



2nd Thoughts

OCTOBER
2013

Martyrs Among Us

US Congressman Rebecca Hamilton writes:

According to the Center for the Study of Global Christianity, one hundred thousand Christians have died for their faith each year in the last decade. That works out to 11 Christians martyred for their faith every hour for the past ten years.

Can you imagine the outcry if this was one of the groups that fashion says we should care about? Just consider the sentence: 100,000 _____ were murdered because they were _____ each year for the past ten years. Supply the name of any group whose rights we hear daily that we are supposed to care about: Tibetan monks, Illegal immigrants, practicing homosexuals, or even baby seals.

Now, go back and substitute the word Christians, as in: 100,000 Christians were _____ murdered because they were Christians each year for the past ten years.

See what I mean?

Just in the last ten days, we have read of the 60-200 Christians who were massacred by radical Muslims at the All Saints Church in Peshawar, Pakistan. And why were they massacred? Simply because they were Christians. And what did our supposed ally, Pakistan, do to prevent this atrocity? Precious little. In fact, the Pakistan government seems to be sending a green light to Muslim radicals to continue with such brutal persecution as they did little or nothing to prosecute the "religious cleansing" that took place last March when over 100 homes were torched in a Christian enclave of the city of Lahore by a mob furious at reports of alleged blasphemy. (Of course, a person can be guilty of blasphemy under Islam's Sharia law if they simply convert to Christianity or if they in some way impugn the character of their sword-wielding, prophet Mohammed.)

In addition to these atrocities, we have been reading with horror the attack on the mall in Kenya where Muslim terrorists attacked non-Muslims in one of the most brutal assaults in recent history. This is just one example of many that occur throughout Africa as radical Muslims are persecuting Christians across the continent. If Islam claims to be a religion of peace, then why haven't we heard from their mainline leaders to decry these atrocious acts in the name of Islam?

As Christians, we are first of all called to pray for the persecution of our brothers and sisters in Christ who face martyrdom at the rate of eleven martyrs per hour. But in addition to relying on the power of prayer, we must also voice our concerns to our elected officials to use the powers of the US government to



Pastor Bob Zoba

Sunday Services
10:00 a.m.

Adult Sunday School
9:00am

Sunday School
PK-12
10:30am

Choir Practice
9am & 11:30am

Weekly Activities
Ladies Bible Study
Tuesdays 12-2

Small Group
@ the Rivera's
Tuesday 7pm

Men's Breakfast
Wednesday 7am

Women's Study
Wednesday 7pm

Youth Group
Thursday 7pm

Prayer Service
Thursday 7pm

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Mileto

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demand that foreign nations respect the right of religious freedom and prosecute those who violate it. Indeed, if we don't speak out now for those who are fighting persecution so far away, we may soon discover that there will not be anyone to speak out for us. Indeed, as Edmund Burke once wrote, "All that it takes for evil to prevail is for a few good men (and women) to do nothing." May we not named among those who do nothing. It is time we did something.

Pastor Bob

*Second Union Church
'Prince of Peace' Christmas Bazaar
December 7, 2013 ♦ 10am-3pm*



*Artisans, Handmade Crafts, Baked Goods, Kids Corner,
Tómbola, Santa's Shop, Bazaar Bistro . . . and more*

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Coming soon to the big screen at Second Union, *October Baby*, a movie of choices, forgiveness, and hope. Hannah, the movie's lead character, discovers she is the survivor of a botched abortion attempt. The movie chronicles her journey to discover the truth about her birth mother and on the way discovering something about herself as well.

"October Baby is a coming-of-age film, not propaganda disguised as a docudrama. The film is pro-life, no doubt, but the story focuses on Hannah's journey to find her place in this world and on the power of forgiveness." Morgan Feddes, Christianity Today

The Women's Ministry Team of Second Union has joined forces with Young Lives [a branch of Young Life ministries] that reaches out to teen moms. WM will be hosting a concession stand to raise funds for Young Lives.

Come October 25 at 7pm and show your support. Admission is free.

You saw me before I was born

Psalm 139:16 NLT

Men's Walk to Emmaus # 47

The first walk to Emmaus took place a couple of thousand years ago.



Two "pilgrims" were walking a seven mile stretch of road from Jerusalem to a village called Emmaus when a stranger appeared and inquired as to what they were discussing. They reviewed the events of the past days: a prophet, Jesus of Nazareth, was crucified unjustly by the Roman government and was laid in a tomb three days before. They had thought him to be the redeemer of Israel. However, now that he was dead, all hope was lost. Suddenly they realized they were being visited by the risen Christ. After he was gone they said, "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked to us on the road?"

Ready for some heart burn of your own? Maybe you should take a walk to Emmaus.

That account of the first Walk to Emmaus was recorded by an ancient physician named Luke. (The Gospel of Luke, Chapter 24, verses 13-35.) The story ends with the pilgrims exclaiming, "The Lord is risen indeed..." Their experience led them to move from seeing Jesus as a mere prophet to being the risen Lord. Perhaps you would benefit from such a transforming experience and energized spiritual vision.

Do you want that kind of experience with Jesus? The choice is yours.

Upcoming Men's Walk to Emmaus: October 24-27

Application Forms are available in the church office.

For more information: contact Pastor Bob or Emmaus Walk Lay Director: Jeff Cherok: 939-940-8891
emmausmenswalk47@gmail.com

Joan and George McMurray, Eva and David Roman, and Sylvia O'Connor enjoyed a wonderful night at the Opera at Centro de Bellas Artes in San Juan. Donizetti's L'Elisir d'Amore was masterly performed by local talent to a packed house.

The Brian Cole Family is in its 2nd year in Valencia, Spain and really loving their life there. "It is an incredible city on the Mediterranean full of history, modernity, music and great food. It is also a wonderful place to raise a family, which is quite important being that just 3 months after arriving in Valencia we added twins to our family - Gabriel and Clara. They are now 1 year old and doing so well. Our 10-year-old daughter Elena has embraced Valencia from day one and is having a great time. My wife Iris is still working remotely for her company in Puerto Rico, and is loving being a full-time mom again. I am now in my 2nd year as Dean of the Valencia Campus of Berklee College of Music and am exceeding happy with the job and working for what I feel is a wonderful institution."



God willing, the John and Evelyn Alberts family is expecting a grandchild in March from their son William and his wife Megan, this will be their first child. William has been very busy working as an Underwriter for Swiss Re. His job has allowed him to travel to Switzerland, China, Canada, Mexico, Germany, Italy, Panama, etc. and various states. Sara our eldest and her husband Kenny has given us two beautiful granddaughters, Natalie, 2 and Aubrey, 8 months. She is a Library Supervisor, soon to be promoted. Jeff lives in LA and is a Director of Photography for the show "Counting Cars." He worked with "Smoking Gun" and "What Not to Wear". He's multi-talented: doing improvisation with a group, writing scripts, serving as an illustrator, puppet maker, and sound man. Nadine is working as Puerto Rico's Metro Manager for a Promotions Company. Recently she was named Metro Manager of the month and received an IPAD - she competed with other managers in the States.

Sofia Droz made the Dean's List at la Inter. She was also awarded a full scholarship to study in Toledo, Spain next semester.

People relocation to the States this month:

- David and Valerie Banderman are relocating to Austin, Texas.
- Raquel, Ron and Abraham Seely are moving to Virginia.
- Willi and Wilfredo Santiago are moving to Tampa, FL.

Luis Gandia writes, "Mimi & I are traveling Oct 1 - 8th to Elmira, NY, Mimi's hometown. Her Mom has not been well and we want to go and help her and bring her encouragement. We will also be celebrating our 39th wedding anniversary Oct. 5th, with her relatives in Elmira, where we got married. Also, on this season of America's Got Talent, a Tenor Trio called FORTE came in fourth. One of the tenors is Fernando Varela (from San Juan, established in Orlando), who is our son, Aaron's friend (and ours) and has been Aaron's client for the last 9 years. In fact Aaron has recorded all of his records. We are very proud of his accomplishment and are happy for Aaron that his client and friend has been successful in AGT. We are hoping that if and when Fernando visits P.R. he will be able to visit 2UC and sing at one of our services."

Madeline Vega writes, "Xavi was elected Class President for eight grade at Leadership Academy. Also, I just finished editing my book Letters to my Son 2 which will be published this year by Editorial Cultural."

John Alberts has qualified for and is now officially registered to run in the prestigious Boston Marathon to be held in April 2014? (Congrats John!!!)

Dennis "Speedy" Gonzalez won the MG Midget championship on a Saturday and crashed his car in the rain the next day. He is now fluent in Hebrew (Not!!!) and waiting to talk to the locals in Israel in their own language during the upcoming 2UC trip to Israel. Dennis is also taking the two psychology classes at Inter-American University but wasn't able to take the English language course because Prof. Christie Curie de Zoba didn't teach it this semester. He writes, "We were going to do a video with me mumbling a few words at the beginning and then reciting Shakespeare at the end of the course, showing all the miraculous abilities of Madame Curie and how much the students improve in just 3 months.....ha, ha... Our mixed doubles team is 4-0"



Jared Adams was a champion wrestler in high school and grew up in Twinsburg, OH?

The soccer team of Edith Perez's grandson, Gabriel went to Disney World and came in 2nd place (Silver Medal)!! by beating various other countries! Edith is a volunteer English (ESL) teacher/tutor at Fowler's Academy.

Lisa Gervitz and her husband Daniel are awaiting their second child! They will be blessed with another little girl. Her name will be Sophia Isabelle and her arrival will be in mid-November!!!

The Bentz family is on the verge of upgrading to a family of 4, Lucas F. Bentz will be born at any moment! Papa, Fernando, just finished a Masters in Public Administration in July, and will complete Law School in December. (Wow! Congrats, Fernando!)

The Virginia's are settling into Ft. Myers, FL and the restaurant is up and running? And they are new grandparents again!



Two of the many things that Brenda Ferrer enjoyed this summer was seeing her youngest son, Joseph, have all three of his children with him at the same time and seeing the fruits of the labors of daughter Jameelah, grandson Al-Lateef, and hers turn into a huge success at The Jenkins Family Reunion in Hanover, MD. To God be the glory!



Chanse Riley has become a local football star in his new state of New Jersey?



Joe Ramos is now officially the pastor of the Palmas Community Church and good things are already happening in that congregation?!?

Yashira Pizarro is reviving our Young Adults ministry?

Stan Pinkerton recently made a trip to Nebraska where he visited his daughter and attended an Emmaus Walk?

Edwin, Conchi, Maria Christina Perez, Bob & Christie Zoba, John & Evelyn Alberts, Omar & Leeza Hae-do, and Dennis & Amarylis Gonzalez will be making a pilgrimage to Israel in November?

Christie Zoba recently traveled to Southern California to spend time with her mom and her dad's brother and sister? She also snuck in a visit with J.J. in Dallas on the way!



Milton Matow is coming down the home stretch of his dentistry program? Praise the Lord for that!!!

Cherish Lexvold is student teaching this semester in pursuit of her teaching certification and BA?

Matt Golley recently made a visit to the island and will be back and forth throughout the year ahead to promote Young Life Puerto Rico?

Dennis and Iris Morales are getting ready to move to their new home in San Antonio, Texas? Their New address is: Rev. Dennis and Iris Morales • 118 Maple Valley • San Antonio, TX 78227-4545

Second Union welcomed new members during the month of September? We're glad to have you!





“Suffer the Little Children ...”

On Wednesday, September 25, sixteen of the people working with Christ’s Hands ministry visited Hogar Cuna San Cristóbal in Caguas. In setting up the visit, Evelyn Alberts prayed for at least eight volunteers for the visit. The prayer was answered in double as we were sixteen. As God works things, sixteen is the exact number of children currently staying at Hogar Cuna.



During the visit, Andrea and Ricardo Jusino, assisted by Alysha Jackson, entertained the children with a puppet show about the importance of love, especially God’s love, over all the other desirable things in life. Edith Perez got all the kids and most of the adults involved in games with a large colorful parachute. We shared snacks and juices with the children and left them with many gifts provided by the generosity of our Second Union family.

Each child received two sets of new clothes, a pair of new shoes, and a coloring or activity book for play-times. In addition, we were able to leave the facility a large supply of diapers, other paper products, cleaning supplies, and cookies and juices for future snack times.



Our visit lasted just about an hour, but for those who attended, the warmth and joy of being with these children and those who care for them will be lasting for a long, long time.

Hogar Cuna San Cristóbal is a non-profit entity, founded in 1992. It is the first facility of its kind in Puerto Rico to be authorized to provide adoption services. Hogar Cuna houses children who are candidates for adoption from newborns up to seven years of age. Currently the service is open to children from all over the island. Many of the children have been referred by the Department of the Family. Other children are there because of the voluntary delivery by mothers who understand that they cannot or do not want to assume responsibility for the care of a child and see adoption as a loving alternative.

Their new facilities of Hogar Cuna San Cristóbal in Caguas accommodate sixteen children. The children live, eat, and sleep on the premises. The older children leave for school during the day. The new facility has a nursery for the babies, and dorm style rooms for the older boys and girls. The rooms are clean and spacious. In fact all the areas of the facility are clean and spacious and reflect the care that the staff gives to these children. During their stay, the children receive specialized 24-hour care by a staff trained to care for the physical, emotional, spiritual and social needs of young children. In addition to housing, Hogar Cuna coordinates services of neurologists, psychiatrists, speech therapists, and others as needed, and provides school readiness and recreation programs.

Hogar Cuna can always use volunteer assistance. If you are interested in volunteering, please call them at 787-747-9488. They will be grateful.

We of Christ's Hands Ministry and of Second Union Church were blessed to spend this time at Hogar Cuna San Cristobal to be with these wonderful children and to see the hands of others who are heeding Christ's call to care for others.



Psalm 46:4 God's blessings are like a river. They fill the city of God with joy.

To my friends and family at Second Union Church

Psalm 46:4 for me expresses best how I feel and, I believe, the general feeling of those who attended the Ordination/ Installation celebration at Palmas Community Church on September 8, 2013.



I saw the Body of Christ at its best. God, by His Grace, managed to bring together, Second Union Church, Union Church, Christian Community Church, Palmas Community Church, members of the Prison Ministry, members of Baseball Chapel, a Professor from the Theological University, Emmaus, WBMJ, guest, people of all ethnic / social economic backgrounds, family, clergy, laity, friends, brothers and sisters in Christ, to be in His presence, and all were blessed - Blessings that flow like a river....Ps 46:4

I don't know how to adequately thank Second Union Church for nurturing me over the last 28 years in preparation for this calling. Your trust in me, allowing me to stand in the pulpit to deliver God's message, allowing me to share in the leading of worship, the Bible studies, Emmaus, council, prayer & worship nights, your love, prayers and care, have all contributed to my spiritual growth, which led to this calling at Palmas Community Church.

My prayer is that some day you will allow me to come back, if just to sit in the pews and listen to the sermons and Potluck Sundays for the food.

Second Union – you need to know, that while we may not be a mega church, we bless in mega ways. Many have passed through Second Union Church and because of the blessing they received from you and by the Grace of God, they now bless others in the States, Europe, Central America, Australia, and now in Humacao. I am mega blessed.

And God just adds more blessings upon the blessings! Elilda will be preaching on October 27. The first time a female will deliver God's message from the pulpit at Palmas Community Church. God is great!



Do you see what you've done at Second Union Church! You blessed others, so that they might be a blessing to others. You equip the saints to fulfill the great commission. What a concept!!

"May the Love of God, the Grace of Jesus and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you always"

Your brother in Christ,
Joe Ramos



Young Adult's Small Group: Building Connections within an Emerging Generation

By: Yashira Pizarro

Why are the young adult groups not present in the local church? Who are they? And why are they so important to the body of Christ?

There have been upsetting statistics through the years that indicate that most churches are not keeping post-high school young adults. This might be happening, because unfortunately we can't seem to relate with church as part of our lives. I believe that this age group in particular has the following needs: to belong, to grow and to reach out.

Belonging to a group is very essential in order to cultivate long lasting friendships and to avoid feeling isolated. (*Galatians 3:28 says: There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*) I also believe that when we grow together in Christ we help each other to strengthen our daily walk as young Christians and deepen our faith through small groups, worship and prayer as well. (*1 Thessalonians 5:11 says: Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.*)

Now, we are called to be the salt and the light of this world we live in. To be Christ's billboard on earth by sharing with others how our lives have been transformed by Him. We do this, by reaching out to our community, evangelizing people that do not know about Christ; making the difference; transforming one life at a time. (*Isaiah 49:6b says "I will make you as a light for the nations that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."*)

Christian young adults are an emerging generation of future shapers. At this stage of our lives we go walking in our Savior's righteousness in the midst of a chaotic world. Therefore, let us unite and make a difference among ourselves, our loved ones, communities and the world for Christ Jesus.

Whether you are studying, graduated or working we would like to invite you to invest some of your time in this group and be part of this awesome experience that will be such a blessing in your life. Stay tuned!

Remember, you are loved and blessed!

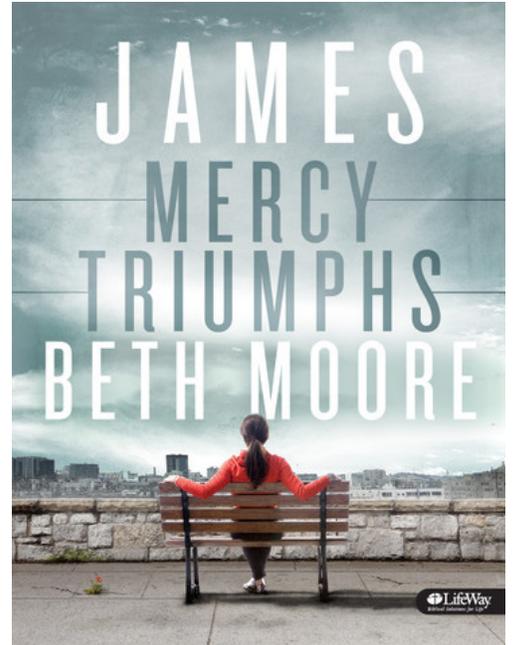
Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.

1st Peter 1:13

LET US THEREFORE
COME BOLDLY
TO THE THRONE OF
grace, THAT WE
MAY FIND
MERCY & GRACE
IN TIME OF NEED.
HEBREWS 4:16

On Tuesday, October 8, we begin a brand-new study of the Book of James. If you've never participated in a Bible Study, this is a perfect time to test the waters! The Tuesday study meets from noon until 2pm. Everyone is welcome - we have women of all ages and from all walks of life - you don't need to be a Biblical scholar - and you don't need to be a member of Second Union Church. What you need is a desire to get to know Jesus better. So give it a try - join us this coming Tuesday. You can order lunch from Anita (anita00926@aol.com) or you can bring your own. Child care is provided. If you have any questions, contact Christie at 787-717-4001.

About our upcoming study: *Bible scholars compare James to the prophet Amos. In other ways James more closely resembles the Book of Proverbs than any New Testament book. Come along with Beth Moore on a journey to get to know both the man and the Book of James. You will never be the same again. Topics in this study include: joy, hardship, faith, reversal of fortunes for rich and poor, wisdom, gifts from above, single-mindedness, the dangers of the tongue, humility, and prayer.*



Last week, our Bible study group concluded the Priscilla Shirer study, "He Speaks to Me". We learned about Samuel (1st Samuel 3) and how by studying his characteristics, we can prepare to hear God's voice.

Here is a brief summary:

1. Samuel was a child.

The Lord treasures the simplistic faith of children who

- a) trust Him b) are humbled before Him c) depend upon Him
- We need to approach Jesus with a child-like faith

2. Samuel was a worshiper.

He was single-minded and fully focused in His worship – not distracted.

- We need to be undivided in our worship of the Lord.

3. Samuel was set apart.

When we lead a 'set apart' lifestyle – a holy lifestyle, we'll get closer to God and He'll speak to us.

- We must live a lifestyle that honors God and we must not allow sin to create a barrier between us and God.

4. Samuel was still before God spoke to him.

- We must be still if we hope to hear from God.

5. Samuel got as close as he could to the manifest presence of God.

When we make it our consuming passion to get to Him, He makes Himself available to us.

- We must take advantage of the access we have to the throne of God. (Hebrews 9)

6. Samuel had a servant's spirit.

He was obedient and willing to do whatever he was asked.

- As we hear the Lord speak to us, we must be submissive to His will.

As Second Union Church, we are beginning to see unmistakable signs that the birth of Christ approaches. There is the hustle and bustle of activity in the crafting room, sign up sheets declaring the onslaught of the season of pie making, soon the building will transform, and the Christmas Bazaar will mark the beginning of the celebrating.

At Second Union Church the annual Christmas Bazaar provides this congregation with an opportunity to come together to work, hands on, for the body of Christ. We fill up the building with local artisans, cook delicious foods and desserts, and hand crafted items by the women of the church in order to do several vital things. One, to build community with our neighbors, an open door to this house of God through which many step and some even stay. Two, to show others how deeply we love Christ by

how we work together in love, for His kingdom, for them. And believe me, this part truly shows our true colors! Third, to raise money and awareness for the less fortunate.

The Bazaar is a non profit event that helps women and children in Puerto Rico and the world.

This year, "Prince of Peace" will be our Bazaar theme. We intend to keep our focus on Jesus in all that we do.

The Bazaar has many places and ways to volunteer to help. We encourage you to consider ways that you can serve: help with set up or clean up, lend a hand in the kitchen, be a cashier, park cars, help coordinate the music, prep food, gather items for the tombola, donate ingredients for chili, pies, or offer to do the shopping.

The Prince of Peace Christmas Bazaar will also feature a Prayer Corner, where our guests and our volunteers can receive a word of encouragement and prayer from some of our church family. The Prayer Corner will take volunteers for shifts here as well.

Look for the sign up sheets to offer to serve.

One job that everyone should take on is perhaps the most important. Please, please pray for us, your brothers and sisters here at 2UC, that we may all be effective ambassadors for Christ.

May we all truly reflect the Prince of Peace, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ,

Anita Rodriguez

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'Prince of Peace' Christmas Bazaar
December 7, 2013 ♦ 10am-3pm*



*Artisans, Handmade Crafts, Baked Goods, Kids Corner,
Tombola, Santa's Shop, Bazaar Bistro . . . and more*

Budgeting for the Month: October

Common expenses during the tenth month

We know you've been aware of Halloween on the horizon for quite some time now. If you haven't, the decorations that have been up on the store shelves for the past month have been there to remind you.

But while the horror holiday is the most popular October expense, it's not the only one. Here are some others that can come up in the next 31 days:

- Halloween. If you have children who need costumes or live in a neighborhood where you'll be giving out candy, or maybe you even want to throw a party, your spending plan must reflect that.
 - Fall break. If your children are out of school and you are thinking of taking a quick family trip, don't put it on a credit card—put it in the budget instead. Unlike with the card, you won't see the costs next month.
 - <http://www.daveramsey.com/specials/mytmmo-gazelle-budget/?ictid=dbvt.mytmmo.ny13> School pictures. This is usually the time of year when kids are showing their grills for the camera. You may want to pony up some dough to capture those memories.
 - Car insurance/car tags. If you don't have a sinking fund in your budget to save up for these expenses by the month, then you'll need to come up with the cash whenever they come due. Hopefully, if that is in October, you're ready.
 - Christmas saving. Saving time is almost done—we've got two months and counting. Get some final dollars in here then start shopping away.
 - Higher utility bills. We've been having some extreme heat here in Puerto Rico. The light bill may reflect an increased use of air conditioning costs.
 - Thanksgiving holiday. This is the last full month to save for Turkey Day. Be sure you put some money away, especially if you are hosting a party or travelling to see some relatives.
- If you know of any costs that weren't covered here, make sure to leave a comment and reply all so others will get the heads-up. It may be just what they need to keep their own budgets intact.



Remember if you are currently enrolled in Financial Peace University, you have access to the Gazelle Budget on your account at FPU Central. For former students, you have the regular Monthly Cash Flow plan to download or all budget forms are found in the back of your FPU workbooks.

Generation Change @2UC coming Thursday, September 26th – November 21st at 7pm! The youth group Bible study teens will love. And every teen needs! Ages 13-18 Sign up your kids and their friends! Only \$10 per lesson/workbook per Series! Register now! Contact Ricardo Jusino, Youth Pastor ricardo.jusino@gmail.com or 787.400.4194



Generation Change is an all-new suite of Bible studies designed to lead teens to a better understanding of God, themselves and their money—and how it all works together. In the three different teaching series, students are equipped with biblical principles to BE who God created them to be, DO more with their money, and GO out into the world ready to write their story. Lesson videos with Dave Ramsey and his daughter, Rachel Cruze, along with engaging hands-on activities, will bring new biblical and financial truths to this generation, making them a generation of change.

Today, our kids are hit from all sides with mixed messages about what's important and what gives them value. It's time to show this generation a new reality—one that's founded on biblical principles, not the latest fad or pop sensation. It's time to tear down the fake gloss of what society calls "success" and give our teens a true understanding of their value in Christ. It's time for Generation Change.

The Christian Life Series - Choices: Life Commitments Part Six
By: Yashira Pizarro

Thought of the day: I am worthy, because JESUS' blood has made me worthy!"

Who Are You?

- The Word says: So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.- Genesis 1:27
- Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.- 2 Corinthians 5:17
- But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.- 1 Peter 2:19

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure. -1 John 3:1-3

Food for Thought: "Who Am I?"

That is something that we ask ourselves every time. Especially, when we are going through a turning point in our lives, and we do not know what to do. As Christians, we don't really know our identity in our Creator, or what He has to say about it. So, unfortunately we rely on what the world dictates who we should be. And my dear beloved, this should not happen to you. I believe that the only way to find out is by reading the Word of God and acknowledging God's say on the subject. You ought to know that you are loved by God the Father. Yes He loves you!!! Not because of what you do or have done but of who you are. His child! The Scriptures tell us that while we were sinners, Jesus Christ died for us. And he did it to save you and I from death. He longed to have a relationship with us even before we became His children. (Romans 5:8, "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.") The wages of your sin is death (see Romans 6:23), but Jesus paid that price for you and me.

By knowing about Christ's sacrifice for us, we know that we are justified and declared innocent because we have been forgiven. We find this in Galatians 2:16, "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.")

Guess what! We are made new in Christ! God's Word tells us that we are new creatures in Christ, old things having passed away and all things have become new. (2 Corinthians 5:17) When we accept Jesus Christ into our lives as our Lord and Savior, believing in Jesus completely with our heart, mind and soul, we are a new righteous and holy creation. Yes, this is part of your identity, the old you was crucified that very day on the cross with Christ. God didn't repair the old-you, He created a new-you in His Son Jesus. (Galatians 2:20, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.")

After learning God's love for us and that Jesus gave himself for you and I we can grasp the reality that being in Him, we are new, we are different, we are cleansed by His blood. We have been chosen by God, a holy nation, His people. So what the world says about us should not define us at all. We have our identity in Christ and we must exercise it every single day. When we don't realize who we are in Christ, our faith will be crippled.

Let's pray: Heavenly Father, thank you for loving us so much that you gave your only Son to die on the cross for our sins, even when we did not deserve Thank you Jesus that our identity is found in You and not in what the world tells us who we should be. We ask You to continue revealing yourself in Your Word and to let us know that we are alive, in You. In your name we pray. Amen.

You are loved and blessed!!! Rejoice in Christ on this very day and forever more!

(You can find this and other devotionals at <http://www.theraceoffaith121.tumblr.com>)

Father, open
my children's
ears to hear
the message you
have for them
today.

Isaiah 30:21

Reading Through the Bible This Year: 2013

A group from Second Union Church has taken on the challenge of reading through the Bible this year. Each day we read from the Old Testament, the Psalms and the New Testament.

This month's Bible readings are:

Isaiah 10-66; Jeremiah 1-26

Psalms 85-111

Acts 8-28; Romans 1-16; 1 Corinthians 1

Have you read the Bible? Of course you have! But I don't mean reading **in** the Bible - a book or a couple of verses - I mean have you **really** read the Bible - from cover to cover? I had partici-

pated in Bible studies for several years, and I owned a variety of Bibles: hardcover, softcover, faux-leather bound, thin-line to name a few. I even had a New Testament that was published in a magazine format. I had read **from** the Bibles, but I had never actually read the Bible: from Genesis to Revelation. I read lots of other best-selling books, but I'd never actually 'read' **the** best-selling book of all time.

So about ten years ago, I committed to reading the Bible through in one year. It might have been a New Year's Resolution. I found a daily reading schedule, and I began. At first, it was easy - a few chapters a day - no problem. I even began to read ahead of my schedule. I figured I could get through the entire Bible in six months. Well after a month or two, I skipped a day or two, but I was able to catch up. Then a few weeks later, I fell behind again - first a day, then a few days and before I knew it, I realized I was too far behind to catch up. I was frustrated, because I felt like not only had I let myself down, but I'd somehow let God down.

But over the course of the remainder of the year, I really felt a deepening conviction to honor the commitment I had made, but this time, I was going to pray for the guidance and revelation of the Holy Spirit. It was pretty obvious that I couldn't do it on my own. So the following January 1st, I picked up my Bible and prayed that the Lord would speak to me as I read His word. I prayed for encouragement. The Lord answered my prayer, and that marked the beginning of a journey that I have embarked upon each year. That first year, I read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. The next year I read the Bible in the Message version. Reading the Bible had become a joy and a privilege, rather than a 'challenge'. Then I asked if others at the church were interested in participating as well. As a group we've been reading through the Bible for about six years, and I pray that for those of you who are participating, you have found it to be a joy as well.

If you haven't ever made the decision to read through the Bible, why not pray about it now? You can jump in and begin reading along with the group, or you can wait and begin in January. I truly believe, that the Lord will give you revelation - He will speak to you - as you read His word.

May you be blessed.

Christie Zoba

The Word of God well understood and religiously obeyed is the shortest route to spiritual perfection. And we must not select a few favorite passages to the exclusion of others. Nothing less than a whole Bible can make a whole Christian. --AW. Tozer

The Fellowship Committee is planning to organize monthly outings for those interested in our 2UC family. Our first excursion is scheduled on Saturday, October 26th, Second Union is organizing a trip to the "Cabezas de San Juan" ecological reserve and visit to the Fajardo lighthouse.

Cabezas de San Juan, Fajardo
Saturday, October 26 at 2pm (sharp!)
Cost: \$8/person

In this excursion, we explore the history and nature of Cabezas de San Juan Nature Reserve by taking a guided trolley tour through the most important spots of this natural area. We go across dry forests, watch seagrass beds from a distance, take a boardwalk through mangroves and above Laguna Grande, and get to know the different beach types before visiting the Fajardo Lighthouse. There we explore several exhibitions about the organisms and ecosystems found at the reserve, and we enjoy the impressive vistas of the northeastern tip of Puerto Rico from the viewing platform on top of the lighthouse.

If you are interested in participating, please see Christie Zoba or the church office. There are only 30 spaces available for this English-speaking, guided tour!

Sacrifices of Praise

"Offer sacrifices in the right spirit, and trust the LORD." Psalm 4:5

I have a confession to make. After many years of walking with Jesus and seeking Him to fill me, I still struggle with unmet longings. Maybe you can relate. Have you ever wanted something so badly your heart ached with each thought of it? It seems like life would be so much better if you had that one thing. There would be more happiness.

More contentment. More fulfillment. More satisfaction. More peace.

You can envision yourself with this thing, this person, this opportunity. And all things are better. So, why doesn't God give you this longing of your heart? This longing of my heart?

Could it be because He wants us to willingly let it go? Ouch.

That's not the answer I want. Why would God let the aching desire linger and not make things happen? He could. He's certainly able. But when He doesn't, it seems unfair. Not good. Confusing. It's easy to get down when we're constantly let down. We hope this thing will happen ... we'll meet this right person ... we'll get this job ... we'll finally be healed ... we'll get that chance ... we'll see that family member turn his or her life around. Time and again it doesn't happen. That's when it's easy to slip.

That's where trust steps in and reminds us we can't ever learn how to live real faith if we never need real faith. As an offering of trust, we must give up that which could so easily bring us down. Not give up as in discouraged surrender. But give up as in placing this desire in the hand of God and saying, "Either way, I will see Your answer as the good answer and walk in trust."

I like to call these types of releases in my life sacrifices of praise, like Psalm 4:5 tells us to do: "Offer sacrifices in the right spirit, and trust the LORD."

Yes, I still struggle with unmet desires. But not as much today as I did yesterday. And that is good. Not easy. But good.

by Lysa Terkuerst, from girlfriendsingod.com