It’s amazing, Christmas is hardly over and retailers have pushed all of the leftover Christmas stuff into a corner, discounted it, and now have their Valentines Day goodies on full display!

I used to love Valentines Day as a kid… until I reached that tender, awkward stage in life when a girl that I liked in my third grade class gave me a Valentine that said “I choo-choo-choose you”, so I naturally thought that she was in love with me…

Come to find out (the hard way)… she didn’t love me, she was just being kind…

Well it may not be Valentines Day yet, but I can say with all confidence as we end 2018 that God “Choo-choo-chooses” you!

Not out of sympathy, But out His deep, unending love for you…

In Jeremiah 31:3 God says; “I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you.”

In God the Father’s world, it’s all about us… your picture is on His wall…

* Does it matter if God loves us?
* How should we respond to His love?
* What prevents us from responding the way we should?

In an evening of great transparency, our Wednesday Bible study group discussed the excuses we often make that block and prevent us from responding the way we think we should to God…

* We like how we’re living and just don’t want to change.
* We don’t think God will do what we think is best or give us what we want, so we have to maintain control and do what we think is best.
* Nothing bad enough has happened to make me change.
* God doesn’t care whether or not we change, He has more important matters to tend to.
* If God needs me He’ll call, He knows where I am…

I applaud everyone who was there that night that had the guts to speak the truth! But it’s time to repent of those unfruitful mindsets that hinder our relationship with God… don’t you think?

There isn’t some dark satanic cloud hanging over the Verde Valley keeping people from holy lifestyle, obedient to Christ. That’s another excuse that I’ve heard from folks even before we came to Camp Verde.

Self is the problem… Self has to die in order for us to have the life & blessing that God sent His only Son to die brutally on the cross for us to have…

Life & blessing that are far greater than anything that any of us can imagine… that has little to do with money or possessions…

No matter how good or not so good things may be going for you right now…

God has something far greater waiting if you and I will refuse to retreat to the safety and comfort of that old familiar place called self.

How do we get there?

There is one thing that can make all of those statements made by our Wed group vanish like snow in Camp Verde…

1. Humility

Thomas A Kempis, who wrote the “Imitation of Christ” said:

If a believer in Christ replaces humility, with knowledge about humility… their belief and their humility are both in vain…

Replacing obedience, with knowledge about obedience is disobedience, and a false belief…

Replacing our mission of “making disciples who make disciples” with knowledge about it, makes one sterile and produces no fruit for the kingdom.

Jesus told His disciples in John 15:16; “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit.”

That fruit is a lifestyle that God can use to lead people to faith in Christ and makes disciples who will reproduce themselves… Matthew 28:19-20

Why does that matter? Besides the existence of the church…

Thomas A Kempis was right…

When you and I stand before God in judgement, He won’t ask us what we have read, but what we have done? Not how much we know, but how devoutly we have lived and used what His Holy Spirit has revealed to us in God’s Word to be more like His Son?

I have heard people say in the past that “no one can obey God’s Word… (particularly the 10 Commandments), that’s why God sent Jesus to die for our sin… the Commandments revealed our need for the Savior”.

If that were the case God would never have instructed us to do so.

* Deuteronomy 30:11-19
* Isaiah 35:8

God’s path of life & blessing is not for the rich or the elite, but for the humble, as well as those who will allow God to humble them…

An example of one who was humble was David (a man after God’s own heart)…

Prideful King Saul’s armor wouldn’t fit David (but David didn’t need all that, he walked with God and knew he was there representing God)…

1 Samuel 17 tells us that with a few smooth stones and a rawhide sling, humble David stood fully armed against proud Goliath.

Goliath boasted about the obvious advantages he had over David (including His height), but as tall as He was, Goliath’s pride didn’t allow him to see heaven’s army that had David’s back.

As educated as Goliath may have been in the art of war, he was clueless to the power of God that was packed into the tiny stone, thrown in faith by David, that was headed straight for his noggin.

Did David have a great life filled with blessings? Yes, he was Israel’s King! Everything was good until he stopped obeying God, and turning inward, began obeying the desires of his flesh.

God was able to reveal his POWER & MIGHT thru David when he was humble and trusted God…

But when David allowed pride & control to take over, his life began spiraling out of control.

You and I face a Goliath’s & Bathsheba’s every day: the Devil may eveb stand them in front of us. He hates Christians… He hates their humble, holy, obedient lifestyle…, it reminds Him of Jesus… It leads people away spending eternity in hell.

1 John 2:6

Jesus’ walk was a humble walk…

Think about the plans you’re beginning to make for 2019… are they flowing from your fleshly desires… money, possessions, pride & control, etc… or from a humble and obedient walk with Christ?

For some, being humble and obeying God may seem to come natural…

Then there are those of us who need to be humbled… Like Saul…

“Hebrew of Hebrews” he called himself!

After God humbled him, He changed his name to Paul, because he was no longer the same person… God transformed and made him usable for His kingdom purposes…

Many of us know Paul’s testimony… But my favorite part is in 1 Timothy 1:15…

That is why I can believe the words that the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write down in 1 Corinthians 15:1-11…

Do you desire true life & blessing in 2019 and throughout the rest of your life? Follow Paul into humility & obedience by dying daily.

1. Die daily

As was stated from our Wednesday night group, the problem that many Christians face is we don’t stay dead to our old desires/old lifestyle…

Jesus did not die to offer us “new life” that resembles the “old life”…

1 Corinthians 15:31 KJV

* Why is it important to die?
* What can a dead person do? Nothing! God needs to be the one living thru us…

That’s the only way the effect of grace can be seen in our lives…

When we get out of the way and let God work thru us, folks see something way better.

It gives them a reason to believe in Christ and receive Him as their Savior and Lord.

* What does a dead person desire? LIFE! Galatians 2:20
* How does a dead person respond to being given New Life? Humility & obedient service!
* What does a dead person use their new life for? To serve the needs of the One who gave it to them.

Humble yourself, Die daily, and seek the Lord to resurrect you daily to live “the way” of Holiness.

There is no better way to end 2018 and begin a New Year.

I’m not asking you to go it alone, we are family… a community of believers living together… I’m asking you to join me…

Then watch and see what the Lord does with New Beginnings!