

‘ROADGUIDE’

by Ron Holmes

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**A record of articles printed in
Magill Church of Christ
Weekly News Sheet**

And

**Church Prayers
Used in its Sunday Morning
Services**

INTRODUCTION

This booklet was composed because people wanted to keep the short articles used for the front page of the church news bulletin during the time when we did not have a Senior minister. As a retired minister I filled in using material based on the days when I regularly wrote columns for country newspapers. At my age there are a lot of things I can't do but this was one I could and enjoyed doing.

Also within my capabilities is to take my place on the roster of those with the responsibility of leading "the prayers of the church".

Churches of Christ have never had a prayer-book such as is used in Anglican, Catholic and some other churches. The person or persons leading the worship service also have the responsibility of preparing the prayers they use. Sometimes they may find them in a book. Usually they think them up themselves with a view to fitting in with the theme of the day or circumstances of the time.

'The Lord's Prayer', the prayer Jesus taught his disciples, which congregations often repeat together, is only used in Churches of Christ when the person leading worship decides to do so. However, it is an important prayer to learn and remember because it shows the kind of things Jesus says we should pray for.

Since a number of people have mentioned particular prayers they found to be helpful, I thought that some of them could well find a place in this little publication.

Ron Holmes

CONTENTS

1. Thanks for a New Year
2. Power from above
3. Choose the right Grandfather
4. What don't you believe?
5. Grandma's new axe
6. Footy and faith
7. Setting your clock right
8. An Easter Sunday reflection
9. New Morality or Immorality?
10. New words are born
11. Speaking to a celebrity
12. The war problem
13. Foot and mouth disease
14. Special days and other days
15. There are no easy terms
16. The Cash Cathedral
17. Preaching and practising
18. Ever been cut off?
19. Nothing left to chance
20. Praying for or against rain
21. Passing through this world
22. Just a three-letter word
23. People are funny
24. Two things to remember
25. Missing anything important?
26. Things and people
27. Just a lot of legends?
28. The mystery at Bool Lagoon
29. God's wheels turn slowly
30. How things grow
31. If you can't do anything
32. Learning the hard way
33. The Christmas contact
34. The Obituary test
35. "Never 'eard of 'im"
36. What would you take?
37. Getting rid of rubbish
38. Vague impressions
39. Passing those exams
40. The Moral of the story
41. Lest we forget
42. Finding the truth
43. Whose birthday is it?
44. Home for Christmas
45. Snow on the road
46. Finagen begin again
47. Life's ups and downs
48. Pray carefully
49. Walking by faith
50. Passengers in orbit
51. Disillusioned with life
52. What's the score?
53. Roots and branches
54. What's it all about?
55. 'aint education great!
56. Who knows best?
57. Packing up our tents
58. The Human Factor

THANKS FOR A NEW YEAR

Well, you've got it! A brand new year!

Whether you deserve it or not, the gift of a whole new year has been tossed into your lap. Now, what are you going to do with it?

Do you realise that more than 60,000 minutes of 2012 have ticked away already? What have you done with them? "Whose business is it anyway?" you may ask.

Christians believe that the new year is a gift from God: absolutely and entirely a handout to each one of us. The earth on which we live is God's creation. The air we breathe is renewed nightly by the trees. The food we eat depends on the round of the seasons.

We ourselves are God's creation: the power to think, to feel, to will and to work is only ours because God has given it to us.

Surely all this is too big a gift to thoughtlessly tuck under our arm and walk off, without so much as a backward glance at the Giver?

At the very least we might stop to thank him and consider any suggestions He may make about the best way to use his gift. **That is what worship and Christian living is all about.**

POWER FROM ABOVE

There is a story about an old lady who saw an electric tram system for the first time. "Will I get a shock if I put my foot on the tramline?" she asked the conductor. He replied, "No Ma'am. Not unless you put your other foot on the overhead wire."

True! Only when a connection takes place between the high voltage line and earth does the power flow down and the sparks fly.

There are many of us who look up and know that with God there is power, but somehow we fail to make the connection that brings it down to us. Like the old lady, we are in touch with earth, but the powerline is out of reach.

On the other hand, some of us may be like the bird which sits on the high tension wires but is quite safe because it has no connection with earth. So heavenly we are of no earthly use.

If religion is to be of practical use, the person in touch with earth must find contact with God; and the person in touch with God must find contact with earth.

Christianity, as taught by Jesus in the pages of the New Testament, brings the two together and is thus a religion of power. In fact, the whole purpose of Jesus was to bring us and God together. It was called the 'At-one-ment'.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT GRANDFATHER

On discovering that we had ancestors here well over a century ago, my son looked up early copies of The Naracoorte Herald in Adelaide archives. Around 1875 he discovered three Holmes men who managed to get their names in the paper. One because he had been appointed auditor to the council; another who had given an address on Temperance to the Oddfellow's Lodge: the third because he had been fined 1 pound 10 shillings for being drunk and disorderly!

The practice of investigating the family tree is rather popular at the moment and it can certainly be very interesting, even if you find out too much. Yet, as we travel the road of life, does it really matter what happened way back? No doubt our ancestry can have an effect on us, but ultimately what we are is largely our own responsibility. The lad who brought home his school report and said, "She's pretty crook Dad. What do you think it is, heredity or environment?" was trying to pass the buck instead of his exams.

The Christian message is that every person has a chance to make a fresh start, regardless of what happened back along the track. You can't choose your grandfather, but, with the help of God, you can make your life worthwhile.

WHAT DON'T YOU BELIEVE?

I've never been a quick thinker. In fact I've always liked the definition of a quick thinker as someone whose mind works fast and knocks off early. So when the lad in my High School R.I. class suggested that perhaps the reason I believed in Jesus was because my parents believed in him I didn't come up with the classic answer - until next day. Perhaps he didn't believe because his parents didn't believe!

But the lad's comment deserves more than a slick answer. I have to admit that my first knowledge of Jesus came through my parents. That was followed up by Sunday School training encouraged by my parents. The church and its various teaching facilities had a major influence in my early years. But the faith on which I have built my life arose most strongly out of close personal study of the New Testament scriptures during a 3 year period on war service **when I was away from home and rarely able to go to church. I don't believe simply because my parents believed!**

What concerns me is that for so many young people today there is virtually no knowledge about Jesus on which to make a decision for or against him! Like 'O my God', he is just another thoughtless swear word.

Whether people decide to put their faith in Christ or not has to be their own decision. For many in our community today who say they don't believe, "What don't you believe?" would be a fair question.

GRANDMA'S NEW AXE

One of our family's favourite stories is about my grandmother. With her 81st birthday coming up she was asked what she would like for a present. She asked for a new axe !

It was while Grandma was in her nineties that Billy Graham first came to Melbourne. She insisted on going to hear him. It meant 160 K travelling and sitting all evening on a concrete grandstand at Melbourne Cricket Ground. The family told her it would probably kill her. She replied, "Well, I might as well die there as anywhere else."

In early days Grandma lived in the SE of SA. With nine children she once had six of them with typhoid fever. The eldest girl died. My father's earliest recollections of her included seeing her help break in horses, making candles, and gathering the children round her to tell them Bible stories before going to bed.

When she heard that I was going to study for the ministry she sent me a note. It didn't say she hoped I would become a great preacher and save a lot of souls. In fact it didn't use a lot of religious language at all.

What she said was, "I hope you make a lot of people happy". In a long hard life Grandma found that faith in God was her source of happiness. How about you?

FOOTY AND FAITH

I'm not an avid footy follower. Except back in the 1960's when I followed the Sturt team religiously. Their captain, John Halbert, was one of our Youth Leaders in the church where I ministered for 8 years. For 5 or 6 of those years they won the grand final.

John suggested we have a church parade for the team. When the night came we had not only the team, but also the club officials and the Cheer Squad! My job was the sermon. I remember saying to John, **'Is it possible for a team to win every match of the season but lose the Grand Final?'** **'My word it is', he said.**

So I preached that night on 'Winning the Grand Final' The text: "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" We talked of some of the matches in the season of life people like to win: like fame, popularity, good looks, education, money. **But the Grand Final is how you measure up in the eyes of God!**

Some us may feel that we face the final with a pretty sick team. The Bible suggests that any honest person will see it that way. 'All have sinned'. The word 'sin' means to aim at a goal and miss it. There's football language for you! Fortunately, with Jesus as coach, you have both forgiveness and inner strength available. **Even if you miss out on a few games during the season, you can still win the Grand Final. Just do what the coach says!**

SETTING YOUR CLOCK RIGHT

The change to summer time! Does setting the clocks right cause a flurry in your home? At our place there is the kitchen clock, the lounge clock, the clock radio in the bedroom, our watches, and one we always forget - in the car. But I have one clock, used for my Ham Radio operation, which it is important not to change. It is set to what used to be called Greenwich Mean Time. GMT never changes. Except that now it is called UTC-Universal Time Co-ordinated. A radio Ham can talk to another anywhere on earth and both log the same time.

There is a story, from before the electronic age, about a girl in a country post office who used to receive a phone call each day asking for the correct time. Eventually she became curious about the caller and why he required the right time. Next day she asked him. "I'm the engineer at the local butter factory. I like to blow the lunchtime whistle right on the dot of 12." The girl began to laugh. "What's the joke?" he enquired. "Oh, nothing," said the girl. "It's just that I set my clock by your whistle."

It is important that clocks be set to a fixed standard, not just the local whistle. **It is even more important** that our lives be adjusted to a fixed standard and not just the local whistle. According to the Bible, Jesus is the standard by which our lives are judged. Like GMT or UTC he never changes. As the Bible puts it: "**He is the same: yesterday, today and forever.**"

AN EASTER SUNDAY REFLECTION

On Easter Sunday I always remember Bill Jones. It's not 'Bill Jones' to avoid using his real name. It was Bill Jones. An ordinary sort of name, and Bill was an ordinary sort of chap in many ways. He worked for the railways all his life and lived in an ordinary sort of home in a typical street with his wife and three children.

At the church where I ministered, he was the doorkeeper. He was always on the job, always early and always smiling. When visitors came I was very happy that Bill was the first person they met. He was friendly, courteous and pleasant.

Bill was never a platform man. He probably considered himself too ordinary to get up front and lead services or preach. Yet somehow he influenced my thinking more than many who did have the gift of speaking.

The reason was the way he died. Bill had just retired when terminal cancer was discovered. I visited him often during the next few months. He was fully aware of the situation, perfectly willing to talk about it and his peaceful smile never wavered. He had no fears or regrets and was willing to go when the time came.

Bill died on Easter Sunday morning over 50 years ago. I have heard some famous preachers since then and forgotten what they said. But I have never forgotten Bill Jones. Whenever we remember the resurrection I remember Bill.

'NEW MORALITY' or IMMORALITY?

It was back in the '70's". Herb was 83 and chuckled as he told me the story. It seemed that there was an 'Adults Only' film on the T.V. Granddaughter, aged 17, had said, "I don't think you should watch this Grandad. It's very modern in it's attitude to sex and you might be shocked." After all, Grandad didn't belong to the 'with it' age group. Also he had been an elder in the church most of his life.

"I didn't say anything", Herb told me. "But I couldn't help thinking about the days when I was in the Middle East during World War 1, doing a round of the brothels in Cairo to drag out the blokes due back on duty. But I did appreciate her wanting to protect my innocent old-fashioned mind."

Herb belonged to those of us who find it hard to tell the difference between "The New Morality" and plain old-fashioned immorality. Those who promote "the permissive society" try to present sexual licence as something modern and advanced. Those who read the Bible know that it is as old as the hills.

Jesus taught that sex brings its greatest joys and achieves its purpose when fulfilled within the total and permanent relationship of marriage. Some may want to argue with that approach. But, if you do, please... don't give us the line about sexual freedom being "modern" and chastity "old hat"!

NEW WORDS ARE BORN

In recent years the practice of producing a word which stands for the full title of the organisation has become common. The old "Prisoner's Aid" is now "OARS", meaning Offender's Aid and Rehabilitation Service. The "Temperance Alliance" has become "PACE", People for Alcohol Concern and Education.

I was once on a committee considering the name of the Overseas Missionary Department of our churches. OMD did not sound well, but the suggestion that we change it to Department Of Overseas Missions was not taken up. Board Of Overseas Missions was a possibility. At least BOOM was better than DOOM !

My mind was playing with Churches of Christ Board Of Overseas Missions inC. and CHickaCHickaBOOMChick. But I kept it to myself. This was a very serious committee.

Words, after all, are simply a short and convenient means of transferring an idea which may involve a wide range of realities and implications.

That is why, when the infinite range of realities and implications we call God wanted to get through to human minds, he sent a man named Jesus. The Bible calls him THE WORD made flesh.

SPEAKING TO A CELEBRITY

The modern world seems to be full to over-full of 'celebrities'. TV shows, magazines and the weekend newspapers overwhelm us with their pictures and doings. Perhaps I'm just showing my age, but to be honest I have very little desire to actually meet any of them.

Yet I remember going to some trouble to meet up with Bruce Swan. You may have no idea who he is, or was, but to me he was a real celebrity. Bruce Swan was one of Australia's best pencil artists and he was holding an exhibition not far away.

Here was a chance to come face to face with someone of creative ability, whose work was widely recognised and a person who, for various reasons, I was keen to meet. So I went to some lengths to be present at the opening and find an opportunity to speak to him. But when that opportunity at last arose, the only problem was what to say!

Well, I found a couple of things to mention and he and his wife were very gracious and friendly, so the few minute's conversation came and went. Afterwards the thought came to me: you had a wonderful opportunity there to speak to someone of note, and what did you say?

Which reminded me that every day we all have the opportunity to speak to the creator of the universe! When you prayed last, what did you say?