

June 2003

A gorgeous beach, a popular resort town, most inviting. It's a peaceful, forget about the cares of this world kind of place. It's Sharm el-Sheik in Egypt and soon President Bush and the Israeli and Palestinian prime ministers will meet there to talk about the "road map" for peace.

3000 years ago David and then Solomon ruled a strong Israel. When Solomon died, the people asked their new king, Rehoboam, for tax relief. Rehoboam's older advisers urged the new king to go along with the people but the younger advisers counseled him to get tougher. Get tougher is the advice he chose. (1 Kings 12:13) The result? Civil war, ancient Israel split in two, and from then on Israel was often a pawn between stronger nations and greater powers. All because the king heeded bad advice.

The setting at Sharm el-Sheik is so peaceful. You and I do well to put our pursuits aside for this moment and ask God to make the place truly peaceful for the world. Counsel the leaders with good advice, we pray, good advice that will be heard and heeded.

The Meyer Minute for June 3, 2003

"There is a time for everything and a season for every activity under heaven." (Ecclesiastes 3:1) That's helpful to remember when you can't understand what God is doing in your life.

"Just as I am" begins the popular hymn. "Just as I am, without one plea but that Thy blood was shed for me And that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee, O Lamb of God, I come, I come."

That's all well and good, but how do you explain the tough struggles you're going through? If God loves you just as you are, then why, why is this happening to me?

"My child, don't turn away or become bitter when the Lord corrects you. The Lord corrects everyone He loves, just as parents correct their favorite child." (Proverbs 3:11-12)

Yes, God accepts you just as you are but He loves you so much that He doesn't leave you just as you are. In Christ He forgives you, He gives you hope, and He's training you up for glory. To everything a season. In every season of your life, God loves you.

The Meyer Minute for June 4, 2003

I should update my will-I know!--but things get in the way. You know?

The "continuity of Government and Commission" will report today that September 11th showed our government and Constitution are not prepared to respond should an attack kill most members of Congress. "We have a hole in the Constitution that

the framers never anticipated," said scholar Norman Ornstein. (Anchorage Daily News, May 25; A5)

Will "more pressing" things get in the way of Congress acting on that important report?

I recall visiting a church member who was terminally ill. Try as I might, I couldn't get her to talk about the end. That's human nature...but that's not wise.

"Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom." (Psalm 90:11)

Since "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom but fools despise wisdom," shouldn't we prepare for our end, I updating my will and you, what? And what's more pressing for you than preparing to give an account of your life to God? (Proverbs 1:7;2, Corinthians 5:10) You know?

The Meyer Minute for June 5, 2003

Let's do a news quiz.

Why is Sammy Sosa in the news?

Does Martha Stewart think her name in the news is "a good thing?"

Why is Hilary Clinton getting special attention?

How'd you do? Sammy Sosa...caught with a corked bat. Martha Stewart...indicted, not a good thing. Hilary Clinton...wrote about Bill's infidelity. I'm sure you did well. We like to follow the problems of high-profile people.

Now my real point. I'll bet if you asked church-goers what one or two things they're struggling with in their relationship with God, most couldn't give you an immediate answer. Of course, that's very subjective on my part...but I've tried it in my preaching. "Right now can you list one or two spiritual struggles you're having? The reaction on the faces in the crowd suggests the answer is no. We can identify what's going on with superstars in the news. We can identify our own physical, material struggles. But when it comes to the most important news of all, our relationship with God, many of us haven't thought about what's going on. Something to think about.

The Meyer Minute for June 6, 2003

A key to relationships is not simply spending time together but how you spend time together.

A scientist named Aylmer married a beautiful woman named Georgiana. They loved each other deeply and, since life was slower back in those days...The story is set in the 1700's...Aylmer and Georgiana spent much time with each other.

But...

Georgiana's beauty had one flaw, a small crimson birthmark on her left cheek. The more time they spent together, the more Aylmer obsessed about that one physical flaw. Georgiana, wanting to please her husband, also obsessed about it and consented to let her husband, the scientist, concoct a potion to remove the mark that was ruining their life. He did...and in removing the birthmark he also took Georgiana's life. Her imperfection was part of her being.

The story is called "The Birthmark" and was written by Nathaniel Hawthorne.

How will you spend your time together this weekend? Sin makes us rationalize our obsession with other people's imperfections. The love of Christ suggests a better way. "Love covers a multitude of sins." (1 Peter 4:8)

The Meyer Minute for June 9, 2003

Last week the President concluded his overseas mission. He visited with European leaders, Arab rulers and finally with the Israeli and Palestinian prime ministers. Some call the trip a success. Since the Middle East is largely desert, others are finding plenty of stones to throw. Time will tell if real progress was made but simply for that hope we should thank God.

Leviticus described the Old Testament system of sacrifices, a system no longer followed...with one possible exception. Although no grain offering is commanded as in Leviticus, the command to be thankful still holds. "Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." (1 Thessalonians 5: 18)

I don't know how you are, but I've often caught myself receiving something from God but not stopping to say, "Thank You." In Jesus' encounter with ten lepers, I'm often like the nine who didn't come back to give thanks. (Luke 17:11-19) At least for this minute, let's offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving for the hope for peace that comes from the President's trip. It helps keep everything in proper perspective.

The Meyer Minute for June 10, 2003

My deep respect goes out to every man and woman whose whole being is caught up in a struggle against alcoholism.

Dr. Robert Smith and William Wilson founded Alcoholics Anonymous on this date, June 10, in 1935. Four years later Dr. Bob wrote, "It was really a horrible nightmare, this earning money, getting liquor, smuggling it home, getting drunk, morning jitters, taking large doses of sedatives to make it possible for me to earn more money, and so on ad nauseam."

Truly a nightmare. You can read about it, as I did, in the book Alcoholics Anonymous. Is the nightmare affecting you or a loved one? Dr. Bob wrote, "If you really and truly want to quit drinking liquor for good...and sincerely feel that you must have some help, we know that we have an answer for you. It never fails, if you go about it with one half the zeal you have been in the habit of showing when you were getting another drink."

Dr. Bob closes with this: "Your Heavenly Father will never let you down!" (pp. 177, 181)

The Meyer Minute for June 11, 2003

The Susan G. Koman Foundation is in the forefront of the fight against breast cancer. This Saturday the Foundation is sponsoring a race in St. Louis.

Joyce Wadler chronicled her battle with breast cancer. She wrote, "I feel myself getting more depressed and try to think of the best way to fight it." (My Breast: One Woman's Cancer Story, p. 72)

Cancer plus depression, ugggh! As Joyce said, both need to be fought. The word "cancer" no longer means a death sentence. Today there are more and more cancer survivors than ever before. Reason to hope!

The biblically-based person has another reason for hope: "When I said, 'My foot is slipping,' Your love, O Lord, supported me. When anxiety was great within me, Your consolation brought joy to my soul." (Psalm 94: 18-19)

Yes, good reasons for hope. Not only cancer, but death itself will be defeated. Jesus Christ "must rule until God has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy He will get rid of is death." (1 Corinthians 15:24-26)

There's hope...for every one of you battling cancer.

The Meyer Minute for June 12, 2003

Why go to church?

I don't have a silver-bullet answer. Personally, though, I don't have the confidence in my own spiritual insights that many people have in theirs. They seem confident, doing spirituality individually, apart from the people of the church.

Ever buy something that turned out to be a lemon? So why can't you be deceived in your own individualized spirituality? A sucker is born every minute. Jesus said, "My words are Spirit and they are life." (John 6:63) Sunday worship thrusts at me those words of God, puts them in my face. I may not agree with the human interpretation, but when my mind is wrestling with biblical words, the Spirit is there.

In my work, it's better if I can speak to several hundred people at one time rather than speaking to them individually. I think that's also true of the Spirit. Yes, He works on solo spiritual flights...but He's more effective when His people gather together.

"Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me." (Psalm 51:11) That possibility is more likely to happen when you fly spiritually solo.

The Meyer Minute for June 13, 2003

Father's Day? A distinction is called for, I think. We should be honoring good fathers, honorable fathers.

On May 30th Gov. Jeb Bush signed a law repealing Florida's "Scarlet Letter" law. A woman who had a baby, planned to put the child up for adoption, but did not know who fathered the child was required by the "Scarlet Letter" law to publish her sexual history in the newspaper.

The new law replaces that with a "father registry." "Men who believed they may be fathers would have to provide the name, address and physical description of the mother and the date and place where conception took place to protect their parental rights." (New York Times, May 31, 2003; A1)

This weekend is about a man who doesn't need a registry or DNA to be identified as a father. This man met, courted and married his wife. He honors her; she's no passing plaything in his life. He's easy to find...with his wife and children. Such a father is a representative to his family from a good God. We honor him this weekend.

The Meyer Minute for June 16, 2003

John Tefler of the Midland (Michigan) Daily News wrote that he recently told a young woman, "When I was young, we used to communicate by writing letters to one another. My wife and I wrote love letters more often than we talked on the phone." To that the woman replied, 'I've received an instant message love letter.'" (Omaha World-Herald, June 1, 11B)

Someplace my wife has hidden a bundle of love letters I wrote to her when we were dating. Now and then she pulls them out. Wow! Was I a boring letter writer! But I did write...not type, not instant message...and she wrote back.

Once I handwrote a letter to a donor to our ministry. He later thanked me, but added, "I know that you didn't write that yourself, but it was nice." "Harold! It wasn't computer generated. I wrote that myself!"

Maybe a few more handwritten letters would break through the cynicism of our times. And an instant message love letter? Those letters Diane and I wrote turned into a marriage 30 years ago today. Happy Anniversary, Diane!

The Meyer Minute for June 17, 2003

When that fishing boat capsized off the coast of Oregon last Saturday, one of the nine victims was from my town, Collinsville, Illinois. Sigmund Bohnet served faithfully as the principal of Metro-East Lutheran High School for 14 years. He embodied the servant life that Christianity is supposed to be about.

A friend and I were talking about Sig's tragic death. Talking? Stammering is a better word. The life of faith isn't filled with answers for everything. We concluded that we only have this moment. The past is gone, leaving only memories. Faith trusts that Christ's forgiveness covers whatever we regret about the past. To the future we look with lively hope because Christ rose. But the future is not ours; it's in

God's hand, to give or not give as He chooses. All you and I have is the present, now. This present is a time to be seized...with faith that through it all God is good...with hope for resurrection when God will wipe away all tears from our eyes...and with love, that servant love that our friend Sig Bohnet demonstrated with such energy.

The Meyer Minute for June 18, 2003

"We are not made for brilliant moments," wrote Oswald Chambers ("My Utmost for His Highest," June 16). Jim Furyk had a brilliant moment last weekend when he won the U.S. Open at Olympia Fields.

Less brilliant but more touching was the affection between Tom Watson and his caddy Bruce Edwards. When a reporter asked Watson what he'd remember from this Open, Watson replied, "I want to find something for him." Edwards has been diagnosed with ALS, Lou Gehrig's disease. For his part, Edwards said, "Something like this will carry me on."

Read the Psalms and you will find the word "mercy" in the plural, "mercies." That's because mercy is not feeling sorry for someone but rather doing acts of loving kindness for someone with whom you have a relationship. Watson has set out to do mercies and for Bruce Edwards, in fact for any of us struggling under anything, mercies, acts of loving kindness carry us on.

Oswald Chambers wrote, "There was only one brilliant moment in the life of Jesus and that was on the Mount of Transfiguration." Jesus got off that mountain to do mercies. That's our vocation as well.

The Meyer Minute for June 19, 2003

Several weeks ago I was in line at Ever's Pharmacy for a refill on my blood pressure medicine. The woman ahead of me, an older woman, was told her bill, as I recall, was around \$100.

The other day a friend told me about a woman in the nursing home, has to be in the nursing home, no other way for her to be cared for. But the only way she can afford to be there is as a ward of the state.

The huge costs of health care are forcing themselves at us from all sides. Yesterday's USA Today headlined how the VA buys generic medicines in bulk, perhaps providing a model for Medicare reform. An administration official, however, countered that Medicare is just too big to follow the VA model.

Life is a journey of both soul and body and most of the time the destination is still ahead of us. "Are we there yet?" impatient kids ask. No, but may God give wisdom to the people driving health care so that one day soon we can all arrive.

The Meyer Minute for June 20, 2003

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops had a bad news week. The chairman of their sexual misconduct review board resigned, comparing some bishops to the

Mafia. The bishop of Phoenix was arrested for a fatal hit-and-run accident. The Lord's messenger "will purify Levi's sons (Old Testament priests) and refine them like gold and silver." (Malachi 3: 2-3) Some bishops must be wondering, Will our refining ever end?

Not in America, it won't. Americans have always been wary of clergy. Back in colonial days Episcopal priests had a reputation for "licentiousness" (Jean Edward Smith, "John Marshall," p. 20). Other times the skepticism was unfounded. Some people feared the Pope would start calling the shots if John Kennedy were elected. Well-founded or not, American skepticism can have a good result.

The bishops meeting in St. Louis are spending today in prayer and reflection. That's good. Clergy and laity too, always need to look into the mirror of God's law and face the truth that we who have the treasure of the Gospel are "jars of clay," as St. Paul puts it...sometimes cracked pots (2 Corinthians 4:7).

The Meyer Minute for June 23, 2003

On this date, June 23, in 1860 Congress approved the creation of the Government Printing Office. Thank you very much!

Also this date in 1868 a journalist in Wisconsin named Christopher Latham Sholes received a patent for a contraption called a "type-writer." "What's a typewriter?"

Information technology continues to soar. Last week United Airlines announced that it will offer e-mail capability.

Time was when you read the paper and were abreast of the news. Now no one can keep up and if you do try, how do you discern what information is true?

A recent ruling by the Federal Communications Commission is drawing criticism because, it's alleged, several big media corporations are going to dictate what information we receive or don't receive. Big brother stuff.

My opinion: to be contributing citizens, we need to try to keep up with current news in a discriminating way. That means some news sources get priority over others. At that top of that information list I'd suggest the Bible. "Thy word is truth" (John 17:17). The Bible has news...good news.

The Meyer Minute for June 24, 2003

Here's what Senator John Warner, chairman of the Senate Armed Forces Committee, said last Friday about the continuing skirmishes in Iraq. "We're very concerned in our committee, as I find colleagues throughout the Senate are, as well. This is not a risk-free operation. And we regrettably have to bear those risks to fulfill this mission" (St. Louis Post-Dispatch, June 22; A3).

Since May 1st when major military operations ended, 55 of our personnel have been killed, 18 by enemy fire. While the present skirmishes are relatively minor, each life is precious and it is our duty to pray for the 146,000 troops who remain in that dangerous place.

"Almighty God, we commend to Your gracious care and keeping all the men and women of our armed forces at home and abroad. Defend them day by day with Your heavenly grace; strengthen them in their trials and temptations; give them courage to face the perils which beset them; and grant them a sense of Your abiding presence wherever they may be; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen" (Book of Common Prayer, p. 823)

The Meyer Minute for June 25, 2003

Growing up in the 50's, I loved to watch baseball on WGN in Chicago. One player I remember watching was Larry Doby. He played 13 years, most of them with the Cleveland Indians, including two World Series in 1948 and 1954. In 1956 and '57 he played for my Chicago White Sox and returned to manage them in 1978. With a lifetime batting average of .283 and 253 home runs, he was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1998.

Mr. Doby died last week at the age of 79. As a kid I didn't realize I was watching the second man to break major league baseball's color barrier. 11 weeks after Jackie Robinson broke in with the Brooklyn Dodgers, Mr. Doby joined the Indians. Watching him roam the outfield and hit home runs on our black and white TV set, I didn't realize all that black and white really meant.

How often do we watch or talk with someone and have no clue who that person really is, what he or she is really struggling with? Everyone deserves respect.

The Meyer Minute for June 26, 2003

When a married man named David Helsel went to a chiropractor named Sivi Noellsch, the moves aren't only chiropractic. David divorced his wife in order to marry the chiropractor. More than a little put out, his former wife sued the chiropractor for "alienation of affection." Recently the Missouri Supreme Court ruled that "alienation of affection" is an outdated concept (St. Louis Post-Dispatch, June 18, B3). Why should a court pass judgment on anyone's personal love life? After all, isn't marriage a private affair?

Or is it? Why does the government issue licenses for things like cars and guns and liquor sales? Because those things effect society's well being. The stability of our society also requires lasting marriages. Hence the government issues licenses for marriage. Historically the government has made divorce a slow process, trying to keep a marriage together. Now we're told that alienation of affection isn't society's concern? Tell that to the heartbroken spouse. Tell that to children of divorce. Tell that to the One who said, "What God has joined together let no one put asunder" (Matthew 19:6).

The Meyer Minute for June 27, 2003

Here's the Minute I put out a year ago today:

President Bush visited Arizona Tuesday. "Hang in there," he told the people who had to evacuate their homes because of the worst wildfires in the history of the West.

Wildfires or other serious problems, how do YOU hang in there when your energies and will are almost gone?

Not easily. In my experience I've found that I barely hang on. 'How long, O Lord? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me?' (Psalm 13:1)

Complaining to the Lord means we're going to the best source of help. 'I would have lost heart, unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the Lord!' (Psalm 27:13-14)

That was the Minute a year ago. This year we've again had terrible fires in Arizona. "Nothing new under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 1:9). "From everlasting to everlasting You are God" (Psalm 90:2).

The Meyer Minute for June 30, 2003

They say you can tell you're getting older when you know the answers but no one is asking you the questions. Along that line...You can tell you're in a bureaucracy when a co-worker dodges your questions for needed information and hoards responsibility. Not talking here about personal confidences but rather...Your group is responsible for some project but a co-worker isn't sharing information and is hoarding responsibility.

3 negatives come from such conduct according to Tim McGuire of United Feature Syndicate. It tells other workers they aren't trustworthy, breeds distrust and destroys a feeling of ownership on the project. (St. Louis Post-Dispatch, June 23; E2)

Speaking spiritually, that hoarder is reflecting a desire, conscious or unconscious, to exalt himself, herself. A biblically-based approach would recognize that I'm accountable first and foremost to God. Then my God tells me, "Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather...with sober judgment" (Romans 12:3)

As we get older we learn things like this. Is anybody in your shop asking about the spiritual implications of office conduct?