

If, Then

Day 3, Wednesday

II Chronicles 7:14 If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

In June, 2006, Dr Frank Page, was elected as the president of the SBC and in his own words, "What a shock!" Certainly, not because he was not capable, or did not want to do it, no, it was more like, "Who is he?" Dr. Page was not as well known and connected to all the key leaders like many of the past presidents.

Immediately after being elected he began to speak of how he wanted the SBC to be known; what we are for, not what we are against. He called the convention to be kinder, friendlier and gentler, yet standing firm on the word of God. He also took up the cause of the previous president, Dr Bobby Welch, who alerted us to a serious problem and called us to "MORE" through a renewed focus of evangelism.

Dr. Page was re elected in June, 2007 for his second term. He has made it clear that he desires to present a practical, "how to" strategy of evangelism that will bring hope and help to all of the churches that need it. God raised up an "unknown", a new voice, to make an impact on the SBC and our nation. During his first year as president he wrote and admonished us numerous times to seek revival and a new heart, as found in II Chronicles 7:14.

In this verse we find an IF, THEN statement. This type of statement is also found in geometry. It means IF certain conditions are true THEN the last part of the equation must also be true. It is conditional but always true when all of the conditions are met.

Solomon had completed the building of the temple, dedicated it to God, and asked God to hear their prayers. God replied, (verse 12) "I have heard your prayer and chosen this place (temple) for myself." God went on to say, "If I shut up heaven and there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land, or send pestilence, this is what you should do."

He then gives the conditional statement IF my people, called by my name:

- Humble themselves,
- pray,
- seek my face, and
- turn from their wicked ways,

THEN will I:

- hear from heaven,
- forgive their sin and
- heal their land.

Humble ourselves? Turn from our wicked ways? Forgive our sin? What is that about? Don't we do lots of good things? We have the co operative program. We give lots of money. We send missionaries. We do projects. We do disaster relief like no other groups. Yes! In those areas we really do excel. But, do you know there is an area where we perform poorly? As a group we are failing and have been for a number of years and I believe Gods heart is broken.

Let's look at a few facts. We are approximately 16.3 million strong and meet in almost 45,000 churches scattered across North America. We are the leader! But, how are we leading? In 2006, collectively, we were able to reach and baptize 364,826 people. OK so

far, until you realize this is 64,237 less than in 1959. Last year, 10,000 of our churches reported NO baptisms. NOT EVEN ONE.

Each year the number of baptisms continues to go down and the ratio of people to get them goes up. Last year it took almost 44 of us to reach one person.

70% to 80% of our churches (over 30,000) have plateaued OR are declining. Each year many of our churches just quit and close the doors. Something is wrong! Our founders envisioned better when they formed our great convention! Have we lost our vision? Our passion? Our focus on evangelism?

How about churches from other denominations that may read this? Figures demonstrate they are just as bad or worse, but that is comparing and scripture says don't do it. Comparing is not wise and comparing doesn't make us any better before God.

Do you agree we are commanded to go? Do you agree it is right to tell others about Jesus? Is it right to have compassion for the lost? In the last twelve months have you told anyone about Jesus? If we know it is right and don't do it, the Bible calls it sin. (James 4:17) Psalm 28: 13 says, He that covereth his sin will not prosper but those that confess and forsake will have mercy.

Are you tired of hearing about our failures and how we have declined again? Does this make you feel sick? This is not a good representation of who we are and it does not illustrate the power of our God! We can turn this around once we decide that's what we really want to do, but it will take all of us working together. Will you help do your part? Pick up those who are discouraged. Come on; let's join together with a single focus of reaching those around us.

Could it be possible that another "great awakening" is about ready to begin? (There are indicators that suggest this is coming) Does God want to use us to start it? Is it possible that God is ready and waiting? Waiting on us? Waiting on us to be humbled and admit we have lost our focus, lost our heart, and failed in the area of evangelism. Imagine what could happen if we agreed with God, called it sin, and turned from it by regaining our focus and momentum. **We don't have to imagine!**

THEN. Then will I hear from heaven, forgive your sin and heal your land! "My eyes are open and my ears attentive to your prayers." II Chronicles 7:15

God is waiting on us. He is waiting on the **IF!**

Prayer: Lord our convention is failing in the area of evangelism. Some of the responsibility falls on me because I have failed to share with others like I should. Please forgive me. Please speak to me during this devotional study period and help me see the people around me that need to hear about you. Lord, use our family to invite others. Could we all come together to reach our nation for you? Lord, we ask that you work in all of our hearts, our leaders, pastors and members to seek a single focus of evangelism.

It's Dark, We Need Light!

Day 19, Friday

Matthew 5:14 - 16 You are the light of the world. A city sat on a hill can not be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lamp stand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your father in heaven.

In August, 1973 I enrolled as a student in Florida Bible College in Hollywood, Florida. Just prior to my enrollment, God had miraculously supplied a wonderful building for the school to inhabit. To everyone in the area it was known as, "the old Hollywood Beach Hotel." When it was first built in 1926 it was the finest of hotels and many presidents and celebrities had been entertained there over the years. While it was old and a little tired, it still maintained much of the grandeur with the large banquet rooms, huge chandeliers, beautiful carpets and furnishings.

One morning while sitting in an English class, the power went out and stayed out. Unfortunately, there was no emergency lighting and because we were in what the students called the "catacombs" it was DARK! Pitch black, not one bit of light! In this area there were no windows and no outside doors, which meant no outside light could get in. To get to the light we would have to leave the class and wind our way down the hall to get to the main lobby area and foyer where outside light would shine through the front doors. This would be impossible with no light so we sat there in darkness.

After a few long minutes, one student pressed the "light" button on his wristwatch and discovered that the little light actually pierced the darkness of the room. It wasn't so much about how bright the light was, it was all about, it is light. The student believed he could lead the other students out of the darkness by letting the little light shine.

While pressing the light button he informed the class that they would be leaving and that they should come together and join hands. The little light from the watch pushed back the darkness as they made their way down the hall to the outside light.

You are the light! Yes you. Jesus said to his disciples you are the light of the world. Are you a disciple? A follower of Christ? Then you are a candle, lit by Jesus and your church is the lamp stand to hold all the candles that will give light to the world. Someone around you needs your hand and your light to lead them from the darkness.

Have you ever said about someone? "The lights are on but no one is home." This is usually said about someone who is not fully in tune to everything happening around or someone who lacks understanding. Could that be true about you as far as others understanding the reason of the hope that is within you? Did you know it is possible to let your light shine and live a good life that honors Christ, and others still not know you are a Christian? If our gospel is hidden it is hidden to those that are lost. There is a time that words are necessary, just like when the student informed the class to join hands because they were leaving the darkness. If you never say words people may just think you are a good person.

Who do you know that needs you to take their hand and allow your light to pierce the darkness as you lead them to the source of light? Don't worry that your light isn't bright enough. Just let your light shine, it is enough! Push back the darkness and bring your friend to the light at your church for My Friendship Connection.

Prayer: Lord, I have never brought someone to you before. I am afraid. Please help me! Lord, prepare my friends to accept my invitation and say yes. As I invite my friend and

bring them to our special friend day, please help them see my light and see you in me.
May they trust in you for eternal life? Lord, would you bring all of our churches together
in purpose to be a light to our nation?