INTRODUCTION

I am humbled that people read the words that I write. Speaking comes naturally for me. Putting words on paper however, is often painstakingly difficult.

I have written about many topics over the last year. This is a collection of the ten posts that the readers of 24Today.org read the most.

Thank you for the time you invest in letting me share thoughts with you.

I hope these words help you to make the most out of this 24 period.

Learning together,

Pastor Tom
December 2018
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My mom used to read to me. The books I remember the most were by Dr. Seuss. In his years as a cartoonist and children’s writer, Theodore Seuss Geisel created some of the world’s most famous books and illustrations, including Green Eggs and Ham, The Cat in the Cat, and The Lorax.

The messages were for children, but I still find them useful as an adult.

Here is a summary of some of his messages:

- Today you are You, that is truer than true. There is no one alive who is “You-er” than You.
- Don’t try to be someone else. No one can smile, laugh or talk like you. You are wonderfully unique.
- Say what you feel, and do what you say.
- You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself any direction you choose.
- You’re off to great places! Today is your today. Your mountain is waiting, so you get on your way!
- A person’s a person, no matter how small.
• We’re all a little weird and life’s a little weird. It’s ok.
• Think left, think right, think low, and think high. Oh the thinks you can think up if only you try!
• Everything stinks till it’s finished.
• Step with care and great tact, and remember that Life’s a Great Balancing Act.
• Don’t cry because it’s over, smile because it happened.

My personal favorite is the last one.

It helped me immensely the last time I cried because it was over. It is comforting to understand that there is purpose and meaning in the things that make me sad.

The Bible teaches this...

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. – Romans 8:28 NIV
But I also found it helpful to choose to smile BECAUSE IT HAPPENED!!!
Doing this, totally changed my perspective.

It is a powerful combination:
1. Remembering that God has a plan.
2. Choosing to smile because it happened.

[NOTE:] even if you don’t feel like smiling… you eventually will.

Make a point to try to practice at least one of these messages in this 24 Hour Period. It’s bound to be helpful. Dr. Seuss was never wrong.
I’m sick of all the fighting.
Talk shows.
Politicians.
Comedians.
Drivers.
Twitter.
Co-workers.
Parents yelling at umpires.

But…
worse yet…
is the fighting that goes on in our own relationships.

I’m sick of that as well.
Aren’t you?
It might not seem as bad because we are living it and not watching it on a screen.

But it’s ugly.
The bickering. The muttering. The texts. The slander. The looks. The words.

It is just as ugly.

It's easy to be sick and tired
of everyone else's fighting.
But are we sick of our own fighting?

I am reminded of an ancient prayer:

Make me a channel of Your peace
Where there is hatred, let me bring Your love
Where there is injury, Your pardon Lord
And where there’s doubt, true faith in You.

~

Oh Master, grant that I may never seek
So much to be consoled as to console
To be understood, as to understand
To be loved, as to love with all my soul.

-St. Francis of Assisi

If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. [Romans 12:18]

https://youtu.be/V7b-lZu_sHY

*Cartoon image [top] – from http://lardwantsworldpeace.com
Somebody wanted forgiveness.

Somebody forgave.

No change in behavior.

Somebody again asked for forgiveness.

Somebody again showed tolerance, patience, and forgiveness.

No change in behavior.

I know what this is like.

I have been on the "receiving end".

I have been on the "doing end" as well.

Just ask my wife.

Just ask God.

By the way...

Long before somebody put the words on a sign, the Bible said this:

Don’t you see how wonderfully kind, tolerant, and patient God is with you?
Does this mean nothing to you?
Can’t you see that his kindness is intended to turn you from your sin?
Romans 2:4 – NLT

Ouch.
When speaking about my relationship with my wife, with God, with anyone...

The questions should not be:

Will I be perfect?

Will my words ALWAYS match my behavior?

The questions should be:

Am I honestly sorry?

Am I honestly trying?

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**Yes, the best apology is** changed behavior.  
I wish my words were always followed by action. That would be awesome.

---

When this is not the case...

I have to ask the "HONESTY Questions":

* Am I honestly sorry?  
* Am I honestly trying?

---

**What about you?**  
Are you “the somebody” that is asking to be forgiven?  
Are you “the somebody” that is being asked to forgive?  
Even if the actions are not there... **is there honesty?**
I can quickly make a list of things that I am praying for. I can easily make a list of prayer requests that seem unanswered.

I could produce this list in ten seconds.

It would take me much longer to list the ANSWERS to prayer.

Over the years...
God has answered, answered, answered.
I was thankful, thankful, thankful.
I quickly forgot, forgot, forgot.

I look at my life. All around me I see blessing.
I REMEMBER THE DAYS I PRAYED FOR THE THINGS I HAVE NOW.

Yes, I readily admit that I had forgotten.

I had forgotten the days; forgotten the longing for God to answer.

He answered. I forgot.

But today I remember.

Thank you God!

Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. – James 1:17 NIV
Relevant  (adjective) rel·e·vant – ˈre-lə-vənt –

Definition of relevant:
having a significant and demonstrable bearing on the matter at hand. [Merriam-Webster dictionary]

We have a monument on the busiest corner of our church property.

The monument lists the TEN COMMANDMENTS of God.

It’s a beautiful sign.

But is it relevant? Do the ten commands have a significant and demonstrable bearing on today’s culture?
YES! Yes, they are *STILL* relevant.

Here’s why:

1. They command us to worship God – *only* God.
2. They command us to worship God, not things.
3. They command us to realize the power of words, especially when it comes to what we say about God.
4. They command us to slow down and take time to refresh ourselves spiritually.
5. They command us to honor our parents.
6. They command us to respect the sanctity of human life.
7. They command us to honor our marriage.
8. They command us to respect the property of others.
9. They command us to be truthful.
10. They command us to not crave what we see on Facebook and Instagram.

Are any of these commands out of style?

*Of course not!!!!!!!*

The TEN COMMANDS are:

re*levant* (adjective) reˈlə-vənt
Recently, I had the joy of spending six days with my grandson Tommy. Since it wasn’t a vacation week for me, I wasn’t able to devote large blocks of time in doing “kid things” with him. Instead, Tommy needed to join me in the activities I do in a normal week.

For example:

My car was running on empty. I needed to go to a gas station. Tommy went along.

I wanted to include Tommy in what I was doing, so I told him that I needed a special helper.

I needed a special helper:
- To unscrew the gas cap.
- To swipe the credit card in the card reader.
- To select the correct type of gasoline.
- To put the fuel nozzle into the gas tank.
- To squeeze the lever which starts the gas flowing.
- To keep holding the lever until the pump automatically shut off.
- To put the nozzle back into its holder.
- To tell the screen on the gas pump that I didn’t want my car washed also.
To select that I wanted a receipt.
To get the receipt.
To put the gas cap back on the car.

**I needed lot’s of help!!!!!**
The truth is... I could have done all of those things without Tommy's help. But I wanted Tommy to be **my special helper**.

**As my special helper:**
- Tommy and I were able to spend quality time together.
- Tommy felt loved.
- Tommy felt needed.
- Tommy learned how to pump gas into my car.

---

**Did you know that God is the same way with us?**
God doesn’t need our help.
But He wants our help.

*He wants to spend quality time with us.*

*He wants us to feel loved.*

*He wants us to feel needed.*

*He wants us to help Him change the world.*

---

**I learned long ago that God doesn’t need me to do what I do for Him.**
God can speak better than me. God can sing better than me. God can lead better than me. God can do EVERYTHING better than me.

Yet... He wants me to be **His special helper**.
You are no different. God has given you ways to help Him. He has given you a passion, a talent, or a gift. He wants you to use it to help Him change the world.

You are to be His special helper.

God’s special helpers are all around us. Each of them “pump gas in God’s car” in their own way.

Sometimes we visually see them helping God. Many times, we only see the result of what they do.

And sometimes, we might not notice their work at all.

They “pump gas for God” unrecognized.

But God sees them. God sees what they do. For they are His special helpers.

All of this brings me to the picture at the top of this writing. It’s a picture of one of God’s special helpers. His name is Bob Redman. Bob faithfully cuts God’s lawn. God could find a way to cut it Himself. But God desires to include others in the things that He does. God finds things for his special helpers to do.

As “God’s special helper”, Bob spends upwards of eight hours at the church every Friday during grass cutting season. He cuts, edges, trims, and blows off the sidewalks, at no charge to the church. He views it as his way of helping God.

Again I emphasize... God could find a way to take care of His grass without Bob. But God WANTS Bob’s help. God wants Bob to be His special helper.

- God wants to spend quality time with Bob.
- God wants Bob to feel loved.
- God wants Bob to feel needed.
- God wants Bob to help Him change the world.
How do you “pump gas” into God’s car?
It doesn’t matter whether anyone sees you or not.

God’s special helpers do it because God wants them too.

God’s special helpers do it because it helps them spend quality time with God.

God’s special helpers do it because they help God change the world.
Yesterday morning, I read a quote by Henri Nouwen.

He said…

Did I offer peace today?
Did I bring a smile to someone’s face?
Did I say words of healing?
Did I let go of my anger and resentment?
Did I forgive?
Did I love?

These are the real questions. I must trust that the little bit of love that I sow now will be many fruits, here in this world and the life to come.

[Henri Nouwen – riding a skateboard]

The words were powerful to me.
They got me thinking... “I should try to do one of these today!”
Then, I thought... “Why stop at one?”

As it happened, I had already planned to go visit an elderly lady in the hospital.

When I arrived, a friend in the room **SMILED**, and said...”Hello Pastor Tom! I just got done praying that God would bring some encouragement to this room. Then you walked in the door.”

I was amazed. Fully remembering what I had read earlier. Fully knowing that God was at work.

The lady I was visiting, nearly began crying as she told me how disappointed she was to be in a hospital room. She was literally trembling as she told me how much she wanted to go back home.

She briefly conversed with a doctor who was there when I had arrived. Once he left, I pulled my chair by her bedside. I put my hand on her arm and reminded her of how much God has brought her through already, and that He would do it again.

She **SMILED** and told me that I was right.

God prompted me to read her this verse:

> Now may the Lord of PEACE himself give you PEACE at all times and in every way.  
> The Lord be with all of you. – 2 Thessalonians 3:16

“Interesting choice of scripture,” I thought.

*God must have read Henri Nouwen’s quote as well!*

The lady said, “I love you Pastor.”

I said, “I **LOVE** you too.”

I said goodbye and left the room. After a short elevator ride, I felt compelled to take 15 seconds and thank 3 people sitting at the front information desk in the lobby. They were
so helpful to me when I had arrived. One of them even walked me to the room. I said thanks and told them that they do a good job.

Were those my words of **HEALING**?
I don’t know. They might have been.

It’s possible that they feel unappreciated for what they do in the hospital, or unappreciated in life.

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**Anger and resentment?**

I thanked God that I did not have either of those in my heart.

I have had them before and I know that they are lethal.

---

**Forgive?**

God taught me something yesterday. He taught me that forgiveness needs to happen even when there is no major blowup or emotion at the time of the incident.

When I learned the “Lord’s Prayer” as a child, I was taught from an old version which said:

…”and forgive us our t**respasses** as we forgive those who t**respass** against us.”

God brought those words to my mind yesterday.

“Trespass” simply means that somebody crossed the boundary line. Somebody trespassed against me. Someone was unreasonable, disrespectful, and unappreciative. I honestly wasn’t noticeably bothered by it.

But it was a trespass.

So I said a short prayer yesterday, asking God to help me **FORGIVE** the trespass, so that it would not have any lingering affect on my spirit.

Something (that I did not realize was there) was lifted from me and released.
“You're a pastor,” you say. “Your job sets you up to do those things. It’s not so easy for me to find ways to...”

- Offer peace
- Bring a smile
- Say words of healing
- Let go of my anger and resentment
- Forgive
- Love

I will admit. The hospital visit was a perfect opportunity. But that was only one day. Tomorrow, I have no visits scheduled.

The most important thing was that I was open to opportunities. I desired that those six things would happen in and through me.

God honored that desire.

How about you?
I challenge you to make a list of Nouwen’s 6 questions.

I challenge you to be open to the possibility that one or more of them could happen... this very day.

PEACE — SMILE — HEALING — ANGER/RESENMENT — FORGIVE — LOVE
A “friend” loves at ALL TIMES.

“Friends” are wonderful because they see us at our worst; yet they love us anyway.

We all need at least one “friend” in our life. If you have a “friend”… consider yourself blessed.

I believe that there should be at least one person who considers us to be a "friend" to them.
They know that they can count on us to love them at their worst.

They know that we will love them at all times.

A “brother” is BORN FOR ADVERSITY.
A “brother” speaks of a relationship which goes a step further than a “friend”.
It sounds to me as though a “brother” (or a “sister”) is intentionally placed on this earth (by God)… to go through adversity with us.; to walk along our side when we are going through the worst of times.
Thank God for “friends”. But if you have a “brother” (or a “sister”), consider yourself doubly blessed!

Could it be that God gives the role of “brother” (or “sister”) on someone… on our behalf?

Yes!
[This is how I view it anyway!]

If you have a “friend”… take a moment today to tell them thanks.
If you have a “brother” or a “sister”… thank them as well.

For those who consider you a “friend”, or “brother”, or “sister”… thank God that He has given you this position.

Then…
Be the best “friend”, “brother”, or “sister” that you can be.
I don’t want to get caught up in semantics here.

I just want to make an observation:

**There is no such thing as a bad day.**

All days are just days.
We label them bad or good.
We decide.

A man was told by his doctor that he only had months to live.
He had been diagnosed with a “glioblastoma” – an aggressive tumor in the brain.

A friend reaches out and calls the man, hoping to bring encouragement.
“How are you?”, the friend asks. “I’m doing fine”... “I’m in the backyard having a cookout, and the kids are playing together.”
“Sounds like you are having a good day,” replies the friend.
The man responds...

“There is no such thing as a bad day. When you only have a limited time to live, **ALL THE DAYS ARE GOOD.**”

I have no idea what you are going through as you read this.

But *how you label this day will determine how you go through it.*
I received a text on Friday afternoon at 3:57 pm.

The text informed me of the sad, but wonderful news.

The news of Charlie’s passing.

Immediately I remember thinking…”This is the best hour of Charlie’s day.”
God has blessed us with 5 primary senses; sight, hearing, taste, smell, touch.

Each of these senses help us to enjoy and experience the fullness of life.

*I believe that God boosts our senses in Heaven... so that we can fully experience and appreciate things that are more wonderful than we currently have the ability to process.*

Perhaps, the first thing that Charlie noticed... in the first hour of Heaven...

*was a wondrous burst of new sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch.*

He saw beauty like never before; added colors and dimensions.

He heard music with such depth and fullness that it seemed like he was inside of it.

He felt so alive, so free, so new.

And then!

He heard God’s voice.

He saw God smile.

He felt God’s embrace.

He touched God’s face.

And it was only 4:27 pm.

*That was only just the first 30 minutes!*

[https://youtu.be/N_lrrq_opng](https://youtu.be/N_lrrq_opng)
CHAPTER 11

BONUS: MOST POPULAR QUOTES

Your Plans/God’s Plans

Choices

Being miserable is a habit.
Being happy is a habit.
The choice is yours.
— Tom Hopkins —
Our Decision

The only person you are destined to become is the person you decide to be.

-Ralph Waldo Emerson

motivationping.com
Someday

“Someday is not a day of the week.”

Janet Dailey

Patience and Attitude

Two things define you: Your patience when you have nothing and your attitude when you have everything.

Imam Ali
Do It Scared!

More often than not, being brave means doing it scared.
— Michael Hyatt —

Not What It’s Built For

A SHIP IN HARBOR IS SAFE, BUT THAT IS NOT WHAT SHIPS ARE BUILT FOR.
— JOHN A. SHEDD —
THANK YOU

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