

A PASTOR'S PONDERINGS: VACATION TIME

By JJ Stewart

This column is being written the week before I leave for a week of vacation. I'm sorry I'm not going to be here when we have the Annual Rummage Sale. When the season for vacations rolls around each summer, it is probably a good idea to take a cue from a pastor who was serving a church in Texas in the early 1970's. While some in his flock didn't like the season, he looked forward to it.

Granted, there will be Sundays during a vacation season when the pews will be less filled than usual due to the absences of those on vacations. Granted, we miss those who are gone. To some this means something negative, but to that Texas pastor (and yours truly) it means that soon there will be people who are refreshed and ready to tackle new challenges that God throws at them.

Vacations are Biblical! I believe that vacations are a natural corollary to the Old Testament idea of the Sabbath. True, the Sabbath is about honoring God and not about rest as such. Yet, every so often, it is good to be refreshed by a restful change. In fact, even if the change isn't so restful, it still seems to refresh us. What better time to honor God with our worship than while we have the time to be intentional about it! I hope, of course, that everyone who takes a vacation has a safe journey.

While people are on vacation, they should remember that the church never takes a vacation. Consequently, everyone needs to pray for the church's spiritual and financial support even when they are gone. Steady support of the church is always important.

Look around you when you come to worship! Pray for those who are sick that they may be healed and returned to active duty in the Christian community. Pray for those who for any reason find that they choose not to be in church today, that they may be tuned in to the guidance and power to the Holy Spirit. Pray for those on vacation, that they may be refreshed and empowered to do God's will.

To paraphrase the motto of the U.S. Post Office Building in Washington, D.C., "Neither snow, nor rain, nor heat, nor gloom of night stays these Christians from their call to daily prayer and worship" I truly believe that this should be a Christian's motto. I cannot imagine a day in which I don't want to pray and spend time with God. True, once in a while I will not read my Bible

before getting out of bed. Even if on vacation however, I cannot imagine a day without prayer, can you?

For me, vacations will sometimes include even more prayer than usual. I love to drive along in my car while talking to God. Sometimes I sing classic sacred music or contemporary praise songs. The only one who hears me is God, and for Him it is a joyful noise. I don't know how many times I prayed as I walked to work in Yosemite. There were also times when I would take a break, walking in the forest, and thank God over and over again. Sometimes the most satisfying prayer is to say that single phrase; "Thank you!" How about you?

Yours through the Risen Christ.....JJ

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