

May 2026

The Lighthouse

Means of Keeping the Heart 2 & 3

"Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life."
(Proverbs 4:23)

Last month, I shared with you the first of 6 means for keeping the heart according to John Flavel; namely, "furnish your hearts richly with the word of God, which is their best preservation against sin." In this article we explore the second means of keeping the heart which is this: *Call your hearts frequently to an account, if ever you mean to keep them with God.*

If someone has an employee of whom they are suspicious, they will keep a close watch on them and the Bible says: *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?"* (Jeremiah 17:9). How wise it is to keep a close watch on our hearts. Every evening, we should call our hearts "into the office" for examination. Paul told the Galatians: *"But let each one test his own work..."* (Galatians 6:4) We should test our hearts and say (paraphrasing the words of Flavel), "O my heart! Where have you been today? Where have your thoughts been wandering today? What account can you give of them? O naughty and vain heart! Could you not stay with Jesus, the fountain of delights? Is there better entertainment with the things of this world than with God?"

The more often we meet our hearts with rebukes and checks for wandering, the less it will wander. If every vain thought was renounced with sorrow, and every excursion of the heart from God was met with a severe check; it would not dare so boldly and frequently to digress and step aside from the Lord. Those actions which are committed reluctantly, are not committed with frequency. Take time regularly to examine your heart and call it to account.

The third means of keeping the heart is: *take heed of plunging yourself into such a multiplicity of earthly business, that you cannot manage without neglecting your main business.* The main business of a Christian is to glorify God and enjoy him forever (Shorter Catechism #1). This is not something that we do in the future; rather, it is what we were created for as humans. It is our chief end, as the catechism states.

How much time do we spend time investing in this world wealth, power, status, acceptance; only to have it disappear at death? A king and a peasant are the same in the grave – powerless, moneyless, and no longer contributing to anything on earth. How much time do we spend in trivialities like binge watching sitcoms to the neglect of our spiritual lives? We spend hours playing games on our phones, but only a few minutes at best in God's Word. We spend three hours watching a football game, but find it difficult to be in worship for an hour, or (the horror!) two hours if we attend evening worship.

Remember Paul's words to the Colossians: *“If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.”* (Colossians 3:1–4)

“This is what I mean, brothers: the appointed time has grown very short. From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none, and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods, and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away.” (1 Corinthians 7:29–31, ESV)

May the Lord give us the zeal to keep our hearts close to Him!

Grace & Peace,
Tim



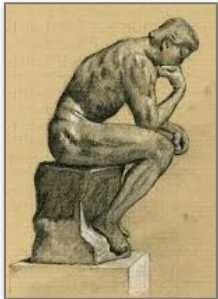
A report from our local mission field...

WORDS FROM THE WILDERNESS

Establishing a Prayer Team To Share God's Heart to Reach the Lost

He Is the Son Of a Pastor

And now he is an atheist. Grant and I met in a “providential coincidence” in Ocean Springs, and we hit it off immediately. Since leaving his family and the faith of his childhood, he has become a successful businessman and owns several liquor stores near the casinos on the gulf coast (no, that is not where we met). But once he found out I was a pastor, he was intrigued and full of questions, so we had a surprisingly deep and real first conversation together. Grant asked if we could meet again, so we arranged to have lunch at a Newk's in Pascagoula (where he is from), and on that day, a shop that is well known for its sandwiches became the site for one of the most interesting (and intense) conversations I have had with a lost person since coming to the coast. Grant is still well versed in Christian theology and truth claims, and he is also well read in all the big philosophers. As we talked, he cited both the Old Testament and the New Testament, and he quoted Sartre, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Camus – And when I say “quoted,” I don't mean in a passing, “I read an article once” kind of way. He knew their writing. He knew their thought and their worldview – And he was bringing them all to bear critically against the worldview of the Bible and the gospel. It all had me digging deeply into my own familiarity with such sources and the apologetics and truths from Scripture that can answer them.



Yet, the time was not antagonistic. Grant and I were able to talk as new but honest friends. He told me his family background and what led him to deny the faith he had grown up believing. And even though he has wandered far since then, he had dozens of earnest, well thought out questions for me. Questions that centered around a theme of, “The gospel seems too good to be true.... But what if it really is true?” And my goal through the conversation (the two hour, non-stop conversation) was to listen well, so I could really hear the heart behind his questions, and to faithfully represent and witness the absolute, unfailing, truth of the gospel to my new friend. Trust me when I say I was praying the entire time, calling to God, “Don't let me screw this up – And would you soften Grant's heart to receive the gospel.”

As our conversation drew to a natural close, we hugged and parted as friends, and with Grant asking if we could meet again and talk more, to which I of course gladly agreed, and invited him to come and meet with some of the crew on Government Street as we gather to continue conversations around “Could the gospel really be true?” Then, as I was driving home, I was praying further for Grant's conversion, and praising God for the privilege of spending my afternoon with a curious non-believer, who at the same time could be so far from, and yet so close, to believing the gospel.



Then Everything Exploded

I was driving home on the highway that runs along and hugs the coast from New Orleans all the way into Florida. As I drove west back toward Ocean Springs, I glanced in my rearview mirror and saw enough blue lights that it looked like the entire Pascagoula police force was behind me – Still a long way off, but gaining quickly. I no more had time to wonder what was going on when, zoom – A motorcyclist blew by me, only inches from my passenger door, and going well over a hundred miles

an hour. He was obviously running from the police and was the object of their pursuit. I did not really have time to register all of this, however, because as soon as he got just ahead of me (in about .001 of a second), he came to an intersection. An intersection where an older lady was driving a Ford F150 and turning in front of us, not seeing the motorcycle coming at her like a rocket. With a sickening sound that anyone who has witnessed such an accident knows and can never forget, the man on the motorcycle hit the turning truck broadside. The impact was immediate. And devastating. With enough force to spin the F150 a full 180 degrees and send it sliding into a ditch. The motorcyclist, as you can imagine, fared even worse. The impact reduced his bike practically to dust. I am not exaggerating – As I surveyed the scene later, the bike was literally in pieces, most of them the size of your hand or smaller. And the man himself was thrown end over end at least fifty feet through the air where he landed and lay motionless on the highway.

Since the accident had happened right in front of me, I was the first person on scene. As I ran to the the motorcyclist, I had a sick feeling in my stomach, expecting the worst. But I was still not ready for what I found. I will not go into details, but suffice it to say, there was grave evidence of catastrophic violence at the site where the man landed. There was not much I could do to help. But I did kneel beside him, and I began to pray. Not “last rites,” of course. But I did call out to our God who is perfect in His compassion and His power, and I asked Him to help. In whatever way was best, would He be with and help this man, and the lady in the truck, and the first responders whom I knew would be on the way and on scene shortly. It was short. It was urgent. And all I could do was kneel there in the middle of the highway and call out God to help.



Very quickly, the police officers who had been pursuing the motorcyclist were on the scene. Securing the site, and checking the victims. Then an ambulance arrived. And a fire truck. And the scene began to fill up quickly with many people doing many things. That is not my world nor my area of expertise, so as soon as I could, I gave a statement to one of the responding officers, and then I vacated the scene, leaving everything to those who are better trained to deal with such a situation. I did check briefly on the lady who had been hit, and was able to pray with her. And then I got back in my truck and drove away.

Although my own part in the incident was brief, the suddenness and the violence of what had happened stayed with me as I tried to process it the rest of the day, and in the days that followed. More than anything, I was struck, if you will pardon the expression, by the juxtaposition of what I had been involved in that one afternoon: First, I had spent two hours in honest but intense, urgent conversation with a man whom I consider a new friend – Inviting him, calling him, almost at times pleading with him to see and receive the gospel – which is a truth that will impact him not only today, but every day to come, and even into eternity. And then, immediately after, I knelt and prayed over a man as he entered into that eternity. The effect was visceral. And jarring. And it left me with one overwhelming conclusion:

This Is Why God Has Called Us To Ocean Springs

Let me be clear: Not every day of ministry here on the coast is anywhere near this intense nor this dramatic. Thank God. However, each day is this important. Eternity, my friends. We pass by people every day for whom eternity is closer at hand than they or we might realize. Some of them have made a choice to walk away from early experience from what they consider “Christianity.” Some of them have stories to tell of past mistakes, and current brokenness and shame. Some of them think deeply about God – and they are just as deeply afraid that they are too far gone for Him to bring them back. Or they carry deep anger toward Him for allowing things to happen that have ruined their lives. And some of them, praise God, some of them are looking around, wanting to connect, and desperate for someone who can sit with them, listen to them, and tell them of the hope of Jesus Christ.

That must be the reason why our new church is here.

My friends, I am so excited and grateful for all that God is doing in Hope Presbyterian. A church that has been prayed into existence through the prayers of believers for years before me. Whose soil was turned over and prepared through the initial work and ministry of Phillip and Lori Sealy, before Phillip passed away. And a church that we now see coming to fruition in the hand and blessing of her Lord, the Head of the church. A church that is growing as she is filled with different people, from different places, all with different stories – And yet God is calling them to unite together for worship, for Bible study, and for growth in Christ. It is planting and growth process to witness. First in our house for Bible on Sunday nights. And then for worship on Sunday mornings. And after we outgrew the house, God has led us and provided for us, as of last month, to begin worshipping at the Ocean Springs Civic Center. So now we have a new building. And a worship team. And an AV team. And we are asking God to lead us to new people. And for Him to grow His church. But why? Why are we here? Why plant this church?



There are lots of reasons to plant a church. But our reason cannot be simply to put another “PCA pin” in the map. It cannot be so that good, reformed people God is bringing to Ocean Springs have a closer church so they do not have to drive all the way to Biloxi or Gulfport for worship. It cannot be simply so that we re-arrange “chairs and name tags” with people from other churches, whom we convince to now go to our church. Even as the Lord fills this church with His people, people whom we love, people whom we worship next to, and have the privilege of helping to teach and disciple. People who still come to our home for discipleship groups and Bible studies and to help each other grow up in their identity in Christ and in His mission. It cannot all be simply that there would now exist a church where previously there was not one. And even as we rejoice that God has led us to a new building – The point must never be the building itself, nor how to decorate it and make it more comfortable and useful.

It is my prayer (Then. Now. More than ever.) that the Lord will lead this church to share His heart for the least. For the lost. And for those in danger of being lost for eternity. That God will open our eyes and guide our steps to those whom we see everyday, but might pass right by. Those who are hurting, and afraid. Those who have caused damage and been damaged. Those who stand on the very edge of eternity – And need to know that Jesus died to be their Savior. And give them Hope. And our vision, our prayer, from the beginning, and even more now, is that God will indeed plant His gospel and His church in Ocean Springs – And that He will fill it with those who are coming to know Jesus as their Lord and as their Savior. “Jesus saw the crowds, that they were harassed and helpless, and He had compassion on them. And He said, ‘The fields are ripe unto harvest. Pray to the Lord of the harvest to send His workers into His harvest field.’” (Matthew 9:35-38)

Will You Pray With Us For What God Is Doing Here

- It all starts with prayer. If you will, please pray for those whom God is leading to this new church, Hope Presbyterian. Singles. Couples. Families. People who are learning to worship Jesus and to respond to His incredible, amazing grace and gospel. Pray for marriages to be strengthened. For children to hear and believe the gospel. And for us to become a church that knows Jesus, in reality – so that we are making Him known in reality in this community.
- Pray for Steve and Sherry Lanier, who are laboring next to us in this ministry. Pray for the dear people of this new church, who are learning to serve in their gifts, through worship, through AV and tech setup and sound, through hospitality and greeting, or through serving in ways that will never

be up front or in the spotlight, but that are so vitally important to the life, worship, and ministry of a new church.

- Pray for Grant and for others God is leading us to in order to share the gospel. Musicians and misfits on Government Street, and lost people throughout Ocean Springs, everywhere we as His church might go. Pray that Lord will lead us to many connections and conversations, where we can listen well, and then, with the word and ways of Jesus, present a gospel that is both desirable and real – For it really is True!
- Pray for Kyle, our new church planting resident, whom we are training in evangelism and in ministry in the hope and expectation that God is calling him to plant the next church on the coast.
- And finally, please pray that in everything we do, the gospel might be clear, and winsome, and come in God's power to change lives – **That eternity itself might be different!**

Would You Become a Financial Partner With Us?

To give to what God is building in Ocean Springs:

- Use the QR code to the right, or visit <http://give.pcamna.org/to/1749>
- Checks can also be sent payable to:
Hope Presbyterian Church
% First Presbyterian Church
1340 Beach Blvd
Biloxi, MS 39530



You Can Find Us Online:

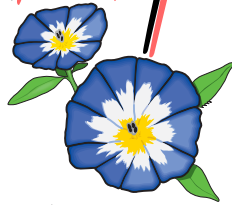
- Our new website: www.HopeForOS.org
- Our YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@HopePresbyterianChurchofOceanS>
- And our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/613907074215025>

Thank you, dear friends. Thank you to all who pray for us and all who give to support God's work here. We praise God for you. And may His grace and peace be with you, always!

**Hope Presbyterian is a GOSPEL COMMUNITY that exists
to REACH OCEAN SPRINGS to REACH THE WORLD for JESUS CHRIST**

BIRTHDAYS for MAY

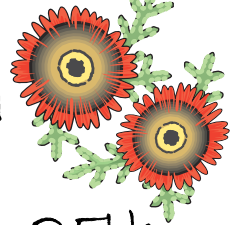
Dean Rydbeck 7th



Scott Malthaner 12th

Jeff Harrison 10th

Evelyn Smith 13th



Hannah Blakeney 11th

Eli Venning 25th

Dates to Remember for May

May 2 Men's Breakfast 8:00 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall

May 3 Communion

May 4 Men's Bible Study at 6:30 p.m. in the parlor

May 7 Ladies Circle at 11:00 a.m.

May 11 Session Meeting at 6:00 p.m.

May 17 Monthly luncheon after the morning worship service, please bring a dish to share

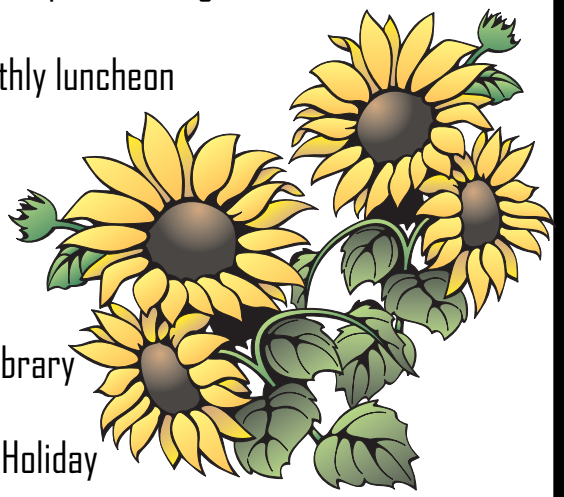
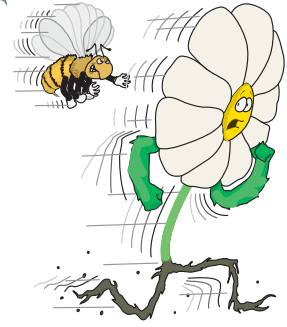
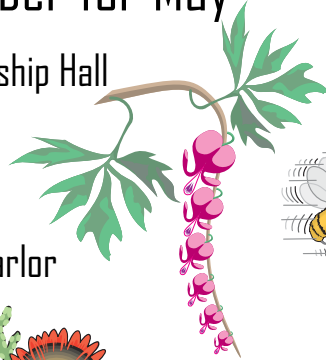
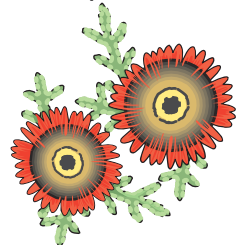
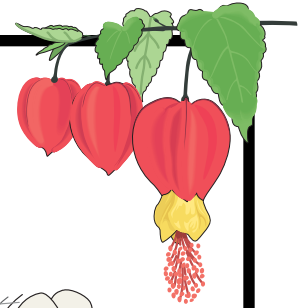
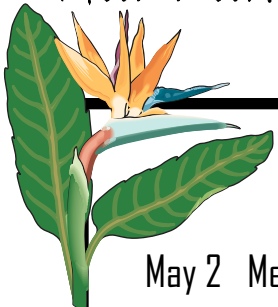
May 17 Recognize our Senior Rachael Venning at the monthly luncheon

May 18 Men's Bible Study at 6:30 p.m. in the parlor

May 18 Deacons Meeting at 5:45 p.m. at the church

May 20 Women's Leadership meeting at 5:30 p.m. in the library

May 25 Church office will be closed for the Memorial Day Holiday





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firstpresbiloxi.org

A congregation of the Presbyterian Church in America.

Elders

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Aaron Smith	601-214-0918	aaron.smith@firstpresbiloxi.org
Ken Pennell (Elder Emeritus)	601-674-1637	ken.pennell@firstpresbiloxi.org
Tim Horn (Pastor)	662-313-8445	tim.horn@firstpresbiloxi.org
Dean Rydbeck (Pastoral Care Minister)	337-351-5294	dean.rydbeck@firstpresbiloxi.org
Kyle Palmer (Pastoral Intern)	228-860-7412	kyle.palmer@firstpresbiloxi.org

Deacons

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Church Secretary

Kim Clark	228-374-6880	info@firstpresbiloxi.org
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Church Facilities Manager

Greg Mann	601-954-1241	greg.mann@firstpresbiloxi.org
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Nursery Coordinator

Kerri Willson	570-430-8119	kerri.willson@firstpresbiloxi.org
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