***“FOURTH GRADE”***

Does fourth grade seem like another lifetime ago to you too? I entered Mrs. Carroll’s class at Pentecost-Garrison School for Boys in Memphis in 1948. Look who was born that same month: Terry Bradshaw, Bob Lanier, Margaret Trudeau (in Vancouver, BC, incidentally), John Ritter, Olivia Newton-John and Bryant Gumbel.

That month the UN broke ground: “Uncle Miltie” Berle debuted TV’s “Texaco Star Theater;” and, very un-PC-like, Warren Spahn’s Boston *Braves* lost to Bob Feller’s *Indians* in the World Series.

Bobb Biehl, coach to some 2,500 executives in the past thirty years, has asked them when they started to become the person they are now. Most say, “About fourth grade.”

Bobb calls this “The Single Most Shaping Year of a Human Being's Existence.” His rationale: “Third graders can’t concentrate, and fifth graders are skeptics. Fourth graders (9 year-olds) establish their comfort zones for life.”

That leads us to today’s “Big Question:”

**When you replay your fourth grade year –- you were maybe nine -- what memories rise to the top? Were you a leader or follower? Did you have lots of friends, one best compadré, or did you fly solo? Did you hang out mostly with adults or peers? Did you feel rich, poor, in between? What were your study habits and grades like? (DISCUSSION)**

In his book, *WHY YOU DO WHAT YOU DO*, Biehl lays out eight basic emotional needs people want to have met. Since one of our three Nordy’s objectives is to apply Scriptural truth to our daily lives, let’s measure what the Bible says about each of these needs:

1. The need to be loved unconditionally (John 3:16; Romans 8:38-39)

16God loved the people of this world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who has faith in him will have eternal life and never really die.

38I am sure that nothing can separate us from God's love--not life or death, not angels or spirits, not the present or the future, 39and not powers above or powers below. Nothing in all creation can separate us from God's love for us in Christ Jesus our Lord!

1. The need to be significant (2 Corinthians 5)

17Anyone who belongs to Christ is a new person. The past is forgotten, everything is new. 18God has done it all! He sent Christ to make peace between himself and us, and he has given us the work of making peace between himself and others.

19God was in Christ, offering peace and forgiveness to the people of this world. And he has given us the work of sharing his message about peace. 20We were sent to speak for Christ, and God is begging you to listen to our message. We speak for Christ and sincerely ask you to make peace with God. 21Christ never sinned! But God treated him as a sinner, so that Christ could make us acceptable to God.

1. The need to be admired (Hebrews 12)

1Such a large crowd of witnesses is all around us! So we must get rid of everything that slows us down, especially the sin that just won't let go. And be determined to run the race that is ahead of us. 2We must keep our eyes on Jesus who leads us and makes our faith complete.

1. The need to be recognized as an individual (Psalms 139)

1GOD, investigate my life; get all the facts firsthand. 2I'm an open book to you; even from a distance, you know what I'm thinking. 3You know when I leave and when I get back; I'm never out of your sight.

4You know everything I'm going to say before I start the first sentence. 5I look behind me and you're there, then up ahead and you're there, too--your reassuring presence, coming and going. 6This is too much, too wonderful l-- I can't take it all in!

13Oh yes, you shaped me first inside, then out; you formed me in my mother's womb. 14I thank you, High God--you're breathtaking! Body and soul, I am marvelously made! I worship in adoration--what a creation!

15You know me inside and out, you know every bone in my body; You know exactly how I was made, bit by bit, how I was sculpted from nothing into something. 16Like an open book, you watched me grow from conception to birth; all the stages of my life were spread out before you, The days of my life all prepared before I'd even lived one day.

17Your thoughts--how rare, how beautiful! God, I'll never comprehend them! 18I couldn't even begin to count them--

any more than I could count the sand of the sea. Oh, let me rise in the morning and live always with you!

1. The need to be appreciated (Philippians 1; 2 Timothy 4)

3Every time you cross my mind, I break out in exclamations of thanks to God. … 5I am so pleased that you have continued on in this with us, believing and proclaiming God's Message, from the day you heard it right up to the present. 6There has never been the slightest doubt in my mind that the God who started this great work in you would keep at it and bring it to a flourishing finish on the very day Christ Jesus appears.

7I have fought a good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful. 8And now the prize awaits me--the crown of righteousness that the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on that great day of his return. And the prize is not just for me but for all who eagerly look forward to his glorious return.

1. The need to be secure (Psalms 16; Hebrews 13)

5You, LORD, are all I want! You are my choice, and you keep me safe. 6You make my life pleasant, and my future is bright. 7I praise you, LORD, for being my guide. Even in the darkest night, your teachings fill my mind. 8I will always look to you, as you stand beside me and protect me from fear. 9With all my heart I will celebrate, and I can safely rest.

5….The Lord has promised that he will not leave us or desert us. 6That should make you feel like saying, "The Lord helps me! Why should I be afraid of what people can do to me?"

1. The need to be respected (1 Corinthians 4)

1Think of us as servants of Christ who have been given the work of explaining God's mysterious ways. 2And since our first duty is to be faithful to the one we work for, 3it doesn't matter to me if I am judged by you or even by a court of law. In fact, I don't judge myself. 4I don't know of anything against me, but that doesn't prove that I am right. The Lord is my judge. 5So don't judge anyone until the Lord returns. He will show what is hidden in the dark and what is in everyone's heart. Then God will be the one who praises each of us.

1. The need to be accepted (Ephesians1)

3How we praise God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we belong to Christ. 4Long ago, even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. 5His unchanging plan has always been to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. And this gave him great pleasure.

6So we praise God for the wonderful kindness he has poured out on us because we belong to his dearly loved Son. 7He is so rich in kindness that he purchased our freedom through the blood of his Son, and our sins are forgiven. 8He has showered his kindness on us, along with all wisdom and understanding.

12God's purpose was that we who were the first to trust in Christ should praise our glorious God. 13And now you also have heard the truth, the Good News that God saves you. And when you believed in Christ, he identified you as his own by giving you the Holy Spirit, whom he promised long ago. 14The Spirit is God's guarantee that he will give us everything he promised and that he has purchased us to be his own people. This is just one more reason for us to praise our glorious God.

Regardless of who and how we were in fourth grade, God has a maximum life in store for us, both now and throughout eternity. **Here’s how God puts it, as He spoke through His prophet Jeremiah six centuries B.C. in Jeremiah 29:**

11”I know the plans I have for you," says the LORD. “Plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.

Only when we grasp who God is and how great He is will we, by faith, be able to relax in Him. **The Old Testament prophet Isaiah wants to help us in that regard, first in ch. 40:**

6… We humans are merely grass, and we last no longer than wild flowers. 7At the LORD's command, flowers and grass disappear, and so do we. 8Flowers and grass fade away, but what our God has said will never change.

12Did any of you measure the ocean by yourself or stretch out the sky with your own hands? Did you put the soil of the earth in a bucket or weigh the hills and mountains on balance scales? 13Has anyone told the LORD what he must do or given him advice? 14Did the LORD ask anyone to teach him wisdom and justice? Who gave him knowledge and understanding?

15To the LORD, all nations are merely a drop in a bucket or dust on balance scales; all of the islands are but a handful of sand. …

23God brings down rulers and turns them into nothing. 24They are like flowers freshly sprung up and starting to grow. But when God blows on them, they wilt and are carried off like straw in a storm. 25The holy God asks, "Who compares with me? Is anyone my equal?" 26Look at the evening sky? Who created the stars? Who gave them each a name? Who leads them like an army? The LORD is so powerful that none of the stars is ever missing.

… 28Don't you know? Haven't you heard? The LORD is the eternal God, Creator of the earth. He never gets weary or tired; his wisdom cannot be measured. 29The LORD gives strength to those who are weary. 31….those who trust the LORD will find new strength. They will be strong like eagles soaring upward on wings; they will walk and run without getting tired.

**And in Isaiah ch. 55:**

6Seek GOD while he's here to be found, pray to him while he's close at hand. 7Let the wicked abandon their way of life and the evil their way of thinking. Let them come back to GOD, who is merciful, come back to our God, who is lavish with forgiveness.

What do you suppose Isaiah means by **“Seek GOD while he's here to be found, pray to him while he's close at hand.”**

Some of our media comrades have stepped into eternity in recent days. We never know when we’ll draw our last breath. It pays to be prepared. **Paul reveals why in 1 Corinthians ch. 15:**

48The First Man was made out of earth, and people since then are earthy; the Second Man was made out of heaven, and people now can be heavenly. 49In the same way that we've worked from our earthy origins, let's embrace our heavenly ends.

50I need to emphasize, friends, that our natural, earthy lives don't in themselves lead us by their very nature into the kingdom of God. Their very "nature" is to die, so how could they "naturally" end up in the Life kingdom?

51But let me tell you something wonderful, a mystery I'll probably never fully understand. We're not all going to die--but we are all going to be changed. 52You hear a blast to end all blasts from a trumpet, and in the time that you look up and blink your eyes--it's over. On signal from that trumpet from heaven, the dead will be up and out of their graves, beyond the reach of death, never to die again. At the same moment and in the same way, we'll all be changed.

56It was sin that made death so frightening and law-code guilt that gave sin its leverage, its destructive power. 57But now in a single victorious stroke of Life, all three--sin, guilt, death--are gone, the gift of our Master, Jesus Christ. Thank God!

58With all this going for us, my dear, dear friends, stand your ground. And don't hold back. Throw yourselves into the work of the Master, confident that nothing you do for him is a waste of time or effort.

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Whoever you were in fourth grade (and, please, don’t show us your school picture!) – whoever you are now – God made you with a clear purpose in mind. Do you know what that purpose is?

His Deal

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