

PRAYERS & ENCOURAGEMENT

Those who are sick or need our prayers — Joe, Turner, Kaylee Dolan, J Hughes, Linda Reagan

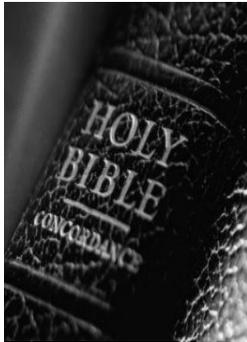
Continue to remember in your prayers those who are unable to attend worship services regularly: *Faye Roberts, Freda Dunn, Romona Stokes, and Marjorie Barringer, J. Hughes, Billie Sue Atkins.*

Please pray for those who have forsaken the Lord that they may be reconciled to God.

READING THE OLD & NEW TESTAMENTS IN ONE YEAR

*Monday - Esther 7-10; Revelation 3
Tuesday - Ezra 7-10; Psalm 97; Rev 4
Wednesday - Nehemiah 1-3; Rev 5
Thursday - Neh 4-6; Psalm 98; Rev 6
Friday - Psalm 140; Rev 7*

***Week #49
Dec. 4 – Dec. 8***



VISITORS - We would like to get to know you better, and ask that you stay a while after services. We encourage you to visit our website at <http://www.parkhillchurchofchrist.com> where you will find sermons, articles, and daily bible studies to encourage you in your daily walk with God.

QUESTIONS? *We Welcome the opportunity to study God's word with you any time.*

*All sermons are recorded on CD & DVD -
If you would like a copy, please ask one of the men.*

ELDERS

Carl Dolan....479.414.1972 ~ Ron Roberts479.452.0347 ~ Randy Sexton.....479.763.4524

DEACONS

Wayne Carson...479.648.1087 ~ Luke Dolan.....479.357.9547 ~ Joe Dugas479.629.4046 ~ David Meek.....479.459.0820 ~

PREACHER

Bryan Loughmiller.....479.434.3939

December 3, 2017

THINK ON THESE THINGS

Welcome to the Park Hill Church of Christ

3536 GRINNELL AVENUE FORT SMITH, AR 72908 479.782.2415

It is our desire to worship God in spirit and in truth, and to glorify Him in all we do.

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

SUNDAY MORNING	SUNDAY EVENING	WEDNESDAY EVENING
Bible Study.....9:30 am	Worship..... 5:00pm	Bible Study.....7:00pm
Worship.....10:15 am		

Strolling Through Our Spiritual Garden

1 Corinthians 16:17-18 "I rejoice over the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus, because they have supplied what was lacking on your part. For they have refreshed my spirit and yours. Therefore acknowledge such men."

This week we are on a journey. We are taking a stroll through our spiritual garden. We are counting the trees in our garden. Unlike Eve, who was focused upon the one tree God told her not to eat from, she failed to count all the other trees that God had provided. God is rich in blessings. We get listening to Satan's sad song and feel that we have been left out, cheated and deserve more. What Satan points us to is what God forbids. Satan's solutions are always wrong. He wants us to do what we shouldn't. If we see how blessed we are, if we could only count the trees in our garden, then we would not listen to Satan as much. Count your many blessings, is a wonderful hymn and exercise.

Our verse today, reminds us of several mighty trees in our garden. Righteous friends, brethren, who know us, love us and have helped us through the years make up some of the amazing trees in our garden. It's hard to know what one would do without great friends, especially when they are Christians. Years of worshipping together. Years of doing projects together. Years of sharing, learning, and growing together. In a forest, or woods, as we call them in Indiana, trees grow tall and close to one another. Under the soil, the roots don't go straight down. They spread out under the soil. The roots of other trees weave and connect to the roots of other trees. Not only are they sharing the soil

and nutrients but the roots all growing around each other help support each other. In the woods behind my house are some dead trees. They have been dead since I moved there. Why doesn't the wind blow them over? They are being held and supported by the roots of the surrounding trees.

This is what brethren do. And as your faith grows and as you travel, you find this circle of godly companions ever increasing. Good people. God's people. Those who love and stand for the truth. Those who want the kingdom to grow. These folks pray when there is a need. These people invite you into their homes. They want you to succeed spiritually. They want you to grow spiritually. Their roots are woven around your roots. Together you support each other. The Bible word for this is "fellowship." It's more than a name in a church directory, it's a relationship. It's trees in your garden. It's roots woven together deep under the soil.

When this fellowship is right and strong, it's powerful. It's funeral homes packed with brethren. It's a Saturday, and guys show up to help you load boxes and move. It's hugs and tears when storms come, and it's hugs and smiles when the sun comes out. It's growing together. It's a spiritual family. Just as in any family, there are bumps and hiccups once in a while. But we are family. We love each other. We are there for each other. We get through those tough times together. We are bound together through our faith in Jesus Christ. Grace, forgiveness, kindness and goodness causes us to watch our words and not be so opinionated. Love and care for one another causes us to get out of our lazy chairs and serve one another.

These are mighty trees in our garden. But Satan doesn't want you talking about these. He wants you to look at forbidden fruit. He wants you to walk away from these trees. It is interesting in the Genesis account that there seemed to be just one tree that was forbidden. What a contrast. Satan would have you to think that God only allows you to eat from one tree and all the others are off limits. He would have you to think that you are missing out.

Now, there are two things that Satan does to try to get our eyes off our mighty trees of fellowship.

First, by making us feel alone. There are those like that. In a large church, they don't know anyone. They have very few friends. They worship alone. Satan plays on that. You are not invited. You are not welcomed. You are not loved. You worship but you are not one of them. As long as Satan keeps singing this song, we will begin to find friendships elsewhere and among the choices that Satan offers.

Too often, we sit in our pew and we see conversations taking place. We see hugs, handshakes and slaps on the back. We hear laughter. We see all of this, but we are not included. We are on the outside, looking through the window and wishing we could be a part of that. That's what Satan wants you to believe. It takes some doing on your part to make

friends. This is especially true when a person has moved into a congregation. Friendships and relationships have already been formed for years. You are the new kid on the block. How do I get into that fellowship? How do I make friends?

Sadly, in some places, it's a closed circle and the people will let you know that you are not one of them. That's wrong and that's dancing to Satan's tune. Instead of waiting for someone to invite you, you invite them. You be friendly. Don't always talk about yourself or the last place you were at. Listen. Be yourself. Don't push and don't try to change everyone to fit you. Laugh at yourself. Be open. Be like Jesus.

Satan will try to introduce people of the world to take the place of those mighty trees in your garden. Neighbors, co-workers and even family members who may be nice, but do not have that spiritual foundation to walk with Christ. They'll laugh at your silly jokes. They'll invite you. They'll include you into their circle of fellowship. You spend a lot of your weekends with these people. You begin to think that you like these people more than those people down at the church house. You find yourself going along and every once in a while, actually doing things that you would never do before. But you don't want to be the odd person in this group. And before you even know it, Satan has gotten you to compromise, weaken your stance and to accept what you never would before. The pull from the world has had an impact upon you. You begin to miss some services. It's not a big deal you say. You're doing things with your friends. They don't worship. A little here. A little there. Your faith has weakened and you never realized it.

Now, is it wrong to have friends who are not Christians? Certainly not. How else are we to be the light into the world? How else will we try to show Jesus? However, when we view our friends of the world as a greater and more important influence in our lives than fellow Christians, then Satan has us looking at the wrong tree.

Paul, from our verse today, had his spirit strengthened because of the good brothers that came to him. A refreshed spirit. A heart that remains focused. A priority that runs strong and deep. A hope that anchors us through storms. There are good things that we gain from our fellowship with other Christians that we never can receive from the world. Most of us would not be who we are today, without those godly friends throughout our lives who stuck with us, by us and for us.

What's in your garden that God provides? An enormous forest of spiritual friends who are there for you. Don't take that for granted. Invest in these people. Pour hours into being with them. Serve them. Help them. Open your heart to allow them to do the same to you.

We are blessed!

Roger Shouse, via Jump Start #1976