

THE PROCLAMATION

"...the Lord hath appointed me ... to proclaim liberty to the captives ..." Isaiah 61:1

By
Dennis Walton



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Dear Family and Friends,

Greetings in the name of our Lord!

2011 already?! I can't believe another year has passed. **James 4:14** says it best, "your life is like a vapour that appears for a little time and then vanishes away." I've talked to a lot of people in their 70's and 80's and they all say the same thing: "It has gone by so fast."

You can't stop time but you can make the best of it. Enjoy the many blessings around you and give God your praise. Make it your goal to draw closer to Him in 2011. And my prayer is that The Proclamation will help you do just that!

In Christ's love,

Dennis J. Walton
Pastor

Service Times

Sunday School	10:00 a.m.
Sunday Morning Worship (Children's church provided)	11:00 a.m.
Sunday Evening Worship	6:00 p.m.
Wednesday Evening Bible Study (Children's church provided)	6:00 p.m.

“The ABC’s of Faith ”

“It’s as easy as ABC and 123.” That’s what we say when something should be very simple and easy to understand. **Isaiah 35:8** signifies that God has established the path that we are supposed to walk in life that leads us to Heaven. And that He intended on it to be a plain and simple path that anyone can follow. However, for centuries Christians have specialized in turning this simple path into a complicated treasure map in which you must be able to unlock the secret codes in order to make it to the reward. And of course everyone thinks *they* have the secret code and everyone else is just on a wild goose chase. To be frank, on judgment day there are going to be a lot of people claiming to be “Christians” that are going to pay the price for making things so complicated and pushing people farther away from God than they already are. But that’s another message for another day. Since God’s desire is that everyone go to Heaven, **(II Peter 3:9)** it stands to reason that His plan on how to get everyone there would be easy enough for everyone to understand.

Years ago I volunteered to work at a Vacation Bible School. That’s right, I volunteered. For a whole week! About three minutes into it, as I stood there with a glazed over look on my face watching fifteen hyperactive little Indians on the war path, I wondered what I just got myself into. *(Have you ever tried to herd squirrels? That would be easier.)* But it proved to be a great learning experience for me. *(I learned never to volunteer for Vacation Bible School again.)* Of course we sang, made crafts, played games, ate snacks *(which looking back now wasn’t such a good idea to give more sugar to kids already bouncing off the walls)* and most importantly we had a Bible lesson each night. And the way we presented the lessons was in the form of the ABC’s.

We knew that in order for the kids to understand what we were teaching, we had to make it simple.

But I had another revelation during those lessons. I thought, “if I can tell these kids about Jesus Christ and make them understand it, then I can get the message across to anyone.” Those kids weren’t the only ones learning that week. God taught me a great lesson. Keep things simple. What good would I do anyone if I gave a fancy speech with impressive words and people left church saying, “what in the world was he talking about.”

That week we just taught A, B, and C. Admit, Believe, and Confess. But we can find a Biblical truth for every letter of the alphabet that will help us understand what it is to become and stay a Christian.

A = Admit. Admit what? Admit you are a sinner. They always say that in order for an alcoholic or drug addict to overcome their addiction, they must first admit that they have a problem. Once they come to grips with the fact that their addiction is in control of their life, then they can get help. Admitting you are a sinner is the first step towards salvation. You have to realize that you, as well as every other human being, have broken God’s laws. Until you admit that, nobody, including God, can help you. Now if you’re like me, this is not too much of a problem because you know you have messed up many times. But many people take on the attitude of, “well I’m a good person. I’ve never killed anyone.” But it doesn’t matter what level or degree of sin you’ve committed. What matters is that you’ve committed sin, period. And that sin stands between you and God until you admit it to Him. When God came to Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden and asked, “have you eaten from the tree that I told you not to eat from?”, He already knew that they did but He was wanting them to admit it. Unfortunately, they did what many people do today. They blamed it on someone else. A lot of people hide behind tragic things that has happened in their past, and use that as an excuse for their sin. But although bad circumstances may have contributed to

your situation, you are still responsible for you.

B = Believe. Believe in what? God? Is that enough? Nope. Anyone with a pulse and some common sense believes in God. In fact, Satan and all the demons in Hell believe in God and tremble at His name. **(James 2:19)** Just believing in God’s existence is not enough to be saved from your sin and the price you will have to pay for them. **John 3:16** says, “**For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.**” You must believe in Jesus Christ. You must believe that He is the Son of God and that He died on that cross to pay the penalty for your sin. Then on the third day of laying dead in a tomb, He arose again conquering death, Hell, and the grave. Politicians who support abortion will hypocritically say “God bless America.” Movie stars and rock stars who glorify casual sex and the use of drugs and alcohol love to point towards Heaven when they win their big awards and say “I’d like to thank God.” But few of them will mention the name of Jesus Christ. Why? Because His name brings conviction. The very thought of Jesus on that cross points out the fact that we are all sinners and forces us to either accept Him and turn from our sinful ways or reject Him and accept the eternal judgment that comes with it.

C = Confess. Now that you’ve admitted you’re a sinner and believe in Jesus Christ, now you must “confess” Him as your Lord and Savior. **Romans 10:9** says, “**if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved.**” There is no such thing as a secret Christian. I call them “Nicodemus Christians.” He was a man that snuck through the shadows at night and came to Jesus with a weak confession of, “yes I believe in you Jesus.” Yet he didn’t want anyone else to know. But God won’t accept that kind of confession. And why

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should He? After all, what would you think of someone that talked to you like a friend when nobody else is around, but then acted like they didn't even know you when they were in a crowd? You must, without being ashamed, proclaim Jesus Christ to be Lord of your life.

D = Doer of the Word. What good does it do you if you go to church every Sunday and hear a sermon or read The Proclamation every time it comes in the mail, but never apply the teaching of the Word to your life? **James 1:22-25** says, “**be a doer of the word and not a hearer only.**” It goes on to explain that the Word of God is like a mirror that allows you to see yourself as you truly are. For example, you may wake up some morning with a big pimple on your face and never know it. But when you look in the mirror, that zit sticks up off your face like a volcano. The mirror exposes your blemishes. The Bible works that way. When you read it, it exposes the things in your life that are wrong and need to be changed. Once you've heard the Word and seen the blemishes of your life, you have a choice to make. Ignore it or become a doer and change it. You may walk away from that mirror and say, “I don't want to deal with that zit on my face so I'm just going to ignore it.” But let me remind you that it's still there. Everyone else will see it even if you've convinced yourself it's not there. You may walk away from God's Word and ignore the fact that you have sins needing to be dealt with but the sin is still there and God still sees it.

E = Expect. If a child is hungry and asks his father to give him some food, does he worry that his dad won't give him what he needs. Of course not. He expects his dad to provide for him. As Christians we should live in a state of expectation. Not like spoiled brats that throw a fit if they don't get what they want, but as God's children that expect our Heavenly Father to be faithful to meet our needs. Jesus said, “Ask and it shall be given unto you,

seek and you will find, knock and He'll open the door.” (**Matthew 7:7-8**) A lack of expectation is a lack of faith.

F = Fail. What? Fail? But I thought we were talking about the life of Christians. What does that have to do with failure? Well, I've never met one or read about one in the Bible that didn't fail in some way. Though we are Christians, we are still humans. And humans are prone to failure. Don't get me wrong, I'm not making excuses for our failures. God still frowns on our failures and we pay the price for them. Though we'll never be perfect, I believe we should die trying. But God is also very patient with us through our failures and specializes in turning them around and using them for our good. Jesus looked Peter in the eye and told him, “before the rooster crows in the morning, you will deny me three times. But after you are converted, use your failure to strengthen your brothers.” It wasn't *if* you fail, it was *when* you fail. I'm sure that Peter's testimony was a great comfort to many people who faced similar challenges. Nobody likes to talk about their mistakes. I know I don't. I don't like to think about them, I don't like to talk about them, and I don't like other people talking about them. But God has called us to fail forward. When you fall don't stay down. Get back up and share with others how mercy restored you. You can't truly understand grace until you have experienced the pains of failure.

G = Give. There is no such thing as a stingy Christian. God is giving, therefore when you are truly born again and filled with God's Spirit, there is just something in you that wants to give to others. You have *received* a blessing and so you want to *be* a blessing. There is no greater blessing for a Christian than to know that God used you to meet someone else's need. Jesus said, “Give, and it shall be given unto you, good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom...” (**Luke**

6:38) That doesn't mean that if you put a dollar in the offering plate God will make you rich. It simple means that if you do your part to be a blessing to others, God will do His part to be a blessing to you. **James 1:27** says that “pure and undefiled religion” is meeting the needs of orphans and widows. Unless we put our money and time where our mouth is, all our churchy ways are vain and meaningless.

H = Holiness. We'll never see God unless we are walking in holiness. (**Hebrews 12:14**) But what does it mean to be holy? Some have limited the definition to what clothes you wear or how you fix your hair. But I think we should give God a little more credit than that. Jesus Christ didn't suffer on that cross to establish a dress code. Don't get me wrong, we need to cover up what needs to be covered up. Just remember, your flash of the flesh could cause someone else to lust and that's the last thing God wants. But aside from decency, God doesn't get hung up on your outward appearance. I've met several people that “look” like Christians but act meaner than a junk yard dog with a toothache. And Jesus' track record shows loud and clear that He is not happy with people like that. He wants us to be holy, not holier than thou.

First of all it means to be sanctified, or set apart for God's use. When the temple was built, all the vessels they used in the temple were set aside as holy unto the Lord. They were not to be used for worldly and sinful purposes. They were dedicated to the work and worship of the Lord. When we are born again we have dedicated ourselves to God completely. We are to leave the sins of the past behind and give God full control of our lives.

But most of all it means to be like God. **I Peter 1:16** says, “you be holy, because I am holy.” Rather than living by that sinful nature that we are born with, we should strive to live by the divine nature of Christ. Living by the fruits of the Spirit rather than

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the lust of the flesh.

J = Joy. It’s what everyone wants but not everyone finds. Why is that? Because they are looking in the wrong places. True joy cannot be found outside of Jesus Christ. It can’t be found at the bottom of a beer bottle. It can’t be found at the end of a joint. And it can’t be found inside a fat wallet. Those things bring temporary pleasure but they never bring lasting joy. Psalm 16:11 says, “in God’s presence is fullness of joy.”

The joy that God gives us endures no matter what circumstances life throws our way. Few people suffered more than the apostle Paul. He was beaten with whips five times, beaten with rods three times, stoned once, shipwrecked three times, spent long cold nights with no food, was robbed, and was betrayed by his own people. But yet through it all Paul was able to say, “I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation.” (II Corinthians 7:4) Wow! No Iron Man competition ever produced a man that tough. Paul had proven Nehemiah 8:10 true, “the joy of the Lord is your strength.”

K = Keep the Sabbath. Of all the commandments this one is the most ignored. People fail to realize that it is a *commandment* not a suggestion. Just like “thou shalt not kill” and “thou shalt not steal”, God felt it was so important that He included it in the big ten. God didn’t say, “I’m giving you ten commandments. Choose which ones you want to follow and ignore the rest.” He expects us to follow them all. So if you would never kill someone, or you would never steal, then why would you not go to church on Sunday? And don’t say, “because there are too many hypocrites in church.” Are you perfect? Of course not. So if you judge the people who go to church, even though you know you’re not perfect either, then you are the hypocrite. Think about it. Not being mean, just honest.

In this day and age there is more of a reason to go to church than ever before, yet people seem to go less and

less. It makes no sense. Hebrews 10:25 says, “Don’t forsake the assembling of ourselves together ...but exhort one another, and so much more as ye see the day approaching.” The word “exhort” means to help, comfort, and encourage. And that’s exactly what you get when you surround yourself with Christian people who love you. I would never want to face the trials of life without my church family. Something that should never be heard in a Christian home on Sunday is, “are we going to church today?” Rather it should be, “load up everyone, it’s church time!”

L = Love. Love God and love others. And here’s a doozy; love your enemies. Ouch! Stomped right on that toe didn’t I? These are three things that Jesus practiced and preached. In fact, He wrapped all the commandments up into two. He said, “the greatest commandment is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind. And the second greatest commandment is to love your neighbor as yourself.” (Matthew 22:37-40) If we faithfully keep these two commandments then we will automatically keep all the others. If you love God with all your heart you’re not going to take His name in vain. And if you love others the way you love yourself you’re not going to kill someone. Love should be the fuel that drives every Christian.

M = Minister. Most of the time when you hear the word minister you think of a pastor, preacher, evangelist, etc. But the word minister means to serve and meet the needs of people. We are ALL called to do that. Each one of us have special talents and callings that enables God to use us as His hands and feet. Some people are teachers, some are counselors, some are encouragers and comforters, some are singers, some work with their hands, and the list goes on and on. It’s God that blesses people, but He uses people to do it.

And what you may not realize is that you are actually ministering to

God. When God called Aaron and his sons into the priesthood (Exodus 29:1) he said that their job was to “minister unto Him.” Through serving the people, they were serving God. Jesus Himself said that whatever you do for someone else, you are doing for Him. (Matthew 25:40) Let’s minister to God by ministering to one another and leave this world in better shape than when we found it. That way God is blessed, the person you ministered to is blessed, and you are blessed. Everyone wins!

N = Never quit. There are no rewards for quitters. Who cares who starts a race, it’s who finishes it that matters. Anyone can start, but only the faithful will finish. I’ve never seen an ESPN commentator do a big story on an Olympic runner that quit half way through the race.

Beginning your walk with Jesus is a noble thing, but if you lose heart when the trials of life come your way then you’ve gained nothing. It’s enduring through the hard times and standing before God faithfully in the end that matters. Galatians 6:9 says, “let us not be weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap if we don’t faint.” No one in their right mind would plant a garden one day, then go outside the very next day to pick vegetables. The vegetables will not grow until their “due season.” The gardeners job is to water, fertilize, and pick weeds in the meantime. If he gets discouraged and quits halfway through the process then he will never harvest what he planted and all his labor was in vain. But if he faithfully endures the summer heat, and those evil rabbits, then he will eventually get to enjoy the fruits of his labor.

To be continued....

(Okay, so I got long winded on this one. For O-Z be sure to read the next issue of The Proclamation)

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