

FAITH CHRISTIAN ASSEMBLY

13820 Seal Beach Blvd

PO Box 3444

Seal Beach, Ca 90740

Rev. Gwyn & Ginny Vaughn, Lead Pastors

Rev. Sheri Leming, Executive Pastor – Gary Leming, Business Administrator

Church Phone 562-598-9010

GV2fca@aol.com

www.fcachurch.net

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MAKING LIFE MEANINGFUL

Our church has been blessed during the past 27 years with a host of members who have enjoyed longevity. And just recently, we have suffered the loss of another one at 103, Lucille Wieczorek. We are going to miss her because of the impact she has made upon so many of us through the years. Back in 2015 I wrote a tribute to when she has reached her 100th year of life. So I will not do that today.

However, there is something about these people who have enjoyed long life, whose memory we cherish, which needs to be considered. That ‘something’ I believe is more than that they were survivors. While “old age” may be called a blessing this prompts the question; How is it that they survived, when others didn’t? I am not sure we can fully answer that question but the Holy Scripture does give us a few clues, such as one to the young: “obey” and “respect” parents, that “your” days may be long upon the earth (Eph. 6:3).

Of course, it may be that the children who were obedient to their parents lived longer, because of their respect and appreciation for the same values which their parents had chosen to live their life. In Christ’s story of the Prodigal son our Lord chose to point out what it was that convinced him to go back home; it was the fact that his father’s servants were living better than he even though he was a son. For he said, *“How many hired servants of my father’s have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!”* (Luke 15:17). The lifestyle he chose failed to pay the dividends he expected. So he returned home.

I realize for some, longevity is not as great as some people think. No doubt this can be due to the fact that many of these dear seniors find that their remaining years are filled with more sorrow and pain than they ever had anticipated. Therefore with the loss of health or even the loss of a companion or close friend one can feel robbed of the “joy of living” unless they are able to find meaning and purpose for living in spite of such a loss. This is the advantage a child of God has when they find they must suffer the same kind of loss that others do....God is able to turn that loss in an opportunity for good and provide one with a life that has purpose and is meaningful.

CAN WE PASS THE TEST FOR THE ROAD

I am turning 80 next month and I have been told, that I must take a test to determine whether I am mentally fit to drive. So they gave me a book to read. Now the question is: will I remember enough to pass the test in order for me to drive. Now naturally, I think, to myself, “I don’t need to take a test. I have driven since I was fifteen years of age. I have a lot of experience.”

I drive around 20,000 to 25,000 miles a year...depending on my schedule of activities. So, I want to say to them, *“I don’t need a take a test.”* (I never did like tests in school and I still don’t like them.) Now I could argue till sunset on why I think I should not need to take a test. I could claim I haven’t had a ticket for speeding since the last one I got. I could argue that though I had an accident, it wasn’t my fault...so that ought to give a **“brownie point.”** But, all that arguing will fall on deaf ears of the DMV because the Law of California wants to know if I am mentally fit. Can I pass their exam? Pass it and I am back on the road....driving as reckless as the next guy. **But I still must pass the test.**

But here is something that I notice when reading California Exam Law Book for driving and passing the test. I have found that I am not as sharp as I thought. I have found out that what I assume I knew merely by taking one of those sample tests proves to me that perhaps I have rather forgotten some of the rules. Now, please don’t contact the DMV and warn them about me. Ha. But because I am going to be tested...I am reading up and sharpening my mind on what is expected of me as a driver. Now I should be thankful. And incidentally, my reader you should also be thankful, especially, if I am headed in the direction of your neighborhood.

You probably will be glad that they made this 80 year old man take a driving test in spite of all **“his experience.”** The life I save may be my own, or all those that ride with me some times. I hear that a lot of people seem to get a lot of their prayer time in when they are in the back seat and I am in the driver’s seat. Now what is the point I am trying to make? No matter how much experience we have had in life, the question is, Can we pass the test? Can we pass God’s examination test? How sharp are we on the Word of God? Do we study it? Do we know the questions God is asking? Don’t claim you have all the answers if you don’t know the questions that you will be asked on the Judgment Day.

LESSON IN THE BOOK OF RUTH

Recently I have been reading once again the Book of Ruth, and while the book was name after Naomi’s daughter in law, I feel much of the book is more about Naomi than it is about Ruth. Because if Naomi had not been involved in the story of Ruth’s life, I doubt we would have heard of this young lady. Ruth’s virtue was her love and concern for her mother-in-law after the death of her husband. She could not see herself leaving this woman she had come to love and just happened to belong to the *“chosen race”* of the people of God.

What is fascinating to me is how that a woman who suffered loss in a great measure was still able to survive. Naomi’s husband died in Moab, never able to return to his native land prior to his earthly departure. After losing her husband, she still had her sons. But then they both died too over a space of time. All she had left was the two daughters- in-law. But she didn’t want to be responsible for them and their future. So she urged them to go back to their parent’s house; but the two daughters-in-law at first refused.

But after Naomi had quit moaning, one of them did return to her father’s house...but Naomi didn’t. She said, *“Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge.”* Ruth 1:16-18. I am sure that Naomi knew the cost that a Moabite would need to make if she decided to become a convert to Judaism. It would be a completely different lifestyle. But it was one that Ruth felt she was willing to make. Read the following paragraph as Adam Clarke Commentary spelled out how the conversation could have taken place:

“And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee,” for I desire to become a proselyte. And Naomi said, We are commanded to keep the Sabbath and other holy days; and on it not to travel more than two thousand cubits. And Ruth said, “Whither thou goest, I will go.” And Naomi said, We are commanded not to lodge with the Gentiles. Ruth answered, “Where thou lodgest, I will lodge.” And Naomi said, We are commanded to observe the one hundred and thirteen precepts. Ruth answered, What thy people observe, that will I observe; as if they had been my people of old. And Naomi said, We are commanded not to worship with any strange worship. Ruth answered, “Thy God shall be my God.” Naomi said, We have four kinds of capital punishment for criminals; stoning, burning, beheading, and hanging. Ruth answered, “In whatsoever manner thou diest, I will die.” Naomi said, We have a house of burial. Ruth answered, “And there will I be buried.”

Why would a Moabite want to be with a sad, unhappy, miserable woman such as Naomi is pictured in the Book of Ruth. Possibly Ruth had seen Naomi in happier days and that might have been the motivation. Or perhaps Ruth’s love for her son could have had a bearing. Yet going to a place she had never been, being educated to a religion she had never known, and knowing a God she had never met would introduce her to a new world she had never lived. Yet she was willing to take the risk.

But maybe Ruth was much like those who are trying to cross America’ borders. Maybe, like Ruth, they think that the worst days in America are mild compared to where they are coming from. Surely Ruth felt that way about Moab. Maybe she saw just enough light in Naomi’s religion and family that made her want to make the change. I believe that Naomi’s family exposed just enough light to make her want to say, *“Thy God shall be my God.”*

Yes, life can be rough, but it is not as rough as it would be without Him. That is why I love being a part of the family of God. God makes life truly meaningful. That is why we reject abortion for a child, and euthanasia for seniors. Life is meaningful and there are more people like Ruth that need to know this to be true. Oh that America would awaken to this reality...That those who claim to be Christians who are willing to vote people into office would awaken to this reality...That lawmakers like those in New York instead of death would promote life. Yes, we need revival in the land that even when we “Christians” are not always in the best of mood still would be able to convey to the Ruth’s of this world that we have something better and meaningful for them. Amen. If they would just come along and join us like Ruth did.