

Hello Orange Cove Church Family & Friends of Orange Cove,

Pastor's Weekly Letter: April 12, 2017 – "Stupor?"

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Happy Wednesday, April 12, 2017. Here are the **PowerAds** for Orange Cove Church for this coming week:

- This coming Sabbath Pastor André will share the morning message during the worship service.
- This coming Sabbath is the 3rd Sabbath, so the Q&A Bible Study/Discussion class will meet at 1:30pm in the Learning Center.
- New Bible Study Series, "TruthLINK" starts April 19, 2017, 6:30pm.
- CREATION Health classes – Every Tuesday, 6:30pm, at the Barco-Newton YMCA and every Thursday, 10am, at the Dye-Clay YMCA. Call Andrea Richardson for more info: (904) 502-8545.

This Week's Devotional – "Stupor?"

Recently I've been watching documentaries on "D-Day" and the invasion of the Allied forces in World War 2 of France. Imagine how ludicrous it would have been if a group of soldiers wanted to take time out to have a drinking party on the beach amidst the machine gun fire that was cutting into the bodies of so many of their fellow soldiers. Who would think to divert their attention to leisure and frivolity amidst the carnage of a gruesome battlefield? No one, right? Yet, in the midst of the great controversy between good and evil, where people are dying all around—from lifestyle related diseases, drug overdoses, murders, war, gang violence, etc.,--why are so many people focused on trying to forge a life of comfort and ease?

Is it because there is so much pain and suffering in the world that people escape reality by turning on superficial self-gratifying pastimes? Shouldn't the pain and suffering rather be warning sirens that life's was not meant to be this way and that there is an enemy inflicting these casualties? I would say yes. The bible clearly says in John 10:10 that "the thief comes to kill, steal and destroy." Why don't you and I keep this warning in the forefront of our thinking and before we leave our home every day, we call for God's protection? Whether we are driving, doing chores around the house, shopping, spending time with friends, or attending church, our enemy is looking at us through his telescopic sights, waiting for an opportunity to destroy us.

In 1 Peter 5:8, the bible calls our enemy a roaring lion: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a **roaring lion**, seeking whom he may devour. As a Pastor, I do a lot of hospital visitation. It is so frustrating to not be able to find parking in the hospital parking lots. Every hospital is filled to capacity. There are more people dying annually from lifestyle related diseases, than were killed in the four years during World War 2. 1.3 million Americans die annually from lifestyle related diseases, whereas approximately 430,000 Americans died during World War 2. Now add all the suicides, vehicle accidents, overdoses, murders and other deaths to this number.

In the midst of this human catastrophe, are you and I in a stupor that has been induced by the superficial distractions that come to us via the media, entertainment and the selfish desire for pleasure and self-gratification? Are you and I lured away from the harsh realities that are so evident in the great controversy to where we are soft targets for our cruel enemy's attacks? Are we opening doors to our enemy and giving him permission to come into our homes, our marriages, the lives of our children, our church, or our community, by the choices we make regarding what movies we watch, what internet sites we visit, or our neglect of spending time alone with God in prayer and bible study?

The following quote from the Desire of Ages page 324 summarizes a warning and the solution to the enemy's attacks perfectly: *"It is not necessary for us deliberately to choose the service of the kingdom of darkness in order to come under its dominion. We have only to neglect to ally ourselves with the kingdom of light. If we do not co-operate with the heavenly agencies, Satan will take possession of the heart, and will make it his abiding place. The only defense against evil is the indwelling of Christ in the heart through faith in His righteousness. Unless we become vitally connected with God, we can never resist the unhallowed effects of self-love, self-indulgence, and temptation to sin. We may leave off many bad habits, for the time we may part company with Satan; but without a vital connection with God, through the surrender of ourselves to Him moment by moment, we shall be overcome. Without a personal acquaintance with Christ, and a continual communion, we are at the mercy of the enemy, and shall do his bidding in the end."*

Living in the presence of God, moment by moment, is our only protection against the wily attacks of our enemy. If we would arrange our schedules in such a way that we spend time alone with God, first thing in the day, we could fortify ourselves with the word of God, listen to His still small voice while we pray and be filled with His Spirit. The enemy has no access to any part of our lives when we do that. God says to us in Exodus 14:13, 14, *"Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will accomplish for you today . . .¹⁴ The LORD will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace."* So, as Christians living on the battlefield of the great controversy, we need to do two things: (1) Have situational awareness of the seriousness of the battle and defy being in a stupor of comfort and self-gratification, and (2) ally ourselves with God moment by moment, starting our day with an intentional, focused time alone with God in prayer, listening for His voice and the study of His Word.