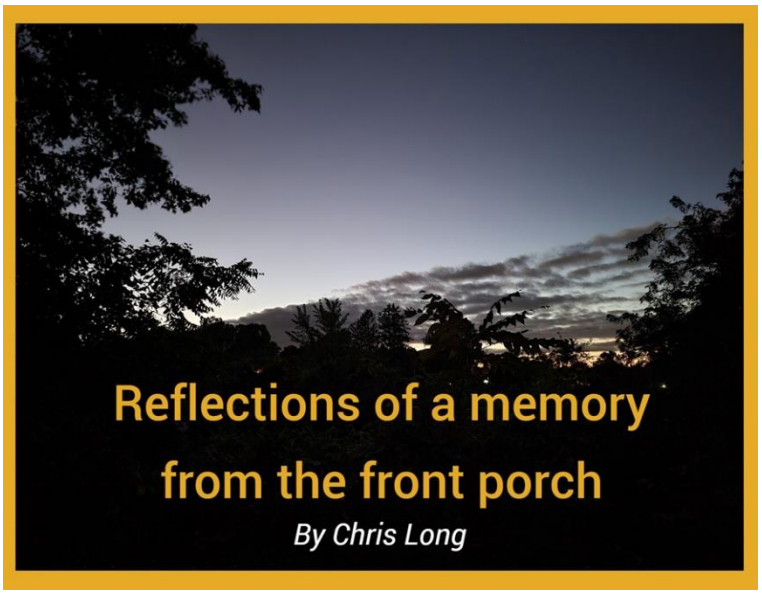
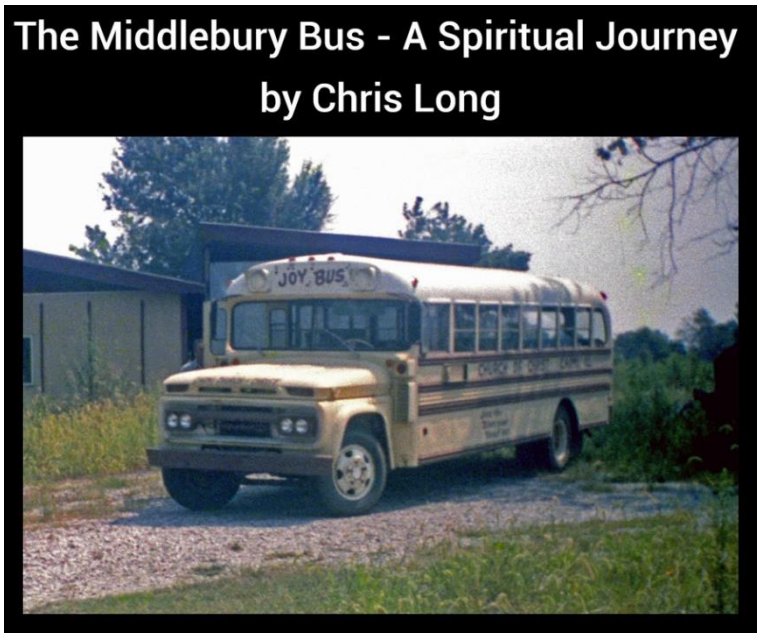


Reflections of a memory from the front porch

While looking at tonight's sunset it brought me back to time and a place. It was the summer of 1978 after work on a porch with High School classmates at our friend Neil's house in Akron. A group of young Christian men, drinking coffee reading Bible passages and listening to Night Watch on WCRF radio. We had just graduated from High School and still did not know where exactly we would be going or what the future held for each of us. But we knew that He who held tomorrow, held our futures as well. This same house was a place where people had come to party, drink, and smoke both kinds of substances. But a year later much had changed. It now was a place where young Christians would gather, a place where people committed to following Christ would receive encouragement and fellowship. Some of the old gang would visit from time to time out of curiosity just to see if the faith had still held with the group only to discover after brief conversations that indeed it had. The time was simple and important as young men were making life decisions that would affect the course of their lives. Three would decide to go into the ministry, two would decide to go into education, and others were contemplating their life's work with marriage and family. The Lord certainly directed our steps. Proverbs 3:5,6 Trust in the Lord with all your heart; and lean not unto your understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct your path. – Chris Long



The Middlebury Bus: A spiritual journey – By Chris Long

It was the summer of 1978. I had come to faith in Christ the previous fall. The little church I attended had a mixture of people, but the thing we had in common was our new-found faith in Jesus. The pastor drove the bus that day to an all-day church softball tournament. I don't remember much about the play on the field. I think we were eliminated pretty quickly. But it was the ride home that has stuck in my memory as a spiritual journey.

The ride home was a little over an hour, and sometime during that ride we began to sing worship songs, then different ones began to lead in prayer. There was such a sweet presence of the Lord in our worship and prayer as the spirit of unity in Christ was felt keenly.

These Scriptures seemed to come to life as we read them. As Jesus prayed in John 17: 21, "… That they all may be one: as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: That the world may believe that thou hast sent me."

While we were lifting up the Name of Jesus, his presence filled us and surrounded us.

We hadn't noticed, but the pastor got off the highway and was pulling in and out of gas stations, and then just kept driving. When the bus arrived back at the church, we all sat there quietly for a few moments. Then, the pastor looked back at us and said, "I didn't want to disrupt what the Lord was doing, but we ran out of gas twenty miles ago. I was looking for a gas station and couldn't find one that was open." It was an additional miracle to our experience that each of us has never forgotten.

When we are challenged by the divisions of the day and the hostilities of our world, let us remember what Jesus said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer. I have overcome the world." John 16:33



44 years ago, I took a bike trip across America. We started on June 3rd and concluded on December 8th.

When I took this journey, I had only been a Christian for 2-1/2 years. My teenage years through young adulthood was a turbulent time. I was 19 years old when I came to faith in Christ, and I already had experienced many life issues. When I launched this trip, it was with the intent of sharing the good news of Jesus with anyone we met along the way, and we did just that. We met farmers, bankers, stockbrokers, construction workers, ranchers, loggers, young and old. But God had another purpose. There was a lot in me that was still unprocessed. And like in the scene from Forrest Gump when he started running across America, he had things to process: So did I. God was working a more full redemption in me. There were still things that had to be dealt with, things I had to let go.

We had no cell phones or headsets, and we didn't even bring a watch with us. The sun came up and the sun went down each day. That's how we marked time. We only talked to people back home on two occasions. The first time was when we

were lost and separated from each other. We had to call one of the families back home to verify our locations to find each other to continue the trip. The other call was in mid-October from Comstock, Texas. We called friends back home from a phone booth. It was good to hear the voices of our friends Jimmy and Kathy Gorrell, and another friend, Silvia Bryan.

I knew Silvia as an acquaintance, but when we talked that day, something special passed between us over the phone. When I handed the phone back to my friend Steve, he said, “What was that all about? She sounds really happy.” That was the call that changed my life. I looked over at Silvia this morning as she slept, and thought, “Eight children, fourteen grandchildren, and a life of special moments together.” God knows what we really need.

Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Psalm 37:4

- Chris Long



The Greyhound Bus Trip Home - By Chris Long

It was December 1980. After 5,400 miles of biking across the country, it was time to go home. We took a Greyhound bus from Corpus Christi, Texas, all the way to Akron, Ohio. It made stops in Tulsa, Saint Louis, Indianapolis, Columbus, and then on to Akron. It took two days on the road to get home. The longest part of the trip was from Columbus to Akron on Old Route 3. Members of the Amish community were getting on and off at little crossroads along the way, making the final stretch agonizingly slow. Little did I know when travelling up Route 3, that I was passing the little Bible college I would attend the following spring.

After six months on the road, we were finally going home. We had decided not to continue to the East Coast, as winter was coming on. We accomplished our goals and were ready to get on with our lives. For me, I would be going back to Bible college, finishing my ministry degree. My other two companions, Joe and Steve, had plans of their own. Little did I also know that marriage was also in the future for me. But for now, it was the experience of Greyhound with a few layovers, and then the final stretch home after a life changing trip of biking across the country. Just a few friends, Jimmy and Kathy Gorrell, greeted us that Monday afternoon at the Greyhound station in downtown Akron, as most folks were at work and there was no set time for our arrival. It was nice to be home and to see our friends again.

That night, after getting settled in at my parents' home in Akron, Dad and I were upstairs watching the Monday Night Football Game when Howard Cosell broke the news that John Lennon had been shot outside his apartment in New York City, and was deceased.

1980 had proven to be a momentous year. On April 29th, I was in Washington, DC. for Washington for Jesus, a large prayer gathering of Christians from across the country praying and fasting for our nation, half a million strong. The morning of that prayer event, the Washington Times reported on the failed rescue attempt of the hostages in Iran, with the picture of the wreckage of the helicopters that crashed in the desert on the front page.

On May 17th, I went to the Bob Dylan concert at the Akron Civic Theater, where Bob Dylan shared his testimony of his new-found faith in Christ. The music he shared was from the Saved and Slow Train Coming albums, with black gospel singers as back up. The next day, on May 18th, Mt. Saint Helens erupted and sent debris and ash for hundreds of miles.

On June 3rd, I left for the cross-country bicycle trip with two friends to share the gospel with people we met along the way. The trip started in Ohio, then all the way to Oregon, down the California coast, and back across the southern states to Corpus Christi, Texas. Twelve states, six months, and nearly 6,000 miles.

On the first night home on December 8th, the announcement came that John Lennon had been shot. There were spontaneous memorial vigils across the country and around the world at the passing of John Lennon. Those gathered began to sing some of his songs. The outpouring was similar to the recent outpouring for Charlie Kirk who was also assassinated. John Lennon was a voice of his era for the political left. Charlie Kirk was a voice of his generation for the political right. It has been reported that John Lennon was reading the Bible and doing some spiritual searching just before his death. It's understandable, as people that he had known, like Bob Dylan, had come to faith in Christ. And there were others who had spiritual experiences with the Lord at that time - Eric Clapton and Noel Paul Stookey of Peter, Paul and Mary. Charlie Kirk, on the other hand, was outspoken about his faith in Christ and shared it openly at most of his meetings in recent years.

Two men with different messages. John Lennon is known for his song Imagine that conjures up the idea to imagine there is no God, no religion, no country, just people living as one without possessions. It was a communist belief, a dark and empty existence indeed. As the Apostle Paul said, If we have hope in this life alone, we are of all men most miserable.

Charlie Kirk's message, on the other hand, was a message of the gospel of Jesus Christ with eternal hope and blessing. Both men were struck down in their youth by acts of violence. Our hope must be in something greater than ourselves. Jesus said, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh onto the Father, but by me. (John. 14:6) Time will tell what impact the passing of Charlie Kirk will have on this current generation. Will they pick up the torch and run the race or will his impact fade with time? Only time will tell.



Listening to FOX & Friends this morning, I heard an interview with Mike Posner, a singer and adventure traveler. He was asked by the host what he learned when he walked across America in 2019. What did he see? He quieted the host with his response, as they were moved by his words. He said, “I saw a child in Navajo Nation weeping. I traveled through what I thought were abandoned coal mine towns and abandoned houses, only to see children emerge from those very houses. I met people from various walks of life who were kind to me and wanted to help me on my journey. I found the American people gracious and kind.”

I was encouraged by his account. Forty-five years ago, I traveled across America on my bicycle – 12 states and nearly 6,000 miles. I often wondered in recent years what it would be like to travel America again. What would I find? Would I find the same gracious people that I had met along the way back then, or would I find America much changed, hardened, cynical, and divided? It is heartening to hear a fresh account that the America I knew and loved and explored still exists, that that same kindness in every day Americans is still prevalent. I am glad that a younger generation is rediscovering that truth. God Bless America! - *Chris Long*

What I learned from reading through the Bible this past year

In reading the 66 books of the Bible this past year, 39 Old Testament and 27 New Testament books, from the various authors, of Moses, Joshua, Kings and Chronicles, the prophets, Palms, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes in the Old Testament, and the Gospels, Acts of the Apostles, Epistles of Paul, Peter, James, and John, and the Revelation in the NEW Testament. Fresh impressions surfaced and inspired me from the Scriptures.

Here are a few things that stood out to me this past year.

God emphasized the importance of keeping the historical record of his people Israel and detailing the record of both their good and bad kings, as recorded in the books of Kings and Chronicles. This importance also resurfaced during my reading of the book of Jeremiah when the sinful King Jehoiakim of Judah read the transcript of Jeremiah's prophesies and burned them in the fire as recorded in chapter 36. Baruch, the scribe who recorded Jeremiah's prophesies, was instructed by Jeremiah to write them again to be kept for the record. That's how we have the prophesies of Jeremiah today.

Considering how much effort it took in the ancient world to write on parchments and the length of the prophesies of Jeremiah, that was quite a task. God instructed Jeremiah to dictate in detail the writings for the record.

Then there was the fresh impression that came to me while reading the book of Job, a book filled with drama of the battle between God and Satan with Job as the subject matter. After all that had befallen Job, the discourse between Job and his counselor friends is a great debate of apologetics and the existence of God himself.

Then there was the profound vision the prophet Ezekiel saw by the river Chebar as the heavens were opened and he saw a vision of God and His throne. The prophet, in his limited human ability, attempts to describe what he is seeing. The significance of this book was not only for Israel in their time of captivity in Babylon and the promised return as prophesied by Jeremiah to the land of Israel, but also looking down the corridors of time when the new Jerusalem will be established for God's people and His communion with them. This theme is continued in the book of Zachariah as God is showing his people there is a time to come – what is referenced in Job 19:25, "For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand on the earth at the latter day."

What also stood out to me this year was the concept of time. God has always existed, so he introduced himself to Abraham and to Moses as I AM. As each generation passed, it's as if no time had passed at all. As the Bible says, our life is but a vapor. It appears for a short while, and then it's gone. (James 4:14)

God declared in his creation of man, "Let us make man in our image." He made us eternal beings. Job declared, "If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come." (Job 14:14) That is why Jesus declared in Revelation 1:8 to John, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty."

There is a continuance of time and yet … "There should be time no longer," as stated in Rev.10:6.

"He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end." (Eccl. 3:11)

As a student of the Bible now in my 47th year, I find new treasure each time I read through the Bible. I hope you will take the time this year to read through the Scriptures and let God speak to you from his inspired and eternal Word. **- By Chris Long**



What I learned in the one-room schoolhouse in Strasburg Ohio – by Chris Long

A friend from church invited me to visit her grandparents in Strasburg, Ohio. She explained that it was a one-room schoolhouse that had been converted into a home in the country, and that we would have to travel down a one lane road, over a rickety old bridge, and over the creek to get there. I said, "Sure, I'll go." So off we went to visit her grandparents. It was just as she said. It was a one lane bridge, over the creek, and then up the hill on the back roads to the one-room schoolhouse.

As we parked the car and approached the back door, there was no indication of anyone living there. On the back door was a sign that read, "Prepare to Meet Thy God." Well, at that moment I had visions of a shotgun on the other side of the door, and I was a little afraid at that point. But as we approached, an elderly man opened the door. It was her grandfather, Roy Dear, a retired preacher. He and his wife Alice lived in this one-room schoolhouse that he had converted into a home. Alice had severe rheumatoid arthritis and was bedridden. Although in pain, she never complained and always had a kind word to share. She would always ask how you were doing and would never mention her own ailments. She was interested in what you had to say. She was kind and gentle and was happy to have visitors.

I sat in the kitchen with Roy while Silvia visited with her grandmother. Roy served me tea to drink and told me about his elder brother's service in WWI. He was injured by mustard gas in the war and never fully recovered from the effects of the gas. We looked out the kitchen window together as we drank our tea and watched the birds feeding at the bird seed feeders. He shared about the variety of birds that came to the house. We talked about the things of God and about life. He then took me to the basement to show me how he loaded the coal furnace to heat their home. I had never seen a working coal furnace before.

Roy and Alice had lived through the Great Depression and led a simple life as Christian ministers. They raised three children on meager wages. Roy supplemented his ministry

income by selling vitamins door to door in the country. Alice, now bedridden by her arthritis, enjoyed watching Christian television. There was a full-time Christian station out of Louisville, Ohio, WDLI Channel 17. Most people had difficulty tuning in to the station, as the signal was not strong, but to my surprise, Alice was able to get the station in crystal-clear. You see, she prayed over it, and was able to enjoy Christian fellowship through the programming.

This sweet elderly couple had a deep Christian faith. They must have known that my friendship with Silvia would grow into something more, as Roy would ask her, "How is your boyfriend doing?" She would reply, "He's just a friend Grandpa; he's not my boyfriend." Little did we know that a few years later, Alice and Roy would be holding their great grandson, our firstborn son.

Age and health eventually took their toll on both Roy and Alice. They left the one-room schoolhouse that had been their home for so many years and moved to Akron to be cared for by Silvia's parents. The home was later sold to pay for their healthcare needs. After several owners it was purchased by an artist who wanted to refurbish the old schoolhouse and make it into an art gallery.

Silvia and I visited the one-room schoolhouse that had now become a pottery art gallery. We spoke to the owner and told him the story, that it was once owned by her grandparents and that they had lived in it as their home. He was intrigued to learn about its history.

A few years later, I was shopping for a Christmas gift for Silvia and stopped by an art gallery in downtown Hartville. As I looked around the gallery, I saw a painting of a snow-scaped one-room schoolhouse that startled me, and with joy I thought, "It looks exactly like the schoolhouse where Silvia's grandparents lived! She will love this." The painting is now hanging in our home next to the window where we watch the birds eating at our feeders. It is a reminder of the gentle, elderly Christian couple who found joy in each other, their visitors, and the simple things of life. What I learned in the one-room schoolhouse in Strasburg, Ohio, is that "godliness with contentment is great gain." (I Tim. 6:6)



We just happened to be visiting The Chapel on Sunday morning when the announcement was made that former Pastor Dave Burnham had gone on to be with the Lord at the age of 90. Many remember Pastor Burnham, as he was at Wheaton College and an NFL prospect when he received the news of his father's passing back in Akron. David was called to pastor the church in his father's stead. I had the privilege of hearing him on Easter Sunday morning 1978, invited as a guest by my former high school English teacher, Neil Cabe. I had just received Christ earlier that fall in October of 1977. I had shared my faith with Neil when he was hospitalized for back surgery, with other classmates who were visiting him. All of us had accepted Christ that year. He was intrigued by our new-found faith in Jesus, and it caused him to reconsider his own life and rededicate his life to Christ. He grew up at The Chapel. We attended with his parents that day. His father was a tire worker at Mohawk Tire. The family was originally from Georgia and had those southern hospitality attributes. We sat just five rows back from the front that Sunday morning, and I heard Dave Burnham give one of the best sermons of his life, according to my friend Neil.

He preached on, "If Christ be not raised, then your faith is vain." He was rather dramatic that morning, as he emphasized, "If Christ be not raised, then take down the sign from this building and disband the company. You are wasting your time being here if Christ be not raised." That definitely got everyone's attention that Easter Sunday morning. He continued, "But Christ is raised from the dead, and because of that fact, everything has changed."

After the service, Neil turned to me and said, "That is the best preaching he has ever delivered." The Chapel was not my church home, and I've only visited there from time to time. The next time I would visit just happened to be the Sunday that Knute Larson was candidating for the pastoral position. This past Sunday was another of those happenstances of visiting the day that they announced the passing of Pastor David Burnham, but there are no coincidences in the Christian life.

Proud of Our Army Veteran Son, Jonathan Long



I am taking this opportunity to boast about our son, Jonathan, the oldest of our eight children, and a Global War on Terror Army Veteran. Jonathan's military career first began when he was seventeen years of age and he informed us that he signed up with the United States Marines out of the recruiting office in Medina, Ohio. Jonathan had high academic scores and was a candidate for one of the Service Academies. But after the war broke out after the attacks of 9/11, he couldn't see himself sitting on the sidelines going through an academy when his fellow countrymen were already in the battle, fighting the Global War on Terror in Afghanistan, Iraq, and engagements around the world, tracking down threats to the homeland.

We had high hopes for Jonathan in his academic career, and wanted to see him become an officer. We visited the Naval Academy, which would have given him a pathway to the Marine Corp, but that appointment in our Congressional District went to another candidate. Congressman Sawyer's office was prepared to provide Jonathan with another appointment to another Academy, but Jonathan chose to go to Ohio State University. The problem was that he had already signed papers with the U.S. Marines. We took a trip to Columbus to talk with the Naval Commander of the ROTC and asked if Jonathan's enlistment could be transferred to the ROTC of Ohio State. The Commander said this was highly unusual and difficult, but he could provide the transfer if we could guarantee that Jonathan would follow through with his commitment in the military. I said, "There is no one who can stop him from doing that. He is determined to serve his country." So, the transfer was provided and Jonathan was now an ROTC cadet at Ohio State University and an engineering major.

But what happened next took everybody by surprise. The Bush Administration was launching the 18 XRAY Program, a program that would recruit off the street highly intelligent recruits to help the military in its intelligence capacity. They needed linguists and people that could learn quickly. The war was in progress and the threat to the homeland was still very real.

So, Jonathan and his roommate, both engineering majors in the honors dorm at Ohio State University, went to a recruiter's office in Columbus and signed up for the U.S. Army. His friend, Grant, signed three-year papers. Jonathan, because of being selected for Special Forces, signed six-year papers. This means he would be leaving

Ohio State, suspending his collegiate pursuits, and leaving the ROTC, where had he finished, he would have been commissioned a Second Lieutenant. Instead, he opted to be an Army recruit and headed to Fort Benning for basic training.

His friend, Grant, headed to Fort Bragg. Now this is where it gets even more interesting. Jonathan was slated for Special Forces as a linguist/cryptology specialist. But after an injury at Fort Benning during Airborne training where he was injured during one of the parachute jumps, he was laid up to recover and his unit moved on. The Army said he could wait for the next group and be assigned to another Special Forces unit. Jonathan said, "No, just go ahead and assign me now." That's when you're putting your future in the hands of the Army and God. They assigned him to a unit with the 82nd Airborne at Fort Bragg. Oddly enough, he was in the same eight-man unit as his roommate from Ohio State, and with another young man, Josh, a Baptist preacher's son who became one of Jonathan's best friends.

Within ten days, the unit was on its first deployment into Iraq. They were green and fighting a new type of warfare. The year was 2004. This would be the first of three deployments: Mosul, Iraq (ancient Nineva), overseeing the first elections after the fall of Sadam Hussain.

Second deployment was fighting the insurgency in Tal Afar.

Third deployment – Jonathan was part of one hundred select men from the 82nd Airborne, working with black ops and Special Forces, tracking down Abu Musab al- Zarqawi's weapons stash and personnel after Special Forces had captured his laptop with all the connections across Iraq of weapons stashes and terrorist networks. Zarqawi had been killed in a targeted attack and his laptop was seized, which provided the information of the terrorist network. Jonathan's special group under command directly from the Vice President of the United States, and six months before the Surge, was tasked with tracking down the personnel and destroying the weapons stashes. Over sixty air-assault missions were accomplished by the unit. They are credited with seizing more weapons than the entire U.S. Army did in the previous five years of the war. They are in line for a Presidential citation, still pending.

Jonathan served over two years in Iraq in three different deployments, but it was his third deployment about which he expressed real satisfaction that the unit had accomplished a significant goal in its operations. Had he continued in his Special Forces training as a cryptologist, he may never have been in combat action.

When Jonathan ended his service and we were finally able to take down the blue star in the window at our home, having prayed many prayers for our son during his deployments, his siblings waited with joyful expectation to see their older brother once again come home from the Army.

Let us take this opportunity to thank all our veterans for their service to our great country.

Sincerely,

Chris Long

A Christmas Eve Story – by Chris Long

It was December 1981. I was working my way through Bible College in the small town of Mt. Vernon, Ohio during a time of recession. We students took any job we could find in town to help pay our tuition. That December, the local five-and-dime, The Jupiter, was closing its doors for the final time. The last day of business was to be December 24th. I took the temporary job, as there were no other prospects. I started on December 1st and worked right up until Christmas Eve. Each week, when we came to work, fewer and fewer items were on the shelves, as the sales discounts continued until everything was gone.

The store was very lonely on that Christmas Eve when we came into work. Christmas music played over the sound system, but it was eerily sad, as the store was nearly empty of items and ready to close for the final time. A few of us had to work right up until 6:00 p.m. when the store closed. Then, without fanfare, the store manager rushed us out the door and locked up without so much as a "Merry Christmas." The streets downtown were lonely and quiet.

I hurried back to the school dormitory, as the school also was closing for the holiday break. As I rushed up four flights of stairs to get my things, the dorm assistant was impatient and hurried me along. Once I was out the door, he locked up and drove off, leaving me as the last student on the small campus.

The college was in the country, a lonely and quiet place. This was before cell phones and there were no pay phones. I was looking forward to going home to see my fiancé and parents. Financially, it had been a difficult time. Each quarter the tuition had to be paid. We didn't take student loans out in those days; you would pay as you go. As the last student to leave the building, I packed up the car, turned the key, and nothing happened. It was dark, it was cold, there's no one around, it's Christmas Eve, and now the car won't start.

As a Bible College student, you have that moment. "God, where are you?" Quiet and no response.

I thought, "What am I going to do?" There were a few staff homes nearby. So, I went to knock on the door of one them. It was now 6:45 heading towards 7:00 on Christmas Eve night. Someone came to the door. The family was in the middle of their Christmas and were in no mood to help a student whose car wouldn't start. I walked back over to the car, said a prayer, "God, I'm doing all I can, working my way through this Bible College. I don't understand all the difficulties." A little later, one of the maintenance guys came back with jumper cables and helped me get the car started. I was very thankful for that as I made the hour and a half drive home, hoping the car would make it. One small trial, and there would be many more to come, but also blessings. We must be faithful in the difficult times, as God is preparing us for something far better. **Psalm 37:4 Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Let us not forget the difficult journey that Joseph and Mary made to Bethlehem: the taxation and the threat of death by Herod. God knows what he is doing. Let's give thanks this Christmas for all that he has done. Trust him. Merry Christmas.**

The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death



Yesterday, while talking with a neighbor, I learned that another neighbor who had just moved in in the last five years had passed away a few weeks ago. I also learned that a local business leader that lived in the neighborhood that we had known for 24 years, died unexpectedly of a heart attack in January. He was only 62. Since the beginning of COVID in 2020, I started making a list of those who had passed that I had known either as family, friends, or close acquaintances. The list has grown to over 100 in count. It includes all ages. Many people on that list were friends that I had spoken to on a regular basis.

This week in our community, in the space of just three days, and all within a few blocks of each other, three people lost their lives: One by a fire, one by a late-night shooting over a domestic dispute, and one by a fallen tree on their apartment home during the windstorm.

It feels at times that death is all around us.

I remember back in high school when a teacher wanted to take a class of students to a local funeral home and discuss the process of death, a rather morbid subject for young students for sure. I could not see the purpose of it. It had no hope without God in the world.

Everyone will face the final act – death itself. Believer and unbeliever. It is appointed unto man once to die, but after this the judgement. Hebrews 9:27

On this Good Friday, we contemplate the death of Christ on the cross, the seven statements of Christ, the redemption of the thief on the cross, and the witnesses. Some of the witnesses who were leaders of the Sanhedrin and who had condemned Christ for blasphemy, as he had claimed that he was equal with God, marveled that even in his agony, he quoted the Scripture, fulfilling prophesy.

The last enemy to be destroyed certainly is death. Ten days earlier, at the gravesite of Lazarus, Jesus proclaimed, “I am the resurrection, and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?” John 11:25&26

Do you believe? If you do, the sting of death has been taken away. It is a dark veil of uncertainty, but on the other side is Christ himself waiting for us. That is why, for the believer, there should be no fear or torment concerning the last enemy to be put under Christ’s foot, which is death. “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily besets us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Hebrews 12:1&2

Don’t fear the last enemy, for Christ has defeated death itself!

By Chris Long



Reflections of the Bicentennial 50 years later.

Fifty years ago, I was a young man of seventeen years of age, very much lost and without direction. Not knowing how to celebrate our nation's 200th birthday, the group of friends I hung out with would drink Pabst Blue Ribbon Beer because it was red, white, and blue. That was the extent of our patriotism.

As July 4th approached, I was asked by a friend to join him on a journey to New Jersey where his dad lived. My friend's parents were divorced and his dad wanted to see him for the holiday, so he told me. His Dad was planning a Bicentennial party, and we were invited to that. For whatever reason, I do not remember why, we had no travel arrangements and ended up hitchhiking all the way to his dad's house in New Jersey on the eve of our nation's bicentennial birthday. It became clear when we arrived that his dad was surprised to see Bobby and wondered how we got there. Turns out Bobby had a falling out with his mom and wanted to see his dad who he had not seen in some time. His dad was glad to see him of course and told everyone how we got there. It was strange being in a new setting with people that I did not know. Bobby had mixed emotions, as he lived with his mother back in Ohio and didn't see much of his dad. I was also shy and not accustomed to meeting new people. I felt self-conscious and didn't have much to say. We went down to the party for some food and drink, but Bobby's dad was busy entertaining his guests and didn't have time for him, so Bobby was depressed. He was just a kid wanting to spend some time with his dad who he didn't get to see very much, and I was the friend who went along for the ride. We really didn't mix with the people at the party, so the trip was pretty much a bust. We headed out the next day to hitchhike back to Ohio. We had missed most of the celebrations of the Bicentennial. We drank a little beer and had something to eat. But that was pretty much it.

The hitchhiking back to Ohio was difficult. No one would pick us up. We had trouble hitching a ride on the highway, where state troopers eventually chased us off. After they left, we went back on the ramp to try our luck again. Finally, someone in a Volkswagen picked us up and took us most of the way back to Ohio. This was a turbulent time in my life, looking for the real meaning of life, and I was very much lost in the process. In August I would fly out to California with money I had won in a one-time bet with a friend at a racetrack. We hitchhiked up the California coast to San Francisco. That trip almost cost me my life. Little did I know back then where my life's journey would take me, from a kid who knew little about our nation's founding and form of government, to aiding in the election of a U.S. President, having a bill passed by Congress, adding a prayer monument on the Mall in Washington D.C., and seven invited trips to the White House. You never know where God will lead your steps once you completely trust him. There are no limits to what God can do. We are the ones who limit the expectations of what God can do. "And Jesus looking upon them saith, with men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible." Mark 10:27 Happy Independence Day! May your celebration be a meaningful one. – *Chris Long*



An Easter Story

Early in my ministry, I painted houses to help supplement our income. One year during the Easter holiday season, I was painting the house of an older Jewish woman, Mrs. Adleman. She knew that I was a Christian minister and that I was preparing for Easter. We were talking, and then she stopped and said, “I do not know who did that to him,” referring to Christ’s crucifixion on the cross. I told Mrs. Adleman that **I did that to Jesus.**

She was taken back and surprised to hear that come from me, a Christian minister. As a Jewish woman she probably heard all her life that the Jews had Jesus crucified, and no doubt she heard the antisemitic slurs of “Christ-killers.” Now, here is a Christian minister telling her that he was responsible for the death of Christ on the cross. She was amazed to hear this.

I shared with her that even as John the Baptist proclaimed, “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!” so, my sin and my rebellion was taken by Christ to the cross for me for my redemption! That got her attention and planted a seed that day in her heart.

Who are you sharing the good news of Christ with? May we be bold to proclaim the Good News!

OCA President Chris Long



Martha (Sparky) Long went home to be with the Lord on December 2nd. With eyes wide open and reaching up with joy on her face she left this life into the next. My daughter Anna was there at her bedside. Mom was 91 years young. Her nickname was Sparky. The name was given to her by an old Irish police captain when she was a baby. She always had a sparkle in her eye and truly a fighting spirit, but a kind heart. She grew up through the Great Depression and married a sailor come back from the war. They met on a blind date and they would never separate after that, through 63 years of marriage. My mother was a great cook. She learned from her Italian mother-in-law who liked my Mom, for she saw how happy she made her little Joe. Mother would be the owner of Sparky's Lounge and Game Room, and after coming to faith in Christ, would launch Martha's Catering and truly found her joy in serving others by helping make their wedding celebrations a special occasion. When Mom and Dad would have a consultation with a new couple for catering services, they of course would share their faith in Christ, the greatest joy of their lives.

Truly the story of our family is a miracle, for in the year 1977 the whole immediate family would come to faith in Christ. When I was a teenager, I almost lost my mother. She was in the hospital severely sick. She made a pact with God, asking Him to spare her life and save her family. He did both. For the past 6-1/2 years my mother has been a resident in an area nursing home. She won the staff over with her fiery spirit and kindness of heart. Time after time I would hear from both nurses and aides, "I love Ms. Martha. She's my favorite!" Thank you for your prayers for our family.

Martha Eileen (Harris) Long was born in Akron, Ohio, September 4, 1929, to Vincent and Martha Harris. She was preceded in death by her parents; husband Frank J. Long; sisters Patricia Davis, Doris Maiert, and Margaret Holt. She is survived by her sons Vince (Marcie), Mike (Carol), and Christopher (Silvia); brothers Vincent "Bing" Harris, Frank Harris, Joe (Jackie) Harris; grandchildren Jamie (Allie) Long, David (Karly) Long, Carlton Long, Chris Long, Jonathan (Iris) Long, Anna (Steve) Wilkins, Sarah (Nate) Winston, Shelly (Nick) Thompson, September (James) Coyne, David, Timothy, and Caroline Long; ten great-grandchildren; and many nieces and nephews.

A Tribute to My Dad

He passed ten years ago, but I think of him often. His influence and example are still with me.

Born in 1927, he was raised through the Great Depression with seven siblings. My grandparents were Italian immigrants, and as first-generation Americans, they raised their children to learn English quickly and the American way of life. Dad knew very little Italian because his parents were determined that their children would learn English only. My grandfather was a printer by trade and did printing for Harvey Firestone during the Great Depression, as the family lived near the Firestone Tire Company in Akron. Dad would eventually learn this trade as well and was a printer most of his life. When war broke out in December of 1941, he watched as his older brother, John, signed up with the U.S. Marines. Dad went to school through the eighth grade before signing up with the U.S. Navy in 1944. He would later get his GED. He had respect for both his mother and father, and his siblings.



When he met my mother after the war on a blind date, love struck quickly between the two. She was all Irish and he was Italian. It was a little shock for both families, but Dad quickly won over his Irish in-laws and my grandmother took to my mother as she saw how happy she made her little Josie. Grandma taught Mom how to cook Italian and boy did we benefit from that. Mom was a great cook. My mother also grew up in the Great Depression and hardly had anything to eat at times. Dad pledged to her, “You’ll never go hungry.” He kept that promise to his dying day.

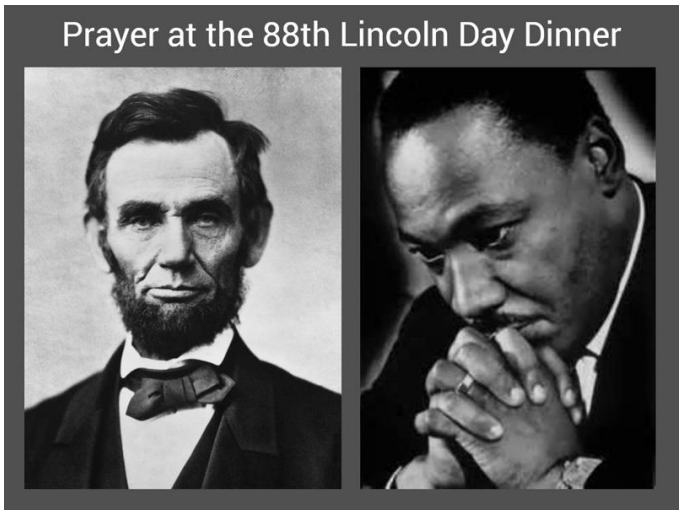
I was the youngest of three boys and was favored somewhat by my father. Maybe because my mother was having health issues at the time, and he had to play double duty as a parent. I always remember him being kind to me, as he was faithful and a gentle man. He worked hard for his family. He didn’t have many hobbies; his family was what was important to him. Like many, I was rebellious in my teen years. Dad gave me space and room to figure things out myself. In 1977, when the entire family came to faith in

Christ, it started a new chapter in our relationship. I learned how to respect my father and watched him also grow in Christ.

Over the years, I learned a great deal about my father's character, whether while working with him at the print shop or having discussions about life issues. I watched as he treated everyone the same that came through the door of the shop, no matter their status in life, whether it was a well-to-do businessman that was making a large order or a street person that was panhandling for some money. He treated everyone the same. That value of human dignity that he demonstrated stuck with me. No wonder so many people had kind things to say about him at his funeral. Once he became a Christian, he was bold for Christ and told everyone he met about Jesus. His character shined through, even when he was hospitalized during his time of illness. People could tell there was something special about him. Indeed, there was. I was fortunate enough to have him as my Dad, and his memory continues to be a blessing.



HAPPY FATHERS DAY!



Note: Concerning prayer. The D-Day Prayer will be added at the WWII Memorial Dedication June of 2022. Thanks to Senator Portman and Congressman Johnson. **That was a vision. The Bible says that young men shall see visions and old men shall dream dreams.**

Scripture Reading: Proverbs 6:16-19

16: These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him:
17. A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood,
18. An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief,
19. A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.

Let us pray…

Our Heavenly Father, we are in a day when men are speaking lies and sowing discord among your people. The proliferators of hate are having their way in our nation at this time. But your Word declares "How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." We seek unity and peace with our fellow man, but there are those who seek to divide us and sow discord. We freely admit to You that we are incapable in and of ourselves to accomplish unity and reconciliation. We need your wisdom and grace to guide us.

We look to the example of your servant President Abraham Lincoln who served our nation in a time of great divide when his fellow countrymen were literally killing each other on battlefields across the country. During those days of conflict and war, President Lincoln had a recurring dream. He saw himself on a fast ship, moving quickly to an indefinite shore. The President had this dream again as he urged Congress to pass the 13th Amendment before the close of the war that would abolish slavery. When the President spoke of the abolition of slavery, he stated, "Fellow citizens, we cannot escape history. We of this Congress and this Administration will be remembered in spite of ourselves. No personal significance or insignificance can spare one or another of us." The President in his dream saw the shore on which all men will live free.

Your servant Martin Luther King, Jr., also had a dream that he would live in a nation where his children would not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. We seek to advance the dreams of President Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King Jr. Now we ask that you bless this gathering tonight in our time and fellowship together. ***This we ask this all in Christ's name. Amen.***

A Prayer for the Nation – The D-Day Prayer Addition is Now Open to the Public



OCA President Chris Long with his wife Silvia visited the D-Day Prayer at the WWII Memorial for the first time on Saturday, January 21, 2023.

With no official announcement from the U.S. Parks Service, the prayer became accessible to the public on Tuesday, January 17th. We were notified by Congressman Bill Johnson's office that the prayer was now open to the public, so we headed down to D.C. to see the Prayer on Saturday.

While viewing the prayer for the first time and taking some pictures, we waited to watch people come by and read the prayer. We first met a family from North Carolina, the Joneses. We told them the story of the prayer and the 11-year journey it took to get it in the ground and completed. They were thrilled to learn the story. Then, we met Skylar, a teenager from Minnesota with her parents. We watched as Skylar told her parents that she wanted to read the prayer aloud. She thought she was interrupting us and I told her, "No, you're the reason why this prayer is here. It's to learn about our national history." After Skylar finished reading the prayer, we told her and her parents how it all came about. Her father thanked me and asked, "What made you want to do this? What does the prayer mean to you?" I told him that it's here for the honor of The Greatest Generation, as it will keep telling their story of commitment and sacrifice for the cause of freedom.

The day was getting late as we watched more people come to read the prayer. I didn't really know how I would feel on this day after seeing the prayer for the first time after so many years of working on this project wondering if it would ever get done. I thought about all the veterans we met over the years who have since passed on, men who had encouraged us to keep going and get it done!

Now I realize that it is in the quiet reading of this national prayer that the reader will come to understand that it was not by the strength of arms alone that the ultimate victory over the unholy forces of tyranny was secured for us, but rather our reliance upon Almighty God that secured for us a lasting peace "a peace invulnerable to the scheming's of unworthy men. And a peace that will let all men live in freedom, reaping the just rewards of their honest toil. Thy will be done, Almighty God. Amen."

Now this National Prayer will keep telling the story for generations to come.

Next time you are in Washington D.C. visit the D-Day Prayer addition at the WWII Memorial on the Mall.

The Power of Gratitude - *by Chris Long*



"O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good: for his mercy endureth forever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy:" (Psalm 107:1&2)

When I'm in a complaining mood, my wife Silvia reminds me to be thankful for what we have. There is a power in gratitude that changes one's perspective. Being grateful even has the ability to change the direction of things. Solomon had riches beyond compare of any king, yet he wrote this proverb, "Better is a dinner of herbs where love is than a stalled ox and hatred therewith." (Proverbs 15:17) Solomon knew the benefit of a small gathering with humble means, as long as there was love and unity in that gathering.

When we are reminded to be thankful for what we have, as opposed to what we do not have, it puts a better perspective on our circumstances. Above all, consider this: Do you have health? Do you know what some people would give just to have good health? Are you free of pain? Consider what some people would give just to live a day without pain. Do you have a home with heat in it? Consider those who are out in the cold, living in a car, or on the street. Do you have food? Consider those who have gone this day without eating. Do you have someone who cares for you? Consider those who are alone. When we stop and truly count our blessings, there is so much to be thankful for. And it is God who has granted us all these gifts.

Take time to be thankful every day. Psalm 107:8&9 "O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men. For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness." Consider this: It was the grumbling and complaining of the Children of Israel that kept them out of the promised land and in the wilderness for forty years. Every day we have a choice, either to be thankful or to complain.

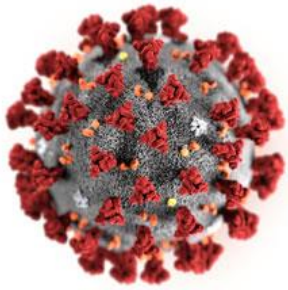
"Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." I Thessalonians 5:16,17, &18 **Happy Thanksgiving**

COVID-19 - Laboratory of Liberty

Chris Long, President Christian Alliance of America







Now in our 13th week of emergency health orders in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, what has emerged is a referendum on liberty itself. Once it was determined that COVID-19 had made its way to the American shores, state after state enacted health emergencies with a cadre of health orders. These draconian laws enacted by state and local governments forced the suspension of civil liberties that had not been seen in this country for generations.

As health officials created an atmosphere of fear over the Chinese coronavirus that may have been created in a Chinese bioresearch lab in Wuhan, we may never know its true origins. Governmental officials began to issue emergency health orders that resulted in restrictions on commerce, movement, and public gatherings. The result was the suspension of numerous civil liberties that Americans had taken for granted. One area alarming to many in the faith community was the suspension of in-person religious services, as state and local officials deemed religious assemblies “non-essential.”

There was no uniform code or reason to the types of restrictions ordered by government officials. In some instances, it appeared as if it was at the whim of the governor, mayor, or policing authority in charge. Numerous disturbing reports surfaced across the country.

In Orlando Florida, a pastor was arrested on a Monday after his Sunday services for what the local county sheriff stated were violations of the health orders. County officials had previously given the church the go-ahead, as they had enacted a number of precautions and social distancing guidelines. Nevertheless, the pastor was arrested and booked at the county jail on the Monday following his Sunday services. A lawsuit was filed on behalf of the pastor and the church. Florida Governor DeSantis, hearing of the arrest, stated that was not what he had intended. The local sheriff had acted on his own accord in relation to the church and pastor with enforcement the state had not intended in its health order.

In Kentucky, Governor Beshear ordered that churches were not permitted to conduct a drive-in-style service at their churches, even though they would practice social distancing by staying in their cars. He threatened that if anyone attended the service, they would have their license plate number recorded by the highway

patrol, and that they would receive an order forcing them into a 14-day quarantine. Again, a lawsuit was filed to defend the church members' right to assemble and worship.

In Greenville Mississippi, the mayor had local law enforcement issue $500 tickets to anyone who showed up to a drive-in-style church service. In Richmond Virginia, the pastor of Lighthouse Fellowship in Chincoteague Island received a summons served by police for holding a church service for 16 people spaced far apart in a sanctuary that seats 293. The charge for violating Governor Northam's Covid-19 order carries a penalty up to a year in jail and/or a $2,500 fine.

Dozens of disturbing examples emerged across the country. Some pastors and churches that have been threatened have chosen not to go public for fear of public reprisal. And even though U.S. Attorney General William Barr spoke against such discriminatory treatment of churches, the oppression of religious liberty continues under the guise of health emergencies. The prejudice and bigotry against people of faith has been on display during this COVID-19 shutdown.

In Chicago, Mayor Lori Lightfoot ordered a no-parking zone in a 9-block area targeting a Romanian Catholic church that had announced they would hold in-person services. Not only were the congregants affected as an army of tow trucks emerged, but local residents also had their vehicles towed. Because some churches were undeterred by the intimidation of city officials, some city officials took additional steps. A threatening letter was sent from Commissioner Allison Arwady that stated, "I am authorized to see to enjoin such nuisance or to cause the same to be summarily abated in such manner as I may direct…." What this order means is that the property could be forcibly closed, boarded up, or deemed a "nuisance property", like a drug house that can be razed by city government. So, not only did the virus come from China, it sent along its religious oppression to be practiced in its wake.

What is apparent in all of this is just how fragile our right to assemble and practice freedom of religion has become in the United States during the COVID-19 shutdown. The health emergency has clearly exposed limitations to our liberty that we could never have imagined. John Adams, one of our great founding patriots, left us with a warning, "A Constitution of Government once changed from Freedom, can never be restored. Liberty, once lost, is lost forever."

Whether or not a vaccine or antidote will ever be developed to combat COVID-19 is unknown. The real question is, what antidote or vaccine will be available to protect civil liberties and religious freedom against tyranny for America's future? Only time will tell.



Chris Long is the President of the Christian Alliance of America, a public policy, voter education grassroots organization representing Christian interests before the U.S. Congress and state legislatures. The Christian Alliance of America advocates for pro-life, pro-family, religious liberty, First Amendment issues and produces nonpartisan educational voter guides which can be distributed in churches. www.CAAmerica.org