

JANUARY 2018

“TRUTH”

**A SURE WORD
FOR TODAY**



Truth is like a mountain, It cannot
be moved and it never changes

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NEXT MONTH

Next month our feature article will be entitled, “God’s Plan For Jerusalem.” In this article I will take you to Old Testament scriptures where the prophets of old tell us what God’s future plan for Jerusalem is. It is so exciting to be living during a time when things are starting to line up to what God’s Word has said. You won’t want to miss this.

Also, as we come to the end of 2017 we want to thank all who prayed for us and stood with us financially during the past year. As usual, it has been a walk of faith, but also a wonderful opportunity to see God’s faithfulness over and over.

We have never felt like God wanted us to charge for anything we offer or to send out e-mail blasts asking for financial help. Our belief has always been that God’s people hear His voice and that He is the best fund raiser on the planet. This has always worked in the past, and it is still working. Let all praise and honor and glory go to Him and Him alone!

FEATURE ARTICLE: “LIFE THROUGH THE LENS”

WARNING: You are entering the “TRUTH ZONE”. You may not like what you read. It may make you feel uncomfortable. That is not my goal. My goal is to help you and provide spiritual guidance for you and your family in a time of great spiritual darkness. You can be sure that what you read here will be TRUTH!



I wanted to start the January version of “Life Through the Lens” by sharing some photos I took on October 5th last year. I have made the one above my screen saver and am greeted by it every morning when I turn on my computer. I hope you enjoy it and agree that it is something very special. However, like most of the photos we share, there is a rather interesting story connected to it that has wonderful life lessons for all of us. But before you read the story, you must promise you will not think badly of me. **I have been a very naughty boy!** Now that I have your undivided attention, we can continue.

This last fall proved to be one of the most disappointing fall color seasons we have ever experienced. The aspens around Estes just never seemed to “pop” like we know they can. We like to use current photos, so we just kept hiking and hoping.

Our last attempt to get good fall color photos took us on a six-mile hike during which we took over 200 photos. Later that evening when I downloaded them, I was so disappointed and frustrated. There was not even one I felt we could use! UGH!!

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“ LIFE THROUGH THE LENS “

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It was then I got an evil thought. What would happen if I took two photos and merged them into one, bumped the color, and put some clouds in a very boring, cloudless blue sky? I know, that's an evil thought, but I had to at least try! About 30 minutes later I had created something I felt was totally amazing. But there was one huge problem; I couldn't use it because it wasn't real! UGH!!!

Then I had a righteous thought. What if I used the photo to share lessons about life? I would reveal what I had done and then teach on the danger of deception. It was a great idea. YEAH!!!

All of us already know about deception because we face it every day. Every commercial we view must be carefully scrutinized because the product probably really isn't as good as they try to make it appear. Politicians are the best (worst) at putting a "spin" on something that really isn't as they present it. Most of us have come to totally mistrust the media because their "spin" on the news often seems to cross the line from "spin" into the ugly darkness of outright lies.

As a pastor, this was something I always wrestled with. In every church there are things that happen that are not fit for public consumption. These can include strife, gossip, immorality, or a hundred other things that are far from being Christ-like.

There also were times when I personally came under fire. The military would call it friendly fire. I must say, it never felt very friendly. However, I was determined to protect the sheep from feeling like they needed to get emotionally involved in my personal struggles. I firmly believe it is far better to be admired for one's strength than to be pitied for one's trials. Over and over, I put my big boy pants on and stood in front of the church determined that whatever came out of my mouth would always glorify Jesus.

Yes, there were times when things had to be brought before the whole church. When a staff member has an affair, it is wrong for leadership to try and make people believe it didn't happen. When it became necessary to fire a staff member, the whole church quickly knew about it so an explanation was required.

However, even in those tragic situations, I always tried to present the person I had fired in the best possible way, even if doing so left my actions open to criticism.

Was I being dishonest and deceptive? I don't think so. I have always believed church should be about Jesus and never about strife and gossip. I believe this wisdom reflects the heart of a true shepherd and pastors who take this approach are to be applauded for their courage and strength.

I also felt I had a verse of scripture in Proverbs to stand on.

Proverbs 17:9 (TLV)

"Whoever covers up an offense seeks love.
Whoever repeats a matter separates close friends."

But let's get back to my deceptive photo and what we can learn from it. In this case, I didn't just try to present something in the best possible way; I created a total deception. I created and presented to you something that doesn't even exist. This is very different than taking something that does exist and trying to make it look as good as possible.

If I wanted to create a deception for my own personal enjoyment, then no harm done. But if I was going to use that photo, I felt I had to be totally open and honest. This is where many people get into trouble. In an effort to present what they are doing in the best possible way, they reach a point where they cross the line and get into deception. Then they present something that really doesn't even exist. We all need to guard against this.

I once saw an example of this that left me totally speechless. I had a pastor ask me to check out his new website. He was so proud of it. His church averaged less than 50 people in attendance, but if you visited his website you were led to believe it was a megachurch and that he was an internationally known speaker. It was a blatant attempt to deceive. I am sad to say that his church closed its doors when his marriage ended in divorce.

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The kingdom of God can never be built upon deception. If we have to resort to deception, we can be sure we are trying to build our own kingdom and not the kingdom of God. Everyone wants to present their church in the best possible way. This is a good thing. But be careful; you can easily cross the line into deception.

I want to encourage pastors to try not to create a “photoshopped” version of their church. You may feel a need to do this because of all the friendly fire you have been dodging. But I can assure you, the “photoshopped” version of your church (like my photo) does not exist. But thank God, it doesn’t need to!

One thing Miss Linda and I have learned is that there are many different ways to do church. We visit churches we really like and others we do not relate to. But we are careful to keep that to ourselves. Why? Even in churches we don’t relate to, we see the spiritual needs of people being met. That is why the people are there, and that is why there are so many different churches “doing church” in so many different ways.

When people fail to understand this simple truth, friendly fire quickly begins to happen. Call it friendly if you will, but people still get wounded and hurt by it. It grieves me when people criticize their church on social media. You may not like the way your church “does church,” but that does not mean how they are doing it is wrong. Let’s all be mature enough to recognize this truth.

There is one last lesson I believe we can learn from my “not real” photo. We all need to be careful not to pass judgment too quickly.



Why? Because we don’t know the full story and we do not have all the facts. We are not God!

The two photos below are the ones I used to create my deception and they illustrate this truth very clearly. The one on the left was taken at the Hollowell Park Trailhead. The one on the right was taken three miles away from a slope overlooking Mill Creek Basin.

I can totally see why someone would criticize me if I published either of them. They are nothing special. When you look at them, you might come to the conclusion that we just didn’t put much effort into getting good fall photos last year. How wrong you would be! What you saw with your eyes would have led you to a wrong conclusion.

At the same time, you might look at the photoshopped version I placed at the top of this article and come to a completely opposite conclusion. Yet, I must confess, I sat in my recliner and in 30 minutes created a false reality, which, if I had not been honest, would have deceived many.

Most pastors work very hard. Some seem to reap very few results from their hard work, while others experience what appears to be great success. None deserve friendly fire. Let God be the judge of His servants.

Start the New Year right by resolving to do what Paul taught in Philippians.

“So keep your thoughts continually fixed on all that is authentic and real, (i.e. not photoshopped) honorable and admirable, beautiful and respectful, pure and holy, merciful and kind. And fasten your thoughts on every glorious work of God, praising him always.”

Philippians 4:8 (TPT)



Miss Linda wanted me to be sure and tell you that merging two photos like this is something we have never done before.



A MINUTE WITH MISS LINDA



“TEARS”

This month I want to talk about “tears.” This is a subject we don’t often hear being discussed because tears are usually associated with pain and

sadness. But is that always the way it is? Let’s take another look at this subject.

Often weeping is looked upon as something we should never do. In fact, if you go online you can even find articles that tell you how to stop crying. Here is one example.

How to Keep Yourself from Crying:

1. Focus on your breathing.
2. Move your eyes to control your tears.
3. Distract yourself with a physical movement.
4. Relax your facial expression.
5. Remove the lump in your throat.

I’m not recommending this advice. In fact, it made me laugh. But this is a serious subject we all need to understand better because tears play a very important part in our lives.

When we first come into this world, tears are the first way we express ourselves. Babies cry about everything. If they are hungry, they cry.

If they are the least bit uncomfortable, they cry. If they need their diaper changed, they cry. They cry in the morning and they cry in the middle of the night. I am sure all parents can relate to what I am saying.

As we get older, we tend to continue this behavior because we quickly learn that this is how we get what we want. Our parents encourage us to “stop being a cry baby.” This is an unpleasant part of parenting that needs to be done. But it needs to be done with gentleness and softness, or it can cause hardness in a child and result in them missing what God has planned for them.

Does that sentence leave you a bit perplexed? Does God’s plan for us include the shedding of tears? Well, of course it does! The shedding of tears is how God created us to function and should be looked upon as being a vital part of life. Jesus wept! He wept over Jerusalem, He wept at the grave of Lazarus, and He wept when it came time to lay down His life.

Hebrews 5:7 (TLB)

“Yet while Christ was here on earth he pleaded with God, praying with tears and agony of soul to the only one who would save him from premature death.”

In Ecclesiastes 3 the Bible tells us there is a time to weep.

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Now that we have established that it is okay to cry, let's discuss what should cause us to come to tears. Obviously, we should not act like babies and cry over every tiny discomfort we experience.

Let's start by talking about compassion. When Jesus wept over Jerusalem, He was showing how much He cared and what great compassion He felt deep inside. We need to be concerned if we get so hard we are unable to weep with compassion over the lost condition of others, or the misfortune others encounter during their journey of life. I always want to be soft enough in my heart to be able to release tears of compassion for others.

Last November we received word of an auto accident that caused the death of a dear family's son-in-law and also the severe injury of their daughter. Immediately we started praying and soon tears of compassion were flowing. May God help us to never lose the ability to shed tears of compassion.

My favorite time to shed tears is when I am worshipping the Lord and His presence is so tangible that it moves me to tears. A while back we were in a church service at Summit Church in Estes Park. During the praise and worship time, they sang the song "I Love You Lord." Here are the words.

"I love you, Lord / And I lift my voice / To worship You / Oh, my soul rejoice! / Take joy my King / In what You hear / Let it be a sweet, sweet sound in Your ear"

As we sang this simple song, both John and I found ourselves shedding tears as our hearts were touched by the presence of the Lord. It was wonderful, pure worship.

Another example of tears being good is when they are the result of joy and laughter. Don't you love it when you are filled with such joy and laughter that you find it bringing tears to your eyes? Sometimes my husband and I laugh until we cry and it is wonderful. And yes, there are also times when tears of sorrow are shed. We should all weep over the lost condition of this world.

We cry out to God with tears for a fresh outpouring of His Spirit upon our grandchildren. Their generation has never seen a great revival. We weep for a nation that has lost its moral compass. We weep when injustice and corruption triumph. We weep when good men are slandered. We weep when good is called evil and evil is called good.

According to the Bible, our tears are precious to God. He sees them and collects them as a remembrance.

Psalm 56:8 (CEV)

"...You have stored my tears in your bottle and counted each of them."



If you feel you have had more than your fair share of tears, you need to be reminded of the last time tears are mentioned in the Bible. It is found in Revelation 21 and it reveals a beautiful scene in heaven.

Revelation 21:4 (TLB)

"He will wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, nor pain. All of that has gone forever."

“ HE DID IT!!! ”

On December 6, 2017, President Donald Trump announced to the world that he was keeping a campaign promise he had made to recognize Jerusalem as the eternal capital of the State of Israel, and to move the United States Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. As I read the news, I wept for joy.

Every president in the last 20 years including Bill Clinton, George Bush, and Barack Obama had made this same promise, but had then refused to follow through. It was beginning to look as if Donald Trump was going to be just another lying politician who would say anything to get elected. I had already written this article and in it had been very critical of him. Thank God, I had to rewrite the entire article! I was happy to do it!

Immediately after his announcement, news networks began to write critical articles about this historic decision. It was portrayed as reckless, unwise, inflammatory, and as the complete abandoning of decades of US policy. Well, at least I could agree with the last charge.

When I read the charge that he had totally abandoned many decades of US diplomacy, I said, “Well, it’s about time.” It has been said that the definition of insanity is to keep doing the same thing over and over, but to expect different results. To say that US diplomacy in the Middle East has been a dismal failure would certainly be an understatement. It was broken and it needed someone with the courage to admit that and fix it.

Now more than ever, we need to pray for our president. The court of world opinion will most certainly crucify him. Because his enemies hate him so deeply and are so corrupt, I am quite sure that behind the scenes, they will encourage the Muslim world to stage violent protests all around the globe in an effort to make President Trump look bad. In fact, I am very sure by the time this is published, these protests will have already made the headlines again and again. I also expect a Middle East war to break out in 2018. Without doubt, our president will also be blamed for this.

WE ALL NEED TO PRAY FOR HIM NOW!

Now the big question is:

What effect will all this have on America?

I totally expect that America will see its share of violence and turmoil. Those who hate what we stand for and what Donald Trump stands for will see to that. I am not too concerned about all that. The only thing that really matters is what God thinks about all this. We need not wonder; God has already told us.

Matthew 25:31-34; 40 (MEV)

“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. **32 Before Him will be gathered all nations, and He will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates his sheep from the goats.** 33 He will set the sheep at His right hand, but the goats at the left. 34 Then the King will say to those at His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world.

40 ...‘Truly I say to you, as you have done it for one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you have done it for Me.’

Get ready America; it very well could be that our president has just moved us from the ranks of the ‘goat nations’ into the ranks of the ‘sheep nations.’ I will not be at all surprised if in the coming months we see the greatest outpouring of God’s Spirit upon America the world has ever seen.

This pattern was first seen in the early 1900’s, and then repeated again in 1948 and 1967. God promised Abraham, “I will bless those who bless you.” Finally, an American President has displayed enough courage to bless Israel. Trust me...

God will keep His promise!

And that my friends,
is the “Truth!”