**THE DASH – Making a Difference with Your Life**

**Scripture Reading: Birth ( Ecclesiastes 3:1-2 NKJV ) D A S H Death ( Hebrew 9:27 NKJV)**

**Special Poem Reading: THE DASH**

**AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION & PREPARATION :**(Request everybody to stand, raise own Bible with the right hand and recite **“THIS IS MY BIBLE It is the Word of God . . It is the sword of the Spirit . .It is the source of my spiritual food . . I am what it says I am . . I can do what it says I MUST do . . .And I AM READY! I AM READY!! I AM READY!!! to be spiritually fed this morning.”**

**I – GREETINGS & INTRODUCTION – Good morning & Happy Sunday! I would like to commend everyone for being here this morning specially those from my family members, friends business associates, fellow members of Peninsula Toastmasters and readers who responded to my invitation in my column on HEALTH & WEALTH. This is the best invitation you responded to because it will give you the TIME and opportunity to hear my sermon, which could determine your final destination to eternity. I would like also to thank Bro. James Quitoriano for inviting and scheduling me to preach this morning.**

I fully appreciate and thank**Bro. Riley Douthit** for the Scripture Reading and **Bro. Clay Hooper** for special reading of the poem – **THE DASH.**The poem was taken from this book **THE DASH – Making a Difference** **with Your Life** which was given as my gift from **Sis. Juanita Robertson**, retired Professor of the City College of San Francisco. This book was jointly written by Linda Ellis and Mac Anderson. If you want to order a copy of this book and want more information about Linda Ellis, author of the poem, visit.[www.lindaellis.net](http://www.lindaellis.net/)

Let me read the poem, **THE DASH :**I read of a man who stood to speak at the funeral of a friend. He referred to the dates on her tombstone from the beginning . . . to the end. He noted that first came the date of her birth. And spoke of the following date with tears, but he said what mattered most of all was the **DASH** between those years. For the **DASH** represents all the time that she spent alive on earth and now only those who loved her know what that little line is worth.

For it matters not, how much we own, **the cars**. . .**the houses**. . .**the cash**. What matters is how we live and love and how we spend our**DASH.** So think this long and hard; are there things you'd like to change? For you never know how much time is left that can still be rearranged.

If we could just slow down enough to consider what's true and real and always try to understand the way other people feel. And be less quick to anger and show appreciation more and love the people in our lives like we've never loved before. If we can treat each other with respect and more often wear a smile, remembering that this special **DASH** might only last a little while. So when your eulogy is read with your life's actions to rehash, would you be proud of the things they say about**how you spent your DASH?**

The verse in the Old Testament **“There is a time for everything; a time to be** **born and a time to die”** is in the book of Ecclesiastes written by **King Solomon**, the wisest and richest king during his time. The verse in the New Testament **“And it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment”** is in the book of Hebrews. written by the apostle Paul. Paul was the same Saul of Tarsus, a very powerful and influential Jewish and religious leader who got a letter from the high priest to persecute the early Christians on the way to Damascus. It was on the way to Damascus when a light from heaven made him blind and he heard the voice of Jesus **“Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?”** Saul replied,**“Who are you, Lord?”** Then Jesus said, **“I am Jesus whom** **you are persecuting,”** Trembling and astonished, Saul asked, **“Lord, what do you want me to do?”**

Jesus told him, **“Arise and go to the city and you will be told what you must do.”**Saul went to the city where he met Ananias who preached to him the gospel in its purity and simplicity. (read**Acts 9**).

After hearing the gospel, Ananias asked Saul, **“And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”** (**Acts 22:16**) Saul obeyed the gospel in baptism for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38) and became the Apostle Paul and a plain Christian (Acts 11:26), the missionary to the Gentiles.

Today, there are so many powerful and influential religious leaders who are still persecuting Jesus like Saul of Tarsus by literally persecuting Christians in Indonesia and in the middle East and blocking the spread of the gospel in its purity and simplicity . There are so many powerful and influential religious leaders like in the Philippines who are perverting the gospel and teaching a different gospel (**Galatians 1:6-9**)

**II**-There are two important events in our lives in which we have no choice and no control .**1. OUR BIRTH -**We didn't choose and didn't control the date and place of our birth . . .**2. OUR** **DEATH -**We can't choose and control the hour, date and place of our death. We can die young like **Elvis Presley** or **Whitney Houston**. We can also die very old like **Methuselah** in the Old Testament.

In the **DASH**which represents all the time that we are alive on earth, there are many which we can choose and decide to do. But with the time allowed for me to speak, I will share with you **SEVEN WHICH EVERY ONE CAN CHOOSE OR DECIDE TO DO.**

1. **EVERYBODY CAN CHOOSE OR DECIDE TO HUNGER FOR THE WORD OF GOD, SEARCH AND MEDITATE ON THE SCRIPTURE**- **“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work”** **(2 Timothy 3:16-17) . . . Gen. Douglas MacArthu**r, one of the greatest generals who commanded the U.S. Armed Forces in the Far East (**USAFFE**), was guided by the admonitions and teachings of the Bible. He said, **“Believe me, Sir, never a night goes by, be I ever be tired, but I read the Word of God (Bible) before I go to bed.”**Gen, MacArthur stayed at the historic Manila Hotel as his headquarter during World War II. During our vacation in the Philippines in the mid 80s, my wife and I were fortunate to stay at the historic Manila Hotel (where there is now the MacArthur Room) through the arrangement of my cousin **Fred** **Gabot,** author, journalist,Editor-in-Chief of **PHILIPPINES TODAY** and past president of the National Press Club of the Philippines. . . . **Ronald**Reagan, the 40th U.S. President, is another influential leader who was guided by the admonitions and teachings of the Bible. President Reagan said, **“Within the covers of the Bible are the ANSWERS to ALL the PROBLEMS men face.”**I hope that the examples of Gen. MacArthur and President Reagan will inspire and motivate you to read, search and meditate on the Word of God, the **BIBLE.**

1. **WE CAN CHOOSE TO BE AN ATHEIST OR CHOOSE TO BE A PLAIN CHRISTIAN – The FOOL says in his heart, “There is no God.”**(Psalm 53:1)**. . I would like to read and share with you the spiritual journeys of JOHN CLAYTON, a former atheist; and MICHAEL SHANK, a former Baptist.**

**JOHN CLAYTON'S SPIRITUAL JOURNEY –**Influenced by his atheist parents, John Clayton (retired high school science teacher) was a practicing atheist for more than 30 years. The turning point of his spiritual awakening came when he met Phylis, a committed, dedicated and Bible-believing Christian woman, who eventually became his wife. At first, John Clayton tried to disprove the claims of Christianity. But after months and years of searching and investigating the historical evidences, archaeological findings, hundreds of eyewitnesses on the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus as recorded in the Bible, he was persuaded that God is real and the Bible is His Word. John Clayton eventually obeyed the gospel in baptism for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38). He is a full-time evangelist and **Editor/Publisher of DOES GOD EXIST?**a nonprofit effort to convince mankind that God is real and the Bible is His Word, responsible for converting hundreds and thousands of atheists, scientists, lawyers and other professionals, high school and college students. This is a copy of **“DOES GOD EXIST”**which John Clayton sends to me regularly.

**MICHAEL SHANK'S SPIRITUAL JOURNEY-**Michael Shank and his young wife Jonetta moved to Nashville, Tennessee, from Chicago in March, 1988 as Technical Service Engineer of OSI Data Solutions, Inc. A young Baptist, he considered himself a good guy with not much time for religion. He wanted the finer things that life had to offer like a big home in the suburb, 7-series BMW, a summer home in Colorado, a winter home in the Keys, fine clothes, vacations around the world, expensive jewelry and all that young and aspiring materialists desire. His spiritual awakening started when he met Randall Hedges, a fellow employee and plain Christian who befriended him and constantly asked series of soul-searching questions like **“How many times did you eat today,” “Okay, how many times did you eat of spiritual food today?”** **“Did you** **know that Christ is coming back?” “Have you obeyed the gospel of our Lord?”** etc. Eventually, Michael Shank and Randall Hedges had series of Bible studies to answer the soul-searching questions during lunch breaks and after office hours. After six months, Michael Shank and his wife Jonetta obeyed the gospel in baptism for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38) on March 15, 1988, at 12:45 am. He is now wearing the name Christian (Acts 11:26, 1 Peter 4:16) and not Baptist. Today, Michael Shank is a full-time evangelist. He wrote and published his best-selling book **“Muscle and a Shovel,”** responsible for converting hundreds and thousands of Baptists, Adventists, Lutherans, Roman Catholics, Methodists, Mormons, Buddhists, , etc., to become plain Christian. This is the original copy of **“Muscle and a Shovel”**which Michael Shank autographed for me and my wife during the Tahoe Family Encampment in South Lake Tahoe, California, last July 22, 2014.

My wife and I were fortunate and blessed to meet John Clayton and Michael Shank on July 22, 2014, at the Tahoe Family Encampment. Our pictures with John Clayton and Michael Shank were even posted in the Facebook. I hope and pray that the spiritual journeys of John Clayton and Michael Shank will inspire and motivate you to become a plain Christian and wear the name “Christian” (Acts 11:26, 1 Peter 4:16) We are the church, the bride of Christ (Revelation 21:9). Like a bride (wife) wearing the surname or family name of the groom (husband), Jesus Christ will be happy and glorified if we all wear the name “Christian” and not Baptist, not Methodist, not Adventist, not Lutheran, not Roman Catholic, not Mormon, not Buddhist, etc. You cannot find or read these man-made names in the Bible.

1. **EVERY CHRISTIAN CAN CHOOSE AND DECIDE TO ASSEMBLE OR FORSAKE THE ASSEMBLY WITH THE SAINTS OR FELLOW CHRISTIANS** – In his letters to the early Christians, Apostle Paul admonished the living Saints or Christians to assemble regularly in order to stir up love and good works and be able to remain faithful There is a common misconception that Saints are dead. But Paul addressed his letters to living Saints or Christians in Corinth (1 Corinthians 1:2, NKJV)), living Saints or Christians in Ephesus (Ephesians 1:1, NKJV); living Saints or Christians in Philippi (Philippians 1:1, NKJV); living Saints or Christians in Colossae (Colossians 1:2, NKJV)

Apostle Paul admonished every Christian or living Saint not to forsake the assembly of every local or home congregation. **“And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.” (**Hebrew 10:24-25). At the **Golden Gate Church of Christ**, we have Sunday morning Bible Class at 10:00 am, Worship Services at 11:00 am, Wednesday Bible Class & Prayer Fellowship at 7:00 pm and Fifth Wednesday Singing & Prayer Fellowship at 7:00 pm. JOIN US.

1. **EVERY CHRISTIAN CAN CHOOSE AND DECIDE TO REMAIN FAITHFUL** – It is very important for every Christian to be vigilant and remain faithful to be assured of eternal home or mansion in heaven. Our Lord and Savior Jesus promised that He is coming back to bring all the faithful Christians or Saints in heaven (John 14:1-3). Every Christian must strive to remain faithful until death or until the second coming of Jesus Christ. In the last book of Revelation, here's the final admonition, **“Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown** **of life.”** Revelations 2:10)

1. **EVERY CHRISTIAN CAN CHOOSE AND DECIDE TO BE A SOUL WINNER** (**Jule Miller**said: **Every Christian MUST be a soul winner. Bro. James Quitoriano mentioned in his sermon last Sunday that every Christian is a watchman. He challenged us to rescue every lost soul from going to the spiritual death row in HELL and bring every lost soul to the eternal joy and happiness in HEAVEN.**We have an obligation to give a warning to all our**FRANC**(**F**riends, **R**elatives, **A**cquaintances, **N**eighbors,**C**o-Workers) the danger of going to the eternal damnation and mention the remedy of avoiding it by sharing the gospel in its purity and simplicity. We have proven and effective tools we can use to reach out to the many lost souls. This **FISH BRACELET** is an effective and unique conversation piece to bring every lost soul to the **Prince of Peace.** This **“WE CARE” New Testament Chain Reference Bible** has proven to be an effective tool to have **“WE CARE” Bible Study** with every lost soul to answer directly in the Bible the urgent and important question: **“What if Christ were to come right now? Would you know for sure, without any doubt, that you would go to heaven.”**

Please pray for me and the **“WE CARE” USA Team** as we prepare to go to the Philippines in February, 2016 for the 3rd **“WE CARE” Evangelism Campaign & Workshop** in the provinces of Pangasinan and Tarlac in Luzon and the province of Leyte in the Visayas where Gen. MacArthur landed when he fulfilled his promise **“I SHALL RETURN.”**

1. **EVERY ONE CAN CHOOSE TO GO TO HEAVEN OR CHOOSE TO GO TO HELL-     HEAVEN**is a prepared abode for the prepared person. Jesus Christ already prepared a mansion for us in heaven. Jesus said,**“Let not your heart be troubled, you believe in God, believe also in Me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself that where I am there you may be also.”**(John 14:1-3). In the last book of Revelation, here's what it says, **“Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the 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)

**HELL is also a real place for the unprepared person**. In Matthew 10:28, Jesus said, **“And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to** **destroy both body and soul in HELL.”** Revelation 20:15 says, **“And anyone not found in the Book of Life was cast in the lake of fire.”**

**7.EVERY PERSON CAN CHOOSE AND DECIDE TO ACCEPT, BELIEVE AND OBEY THE GOSPEL** – There is so much misunderstanding and misconception about what the gospel is. Let's check and find out what the Bible says: First**, the gospel is the power of God to** **salvation**. **Romans 1:16** says, **“ For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation to everyone who believes.”**Second**, the gospel is the Death,** **Burial and Resurrection of Christ (or DBR**). These are proven historical facts affirmed and seen by many credible eyewitnesses. **1 Corinthians 15:1-4** says, **“I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand by which also you are saved if you hold fast that word which I preached to you – unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried and that He rose again according to the Scriptures**

Third, **we must heed the warning and obey the gospel before it's too late. 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9**says,**“Since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.”**

**Lee Strobel,** a former atheist, investigative journalist who completed Master of Laws at Yale University and bestselling author of **“THE CASE FOR CHRIST,”**wrote in his other book **“INSIDE THE MIND OF UNCHURCHED HARRY AND MARY,”**that there are three basic camps of people in the world today.

* + **Camp A,** which consists of people who have found God, obeyed the gospel and assured of

mansions in **HEAVEN**.

* + **Camp B**, which is composed of people who are seeking God and will find Him.
  + **Camp C,** which is composed of people who are not seeking God who will be punished
  + with eternal destruction in **HELL**.

There is danger to being in **Camp C.** Unless,you choose and decide to move to **Camp B** and**Camp A** like what **John Clayton** and **Michael Shank** did, your eternal destination will be damnation in hell. Unfortunately, majority of people are in **Camp C**and very few people are in**Camp A.**Our Lord and **Savior Jesus Christ** said, **“Enter by the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”**(Matthew 7:13-14)

**III**– Before the conclusion and invitation, I would like to read and share the stories of the **DEATHBED LAST WISHES OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT**and**THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS. . . . THE LAST WISHES OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT -On his death bed, Alexander summoned his army generals and told them his three ultimate wishes :**1. The best doctor should carry his coffin; 2. The wealth he has accumulated (money, gold, precious stones) should be scattered along the procession to the cemetery; 3. His hands should be let loose, so they hang outside the coffin for all to see.

One of his generals who was surprised by these unusual requests asked Alexander to explain. Here is what **Alexander the Great** had to say: 1. “I want the best doctors to carry my coffin to demonstrate that in the face of death, even the best doctors in the world have no power to heal.” 2. “I want the road to be covered with my treasure so that everybody sees that material wealth acquired on earth will stay on earth.” 3. I want my hands to swing in the wind so that people understand that we come to this world empty handed and leave this world empty handed after the most precious of all is exhausted, and that is **TIME.**” . . We do not take to the grave any material wealth.**TIME** is the most precious treasure because it is **LIMITED**. We can produce more wealth, but we cannot produce more time.

**THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS -**There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. But there was a beggar named Lazarus, full of sores and was laid in his gate, desiring to be fed with crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. So it was that the beggar died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades,, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom. . . Then he cried and said, **“Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue for I am tormented in this flame.”**But Abraham said, **“Son, remember that in your life time you received good things, but now he is comforted and you are tormented.. And besides all this, between us and you, there is great gulf fixed so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us”**. . . Then he said, **“I beg you therefore, that you would send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify, lest they also come to these place of torment.”**

Abraham said to him, **“They have Moses and the prophets. Let them hear them”. And he said, “No father Abraham, if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.**Abraham said to him,**“If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one come back or rise from the dead.”** (Luke 16:19-31, NKJV)

**IV - CONCLUSION & INVITATION –**I hopeand pray that while you are still in your **DASH**, you'll choose and decide to do something today while you still have the **TIME**and opportunity**.**Otherwise, you willbe regretting like **Alexander the Great** and the **Rich Man.** As we prepare to sing the invitation song, I would like to request and appeal to everyone of you here to honestly and sincerely examine and analyze yourself which **Camp** you are in now in your spiritual journey. If you are in**Camp C** without interest in seeking God and searching the Scriptures, I beg and urge you to move to **Camp B** and start seeking God by reading, searching and meditating on the Word of God, the **Bible**. If you are in**Camp B** seeking God and still searching the truth through the Word of God, I personally appeal and urge you to move to **Camp A** by obeying the gospel in baptism for the forgiveness of sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and be assured of eternal mansion in heaven.(Acts 2:38) I beg and urge you to follow the examples of John Clayton, Michael Shank and Saul of Tarsus who became the Apostle Paul.

If you are a Christian but became lukewarm for whatever reasons, I urge you to choose to remain faithful, choose to hunger for the Word of God, choose to assemble regularly with fellow Christians in your home congregation, choose to be a soul winner and choose to go to heaven. Whatever you choose and decide to do, we ask you **NOW** to come up front as we sing the invitation song.

**\*Sermon delivered by Art Gabot Madlaing during the Sunday morning worship services at the Golden Gate Church of Christ in San Francisco, California on August 16, 2015 to commemorate his 68th Birthday.**