



first heaven and the first earth had passed away . . . And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.” *Revelation 21:1&4, NKJV*. When the earth is made new, all injustices are made right, every disease is healed and all sins are forgiven. The second promise is that God is with us in the meantime. Jesus said, “and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen.” *Matthew 28:20, NKJV*. And Paul reminds us, “For He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’” *Hebrews 13:5, NKJV*. Someday God will fix everything but until then He is with us in all things.

Today there is still controversy over the circumstances of Meriwether Lewis’s death. Only a few years after completing his historic expedition, some scholars believe that in the predawn hours of October 11, 1809, he took his own life. He was deeply in debt, it was held he was an abuser of alcohol, and he was accused of misappropriating funds from the government. But most of all, in spite of all that he accomplished, he was unable to realize his true vision. He found no “Northwest Passage.” The expansion of the United States was eventually accomplished and our nation today spans the continent *because* of his expedition. He discovered animals and plants unknown until then. He met and established good relations with Native American tribes. Only one person died on the trip due to an unpreventable event. He accomplished so much, yet he did not accomplish his true vision, which left him depressed and despondent.

A wise steward looks to the future. So as we begin this New Year our vision, Jesus Christ our Savior, gives birth to life. “He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.” *1 John 5:12, NKJV*. I challenge you to study God’s word. Look for His vision for you within those precious pages. Lay aside those things that do not give life but take it. As we are stewards of our Spiritual life, let us contemplate with pleasure the true promises of God.

BRIEF BIO: Edward W. Fergusson, M.Div., currently serves as the Director of Government Relations for the Church State Council in Sacramento, California.

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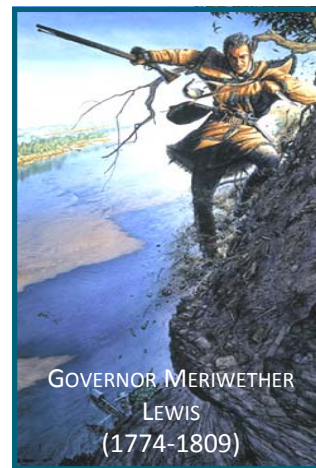
The Stewpot

A potpourri of practical ideas to help you become a better steward

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TRUE VISION—WHILE LOOKING FOR PROMISES IN THE NEW YEAR

EDWARD W. FARGUSSON, M.DIV.



Governor Meriwether Lewis was the visionary of the famous Lewis and Clark expedition. For years he dreamed of finding the fabled “Northwest Passage,” a route across North America that would open up the entire nation like Columbus’s voyage did for Europe and the New World. For some time he lobbied his boss, President Thomas Jefferson, for the opportunity to make this historic expedition. When he finally received permission, he made plans, purchased supplies, got special training and even invented new devices for the long trip. He convinced his friend, William Clark, to join him as co-captain. On May 14, 1804, at 4 P.M. the journey began as the “Corp of Discovery” left Camp Dubois near St. Louis and began traveling up the Missouri River.

On August 12, 1805, Governor Lewis climbed to the top of Lemhi Pass in the Beaverhead Mountains and for the first time looked over the continental divide to see what was on the other side. This was the culmination of a great vision for Lewis and so I am sure he had in mind exactly what he expected to see. He had imagined this moment for many months, if not years, and

what he expected to see were mountains tapering off into the Pacific Ocean. Instead what he saw was nothing but more and more mountains reaching as far as the eye could see. He was so depressed that he stopped journaling for many days. His vision slipped into disappointment.

Scripture reasons, “Where there is

Stewardship; a total lifestyle that involves our health, time, talents, environment, relationships, spirituality and finances.

“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away,” *Revelation 21:4 KJV*

no vision, the people perish . . .,” *Proverbs 29:18, KJV*. That is very strong language. People actually dying because of a lack of vision! Can that be true?

The word used in Proverbs meaning vision, “is to contemplate with pleasure.” I know a lot of people who buy lottery tickets and then contemplate with great pleasure how they will spend their money. Of course, they will be generous with the church and family members, but what they really relish is the new house, fancy car, exotic vacations, etc. Then the inevitable happens, they don’t win. A slight depression sets in until they buy the next lottery ticket and the cycle repeats. That is why gambling is so addictive. It’s not winning that grabs you; it’s the idea of winning that captures your attention and holds you hostage.

So what is the answer? The only contemplation with pleasure that brings life instead of death is contemplating on the promises of God. Only the promises of God do not disappoint. Since God is God, nothing He says or even thinks ever fails. In the beginning He simply

spoke and everything came into existence. By definition, whatever God says is reality.

A wise man looks for guidelines regarding the promises of God.

1. Make sure you know what God has really promised. So many times I have seen very wonderful Christian people become disappointed because they misunderstand what God actually said. For instance, the Bible says, “And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.” *Matthew 9:35, KJV*. Some people have interpreted this to mean that God will in fact heal any disease at any time. May I remind you that in *John 5* Jesus enters a place with hundreds, if not thousands, of sick people, heals one man and then walks away leaving everyone else still sick. If you believe God has promised His healing each time you ask Him for healing, not being healed could leave you devastated. Having a false understanding of God’s

promises can be more disappointing than not believing at all.

2. Make sure you understand the conditions of God’s promises. “If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.” *2 Chronicles 7:14, NKJV*. This is only one of many conditional promises of God. We have a role to play in order to receive the forgiveness and healing promised in this verse. It is not that God cannot act, but that He is too loving to act when it is not in our best interest. That is why he banned humans from the Garden of Eden after sin. If after sin we had access to the Tree of Life, what a miserable universe we would have. When we fail to do our part, God cannot do His.
3. Don’t try to manipulate God. In Mark 2 some people brought a paralytic to Jesus for healing. Jesus tells the man that his sins are forgiven. This is not what the friends or this man were really

expecting but it brought a huge controversy among the religious leaders that were present. Then Jesus said, “But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins— He said to the paralytic, ‘I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.’” *Mark 2:10, 11, NKJV*. Sometimes people will look at a story like this one and try to manipulate God into healing them of a physical disease by confessing their sin. Jesus did not always heal people and God will not always heal us today. We live in a war zone called earth where bad things happen. We have to trust God even when we don’t get what we want.



4. The Steward of our spiritual life demands we hold these promises as we begin 2011. These are two promises that I call the two great promises of the Bible. First, is the promise that someday God will fix everything. “Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the

“Where there is no vision, the people perish:”— *Proverbs 29:18 KJV*