

From the Pastor's Desk

Praise the Lord! A new year has begun and my heart rejoices to the fact that we have the best hope available living in us. I am speaking of the heavenly treasure that all believers have. It is the gift of eternal life made available to everyone who believes. Such an awesome gift came to us by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. It is Jesus, the Messiah who is King and Lord, who made eternal life an achievable goal among humanity. Praise the name of Jesus! He alone is worthy of all praise...

May the Lord lead your hearts into a full understanding and expression of the love of God!

This year I'll be communicating more frequently through letters and the church's website, so do not be surprised if you receive a greater amount of letters from me. In each letter you will find information aimed to stir your heart into seeking to know the Lord and to grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. It is my deepest desire for you to set goals to know God better, and you can know God by knowing his written Word. It is possible that in a particular subject you may not agree with me whole heartedly; I understand, and that is why I encourage you to seek clarification through the reading of the Bible. Keep in mind that sometimes I am giving my opinion or a point of view to embrace an example. Use wisdom, and learn to distinguish between opinions and Biblical principles. While there is room to disagree on matters of opinion we must be careful not to mix Biblical principles. Always remember that the Word of God cannot be altered to fit our opinions, for spiritual principles are not to be debated but followed. The believer must obey the Word as God intended. We must avoid debating God's Word at all cost! No one can win an argument, so why have one?

Life goes on! Yes! We live during times of uncertainty. It seems like the news we hear today projects a gloomy future for this generation. This world is uncertain because people making decisions are uncertain. The character and the moral decay of a bunch of people have contributed to the quality of life affecting this great nation known as the United States of America. What caused the downfall of many financial structures? It is my observation and opinion that the lack of direction in people led to the horrors we are seeing today. Your thoughts may be drifting away into areas that I am not even thinking about. Let me be clear on this. I am not speaking of government officials of any kind; however, I am speaking about people in general from every spectrum.

The loss of quality started among us long ago through little and unnoticed changes. It began in our neighborhoods. I am sure you can relate to the following examples. Perhaps, it was that car repair facility next door to us who overcharges for their services or that family physician, which without a reason, bills medical insurance companies for twice the amount required. People failing to do what is right are the ones responsible, which initiated the downfall of financial structures. The decay in character among every institution resulted in the economy we have today. The public is looking for someone to blame for their current condition. Why not blame the government? Before pointing any fingers, let us take a look at the greatest country – AMERICA. Our government is made up of individuals empowered by citizens. It is not a monarchy or a mere socialist leadership who runs this country, but a democracy ordained by the voting rights of the people like you and me. In America, government and non-government businesses are run by individuals who promise to represent the people.

Government and companies have leaders running them, and it is for this reason that character, vision, motives, and the fear of God must be in the lives of those who willingly choose to serve the public sector. It is my opinion that we do not have a government problem, but a people problem. People, with their actions, are the one's liable; for their actions are the reflection of their sole being.

The great unnoticed deficits that this nation has are found in the areas of morality, business honesty, and spiritual enlightenment, just to mention a few. All of these have directly influenced the current conditions we are experiencing today. Our society is being affected by a few key players from every spectrum, church leaders included, who by their actions have damaged the foundational structure of America. The removal of God's principles from the schools initiated the rejection of God from our daily affairs. The lack of taking the Bible as the primary source of spiritual life has also impacted our way of life.

What can we do today that can make a difference? How can we influence America and ultimately the world? Here is a word that can answer both of these questions. The magic word is "CHANGE".

The Bible says it best. The Bible calls it "RENEWAL". Believers must renew their thinking; seeking to have it changed from negative to positive and from doubt into faith. The goal is to become the action of God by living a life guided by spiritual principles. The world and the entire creation came to exist by the Word of God, and life in general has been influenced by the way people live their lives. A good way to change the world around us is by giving up bad habits. This can be achieved by renewing your mind, which leads to a happier and more prosperous life, one that is worth living.

This world in which we live may be unreliable and unstable, but the living God is not. The only voice that is constant and reliable comes from the Word of God. You can count on God's Word! The principles of God are always producing good results wherever it is put into practice. Such benefits come to anyone who believes the Word of God and genuinely puts them into practice. In 2009, let us start a new year with a desire to welcome change, one that is inspired by the Word of God. Set your goals, and become the person God has in mind for you to become. Are you ready for the challenge? Are you willing to "renew" your mind with good things?

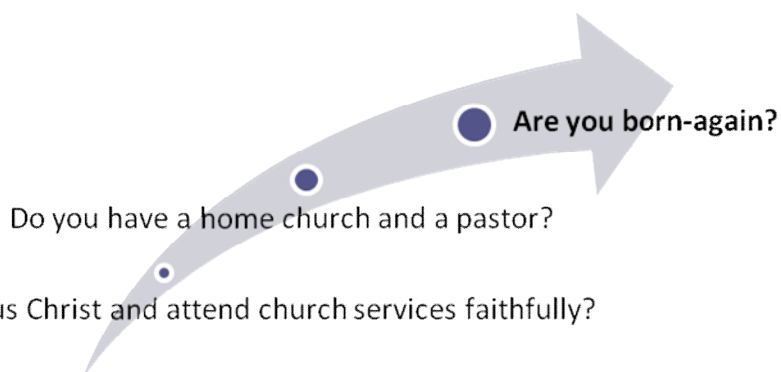
Take a look at 2008. Are you proud of last year's performance? Did you do well? Here is a phrase I often quote during Sunday services: "What is insanity? Insanity is doing the same things over and over, but expecting different results". The past will always be the past. It does not matter how much we desire to change it the past cannot be changed for it is unchangeable. However, our future is within our reach. It is possible to have a better tomorrow if we dare to believe God and include HIM in our decisions. The Apostle Paul in the Book of Philippians 3:13-14 spoke on the importance of forgetting the past.

"No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us."

The Apostle Paul addressed the importance of looking forward to the future. He also said to press on to reach the end of the race for he knew that the past was gone. In life we can expect to have challenges, but we must pursue the will of God in our lives by directing our energy toward obeying the commandments of God. It means to perform according to the principles written in the Bible, even during times when we don't feel like it. Have you experienced a time when you didn't feel like doing something? Some individuals don't do anything during such times, while others do it anyway for they know that it is the right thing to do. What group are you in? Are you a doer of God's principles or only a hearer of the principles? It is never too late to seek improvement and remember that the initial word for 2009 is genuine "CHANGE".

Start this year by making a final decision to live for God. A final decision is a decision that does not require renewal. Take for example your mother's name. Do you renew her name each day or each month? No! You don't do that because her name is part of you and it is a fixed truth that is unchangeable. The believer must use the same approach when making spiritual decisions. Regardless of any elements that produce influence over you, set your mind and heart on making godly decisions. Once you make a decision, remain faithful to your commitments and stand firm on your decision. Always refuse to be a double minded person. In the same way we attempt to please our employers according to company requirements, the believer must seek to please God. Natural or spiritual, both have specific requirements that can offer distinct benefits when followed.

Look at the questions below and in your own heart seek an answer, but be clear as to a "YES" or a "NO":



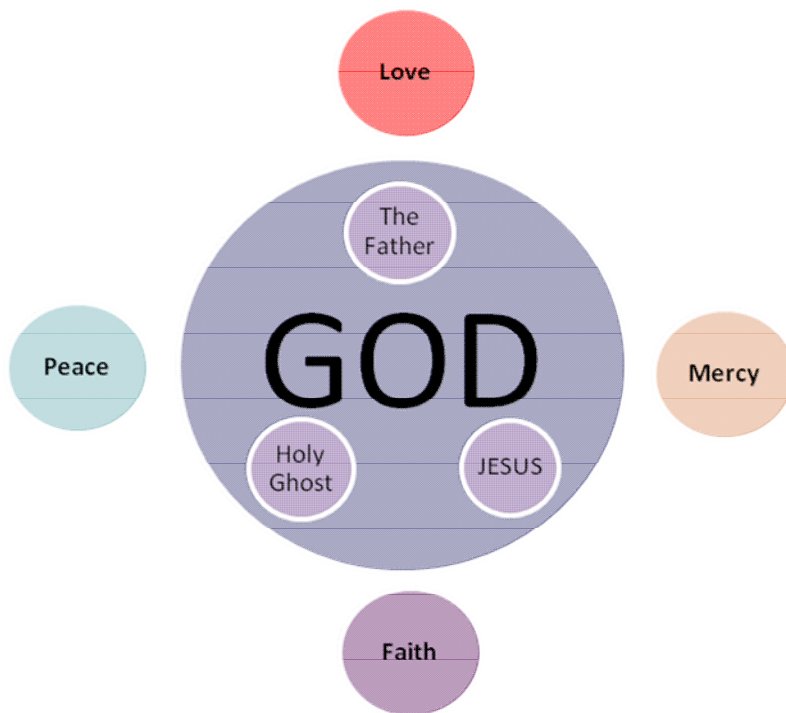
Jesus is the way! Now is the time to do a soul search to find out the condition of your heart. If you answered "NO" to any on the above questions I urge you to make a quality decision to serve God. These three questions combined are purposely included in this document to help you identify the strength of your convictions. In this year begin your life by making room for spiritual priorities knowing that the things that matter the most are spiritual. Now is the time to rekindle your love and passion for the things of God. Do you remember the last time you were on fire for the Lord? It is never too late to renew your commitment. Now is the time to seek the saving of your soul. Think for a moment. Where is your priority? Where are you heading? The Bible is clear on the subject of growing in natural matters at the risk of losing your souls. Let us read about it:

- "And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul?" Mark 8:36
- "And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? Is anything worth more than your soul?" Matthew 16:26

Perhaps, you answered "YES" to all of the questions. Congratulations! You are heading in the right direction toward fulfilling the will of God. During your passage have patience; be firm, totally devoted to your godly convictions. The outcome of your journey will be success and victory. Let your positive words lead you to the plan of God. Are you aware that the elements

that you are encountering right now are stepping stones that will lead you to the place God has for you? Yes! There is purpose in everything that takes place in the life of the believer. You can take control of your future by taking control of your beliefs. In knowing God you will discover that his nature is beyond comparison. What do you say about God lately? Are you expressing words of love towards God? In your search you will soon discover the foundation of God.

God is all in all, but let me share some of God's characteristics with you:



Meditate on all the words mentioned above and search in your Bible to discover their meaning. How would each relate to you? You will find in the Bible the glorious truths embedded in each word. God has abundance wealth readily available for you to find. In conclusion, it is my desire that you begin your new year with extraordinary trust in God. May you hold on to the principles of God! Press on towards pleasing the Lord by obeying his commandments.

In all your ways acknowledge God!

God bless!

Pastor Rey Maldonado

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