

# THE GREENWOOD BULLETIN

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## **Wicked Surroundings**

By Bill Hall

Elijah was a man who reached true greatness in the Lord's service. He was always ready to go where God would send him (**I Kings 18:1; 19:15**); to pray whenever prayer was needed (**I Kings 17:20, 21; 18:36, 37**), and to confront evil whenever confrontation was necessary (**I Kings 18:17-24; 21:17-19**). He was translated without seeing death, and he, along with Moses, was chosen to appear with the Lord on the mount of transfiguration.

The remarkable thing about Elijah is that he attained this greatness while living in a wicked and hostile environment. Had he lived in Judah during the righteous reign of Hezekiah or Josiah, we might not be surprised at Elijah's attainments. But he lived instead in Israel during the wicked reign of Ahab. He was subjected to the cruel intents of Jezebel. He was under constant harassment and threat of death. He became so discouraged at one point that he asked to die, but he never denied his God.

In this wicked environment Elijah was able to influence others.

The widow of Zarephath was blessed through Elijah (**I Kings 17:8-24**). The multitudes on Mount Carmel were led to cry, "The Lord, He is God!" through his courageous efforts (**I Kings 18:39**). Elisha, his successor, must have been greatly influenced by him. And even Ahab was brought to humility on one occasion, clothing himself in sackcloth as a result of Elijah's rebuke (**I Kings 21:27-29**). The message of Elijah is clear. You can live a godly life and influence others for good in a wicked and hostile environment.

When one hears the excuses people make today, it is obvious that Elijah's message is badly needed in this generation. People excuse their failure to teach others the gospel with, "People are so prejudiced around here they just won't listen"; when the truth is, little effort has been made. If they are approached about their ungodly conduct, they explain that "You just don't know how terrible the people are that I have to work around every day". If their children go astray their explanation is, "Our children are faced with pressures that we didn't have growing up". Such statements, repeated often

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enough, become to many a "license" to do wrong and a salve to soothe their troubled consciences.

We must throw aside our excuses and make up our minds to do right. Elijah could serve God in wicked surroundings. And so can we!

## **Conversation Control**

By Steven Rouse

If someone were to stop you in mid-sentence at any given point in the day, what would you most likely be taking about? What fills your conversation? What fills your mind? Is it sports? Academics? Relationships? Daily events? God?

While there is nothing wrong in those first 4 things by themselves, when our conversation is filled with things of this world, our minds will follow. And not only our minds, but the minds of those whom we come into contact with throughout our days. Paul exhorted Timothy to "avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness" (**2 Timothy 2:16**).

How much of our conversation is merely worldly and empty? However, *we can do better!* Each of us has complete control of our speech and of our general topics of conversation. It may seem awkward at first to begin a spiritual conversation, and I think that Satan uses that to our demise every day. It can be a simple question that starts up a spiritual conversation:

*How has God blessed you today?  
How are you doing spiritually? Do you need prayers for anything right now?*

We can help one another in this to become more spiritually minded. The skill of conversation steering must be one that we concern ourselves with, both with fellow Christians and with the lost souls we encounter. Start now—greet the next person you see with something spiritual. It's not as difficult as it seems, and with consistency, this habit will help us and those we encounter to draw closer to our awesome Father each and every day.

## **Fight Boredom!**

By Stephen Rouse

*bore (bôr)- To make weary by being dull, repetitive, or tedious.*

It's summertime. Some people have jobs. Some people have camp. But, when stuff isn't going on, most people just get bored. I have been bored so many times that once, on a whim, I was moved to write a song about it (not sure where it is, though). But I digress. I come here to urge you to consider this:

**As Christians, we DO NOT have the right to be bored.** That hurts to think about. But guess what? There's more work here to do than can EVER be done.

Consider these areas:

· **Preaching to the lost** - Guys, there are hundreds, if not thousands of people that we come

into contact with on a regular basis that NEED, above all else, to hear about what this life is really about. Who have you talked to in the last week about Christ? How many were Christians? How many were of the lost? Preaching the Word is not an option. Challenge yourself.

· **Studying God's Word** - How many hours have you spent staring at a TV/computer screen this summer? How many hours have you spent being enriched by God's Word? And not just because you were at Church services or at camp Bible classes. Because you wanted to. Because "faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ", or because you think: "O how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day." Challenge yourself.

· **Praying to God** - And not just at mealtimes or in the morning or when you go to bed. If you had written all the prayers you've said to God this week, how many pages would it fill? Not that length is everything, but how much are we pouring our heart out to our Creator? And not just asking for help or thanking Him. Those come quite naturally. How about just praising Him for as long as you can without repeating yourself? The psalmist claims: "Seven times a day I praise You, because of Your righteous ordinances." Challenge yourself.

Guys, with SO much to do, whether it's preaching Christ, encouraging one another, praying, studying, praising God, singing, or any number of spiritual activities, we just DON'T have time to be BORED. It has been said that "An idle (bored) mind is the devil's workshop." If we're filling our lives with spiritual things and dwelling on them, Satan will have much less of a chance to tempt us and bring us down.

So, in conclusion, DON'T BE BORED. If I ever tell you I'm bored, do please reprimand me, because I fall short here. Alot. Encourage each other. Let's serve the Lord together. Let's go to Heaven together. We don't know how much time we have: live each day like it's your last. "But encourage one another day after day, so long as it is still called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end." -Hebrews 3:13-14

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### ***That Piece of Clay***

**By Forrest D. Moyer**

A little child has often been likened to a piece of clay that can be molded into whatever type of pottery that the potter (parent) has in mind. A little child is so pliable, so willing to be molded and so trusting. This can either be a

fantastic opportunity or a tragic consequence depending on what the potter does. Solomon expresses this truth vividly when he says, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (**Prov. 22:6**). This is why Paul urged parents to "bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (**Eph. 6:4**).

When clay hardens, it is too late to mold it as you desire. So it is with children. In their young and tender years they can be taught and guided into the way of the Lord, but as they grow older, they become set and fixed in the mold that was cast. You can't wait until a child is a teenager to mold him. It begins before he is born. It takes place while he is a baby, while he is toddler and while he is a pre-schooler. Do you realize that most of a child's molding has already taken place by the time he starts to school? Potters (parents), how are you molding your child?

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### ***One Wise Mother***

**By Ed Bragwell, Sr.**

Some mothers I knew were working on mailing bulletins at a church building where I preached at the time. While working they were talking about how hard it is on young Christians in our present society. One bemoaned how hard it is on them to not get to go to the

prom or participate in certain sports, pageants, etc. because of the immodesty of what they would have to wear. Another lamented how hard it is for them to have to say, "No," to many other activities their peers were into or going to places where they hangout.

One mother who had a teenage daughter spoke up and said, "We try not to let (girl's name) know that she's missing a thing." I like her reply. Two of the mothers by their attitude were no doubt signaling to their children the message, "You poor underprivileged child. I am sorry you cannot enjoy your youth because you're a Christian." The third mother was signaling to her child, "You are the privileged one. You enjoy the blessings of being in Christ, so in reality you are not missing a thing by foregoing the momentary pleasures of this world."

### ***“WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING”***

**By William Beasley**

The apostle Paul speaks of some, who, in a spirit of self-commendation, are “*without understanding*” (2 Corinthians 10:12, ASV) or are “*not wise*” (2 Corinthians 10:12, KJV). Their lack of understanding/lack of wisdom was evident because they, in determining their own self-worth or spirituality were “*measuring themselves by themselves and comparing themselves with themselves*” (2 Corinthians 10:12).

When men or women are permitted the luxury of setting the standard of judgment/comparison, they will come out looking good. If I permit myself, even in my own mind, the use of my conduct as the standard of measuring, I will come out with a rating of 100%. The same is true, of course, of the world's most ungodly, immoral reprobate. When I compare myself with other men (even my brethren) I can, by using just a little care in choosing whom I use as a comparison, also come up with a high rating (between 75% and 150%). Charles Churchmember takes an inordinate pride in having obeyed the gospel and being added to the church (Acts 2:47, KJV), or being **"in the Lord"** (2 Corinthians 10:17). Of course, he is not as faithful as Aaron Attender, but he is, in his own mind, head and shoulders above Arthur Alien. Bert Biblestudy is not only a member of the Lord's church, but he also attends Bible classes. He does not consider himself to be in bad shape . . . when compared to Ned Nevergoes. He is almost as good, he believes, as Tom Teacher . . . who, Bert feels, gets all of his material from someone else. Clem Closedpockets compares himself, quite favorably with Leroy Liar, and maybe, just maybe, a half-step behind Paul Preacher or Elmer Elder. After all Paul is in it for the money and Elmer always did seek the lime-

light. On the other hand, there is also Chester Christian who weeps inwardly when he sings such hymns as *"O To be Like Thee," "Be With Me Lord,"* or *"You Never Mentioned Him to Me."* He compares himself to Jesus, as revealed in the gospel, and cries out in anguish of heart in prayer, **"God, be thou merciful to me the sinner"** (Luke 18:13).

The spirit of self-justification is also evident when the question of modesty is brought up . . . generally by someone else.

Betty Bathingsuit, who every child of God would have considered immodest seventy years ago, argues that she is now modest because so many others (**"comparing themselves with themselves"**) are wearing twopiece bathing suits. Of course, Tammy Twopiece says she is very modest when compared with Bess Bikini. Bess, determined not to be found at fault, points to Nancy Nude and declares that Ms. Bikini is really very modest. Nancy Nude points out that she goes to the beach only when it isn't crowded and she won't be seen by many people, and besides that it isn't her fault that men have such dirty minds. To be sure, there is also Carol Christlike who, like Sarah of old, recognizes that her real beauty is to be of **"the hidden man of the heart, in the incorruptible apparel of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price"** (1 Peter 3:4).