

## Monthly Support Report

January 31, 2017

Dear elders,

I trust and I pray that this beautiful Tuesday finds you and your families doing well. As I sit here going over my notes for the month of January giving consideration to what's been taking place – some of my thoughts wander to the turmoil that seems to continually be taking place in the world and I wonder why we just can't all just get along with each other. And then the thought comes to me. We could if Jesus were alive and active in all of our lives. But He isn't, is He? Or at least that's what my observation from afar tells me. Even with those who profess they know Jesus, it seems to be just an empty pretense or else if they truly knew Jesus Christ you would be able to see His light and the light of His word shining forth from their lives. And from my perspective I just don't see the light of the Savior shining forth. At least that's my opinion from what I'm able to observe.

A professor the other day made the observation to a reporter about a certain religion that it was a religion of peace. And he went on to explain himself and his statement. And as I listened I thought to myself, I've yet to see the fruits of what he was saying coming from this particular religion. And later that evening I thumbed through the Bible of this particular religion and found more than one quote that contradicted his statement and his conclusion he had drawn. He was incorrect. To use the wording of a certain politician that I've heard stated and restated recently that's "fake news." And sadly enough, there's a lot of "fake news" that's being circulated lately about "policy," "politics" and "religion." It's to the point that it's difficult to know what the truth is about a lot of things. That is except about religion. Religion is the easiest one to discern because we have the source of truth. We have the Bible which is God's inspired word. And Jesus himself said, <sup>6</sup> "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. (John 14:6). <sup>32</sup> And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. (John 8:32). Brethren I like the confidence I can have in knowing the truth of God's word.

<sup>17</sup> Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. (John 17:17). Don't you just love these three Bible verses and way they deal with truth? I do! It's just like Jesus promised His disciples when He knew His time to return to the Father was near, as He promised to send them the Comforter (i.e., the Holy Spirit).

<sup>12</sup> "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear *them* now. <sup>13</sup> However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own *authority*, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. (John 16:12, 13). I like clarity on a matter regardless of what the subject is. That's what we have when it comes to religion and how God desires for us to live our lives and worship Him. That's why God has provided us with all truth. I like that. Thank you God! Thank you for Your truth that is a lamp for my feet. Without it I would surely stumble. I pray for the strength – courage and understanding to find my way to you in eternity.

We've had a good January brethren. I pray that you have as well. We've had good attendance thanks in part to minimal sickness in the congregation. We've had our share of visitors now that the ice storm has passed us by. It looks like one family that continues to visit with us may decide to continue with us. I've had a few talks with them and it looks as though we will arrange a Bible study. That's encouraging for all of us. I enjoy home Bible studies so very much both with members and non-members. As you likely already know a Bible in someone's home gives you such a great opportunity to get to know them in the

place they are the most comfortable. And you'll find that they will ask you questions that they wouldn't dare ask you in any other setting. In fact, I'd go so far as to say that (it's my opinion) that a congregation that's having Bible studies in the homes of members is headed in a very positive direction because they are getting to know one another much better and there is a lot of positive spiritual growth taking place. Sometimes auditorium Bible classes can be a little lackluster (my second opinion if I'm allowed two opinions in one report). Why does that happen? Well, one reason could be me, the Bible class teacher. I may not be very well prepared so I'm not too crazy about people speaking up because someone may ask a question. Or, I may not be a very enthusiastic teacher or very engaging. But it's been my experience that when Home Bible Studies are taking place on a regular basis these other surface issues don't matter so much because folks are more enthused about learning and we've become more comfortable with one another. And yes, I just used that "one another" phrase that's emphasized in the New Testament. That phrase is as you know very important to the well-being of a healthy congregation of the Lord's people and the work they are to do.

Our Sunday morning Bible class continues to work its way through those wonderful Parables of Jesus. We're currently considering the Parable of the Two Debtors. We just concluded the Parable that I affectionately refer to as the Parable with a Twist. It is the Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard that is found only in Matthew's Gospel and follows the story of the Rich Young Ruler. Matthew 20:1-16. You may know why I refer to it as the Parable with a Twist. If you don't and you care to know I'd be happy to tell you. But, read through it and see what you think. Like all of the other Parables – it's great and the lesson is great! I will add this much. It is a Parable that can help you with your explanation of Ephesians 2:8-10 if you are having a religious discussion with some of your religious friends about the subject of grace. Since I worked for General Motors earlier in my life I was able to share with the class how (although it was before my time with GM) how before the Union came to the auto factories – how workers were selected to work in the assembly plants at GM. It parallels how the Vineyard owner found and selected his laborers in Jesus' Parable. If you will do a little research, you'll find there was a certain place workers who wanted to work would go to and wait, and employers would go to looking for workers. Do you know where that place was? Do some research. You'll find both cases interesting. It's the extra detail that adds "color" to studies like this and enhances the story. If you do the research you'll remember it forever, and then you'll be able to tell it in a very colorful way to your children and grandchildren. Isn't Bible study enjoyable?

I'm enjoying my personal study and preaching in 1 John as well. But I'm almost afraid to tell the congregation how many lessons it may take me to get through 1 John. It won't be ten. Not if it continues to be as interesting as it has been so far. It may be twice as many as ten. Brethren it's just a fascinating book and it's so rich with great teaching that I hate to pass too many things up. I'm getting ready to preach my fourth lesson and I thought I could cover 1 John 2:1, 2. But I can't. I can only cover verse 1 about Jesus being our "Advocate." But it's not my fault. I love words – the etymology of words, and Advocate is such a wonderful word as it pertains to Jesus. And really as it pertains to confessing our sins so that our sins can be covered by the blood of Jesus. So, it's not my fault that God's word is so rich and wonderful and full of meaning. I'm just doing my very best to understand it and then convey it in clear and precise terms so that all who listen regardless of where they are in their understanding of God's word can appreciate it and praise God for the blessing of His Son's and His precious blood.

Thank you for taking the time to read this report. And thank you especially for your fellowship in the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is greatly appreciated. Your help allows us to make the

small effort we make in teaching and preaching the Gospel to both the saved and the lost as we continue to pray for open doors. May God continue to richly bless your efforts in the kingdom as well. And may God bless you with good health so that you may serve Him many more years in His service.

God bless.

Randy