

REMEMBER IN PRAYER: Our Country; Our Veterans; Elementary, High School & College Students; Foreign Exchange Students; Erica Adams' Grandmother—health; Andy Adams' Brother; Andy Adams' co-worker's husband, Randy—health; Lorinda Bailey's Mother, Elaine Martin, knee replacement surgery; Bohne Family—personal issues; DudLee Brennförder's Father, Gary—cancer treatment & pain; DudLee Brennförder's Family—passing of DudLee's grandmother, Evelyn; Evelyn Brown—personal issues & health; Daniel Enfield; Peggy Dill's great nephew, Joseph Hibler—health, and passing of her sister, Judy Schiltz; Ned & Neva Cooper—health; Robb & Katrina Glassmyer & Jackson—health; Donnis Genung—cancer treatment; Sue Ginn—health; Robert & Susan Grissom's Son, Joel Grissom—health & family issues; Robert & Susan Grissom's nephew, Gary Weaver—family issues; Chase Hofferber—health; Lisa & Cassidy Jurrens—health; Muriel Luke—autoimmune disease; Judy Melvin—health, and her brother Donald and his wife—health; Johnny Meyers—health; Donna Montemayor—recovering from foot surgery; Brian & Karla Nauert's daughter, Kara Voorhees—recovering from back surgery; Seth Ostrander—brain tumor; Steve Sikes's Family in the passing of their daughter, Jessica; John & Ramona Ratliff & Family—Crystal's passing & John's surgery; Dwight Roth & Piper—Dwayne's passing; Kay Strong—Stroke recovery; Shirley Steen's grandson, Adam; Sudanese Brethren—persecution; Towell Family; Roger Yost's Daughter, Ashley—health; Maggie Sales' brother, Gavin Wallace—recovering from surgery; Gary & Norma Werner—Norma's health; Matt & Hope Witt—teaching in China; Tina Witt; Lisa Worley—health & her brother-in-law, Dan Barber—head injury; Joe Wright—job search.

PRAY FOR OUR MISSIONARIES: Russel Bell (Mission work in India & Romania).

PRAY FOR THOSE SERVING OUR COUNTRY: Jeffery Hergenreder

Happy March Birthday To:

Judy Melvin - 6	Andy Adams - 7
Peggy Shearer - 9	Madison Fielder - 22
Maggie Sales - 23	Ann Hinton - 22
Zachery Corman - 31	Muriel Luke - 25
	Robert Grissom - 30

Happy March Anniversary To:

Russ & Felice Dudrey - 8	
Bob & Peggy Shearer - 17	Reed & Betty Munsell - 21

Women's Wednesday night class books: Russ has several copies of a book for the upcoming women's class, Kara Tippetts' *The Hardest Peace: Expecting Grace in the Midst of Life's Hard*. The book is written by a woman dying of cancer and addresses the topic of trusting God and living in His joy and peace in the midst of suffering. See Russ to get one. The suggested reimbursement to the church is \$12 per book, but the books are free to all who need one but don't have the money.

ELDERS IN THE MAKING

Reed Munsell says that for years when the topic of appointing elders in the Hastings church came up, there was a man who said "We can't appoint elders. Nobody here is qualified." End of discussion. It was the same way in the church in Reno as I grew up.

It's been the same in many congregations of the Churches of Christ. The way we have approached choosing elders has pretty much paralyzed us. We have looked for men who have all the qualifications we find in the descriptions of elders in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1. That's our mistake: looking for perfect people. Instead we should look for elders in the making.

That's what Jesus did with the Apostles. He did not look for men who were already spiritually full-grown and fully qualified for apostleship; he looked for Apostles in the making. When he chose them and called them to follow, they were far from perfect. In fact, they were pretty raw.

Peter was raw—at Caesarea Philippi Jesus had to tell him "Get behind me, Satan!" because he was more ready to follow the Jewish Messiah to the wars than to follow Jesus to the cross; in Gethsemane he was still more ready to fight than to pray. James and John were raw—they wanted to sit on thrones when Jesus reestablished the kingdom of David; they fought with the others over who was the greatest; they wanted to call down fire on a Samaritan village that refused to receive Jesus. The Twelve were all raw—they all slept in the Garden; one betrayed, one denied; they all fled. Thomas was raw—he refused to believe until he actually saw the wounds in Jesus' hands and side. None of the Apostles believed the women's report of seeing the risen Jesus himself—they dismissed it as silly women's hysteria. When the risen Jesus appeared to the Eleven he rebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of heart because they did not believe the women, nor did they believe what the Scriptures said about the suffering death and the resurrection of God's Servant-Messiah.

Shouldn't all this have disqualified them from Apostleship? But it didn't. Jesus saw something in them that he knew could develop them into his Apostles—though he must also have known it would take years to develop them into the Apostles they would become. That doesn't happen until Acts 2, when the Holy Spirit comes upon them and gives them the power and the new understanding necessary to make them his effective witnesses.

What did Jesus see in the Twelve from the first? Character. He saw in them the kind of men who would leave everything and follow him, in spite of their repeated failures in following. He saw in them the essential nature of men who would follow at great self-sacrifice—and who in the end would become so transformed that they would not only follow, but lead, like Jesus.

The real mistake in our thinking about what makes an elder an elder has been seeing I Timothy 3 and Titus 1 as checklists of qualifications. No: What Paul gives in these Scriptures are not shallow and external checklists, but internal character descriptions. He describes the essential character of the man, the nature and essence of the kind of man who can shepherd the flock of God. The biggest qualities of elders are that they are blameless, above reproach, upright, holy, self-controlled. They have a good reputation both in the church and in the community. These are not just qualifications, but character descriptions. What makes an elder an elder? His character: he is a man who follows Jesus. The kind of man who truly follows Jesus is the kind of man who will lead like Jesus.

Jesus saw in the Twelve when he called them, not perfect people, but Apostles in the making. They did not have all the qualifications; what they had was character that could be formed—and transformed—into the image of Christ. Let's name men as elders who are elders in the making.

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