

# Blue Ridge Brandmarks

“...I bear on my body the brand-marks of Jesus”. - Gal. 6:17

Volume 4

January 3, 2010

Number 1

## Striving for Excellence

*Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.” - Phil. 3:12-15*

Many confuse the striving for excellence and the attainment of perfection. They are not the same. Despite our imperfections, we must constantly stretch to go beyond where we are. We will never see total perfection, because we all fall short. However, we can begin to experience excellence in our lives.

### **The Opposite of “Striving for Excellence”**

*Laziness* – We ought to achieve something everyday. We should try

something new each week. There’s nothing wrong with rest - it’s important; but laziness is the abuse of rest.

*Apathy* – Laziness will give way to an uncaring attitude.

*Depression* – Apathy will give way to depression. Depression is simply feeling like you will never accomplish the purpose for your life.

*Death* – Depression finally gives way to death - potentially physical, but always spiritual. We can lose all hope.

### **How Striving for Excellence Begins**

*Faith* – We realize God has a purpose for us and the plan to make it happen.

*Hope* – We see God’s power in our lives as we follow His plan.

*Love* – We find security in the Lord’s love and our love for Him and others prompts us to act to the best of our abilities.

Cont. on Page 2 ►

# A New Decade

The beginning of each year gives us an opportunity to reflect, assess and plan, but there is something special from a human perspective about the prospect of beginning a new decade. There is some truth to the observation that if you want to make God laugh, tell Him, "I've got a plan." However, it is proper for us from time to time to reflect on our past, assess our present, and plan for our future. If this is true in matters pertaining to this life only, how much more so in spiritual and eternal matters.

## **Reflecting on the Past**

In January 2000, I was a brand new computer science graduate two months into my first job out of school and on the other side of the continent from home. I had only met my (now) wife Rachel a few weeks before I moved to Seattle, WA to work, and though I was very interested in her, I had no idea I would be married to her before a year passed. Spiritually, I was being tested, as I was making decisions about how to live and where to worship in a brand new place. *What about you? Who were you and what were you doing ten years ago?*

## **Assessing the Present**

A wife, four kids, seven moves and a career change later, I am now a preacher 2

of the gospel for the Blue Ridge church of Christ in Roanoke, VA. It is amazing and inspiring to observe how God has brought me through difficulties, joys, sorrows and my own mistakes to prepare the way for things that I never could have expected ten years ago. I see much room for growth and improvement, but, by God's grace, I have come very far from where I have been. *What about you? Who are you now and what are you doing?*

## **Planning for the Future**

What city, state or nation will I be living in ten years from now? How many children will I have? Will I be in this world or the next? These are questions I cannot answer today any more than I could have answered them ten years ago. But who I am then will depend who I am now and what I do now and who I walk with now. Since I get to choose those things, the most important part of the future is settled. I may not know where I will be or what I will be doing, but I know who I will be. *What about you? Who are you going to be and what will you be doing in ten years?*

For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. - Philippians 1:21

## **Striving for Excellence - from Page 1 ►**

### **What Striving for Excellence Looks Like**

Resisting the devil and the flesh.

Stepping into places where we have not gone before.

Keeping our focus. *“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.”* - Heb. 12:1-2.

No excuses!!!

Examining self: *“For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But each one must examine his own work.”* Gal. 6:3-4; *“Test*

*yourself to see if you are in the faith. Examine yourselves.”* 2 Cor. 13:5.

Realizing it hurts, and that’s okay.

*“Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.”* - 1 Cor. 9:25-27

### **The Key to Excellence**

Keep running the race. If we will stretch ourselves to become more excellent, then we will.

◀Boyd King▶

### **What am I? by Dody Gibson**

"What am I?" is the question.  
Another puzzle, another game.  
So read your Bible from cover to cover;  
Then nineteen times you'll find my name.

When mentioned literally I come up short  
For not much good is said of me.  
But as a symbol to make a point  
You'll find a lesson exemplary.

Once I was likened to words of wisdom  
And once I was weighed so we are told.  
Strength and security I represent  
And I was used to displace the old.

Suddenly I came into the temple  
But not without a driving force.

The consequences whether good or bad  
Depend on who you were of course.

Sometimes I'm made of iron or gold,  
Sometimes even brass or wood.  
The answer is always close at hand;  
A mystery to be understood.

The Savior dealt with three of me  
Though we were never mentioned by name.  
Only John writes of me  
Many years later remembering the same.

But Jesus knew me very well  
So often familiar in His youth.  
If you have solved this puzzle by now  
We'll count you as a clever sleuth.

# JANUARY 2010 DUTY ROSTER

<b>Weekday</b>	SUN	WED	SUN	WED	SUN	WED	SUN	WED	SUN
<b>Date</b>	1/3	1/6	1/10	1/13	1/17	1/20	1/24	1/27	1/31
<b>Opening Prayer</b>	Eric B.		Tim P.		Jeremy L.		Brent P.		Dale D.
<b>Morning Message</b>	John M.		Eric B.		Larry P.		Leo R.		Randy F.
<b>Announcements</b>	Matt. M.	Jimmy F.	Ryland II	Randy F.	Jimmy F.	John M.	Bill A.	Bill A.	Don H.
<b>Leading Songs</b>	Alan M.	Bill A.	Bill A.	John M.	David T.	Matt M.	Larry P.	Alan M.	Brad F.
<b>First Prayer</b>	Leo R.	David T.	David T.	Alan M.	Ryland II	James M.	Eric B.	Larry P.	Jerry D.
<b>Lead at Lord's Table &amp; Contribution</b>	Randy F.		Charlie K.		Jerry D.		Jimmy F.		Jeremy L.
<b>Assist</b>	James M.		Brad F.		Ryland III		Dale D.		Ryland II
<b>Assist</b>	Brad F.		Tripp H.		Jeremy P.		Jeremy L.		Ryland III
<b>Assist</b>	Jeremy P.		Don H.		Matt M.		Charlie K.		Tripp H.
<b>Read Scripture</b>	Ryland III		Jeremy P.		Bill A.		James M.		Leo R.
<b>Preaching</b>	Brent P.		Brent P.		Brent P.		Brent P.		Brent P.
<b>Wed. Exhortation</b>		Charlie K.		Larry P.		Alan M.		Don H.	
<b>Closing Prayer</b>	Jerry D.	Matt M.	Ryland III	David T.	Tripp H.	Dale D.	Tim P.	Leo R.	James M.

**ALL ARE WELCOME!**

## Sunday

9:15 - Morning Message

10:00 - Bible classes for all ages

11:00 - Worship

## Wednesday

7:30 - Bible Classes for all ages

## Elders:

Jim Fields, Alan Moeller & Leo Rodrigue

## Deacons:

Eric Bridge & John Malloy

## Evangelist:

Brent Paschall

Read articles, sermons and download  
class material at

[www.blueridgecoc.org](http://www.blueridgecoc.org)

Blue Ridge Church of Christ  
929 Indiana Ave NE  
Roanoke, VA 24012