

# West Chicago Church of Christ *Family*

## *Welcome to the West Chicago Church of Christ*

Have you ever been inspired to build something from a vision? As kids my brothers and I built a tree house in our yard. We had this beautiful, really huge elm tree and my older brother one day just made this tremendous suggestion. We had old boards from behind the garage. A pile of rusty nails, which interspersed with weeds and dirt also came from the space there. We didn't have benefit of top grade materials. When you are nine, any possible apprehension and thought to complain is overshadowed by the reality of free building materials. And, safety for us was never an issue. My younger brother did fall out of the tree into the bushes once. I believe one of the neighbor kids did so also. This prompted my parents to have us tear it down at the end of the summer. Looking back, that whole experience was just kind of kids stuff.

When I was in junior high, my buddy John (a future engineer) began a visionary project to build a two story fort in the corner of his backyard. Interestingly, the second story was not meant to extend up, but rather down. His plan was to dig a hole in the backyard, 20' x 5', and 7' deep. Of course I was part of the digging and building process along with the other John and our friend Marc. We even built a framework for interior walls, which we nailed together in the yard and ultimately had to push into the hole and fasten together in a big long 2 x 4 structural box. Certainly he didn't plan for us to stop there. We used plywood on the walls and poured a concrete floor. I'm being truthful when I tell you, he also put a water bed at one end. The above ground structure over top of this sort-of, James Bond villains lair was much more modest by comparison. I do remember his dad, a surgeon, would periodically come out to the worksite and kind of shake the corner of the structure to test its integrity. I always thought that because he was a doctor, he was somehow the best person to stamp the project as safe. When all he ever

really said to us was "boys be safe". We did several overnights in the subterranean chamber that summer. We always took an 8-track tape player, a box of Triscuit crackers and several cans of Cheez Whiz. Over the course of 2 years or so however, it became a very humid, spider infested dungeon. I guess we thought that a roughly poured thin concrete floor was all we needed to keep the water out. Not so. Again, that experience in hindsight was just kids stuff.

Several weeks ago, Thelma shared with Sally some very interesting photographs. If you look closely, you might vaguely recognize the property in the picture. The photos are

from the summer of 1956 and depict the ground breaking for our church building here in West Chicago. I have to believe that this building project began with a vision that went far beyond simply a physical structure. My understanding is that construction began in August 1956 and was completed by March 1957. What most strikes me are the smiles apparent on almost every face. I think they foresaw a place to gather and fellowship, worship and pray. A place for this church family to call God's house. And, as Chuck characterized in his last article, a place to call "home". He always loved the **Proverbs**

and so this one from chapter 24:3-4 seems appropriate. *By wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established; by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches.* I really like this one from **Isaiah 32:18** also, *My people will abide in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places.* The church is a collection of people, and among them have been not just one, but many cornerstones. A foundation, not built on a roughly poured, thin concrete floor. But a bedrock consisting of wisdom, understanding, and knowledge. Definitely not kid's stuff.

*Elder Jay*



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Where does advice come from? Is there a big pool somewhere that we all tend to draw from? Is there an app we can access from our smartphones that connects us to the most popular solutions to all the world's problems? Do we need to have certain qualifications to dispense advice or can anyone do it? When someone says, "Let me give you a little free advice", do you jump at the opportunity, and does it ever really turn out to be free? The answers to these questions as I'm seeing them are: yes, no, no/yes, hopefully no, and definitely no. I certainly understand that opinions may vary on these particular questions.

In my experience, so much advice in our world is really geared toward having us believe that there is something we can't possibly do without, which reverts back to that question about "free advice."

When giving out advice, the purveyor of this information, "the adviser" can tend to characterize your decisions from this moment forward, as being a matter of life or death. And, somehow giving themselves the unspoken title of *sage* (1: one distinguished for wisdom. 2: a mature or venerable person of sound judgment.)

A good example of this, is when your good buddy, (also thirteen years old) attempts to give you advice about how to talk to girls. So I wonder, where did *he* get the information? Probably from some other lunkheaded guy trying to be cool, (again, by appearing the *sage*.) My dad told me, in so many words, "just be yourself". Not being yourself in a way is just like telling a lie. Suddenly you have to keep track of everything you've said. "Just yourself" is familiar to you, easy to do, and can answer the question if it ever comes up later, "does this person like me for myself?" I'm saying this to any thirteen year old that may read this. There will most definitely be someone who likes you for yourself, and being yourself will save you lots of work in the meantime. This is true to life information, tried and tested. It's proved beneficial to me and I hope it can be helpful to you also.

There is a story about two beggars who were sitting on the side of the road. One said, "I am where I am today because I would not listen to anyone's advice." The other said, "I am where I am today because I listened to everyone's advice." This simple story suggests how difficult it can be to discern the difference between good and bad advice.

King Rehoboam met his downfall because he listened to the wrong people and followed bad advice. Rehoboam took over the kingdom from his father Solomon. Solomon

had married foreign wives and ultimately built and worshiped at altars to their gods. So God raised up adversaries to disrupt his rule, dividing the kingdom. After Solomon's death Rehoboam wrestled with the problem of recapturing the lost tribes taken from his father Solomon by God. Plagued by this difficult challenge, Rehoboam sought advice from two different sources. Firstly, the elders who advised that he honor the people's request to lower the unjustly high taxes previously imposed by Solomon resulting in his possession of great riches.

Their suggestion was that if he lightened their yolk by this generous and empathetic gesture, they would be happy and serve him gladly all his life. Secondly, Rehoboam asked his younger friends and contemporaries who suggested he actually increase the financial burden on the people as a sign of strength. The younger men appeared to be thinking more about what seemed better for Rehoboam without thought to the needs of the people. As a result, the kingdom remained divided. This story actually includes many complicated details, but I've shared those that help to support my point.

It's not to say that we shouldn't follow advice or that identifying the good will be an obvious choice. It was easy for me to see that I might be getting better council from my Dad, someone I would consider a true people person, someone I always witnessed to being himself. That I may have good advice now, doesn't suggest that I took this same

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good advice initially. It only means that the experience taught me the difference between the two. Seek out that person who can offer you “true to life, tried and tested advice”. It is usually someone you know that loves you. With all good intention, I hope I’ve been able to give you just a little free advice.

*Elder Jay*

# West Chicago Church of Christ

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When I was a kid, my family spent much time in the spring and summer camping. As outdoor people and teachers my parents always used their breaks from school to pack up the travel trailer and go someplace away from home. We had a boat also, so much of our time was spent with water sports, water skiing and tubing. There was a flooded quarry on our lake that we could boat into. We would climb the rocks and dive. My brothers and I would challenge each other for the highest ledge. Of course there were less harrowing activities to participate in. As part of the Tennessee Valley Authority, our campground had activities run by various college interns. Softball, volleyball, and crafts. There were always other young people around. You could even write your name on a clipboard and check-out a bow and arrow to try your skills at the target range nearby. Less harrowing than cliff diving but in hindsight, equally unsafe. We enjoyed these camping trips. As much as we roamed the campground looking for things to do, the home base, where everyone seemed to congregate, was the campfire.

The campfire was always one of the first things we got established upon arrival. It was the only safely mandated use of matches and flammable objects allowed by our parents, so we took this task in hand with exuberance.

Thinking back, I recall, there was always a rusty metal ring at each site meant as a fire pit. This, in general suggested some level of implied fire safety and a buffer from the dense trees and dry needles surrounding our camp. If you are an outdoor person, you are aware that there are specific, very important steps to building a campfire. You can't just toss a match onto a log and expect to get a hot, roaring inferno. You have to work your way up.

Beginning with little sticks (kindling), you gradually add larger limbs and eventually logs. The foundation in this case burns down into coals that ignite the larger sticks and logs that get fed into the flames. That sounds dramatic and

exciting. Logically however, you will hopefully slow down with the fuel wood once the fire reaches a pleasing and appropriate size. Then add the wood as needed to maintain.

When all the fun was over, interest would wane and fire management usually turned over to our Dad. Certainly he maintained a few simple rules. DON'T POKE IN THE FIRE was the main one. I don't know if physics or math equations can express why this is bad, but it did seem like stirring the coals with a stick had less of a positive effect.



I like the whole idea of camping. Our experiences were not as primitive and challenging as what the people of Israel encountered, but it provides a simple parallel we can use as an illustration. In **Deuteronomy 8:2** it says: *Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years, to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands.* God was preparing His people to enter the Promised Land. I believe God's intent was for the people of Israel to get their priorities straightened out. Walk with the Lord, obey Him and He would provide for them every step of the way. This extended 40 year camping trip was to test and to refine them. Not only was God *preparing a place* for them in Canaan, He was *preparing them* for Canaan. Does this make sense? He gave them some guidelines to follow in the wilderness. They didn't always do what He asked. God stuck with them through the darkest times anyway. They grumbled and wished to be back in Egypt where at least they had meager food to eat. Their slavery to them was like paradise compared to camping in the wilderness. There were times when His people didn't want to follow His few simple rules. Sometimes they just wanted to POKE IN THE FIRE. God surely gives us challenges and trials, *to humble us, to know what is in our hearts, whether or not we would keep his commands.* When things get dark... He'll stick with us too.

*Elder Jay*



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Snow! What a beautiful thing. It consists of frozen crystalline water throughout its life cycle, starting when, under suitable conditions, the ice crystals form in the atmosphere, usually in the clouds, increase to millimeter size, precipitate and accumulate on surfaces, then metamorphose in place, and ultimately melt, slide or sublimate away. Aaaah, yes, right, ok...*but what does that mean?!!* After I had looked up the words precipitate, sublimate, and metamorphose it all came clear...kind of.

Snow it is said, carries a very powerful omen of peaceful times ahead, thus I understand why snow conveys a spiritual meaning of calmness, peacefulness, and tranquility. Snow tells you it's time to pause, relax, and be calm. *I am* writing this as I listen to **George Frideric Handel's Suite in B flat Major**. A very peaceful, calming classical music composition indeed.

It is Thursday, February 17, 2022 and a great and blustery snow front has today passed through our area, leaving in its wake drifts and banks of beautiful snowy white. If I could stand outside, tip my head back and catch snowflakes on my tongue like we did as children, I could truly capture the tranquility, the peace and the calm.

Instead, I will wake from my reverie, break from my writings of soothing thoughts and mental images of this amazing winter aesthetic. Then I'll go outside to grapple against the power of the elements to clear the snow from my parent's driveway and sidewalk and periodically as the snowplow passes, shovel away what has been plowed in toward the driveway at the street. This experience is only made complete when shaking off the cold. I sense that ache you get in your hands when they hit the warmth of the indoors and begin to thaw. Does anyone remember thinking as a child it was a good idea to run your frozen hands under the warm tap water? *I did!!* It's almost like a reverse ice cream head freeze. These feelings can only truly be emphasized, then reinforced, coupled with the dull ache you feel in your lower back as you struggle out of your wet winter coat.

I hope my description helps to bring to life your imaging of both the wonder of winter from childhood memories and the contrast of our dutiful adult struggle to shovel a safe walkway.

Outwardly, I have shared two different extremes. Both describe a common occurrence experienced through two different attitudes. Attitude?

This is a very important thing to consider. The attitudes we take can affect everything we do, those things we don't enjoy doing but even those we do. Having a "positive attitude" means a person believes everything happens for the best in the end. A person with a "negative attitude" tends to believe their best days are past, and there is nothing to "look forward to" considering it a waste of time and energy. During the times I grumble, (albeit, to myself) my effectiveness for God's purpose becomes watered down. Is it truly

possible when serving God and others to enjoy even *those things I don't want to do?* I've learned that if you are helping someone else, your own troubles seem to fade. I think this is God working on my difficulty as I work to help someone with theirs. I like this concept. *"I think I'll try it out!"*

A good attitude doesn't require recognition, though a little recognition may sometimes help with my attitude. However, eventually I may start to expect recognition, which then causes me to have a bad attitude. It can create a bit of a vicious circle. He said that we are to live by FAITH (**Hebrews 10:38**), because without it, it's impossible to please Him. He wants those who call on Him to believe in Him, and trust that He rewards those who are diligent to seek after Him (**Hebrews 11:6**). This kind of goes back to that idea about helping others. God is the rewarder of those who seek to do his will.

The snow is beautiful and pleasing to look at. Sometimes however, there is need for me to get the shovel out and take

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care to make sure that safety has been considered. Outside in the winter can be cold and uncomfortable. I feel good, assured, secure that somehow I've made it a little safer for those who tread where I've cleared. This gives me a good feeling, a good attitude. Think about God's will, His glory, if we approach it correctly, it can feel a bit like catching snowflakes on our tongue.

*Elder Jay*

# West Chicago Church of Christ Family

## *Welcome to the West Chicago Church of Christ*

Singing has many positive effects on the human being. It lowers cortisol and relieves stress and tension. It can influence your confidence and self-esteem. It can give you positive feelings and a boost in your energy which also reduces anxiety. Singing enhances feelings of trust and bonding when done in a group. It is a very mindful activity because when you are singing you are fully focused. This separation from distraction can remove your mind from negative thoughts. Additionally, singing is an aerobic activity that can increase overall health.

It exercises major muscle groups helping to improve the efficiency of your cardiovascular system encouraging you to take in more oxygen. This, I understand can actually make you more alert.

It is used to express many different emotions and when shared can be very contagious. It can be soothing or moving and is a perfect vehicle for communication. It can be done by individuals but takes on an entirely different dimension when people sing together. This collaboration of voices, each in different *timbres* (different vocal qualities such as tenor, baritone or bass) to combine different pitches, produces harmony.

Singing is my favorite part of our worship together. I've always felt that God gave us a very distinct blessing in the singing we do. Our acapella tradition is very impressive and is solidly engrained in our souls. Not all of us feel like singers, but we all sing don't we? This is praise to God. If you grew up in the church, and even if you didn't, it's possible that you can sing many familiar hymns from memory. Often I find myself humming low, the chorus to church tunes I've known all my life. What is amazing is that if you pulled together a soprano, an alto, a tenor and a bass, even individuals from different congregations and ask them to sing "The Lily of the Valley" for example, they will probably *not* ask for the words

and music before they break into singing. Through our worship these songs have taken hold in our hearts.

This worship and praise is amazingly present in the singing we share at Rockford Camp. The songs and the young people gathered together aim their *exuberance* toward the heavens. And, if one looks in the dictionary for the word *exuberance*, the definition includes the word "ebullience". This is a great new descriptive word that Tim introduced in his article last week.



Often times we think about something we want to remember and wish that we could somehow capture it in a bottle. My friend Sid Fryer at one camp session a number of years ago brought his colleague, a recording engineer to camp to document our singing. The recording was a great reminder, the essence or our singing together that day. I know the recording is still in existence but can't compare with the ambient energy of the live singing it was meant to capture.

In **Zephaniah 3:17** it reads: *The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves.*

*He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.*" Additionally in **Hebrews 2: 11-12** *Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters. He says:*

*"I will declare your name to my brothers and sisters; in the assembly I will sing your praises."*

The power to praise God and to lift each other up is present in these verses. I see Jesus here, singing with us and to us. We create harmony both as music, and as we aspire to be one in spirit. You don't have to be a singer to sing. If it connects to your heart, it translates as sweet sound in God's ears. *This is something I would endeavor to capture in a bottle.*

*Elder Jay*



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Springtime is a perfect time for the beauty of nature to be highlighted. This is when all the plants awake from their dormant rest and spring up from the soil or the bushes or the trees. (*I find the name for the season does actually originate from the verb “spring”*) This brings to mind the question, “Where does this all come from?”

For her birthday one year, Sally wanted me to get a flowering tree for the yard. There were many to choose from. Of course different sizes, different colors, a diversity in price range. This all resulted in a huge variation of Spring-flowering ornamental trees to choose from, and to visualize each one in my yard was a bit overwhelming. Among them was *Cornus alternifolia*, *Magnolia stellata*, *Chionanthus virginicus*, *Amelanchier x grandiflora*, *Cornus mas* and *Cercis canadensis*. As enjoyable as it may be to read these scientific names for colorful blossoming trees, for me it was a little like wading through quicksand. Too slow and a bit cumbersome. You’ll find their given names more descriptive and certainly more attractive.

*Pagoda dogwood*, *Star magnolia*, *White fringetree*, *Apple serviceberry*, *Cornelian cherry dogwood*, *Eastern redbud*, and finally, *Pear* (scientific name “*Pyrus*”). I realize that Pear, kind of a plain sounding name doesn’t seem to quite conjure the esthetic poetry you might imagine when reading the other names. It’s a bit like displaying a pair of coveralls next to a row of prom dresses. The image above however proves quite a contrary fact when making a comparison. The Pear tree is really very beautiful. As we were deciding, Pear *is*, the one that we chose.

It may be by random chance that the tree Pear, was given a relatively lackluster sounding title and a scientific name that fails to flow off the tongue. I seem to remember someone asking the question, “What’s in a name? That which we

call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet.” That is Shakespeare isn’t it? So Romeo would were he not Romeo called? This certainly is flowery language. The point is, a Pear could be called a Buckeye, but it doesn’t change the fact that it comes from a strikingly lovely tree when it blooms in the spring. Name or not, it definitely falls in line with the rest of God’s amazingly matchless creation.

Back to the question, “Where does this all come from?” I’ve mentioned it before, but when God brought everything into being, he designed into it certain patterns that are manifested in multiple examples of his creativity. Recall, the “Fibonacci sequence.” These repeating physical elements show themselves over again every spring.

In **Job 12** the Bible says: *“But ask the beasts, and they will teach you; the birds of the heavens, and they will tell you; or the bushes of the earth, and they will teach you; and the fish of the sea will declare to you. Who among all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this? In his hand is the life of every*

*living thing and the breath of all mankind.”* In the same way, we recognize His special care in creating us. **Psalm 139:14** is an important reminder: *For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.*

Winter seemed kind of long this year. I know that spring is near when my buddy Ryan begins riding his skateboard in figure eights outside on the street. I am heartened by this. But greater encouragement I find in the regeneration of God’s thoughtful formation, when I see the beautiful Pear tree in its vibrant blossom as it emerges in my side yard. His beautiful spring creation.

*Elder Jay*



(Pyrus) “The Pear”



# West Chicago Church of Christ



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One of the first things I learned when taking art education classes for teaching is, it can take up to twenty-six times for something to become a “habit”. Of course this number could vary by researcher but the point is, an individual doesn’t generally learn most things on the first attempt. For students in my classes, this could include the learning of specific artistic behaviors. As an example, a technique like holding a brush a certain way, or actually, learning to properly clean a brush so that it is usable when students come to class the next day. I often framed this repetition in the form of routines. Things that students, at my initial prompting, just got in the “habit” of doing every day.

I had this really good pole vault coach when I was in high school. Mr. Gross. He had never pole vaulted himself. But he read books, studied diagrams and used his natural rapport with young people to become a good teacher... and a good coach. His sport as a student athlete was playing football at Southern Illinois University in the late 1940s. As my coach he began telling me ‘round about my

sophomore year, what his plan and expectation for me was. “I am training you to be a state champion,” he said. “Holy cow” (or something like) I’m sure I thought at the time. “How is this going to happen?” What made this a potential reality, was that he had already coached two state champions when I came along. Over the next three years, there were many routines. Strength, speed, coordination. Push-ups, pull-ups, walking around on my hands. Swinging on a high bar. A person begins to react physically to all this training.

In sports, in music, in anything with a physical component, this is often referred to as muscle memory. Like a golfer, this muscle memory acquired over time not only results in a consistent swing of the club (most of the time), it also motivates you to visualize that perfect swing. If you’re really into something a whole lot, you tend to walk around

visualizing yourself with a perfect execution of that thing you’ve been working on. And actually, this isn’t confined strictly to athletic endeavors. It is important to realize, that this “coaching” is actually a form of discipline. I remember Mr. Gross saying to me, “I’ve told you a hundred times, and I’m sure I’ll have to tell you a hundred more.” He never got to the point however, when he said to me, “I won’t tell you again! I give up!”

Something I learned growing up is that you wrestle with those things new, unfamiliar or just anything you desire to learn or achieve. You work and try, doing the same thing over

and over again. Sometimes you skin your knee, figuratively... or really! But you get back up. What is unusual about this is that often times there is an epiphany, an illuminating discovery, a realization that you seem to all of a sudden be able to do that thing you’ve been struggling with for so long.

I like when Tim makes reference to the verse in **Romans 7:15**. *For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.* I do, I do not, I do,

I do not! It can be confusing and challenging. Thus the first sentence in verse 15. *I do not understand what I do.* **It is** serious business, but I find it a little humorous also, when I realize that I will always display a certain degree of human frailty. God knows this.

Will our Christian behaviors ever become habit? Well, yes and no, if that is possible. As feeble humans, we will never fully develop that muscle memory. Sometimes we will execute a perfect swing, sometimes not. We sin, even when we don’t want to. God has told us a hundred times, and He will need to tell us a hundred more, but He will never say, “I won’t tell you again. I give up.” Visualize yourself doing those things God is trying to develop in you. You may receive that epiphany, an illuminating discovery, a realization that all of a sudden...you can.



*Jay Hearn pole vaulting, Eastern Illinois University, 1984*

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When I am writing, my biggest fear is that I will use the same word multiple times. With so many to choose from in the English language, it seems certain that there are other great options to add variety when communicating with sentences. I tend to rely very heavily on synonyms.

As a college student, I had this really great thesaurus I would use when writing a research paper or required poem, or whatever. I always had a good “secondary” word to use. Now however, it is so expedient to punch in a request online and have a convenient list of alternatives pop right up on the screen.

Recently, I thought it might be interesting to do one of these searches to see if there is actually a synonym for the word synonym. My initial thought, was that this would somehow create a supernatural language-based “catch 22.” But using my logical mind, I realize that synonym is just a word like any other. Some possibilities I did

find are: *equivalent, synonymy, metonym, synonymic, analogous and synonymous*. All are nouns or adjectives. I found it slightly aggravating that half the synonyms for synonym actually have the word synonym in them. Regardless, a synonym is a word or phrase that means exactly or nearly the same as another word or phrase in the same language. We need them if we wish to be perceived as, at the least, a little articulate.

*Trust, belief, confidence, conviction, reliance, dependence, optimism, expectation, hope*. Certainly, I have on several occasions, included in my article a list of new words to add to my interesting words list. Looking a little closer, you might realize that this is not one of those lists. These words are very close in their meanings. These words, are all synonyms for “faith.”

This list of alternate words for faith is interesting to me in that they all seem very balanced. Certainly, as the search might expect them to be... interchangeable. These are common words we hear everyday.

So, why is faith important? Is it possible to get along without it? I have always heard that in your desire to accomplish something, you need to make an effort to achieve that thing. If you don't believe you can do it however, you never will. The apprehension to attempt is usually driven by an unbelief that you can. A lack of faith.



The familiar story of Jesus... and Peter walking on the water is an example that can be used to illustrate this point. It was Peter who said “*Lord, if it's you tell me to come to you on the water.*” And of course we know that Jesus' response was to come on out and so Peter did. But, the blowing wind and the waves distracted him from his goal. So much so that his faith began to

suffer and, even in his successful attempt, he began to fail. One might think that in his progress, he would have been encouraged on to greater success, to meet Jesus out on the lake. **James 1:4** says, “*But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.*”

I contend that we should apply this ideal to all our endeavors. We need only to get out of the boat. Distraction or not, Jesus is still out on the water urging us along. Only this confusion can interrupt our success. His desire is to reassure and buoy us when the weather around us attempts to change our course. *Trust, belief, confidence, conviction, reliance, dependence, optimism, expectation... hope!* Common words we hear everyday. Synonyms for faith.

*Elder Jay*

**btw:** *I repeated myself 11 times with the word synonym. I guess it's ok... just this once. :)*

# West Chicago Church of Christ *Family*

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Decisions, decisions, decisions. This is a dilemma that affects everyone...everyday actually. Usually starting first thing in the morning. Should I wear the red shirt or the blue. The blue one matches the pants better but it really needs to be ironed. Do I have time to iron it? If not I have to find different pants. The pants that match the red shirt have a spot on the knee. I wonder if that will come out with a little water? Aargh, I don't have time for that either. I think I'll just wear blue jeans and a t-shirt so I don't have to decide. Oh, I guess that was a decision also.

What next this morning? Coffee or orange juice? Bagel or granola bar? Do I have time to shave or can I get by today? What clothes are the kids going to wear? And those are just the basic ones that get us out of the house in the morning.

When you go to work, manage your home, shop for provisions, care for your family, there are any number of choices that have to be made. In a way these things for us become routine, and so we almost don't realize that we are constantly being forced to choose. So many questions to face in determining which direction will be most prudent.

I've been building cabinets to add for badly needed storage capacity in our kitchen. I have an annoying habit of staring at the work area in attempting to visualize how things will look as completed. This doesn't just last a few moments. I imagine, both one way then the other. Stirring around the possible options. What color if any should we use for the finish? Do I use expensive "slow close" hinges or will the cheaper "traditional" ones suffice? Certainly also, Sally reserves the right to throw in even more ideas. I want everything to be just perfect. Sally says, "It doesn't have to be perfect, it just has to look nice." Of course then, back to

those decisions about all the little variables that make for a "not perfect, just a nice looking" result. We can certainly mire ourselves when trying to determine what is best.

Paul in the New Testament certainly represented a much greater extreme in his determination to do what was best. He was pretty adept at disparaging the early church but in a short period of time, actually became one of it's

most convicted leaders. Paul made the hard decision to take back his criticism of Christianity. Subsequently, he lost his former allies, the Jews and was doubted by the Christians regarding his conversion. Having made his decision, he was able to endure suspicion about his sincerity and through his extensive writing was able to share the message of Jesus far and wide.



I've always been drawn to the famous poem by Robert Frost entitled, *The Road Not Traveled*. Frost describes a decision to be made about which path to take at the fork in the road. As he ponders, one appears slightly more pristine. Less foot traffic'd, maybe more interesting. Possibly even... a little hazardous. He decides on this one and leaves the other for another day. However, remembering that one choice generally leads to another, realizes he may never come back. Projecting into his future, "ages and ages hence." He says, "I took the one less traveled by, and that made all the difference."

Paul's choice to follow Jesus, made all the difference. He influenced and inspired Timothy and Titus. He wrote many encouragements AND rebukes to guide the churches. He encountered resistance and disregard. All for his desire to do what was best. His road less traveled was to choose Jesus. And so too is ours!

*Elder Jay*