more complex
Than the human mind has the capacity to conceive,
And it contains more dimensions than the three which we know.

What I do understand is that life is a paradox.
What makes sense to the finite human mind,
In reality, often works in reverse.

The Christian New Testament in I Corinthians 13:12 (KJV) states:
*"For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face:
Now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known."*

We cannot know the mind of God.
We can only see, for whatever reason, what He allows us to see,
And trust that He, in His infinite wisdom, knows what He is doing
To accomplish His purpose.

All we really need to know
Is that God is indeed there, that God is love,
And that God loves us as a Father loves His children.

Yes, there are some whose minds and hearts are blinded...
For whatever reason...but for those not blinded,
God promises to show it to you, if you seek Him with all your heart.

Times change; people themselves change.
It is a short earthly existence;
And the Christian Church, God's institution,
Like every other thing on this earth...is imperfect.
It is imperfect just as the humans who make it up are imperfect.
As in all things, there is good and bad in the church,
But God works out his purpose through
Imperfect things and imperfect people.
If it were all perfect, it would be simple.

It is important for some minds to be able to explain everything...
To be able to not only explain but to dissect and diagram as well.
When they can't, they find things difficult to accept.
As complex as this universe is...that's not possible,
Although there are those who seem to think it is or will be.
The spirit world lies in another dimension that is beyond our science.

God, for whatever reason,
Has chosen to format human life and this world the way it is...
To have it unfold the way it does...
And to reveal Himself to us in the way that He has.

And the Bible...
I believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God.
I also believe that God was able to have written down in the Bible
Whatever He wanted in the Bible for whatever purpose.
I do not pretend to know or fully understand those purposes.

When it comes my time to pass beyond this earthly existence,
I trust, that God, through Jesus Christ,
Will hold me safe for eternity...
And that "I will know, even as also I am known."

In the meantime...
Let me try to live my life on this earth with a pure heart.
*"Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God"*¹
And in all things...
In all the difficult choices and trials of this earthly existence...
Let me strive to be honest while always trying to do what is right
As God may reveal it to me.

*"Who is allowed to ascend the mountain of the Lord
Who may go up to his holy dwelling place?
The one whose deeds are blameless and whose motives are pure,
Who does not lie or make promises with no intention of keeping them.
Such Godly people are rewarded by the Lord,
And vindicated by the God who delivers them."*²

*I believe that Jesus is the Christ,
The Son of the Living God,
My Lord and Savior.*

--W. Cary Perkins
May 24, 2013

¹ Matthew 5:8, ² Psalm 24:3-5 (Net Bible)

THE SOBER TRUTH

In the context of life and death...and eternity, everything else is insignificant.

We all get caught up in our every day lives. We plan and we worry and we let insignificant things run our lives and fill our thoughts. If our team loses, it can ruin our day and even several days. If it wins, we can feel elated, satisfied, and for a short time, proud. What someone said to us, or whether we gained three pounds, got a speeding ticket, or our child or spouse doesn't behave as we think they should ...or our jobs or relationships... those things are all part of living. We let them consume us.

But then we are jolted back to reality. Usually it's only for a short time, but it happens. Someone close to us (and sometimes just an acquaintance) passes away. And in that death, we are reminded where the things that consume us and concentrate our time really stand in the grand scheme of importance. They are insignificant details. Actually, most of these things are less than insignificant. When death is close at hand and we actually slow down long enough to ponder it, there are times for a moment we forget everything else. For a brief moment, we can get a glimpse of how foolish we really are.

It doesn't have to be a death. It can be a brush with death or a serious injury or accident. I know people who suffered through illnesses or accidents and came away changed people who now look at life through different eyes.

The point is...life is a precious gift. Don't waste it, especially on trivial detours of the mind. All of us will some day pass away. Do not let that fact consume you, but at the same time, still be aware that our lives are a limited existence even though we scurry from day to day as though they are not. Live life. Enjoy and be thankful for the things God has blessed you with; but do not get carried away with yourself, your loved ones, your plans, or your successes or failures. Think carefully on how really fragile life is... and what your place is in it. And get to know God. Develop a relationship with Him, for when this earthly phase of life is over, it is God with whom you will spend eternity...or not. And eternity is a long, long time.

W. Cary Perkins
September 25, 2010.

NO COINCIDENCES

By W. Cary Perkins

My personal symbol of the presence of God being with me came at a retreat at Camp Kum Ba Ya on Kentucky Lake in 1973. It was the same weekend I was baptized in Kentucky Lake. I was 24 years old.

I asked God to show me a sign that he was with me. It was impressed upon me that the sign should be finding a penny. You know – the way we will see or find pennies lying on in the street or at other odd times. I got in the bunk that evening in full anticipation of finding a penny. I was anxious to see when and where.

As I got out of the bunk the next morning, I heard a distinctive “clank” on the floor. I immediately knew that it was my penny. I got down on the floor and found it and put it in my pocket. Ever since that time, finding one, especially at important times, has been my living symbol of the Spirit of God with me.

I was lying in bed this morning, reflecting on the events chronicled below and felt I should get up and go write this essay. As I got out of bed to walk to the computer, I picked up my cell phone from the night stand. As I sat down at the computer, I felt something odd in my hand and discovered there was a penny in my hand along with my cell phone. I had to laugh and I thanked God for His way of talking to me. He wants me to write this essay.

That is the way it has been these last four days. Yesterday I went to the big gun show in Louisville. There was a rifle I wanted to buy which I didn't need, but wanted anyway. It was a Browning BLR, a lever action, in .308 caliber. I couldn't make up my mind to buy it so I decided to eat lunch first.

I got my pork sandwich dinner from the Kentucky Pork Producers and looked for a table. I saw a big round table for 8 with only one guy sitting at it. I asked if he minded if I sat there. He said to help myself. I set my things down and went back to get some accoutrements for my meal.

I had earlier noticed an attractive, very young, red-haired lady wearing a Health Source t-shirt. My chiropractor, Dr. Ehrhart, has me make out his checks to Health Source. When I got back to the table, this red head was sitting at the table with the guy.

I sat down and made a remark about the t-shirt and asked the girl if she knew Dr. Ehrhart. She laughed and said “no,” and that they were from Mayfield in far western Kentucky. I said I used to live on West Broadway in Mayfield. I told them I used to work with the forestry division there.

The guy said they had come to the gun show with a man who used to work with the forestry division and asked if I knew Dave Sorensen. I, of course, told him that I used to work for Dave and that he was my boss when I worked in Mayfield.

The guy went on to say that Dave was still out in the gun show with a Mr. Hamm and one of Mr. Hamm's friends. I told him that Don Hamm was our former director and I used to work for him in the Frankfort office.

It turned out the guy's name was Eric Duke and his red-haired lady friend was named Lisa. As I was relating a deer hunting story about Don and I, Dave and Don came back to the table. I had not seen Dave Sorensen since I was acting District Forester in Mayfield under strenuous circumstances about 10 years ago.

Dave was my first boss in Kentucky and a mentor to me as a young forester who was away from home for the first time. I always thought a lot of Dave and I think he also did of me. It was good to see him.

Don Hamm, unbeknownst to me, had had a stroke in February and was on a walker and oxygen. Earlier he had had at least two bypass surgeries. He had had a massive heart attack on his 50 birthday when I was working for him. Luckily he was in the hospital when it happened and they were able to save him. He told me that today, as I write this, would be his 77th birthday.

I told Don I had wondered earlier if I would see him there. I would usually bump into him at one of these gun shows at least once a year. To me, before he retired, he became like a father image. He was a type A personality and could rub people the wrong way. But he had that unique quality that I could be so mad at him, I could spit, but he could make me like him.

As we sat at the table, Don went on to tell me that he still told people that I was the best deer hunter he ever knew. He used to tell me and others that same thing all the time when we worked together. I thanked him and told him I was just lucky.

After we were finished with a really nice visit between Dave, Don, and my new friends, Eric and Lisa, we went back into the gun show. Dave and I left Don to go looking for reloading primers. After Dave and I said goodbye and parted, I was afraid I'd not find Don to say goodbye. It was a monstrous gun show.

I had to go to the bathroom. I went to the one at the back of the show, and the stalls were full with a line. I went to the one at the front – same thing. So I decided I'd just go to the big one outside in the hall. As I was headed down the hall, there was Don on his walker coming back from it. Coincidence? Not hardly -- no more than any of this with Dave and Don and how we met yesterday was coincidence. Look at the absurdity of how it occurred.

Don went on to tell me how glad he was to see me. And he said he hoped he'd get to see me again which was an obvious reference to his health. Taking note of that, alone in the hall, I said the honest, heartfelt things we so seldom share with

one another – but we should share and wish we had when it is too late. I told him when he retired he was like a second father to me. He told me he really appreciated me telling him that. And then I told him, “I love you, buddy. I want you to know that.” And he seemed a little surprised to hear me say it but grateful that I did.

For a man’s man like Don Hamm who always prides himself in being so strong, I think he was just slightly moved. We said our goodbye and I promised to bring my wife Tamara over for a visit. And he told me he’d like that. When I came out of the bathroom, he was gone.

I went back to look for my rifle and found it and still couldn’t make up my mind. I went back to our table and sat down and asked God to help me – to lead me – because I didn’t know what to do. Still with no resolution, I felt I should go try to buy it, and God would sort it out for me. If I was supposed to get it I would, and there would be ample opportunities for me not to buy it. I would follow what I discerned was His lead and be genuinely happy with the result.

I got to the booth and we agreed on a price. But we couldn’t agree on payment. They wanted cash and I only had half enough. They didn’t take credit cards and wouldn’t accept a check. I showed the guy my forestry badge which I still carry, but it didn’t matter. His boss had told him no checks. He told me to come back in a little while and maybe his boss would relent.

I came back – considered not coming back – but decided to trust God for it to work out. The man’s boss still wasn’t back so he called him on his cell phone. Same answer – no checks. So I shook the guy’s hand – and said that was fine – I didn’t need it anyway. He said he hoped they’d still have it if I got to come by their shop in Bowling Green, Kentucky.

I turned and walked away. As I walked up the aisle, I just said “Thank you, Father.” I hadn’t any more gotten those words out of my mouth than I felt a hand on my shoulder. It was the guy. He had chased me down. He said the owner had called back and asked how much cash I could give them. I told him about half. And he said that was OK. So I went back and bought the gun.

Yesterday was an experience. Tamara and I have long said there aren’t any coincidences, and it was so blatantly obvious that these things were orchestrated by God to occur just as they did.

That set me to thinking about something that happened three days ago. My daughter, Amanda, called wanting to borrow some money for her mortgage as her husband, Brandon’s unemployment check had been mailed but they hadn’t received it. They had just re-done their house loan after emerging from bankruptcy and couldn’t afford to be late on their first payment. They were already late by 2 days.

I talked really hard to Amanda on the phone about it. I always knew in my heart that I'd loan her the money but I wanted to take this opportunity to give her a really, really hard time about all the times she had promised to pay me when she borrowed money, but had not.

When she came by the house and I gave her the money, I told her something I had long thought, but had never said. It was much the same as with what I told Don Hamm. I told her what I really wanted for her, besides raising my grandsons right, was to be able to take care of herself. And I told her I wasn't convinced that she could. I told her she was getting better, but that I didn't think she was there yet. I told her I wouldn't always be around to help her.

She wrote me a check to pay me back and told me she'd call me when the unemployment check came in so I could just go cash it to get my money. She called the next day to say the unemployment check had come. Now I see that this whole process was set up for God's purpose. Maybe it was so I could tell her what I told her. Maybe it was something else ([see the post script](#)). An unemployment check mailed in Frankfort on a Monday shouldn't take until Friday to arrive to her in Shelbyville 20 miles away. It could have been walked over in less than half that time. Her economic stimulus check, mailed from the same place on the same day, arrived on Wednesday.

Like the things with Don, I felt I was led to finally say something I should have said long ago.

Let me end this with God loves me -- and you. And he walks with me every day, whether I can readily see it or whether I acknowledge it. He is there. He always has been for me. And I thank Him for that. Whether it is directly the Spirit of God, or God through His guardian angels, or however they may be intertwined -- I can't say. As in I Corinthians, Chapter 13, Verse 12 -- "Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."

To finish -- I was on my way to go fishing in Tennessee on May 13th. When I got 20 miles down the road, I got a call from my wife, Tamara, saying I had left my clothes at the house. I glanced over my shoulder in the back of the SUV, and sure enough, I had left them at home. But she went on to say, "It's OK. God told me that by your leaving them, He kept you out of a fatal car accident. So be glad you left them." She said it gave her chills when He told her that.

I went back and got the clothes. When I got to Lexington, traffic was backed up on I-75 where there had been an accident. "Now we see through a glass, darkly..."

June 7, 2009

[Post Script – See Below.](#)

The story just keeps going. I wrote this essay early on Sunday morning before I went to church. During the above referenced conversation with my daughter, she asked if I had seen the movie "Fireproof." I told her I hadn't. She said I should because I would really enjoy it.

Tamara insisted I take some movies back to Blockbuster last night that were due yesterday. I decided to look for some more movies while I was there. On the shelf, I saw they had one copy of "Fireproof" left unrented. Coincidence? Of course not! So I got it along with 2 more movies.

Then this morning, I went to my church, Southeast Christian, in Louisville. Totally unbeknownst to me, the new sermon series beginning today at church is entitled "Fireproof" and today's service and message featured the "Fireproof" movie co-star, Erin Bethea, as our special guest. She is the daughter of a Baptist minister. And today's scripture was from I Corinthians, Chapter 13, the same Chapter I just quoted above.

My God is an awesome God! There are no coincidences!

And later this evening, having written all of the above, Tamara and I watched the movie, "Fireproof." It was as good as advertised.

2nd Post Script – June 28, 2009

Yesterday evening my wife, Tamara, and I went to a County-Western dance in Louisville and didn't get home until after midnight. Tamara asked if I was going to church and I told her I was going if she was. She said she needed to go since she hadn't been in two weeks. I was willing to bet she'd never get up in time, but I was wrong. She is the survivor of a golf-balled size, malignant brain tumor and two tumors on her spine some 10 years ago. Her stamina is often very low and after the strenuous activity we had last night, it was going to be a major surprise if she was feeling up to going.

I got up shortly after 8 AM, however, and she was indeed up and getting ready. She told me she didn't feel like going and was very tired, but she felt, that for some reason she was supposed to be there. We hadn't been since June 7th when I wrote the main part of this essay above. She didn't feel well on June 14th, and I was in Texas visiting my mom on the 21st, so she didn't go then.

Southeast Christian in Louisville is a monstrous church, and we always have to park a long ways away. We are very often late for the 11:15 service or get seated just as they start. Not this morning. We were in the parking lot by 10:40 and had plenty of time. I was playfully joking about how empty the parking lot looked when we got there and how close we were able to park.

We went in and, unlike usual, there were plenty of seats in the back center sections. She pointed to a place for us to sit and I suggested that we move closer to the front. We chose seats and sat there as the seats around us filled up. In the seat directly in front of her, I noticed a young woman, probably in her

twenties, walk in and sit down. As the service ended and I turned to go, I watched as Tamara softly put her hand on the ladies' shoulder. The lady turned around, and Tamara leaned over close and talked with the woman for a few moments. She hugged Tamara, and as she turned to leave, I saw her wiping the tears from her eyes.

I let it alone until we got to the car although Tamara did tell me as we walked to the car that she had something to tell me when she had my undivided attention. In the car I asked Tamara if she was praying for the lady. She said, no, that she wasn't praying, but that God had given her a message to give to her.

She said she had watched the lady come in and "something" had made her think about her throughout the service. As the final prayer was given and we were dismissed, she said God told her to give her a message. And the message was? She said that God had told her to tell her that whatever she was going through right then, that God loved her and that He had His angels all around her. She went on to say God wanted her to know that she was His little girl, and that He loved her so very much.

I'm sure that is the executive summary, and to my knowledge, the lady never replied back except maybe for a "thank-you" and the hug. Tamara told me though that she saw the same tears that I saw.

Tamara then told me that she knew there was some reason she was supposed to be there this morning. She went on to tell me how amazingly humbling and how special it was that God would use her to carry His message to someone.

So back to coincidences...was it a coincidence that I steered Tamara away from where she originally wanted to sit and picked those exact seats behind the seat this lady would choose? Was it coincidence that we got there so unusually early that we were even able to choose those seats? Of course it wasn't. God knows what He is doing and He is in control. And that is especially true for those, like my wife, who choose to listen to the "still, small voice" and follow it. Just think what a world and what a church we would have if we were all open to His voice and His leading and were able to do the same.

3rd Post Script – July 17, 2010

On July 13th, Tamara and I were dancing at the Bop Club (held at Jim Porters) in Louisville. We had driven separately because Tamara had an appointment to get her nails done and I took my daughter, Amanda, to two doctor appointments. Later in the evening I got tired, but people wouldn't let me just sit still as I do sometimes. They were asking me to dance every dance.

So I told Tamara I was leaving. Something in my spirit didn't feel quite right about doing it, but I thought "Why shouldn't I?" I have my own car and she will be fine. I usually follow her home when we drive separately.

On the way home, I was worried about her. And I asked God to send His angels to protect her and bring her home safely. I had all kinds of negative thoughts and worries about something happening to her.

I went on home and went to bed. I don't remember if I heard her come in or not. But...the next day she told me that God had really looked out for her. She said a big semi-tractor trailer had come within a foot of her and almost ran over her. I forget the exact details but it was while she was taking a detour over the Snyder Freeway from I-64 and coming down US 60 as she often does to avoid construction. I told her that I had prayed for her and I was worried about her. That's just one more instance of God watching out for her and of Him answering prayer. But...I had to know something was about to happen to offer that prayer. How much of life is foretold before it happens? There is so much we will never know or understand until we get to Heaven.

4th Post Script – October 23, 2011

I went to Southeast Christian by myself today as Tamara didn't get up in time. As I was looking for a spot down front, I didn't see what I wanted, and I heard the usher ask if any one needed help. I told him I did. We looked and were still trying to find me as spot when he said there are some people waving at you. It was Dave and Elaina Thomas from our Bible Study group. So I sat with them on the 3rd row. And since our group meeting of the past week, I had been thinking about the song, "Just As I Am" wishing that I could remember the words. And you know what the closing song was on this morning...you guessed it..."Just as I Am." There are no coincidences!

5th Post Script

When I related the story of Don Hamm above from June, 2009, I had no idea that it would be the last time I would ever see him. He passed away in March of 2012. In that "no coincidence," seemingly chance meeting, I got to say to what was on my heart and what I needed to say.