

Choices

By Don Ober

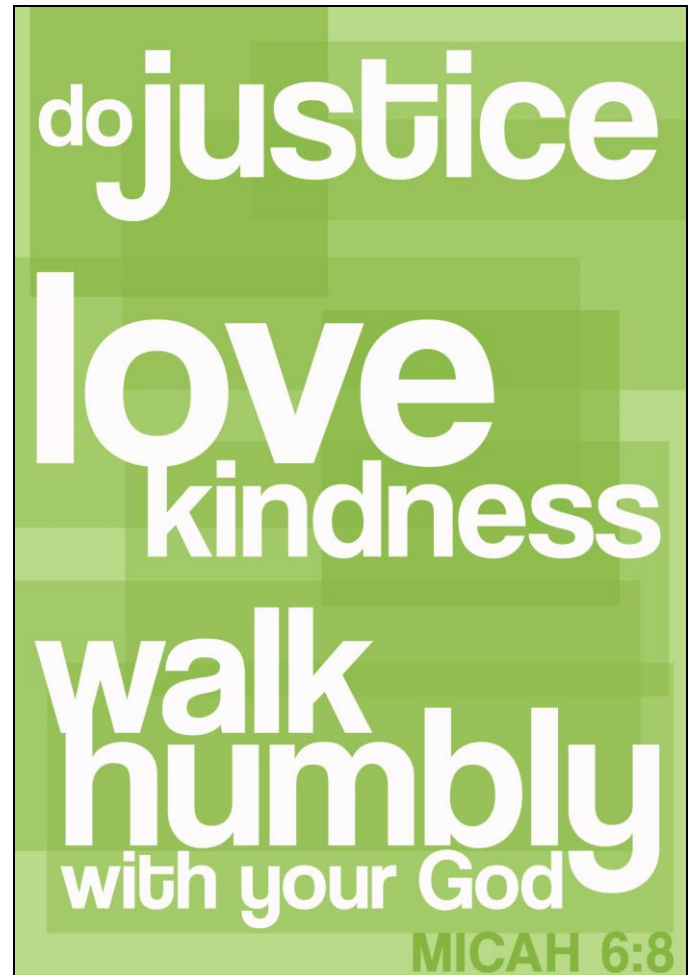
Did you think dividing the wheat from the chaff was going to be comfortable and easy?

With our nation and society so terribly divided, I hear from many people and sides how terrible the national divide is. But is it terrible? Or is it just uncomfortable but precisely what we need?

If godliness, morality, faithfulness, charity and dedication to God are on the increase and, at the same time, sinfulness, moral decay and godlessness is also on the rise, how can that be a good thing? Maybe God is preparing us for a choice we all have to make, and our church, our parents or anything else cannot make that choice for us. We must make it ourselves.

As the gulf between us grows larger and larger, the distinction between the two will become more evident to us and choices will have to be made. I am beginning to wonder if maybe the Lord is placing us in just the right place and the right time to make our choices clearly. Up until now, most Americans have been self-absorbed in their own lives, making a living, enjoying the good life and faith fell on the back burner, so to speak.

If God needs to separate the wheat from the chaff, what better way to make those choices clearer to his people? I am reminded often that we all marvel at God's sovereignty, omnipotence and awesome power but how often do we appreciate His long suffering and His extreme patience with us? I hear saved Christians say all the time, "Come back now, O Lord." But do they realize if He comes back today or tomorrow, some are going to be left behind? If the prayers of those crying out in the past for Jesus to return had gotten their



wish fifty years ago, and He came back then, I would have been going to hell. So from my perspective, I'm glad the Lord was patient, but I also understand being anxious for the promise to be fulfilled.

Maybe what we are seeing is a great separation that may seem like chaos right now, but as time passes, the choices will seem clearer and clearer. Just food for thought.

Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can.

John Wesley

2026 Congregational Meetings

Budget Information Meeting

Please attend in person, or virtually, the Budget Information Meeting on Sunday, January 11, at 11:00 am, to hear about the Chapel's finances and the proposed budget for 2026. This will be the time to ask questions in preparation for the vote on the budget at the Annual Congregational Meeting. For those participating from home, a private live stream with a chat feature will be available so that questions may be submitted to the moderator in real time.

Annual Congregational Meeting

Join us on Sunday, January 25, at 11:00 am, to hear and celebrate in retrospect the events and activities of 2025, and to vote on the 2026 budget and leaders. Since a quorum of 50% of members is required, please plan to attend or submit a proxy ballot by mail or drop it off in the special ballot box on the front porch of the chapel house. There will also be a private live stream of this meeting, and the links for the live stream will be sent via email.

Perisseia:

Our women's growth group will begin an eight-week series on Thursday evening, January 22. We will continue to look at the cloud of witnesses that the Lord has provided for our benefit even as we become part of that cloud! For this series, we will focus on women in the New Testament who were used by the Lord in powerful ways.

This series will be via Zoom, 7:00-8:30 pm. If you would like to join us and are not on the Perisseia email list, please contact Cindy Bills (cynthialbills@gmail.com).



Happy Birthday!

Blessings to all who celebrate a birthday this month. May you feel the love, joy and presence of the Lord as we all celebrate your special day with prayers and warmest wishes.

Kristin Westbrook	January 25
Timothy MacQueen	January 26
Gino D'Amelio	January 30

Clean Up Day!



Elders' Corner

By Tom Taylor

2026! Wow! For many of us it is hard to believe. The years go by seemingly faster and faster. With the New Year comes a fresh call from an old command, *Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.* (Matthew 28:19-20) *And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth."* (Matthew 28:18)

That same authority enables us through the power of the Holy Spirit to obey, to be His witnesses and to make disciples not based on our own abilities but rooted in God's plan for us and the people He brings to us and we go to. Brothers and Sisters, this is our year to see God moving in power, to experience anew the glory of God, to hear His voice more clearly, and to step out in new boldness bringing Christ to all He leads us to.

So the question I have for myself and you is WHY do we find it so difficult to bring Jesus to our family, friends, neighbors and all those God brings our way?

I would submit a few reasons I know I battle with myself. Fear of man, rejection (which is fear's cousin), not walking in the Spirit, and not being prepared. Paul tells the saints in Rome, *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, why, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes....* (Romans 1:16) His trust in God was greater than his fear of man. Philip (Acts 8:25-40) was walking in the Spirit and heard the Lord speak to him to go down the road towards Gaza, and he went finding an Ethiopian Official reading Isaiah the prophet.

Philip went on to preach Jesus to him and lead him to Jesus. Not only was he walking in the Spirit, hearing him, directing him, but he was prepared knowing the scriptures leading to Jesus. Let me put courage in you this new year. Our Father has given us all we need to obey Him. That is what grace is God's ability in us. He never asks us to do something we cannot do.

Here are a few tools we can put to use:

Pray:

Open our eyes to see the lost (John 4:31-38)

Give me your words O Lord (Colossians 4:3-4)

Teamwork:

Challenge one another

Encourage one another

Pray with one another

Resources:

Books for your own study: *Tactics* (Koukl), *Have No Fear* (Lennox)

Cold Case Christianity (Wallace)

Books to give: *Dinner with a Perfect Friend* (Gregory), *Mere Christianity* (Lewis)

Your own personal testimony

As elders we are looking forward to all God has for us in 2026. Know that we love you. Great is His faithfulness.

Financial Update

(Through November 30, 2025)

	Actual	Budget
Income	\$111,806	\$132,000
Expense	\$122,913	\$132,000

Benevolence Fund Giving this year \$3,833

"And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus"

Philippians 4:19

Praise God!

Further Up and Further In

*Inviting dialogue to encourage growth in
and among us*



By Cindy Bills

Adventure!

In his prequel to his trilogy *The Lord of the Rings*, J.R.R. Tolkien shares the musings of hobbit Bilbo Baggins as he contemplates the concept of adventure:

It's a dangerous business...going out your door.... We are plain quiet folk and have no use for adventures. Nasty disturbing uncomfortable things! Make you late for dinner!

A short while back Bilbo's words came to mind as I walked out my door and had an adventure. I set out to jog one of my regular and favorite routes to and through a local park and back. While I was in the park, I was attacked by a large dog that was let off its leash by its owner. I was bitten six times before the owner could control the dog, and then the owner cursed at me for somehow provoking it. I was hurt just badly enough to need medical help and found myself in rabies protocol. And, I was late for dinner....

As I processed this event and pondered the words of Bilbo Baggins, I came to the conclusion that Bilbo's words were not entirely accurate. The truth is that we are fallen people in a fallen world. "Adventure" can find us whether or not we walk out the door. Lightning can strike our home, thieves can break in, our own pets can wreak havoc, health issues can surface. A deeply meaningful life is not so much about controlling adventure as it is about applying faith to it.

The Apostle Paul reminds us in his epistle to the Romans that those who walk in a faith relationship with Christ can be assured that our Lord will work all events, situations, and circumstances for our good and His glory. It is a description of the "Now and Not Yet" aspect of redemption: Even as we wait for our redemption in Him to be complete and sealed in eternity, we have the assurance that the Lord will use every bit of our time on earth for His good purposes for us.

It seems to me that an exceptionally wise way to begin a new year is to apply Paul's words to Bilbo Baggins' concept of adventure. Since we are called to do all things as to the Lord, pursuing excellence in all that we do is appropriate. But a focus on self-improvement so that we can do better, do more, and compete with those around us may be counterproductive as we seek to walk in faith before our Lord and Master. I would like to suggest that we would do well to consider our Maker and Model: As Jesus walked the earth as God Incarnate, He used the adventure of every unpredictable encounter to proclaim God's kingdom, to love, and to serve, knowing without doubt that His Father and the Holy Spirit were at work in Him, to work all things for the Godhead's good and redemptive purposes.

Please feel free to contact Cindy (609-275-8557) or cynthialbills@gmail.com to continue the dialogue....

If you have any items or information you would like to share in the newsletter, please e-mail:

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