

SEEDS OF THOUGHT

The fundamental question is, “When does life begin?” The most prevalent answer among the masses is, ‘Who cares?’”.

Trust a man according to how he handles power.

A journeyman is usually considered a competent and experienced master of his craft, though accolades rarely come. Should you choose to pursue that level in life itself, follow the paths of common sense, hard work, and passion for God’s Creation. Of course, you may still live a life undistinguished by the world’s fleeting priorities, but what does that matter in the end?

God cannot hear an empty pew.

Diplomacy requires painting a picture of someone as they would paint themselves, realistic or not.

Sometimes it's interesting looking at words to see where they came from, what meaning they had at the time, are they still used, etc. Today we're going to look at:

growlery – a place to escape to when the world around you has put you in a bad mood: created by Charles Dickens in *Bleak House*. Frederick Douglas built a growlery (small stone cabin) at his home where he frequently went to think in seclusion. *James often kept a mean dog in his growlery.*

An extended hand is an extended heart.

Eloquent words are wonderful to hear but they must be set aside when Mom's delicious home-made soup is ready to eat.

The slow, silent erosion of freedom by the winds of power is insidious. Often, it is only the wise who can see the cunning, but it can be a great burden to point out the loss when so many will not see by their own choosing.

Scientists have recently discovered that green beans have no nutritional value to those under six years of age when the vegetable from their plate is planted in a flower pot near the dinner table.

The sword of Truth has been masterfully sharpened. Seekers of the truth beware and prepare for the dangers that the Truth carries.

Saddle up and hit the trail. Know what's behind you and learn from it. Know your destination and what's to gain from it. Keep your eye on the trail for hidden dangers.

The best room in the house has no electronics. It looks out over the backyard with a view of roses, daisies, and crape myrtles. Flights of incoming birds know when fresh seed has been put out. Grandma bringing out an extraordinaire breakfast cooked on her iron pots and pans adds the finishing touch.

It doesn't matter if you have a terrible voice or not. When that fiddle gets to playing, go right ahead and sing along. Perhaps out of courtesy to your neighbors, just sing at a lower decibel level.

It is rare to have an immoral thought while eating potatoes.

Anyone can become a leading authority on a subject if more of their guesses are right than not.

A confident man does not need to bow to the world when he knows he is doing the right thing. Of course, having the right kind of leverage doesn't hurt.

There are some with such petrified thoughts that nothing can change them. I don't want to say, "Just write them off", but without new growth there is little to hope for.

Sometimes it is hard to get a read on a man when his words convey a general sense of moral poverty.

I will never enter into any conversation about politics, religion, or sports. Even peanut butter and jelly is too controversial for me.

What we teach our children in this generation will raise the virtues of the past or decay the virtues of the future.

Plant your feet on virtuous ground, and do not fear remaining there. The quicksand of evil surrounding you will always try to overtake your ground, but, in the end, it will not prevail.

It can be disheartening to get a phone call from a nurse saying your child is in the hospital from a drug overdose. It can be even more stressful if you have to leave the bar to rush to the hospital.

It is very difficult to convince a man he is wrong if it involves the man having to give up power or money to be right.

A noble day does not have to be front page news. It can be as obscure as waiting your turn in line with a pleasant attitude, or holding a door open for someone, or taking only the share that is yours, or not blocking an intersection, or adopting a stray kitten.

So, your wife wants to eat at a fancy restaurant because you never take her anywhere. You'll know you're out of your league if the appetizers are raw, the most expensive steak on the menu is from some old filly named Mignon, you don't see a bottle of ketchup anywhere, and your dessert is on fire when they serve it.

A dark, moonless night harbors many unknowns. Without a guiding light, the next step you take is no more sure than the next hundred.

Cheerfulness is not limited to any specific age group or generation. But it seems extraordinarily wonderful when it shows on the face of someone whose years of life on this earth are nearing the end.

Now cats are a different cog in the gardening wheel of life. Dogs joyfully get into the dirty work. Cats, on the other hand, are perfectly content to let Ruff the dog handle the heavy work such as digging, weeding, and irrigation. The felines lean toward the less physical side of management and monitoring, where more finesse is called for.

When faced with a situation in need of real charity, do you consider whether it's tax deductible or not?

Thinking can be very stressful, particularly if you haven't had any previous experience.

Don't ever admit to being lost. If you absolutely have to, it is okay to admit to being confused.

Florida has a wealth of flowering trees and shrubs all year long. Perhaps it is the contrast, but when the winter has been dreary and sullen in the northern climates, there is nothing like the first daffodils and the forsythia to brighten up the day and bring hope of an early spring.

Mark Twain once said, “A lie can travel halfway around the world while the truth is putting on its shoes.” An update in today’s world would be more like, ‘A lie can travel all the way around the world while the truth is deciding what shoes to wear.’

One year my pear orchard looked like it might have a bumper crop. Then I came down with cancer and had to spend a long time in the hospital. When I got home, I found all the pears had dropped to the ground, victims of brown rot. Then I saw it – one pear at the top of the tree. I checked that tree every day and finally harvested the fruit. It was the sweetest pear I have ever eaten.

Prosperity does not come from the government taxing the creators and innovators. Take away the capital from the inventors and innovators and common sense should tell you that you will have less innovation and fewer inventors.

Laws should be created in elementary schools. They would undoubtedly be simpler to read and far less expensive. Factor in all the paper that would be saved and the environmental impact of fewer trees having to be cut down. And ...

I've known very few blind people in my life, but I've seen many everyday who are afflicted by a lack of vision.

Dave Barry once said, "Skiing combines outdoor fun with knocking down trees with your face." I tried it once, but the bunny slope never even made it down to the trees. It was a fast ride to the emergency room, though.

Every human being has experienced sorrow in their life. Those who kept the door open for courage to take residence have learned to coexist in peace.

A weak cause rarely makes it past the first intersection. When the violent words and character assassinations take the crossroads of that first intersection, it becomes readily apparent the cause is not worth following. At least that's what one can hope, but not all followers have the ability or the desire to see that.

Wrongful thoughts can be a great burden for a man. They come when uncalled, stay for longer than you want, and tempt you with unwise comparisons. Finally, only by the Grace of God, you must destroy their existence.

The safest way to avoid bias is to avoid learning anything about what you're talking about. That way you can always remain neutral.

“You know I did a little research, and discovered that Oak County has, counting the bars, men's clubs, tattoo parlors, and various related establishments, forty-three such secular entities on the opposite side of the fence. We have thirty-six

churches. Ten years ago, they numbered thirty-five, and the churches numbered thirty-six.

Twenty years ago, they numbered twenty, and the churches numbered thirty-six.”

Darkness shows no partiality.

Though there is no data to support my conclusion, I feel that naming all of your newly planted citrus trees after hurricanes is a bad idea.

There’s been many a pack mule carrying a load of high potential that never made it to its destination because of the burden of indifference.

A government can never make enough laws to replace the virtues of its citizens.

The lofty thoughts of experience can be quite valuable. Yet, if those thoughts are not further

cultivated, they may soon wither to the paltry sum of a small copper coin.

Politics has garnered little favor with donkeys and elephants for all their association. In fact, I heard that by the next election cycle we could be looking at a new party aligned with dogs. One of the difficulties I see is overcoming the many factions within such a party. I mean, can you reconcile the different views of chihuahuas, and terriers, and beagles, and golden retrievers, and Newfoundlands, and Great Danes, ... and? I don't know. It doesn't sound a whole lot different than what we have today.

Trusting in God does not necessarily mean leaving your door unlocked at night.

Farming can be a risky business. You depend on that tiny seed in the palm of your hand. Then there are weeds, insects, disease, drought, floods, the high cost of tractors, rising fuel and fertilizer prices, late frosts, scorching summers, unknown

yields, volatile harvest revenue, complicated government regulations ... Why do I keep doing it?
... Because I can't get the dirt out from under my fingernails.

Age can be a greedy predator of life. Feeding it too much of yesterday can often make it have a strong desire for the hours of today and tomorrow.

Sunrise casts a light more unique than any other. The cultivated gardens of flowers and the untouched woods evoke a loveliness whose beauty under the light is only magnified when the light creates thousands of colorful prisms in partnership with the morning dew.

A wagon filled with high-minded words is no better than the horse it is hitched to.

Beware the man who espouses something a hundred different ways while proclaiming it to a hundred different people. Sheer coincidence will

prove him right at least once. And when that happens, inverted odds are, he will claim it is what he had been saying all along.

As a farmer, I get up every morning and work the fields. Yeah, it's hard work, but the wheat doesn't lie or deceive; the corn only takes what I willingly give it to produce a bountiful crop; the apple trees don't greet me with violence; the beets don't promote an ideology that destroys the innocent. My hope is that I will be able to continue working hard to help feed those around me. What could possibly keep me from it? Could it be the actions of those for whom there are no consequences? I hope not.

There are many key elements in a successful marriage. One key that is especially important is to

not say something unless you can think far enough ahead of time to know not to say it.

Ah, the lazy days of summer. I'll take an ice-cold lemonade and the shade of an old oak while I enjoy the birds singing their version of a Beethoven classic. But then guilt begins to rear its ugly head and goad me into work. It's a good thing the lawn mower is broken.

Very few of us will ever be front-page heroes, but most of us can help our neighbor find their lost dog.

Many say that experience is the fastest way to learn. While studying books can provide a good foundation, learning accelerates rapidly with the addition of experience. You will indeed become a master at your work if you can truthfully say you've figured out the hardest part and that is how to apply that experience.

Even though your wife is an avid gardener, wisdom behooves you to not buy her a load of manure as an anniversary gift.

A government that continues to grow with its promises of benevolence is an inherent danger to freedom. It will eventually reach a size where the self-interest grip of those who benefit from that large government will be stronger than freedom itself.

Orderly rows of kale does not make it taste any better than randomly spread seedlings.

A bountiful fall harvest comes from a spring and summer of hard work.

Beware of the politician whose answer to a question relies on a quote from Yogi Berra, “I wish I had an answer to that because I’m tired of answering that question.”

Talking to a fool is like talking to a mule. There ain't nothing you can say to convince him he's taking the wrong path. I reckon sometimes ya gotta just let him go. Only God knows if he'll still be a fool when he reaches the end of his path.

Never plant more rutabagas than you can eat yourself.

Evolution and horse racing have a lot in common. A horse has certain irrefutable biological truths. Evolution has certain irrefutable biological truths. Some horses are longshots at 100 to 1 odds. Evolution carries odds closer to a gazillion to 1.

My first planting of strawberries covered a modest twenty square feet. When they began to bear, I got one strawberry. The squirrels got fifty-two. I bumped up the plot the next year to a hundred square feet. I got four strawberries and six more squirrels. Last year, I hit on just the right amount

of square footage—one acre. Now, I get enough for at least twenty breakfasts.

When a new year is ushered in with rousing celebrations, do you have optimistic hope for the days that come? Or are you glad that the old year has fled the land? Or is the answer too close to apathy? Perhaps the question opens a window into your spirit that you want to remain closed.

Have you ever noticed that if an issue arises, politicians will look to see if there is a law that addresses the issue. If there is no law, then they will work quickly to pass a new law, even though not everything can be controlled by law. Regardless of the need, it is the impression that is the most important thing.

Governing a large country is like going to a large deli and having to decide which of the 300 varieties of cheese you want.

If fourteen straight days of rain have prevented you from planting your spring garden and you find yourself getting all depressed, then buying a St. Bernard puppy will help you get over the depression about your garden.

You'll know you're having a bad day when five mechanics in black dress uniforms with somber facial expressions come into the dealer service waiting room and they present you with a tiny little casket with your pickup truck keys inside.

Today, plant a tree in honor of your children and grandchildren. Tomorrow, teach them how to plant one of their own for their children and grandchildren.

Freedom costs very little, unless you're the one who dies for it.

Due to an illness, I wasn't able to plant a garden last year. Naturally, the barren soil all turned to

weeds. Sadness crept over me every time I looked outside. Then I noticed some of the weeds beginning to bloom, and I beheld a whole new world of beauty. Usually discarded when in competition with all the finest new hybrids or classic selections, left to their own, they finally had a chance to show off their fine forgotten dress.

Both the covering of seed with earth and the covering of man with earth, in the hope of emerging new life, requires faith.

The evolution of Thanksgiving Day has moved it from a day of celebration by the Pilgrims for their first harvest to a declaration as a national holiday to the day before Black Friday shopping.

Why are so many willing to pawn their spirit for a pittance when God invested so heavily in it?

If you want to attract armadillos to your garden, then sprinkle soil insects over the entire garden area; otherwise, don't.

It seems like the line between right and wrong has become very fluid. The danger lies in who gets to move that line.

“Yes, Matthew,” said the preacher. “I think that stranger had the good fortune to see something that many folks don't. Of course, now, the truth doesn't always have to come in the form of talking trees. We read it right here every week... Yet, I suppose...when you consider that the pages of this Bible are made from...trees.”

Fine words can enrich, and a generous heart can produce good fruit for the spirit, but you still won't have many tomatoes to eat if you plant them in January.

Do you ever try to figure out who's behind the mask of that little kid hollering 'trick or treat' at your door? ... Naa-ahh ... That would be too much like trying to figure out the people at work.

If you feel a nap is in order and you want to try to talk your wife into planting those fifty apple trees in the orchard, then citing Eve in the Garden of Eden as justification will probably have little effect in convincing her to do it.

I once knew a man who claimed to know everything there was to know. I didn't believe him, though. He couldn't even name one person who was smarter than he was.

So, your last homegrown tomato cost \$7.32. It's the principle.

I only knew my great grandfather for a short period of time. As his time drew near, he always regaled

me with the story of how the pioneers worked the fields and cleared the forests of what wood they needed with only a few hand tools and the sweat of their brow. I always remember him fondly when I walk into my garage that's filled with three large toolboxes and two walls lined with larger power tools. When one of my expensive electronic controlled chippers, trimmers, blowers, or mulchers breaks down, I stare into the garage, and try to figure out how to cope without it.

It is very difficult to talk with someone who thinks they know everything, especially when so much of what they know simply isn't true.

The journey of cotton from a boll in a farmer's field to a beautiful, finely stitched quilt or fabric project is full of nature, science, technology, skill, creative spirit, and love.

Evil often comes in an attractive package.

I don't drink, mind you, so it was merely curiosity that made me stop at The Golden Dome bar out on Route 15. I walked through the front door and a cue stick went flying in front of my face. When I turned to find the source, the lights in the bar went out, bathing the scene in complete darkness. It did not seem to affect those in the bar as things kept blindly flying across the room. A pool ball hit me on the right shoulder, and I felt around my feet for the evidence. When I saw it was the eight ball, discretion forced me to leave The Golden Dome.

You can do all the progressive thinking that you have a mind to do, but you still won't harvest corn from a field of Johnsongrass.

In mathematics, if you have a fixed equation and the variables always have the same values (such as $a + b = c$, where a is always 2 and b is always 3 = 5) then it will always yield the same solution. But if you change your values or selectively leave

something out of the equation, then you can get most any solution that you choose.

I'm confused. How can there be so many "leading" authorities with totally opposite views on the same subject? Are some "leading" us down the wrong path?

Choosing a well-traveled path, if it's wrong, means you will have a lot of company being lost.

It used to be, when I was a kid, you could be frightened by hearing a scary ghost story around a campfire on a dark night. Just a few short years later, as an adult, that same level of fright can be brought on by a simple blue screen on your computer.

Think of all the things that require faith in this world: that the traffic light won't suddenly turn green in all directions, that your car will start in the morning, that it is safe to eat out at a

restaurant, that clean water will come out of the tap, and so on. Yet, many scoff at the idea of faith in a higher being.

If you need someone a thousand miles away to forcibly take your money (and, of course, take their cut) so they can help your neighbor, then perhaps it is you who need more help than your neighbor.

I bought a new mower for my old tractor the other day. While hooking it up to the hitch and pto, I noticed a label that said “ if this label is missing, call 1-XXX-XXX-XXXX. Uh? ... no, that’s too obvious.

Now Hiring Church Positions

Parish CEO – A Doctorate in Theology degree is required. Must have excellent skills in Administration and Asset Management, especially in gold, real estate, capital campaigns, and a large staff. Higher consideration is given to candidates with a corporate mindset and a proven record of hierarchical advancement. Benefits include comfortable

housing allowance, generous pension, health insurance, and paid holidays. Positions available – 8,421

Shepherd – The candidate must be able to tend sheep including existing flock, newborns, and strays. Positions available - 1

Before you pass on to whatever garden God has waiting for you, try to visit the Giant Sequoias or even a forest ablaze in fall.

As long as you don't have to drive in it, there is adventure in an early morning fog. Everything looks different. What will be new when the sun begins to lift the veil of mystery? Imagination usually fades with the fog as you realize that nothing has really changed but your perception of it.

Further evidence of the reality of death in small town America is the ample number of funeral homes, florists, and beauty salons along Main Street. Business must be a little slow, though, in one town. I ran across a billboard on the interstate

that read, “Smith Brothers Funeral Home and U-Haul Dealership. Ask us about our complete moving package.” I’m still pondering the theological implications of such a package.

Old age can give you an excuse to break the rules. Just don’t wait so long that you no longer have the strength to exercise the option.

A moral cancer can metastasize and hardly be noticed. It will, one day, end the life of the individual, the community, the nation, or even an entire civilization.

Ride the horse of anger if it is just but always know when to dismount.

I enjoy putting out wild bird seed in the garden to feed the birds, but sometimes I feel like the fire ants enjoy it more.

Enforcement of the law can be very confusing. For example, are you only breaking the law if you get caught?

A forward-looking individual should still frequently check the rearview mirror.

There's a chill in the air – time to grab a sweater; the maples are ablaze in color – time to grab a camera; apples beckon to be picked – time to make some cider; autumn is putting on a grand finale – time to contemplate life.

Age gradually leads us to the sunset of life, but sunsets can be beautiful, bathing what's around us with an orange glow that gives perspectives not seen before.

As the calendar of life continues its forward march, I look back and wonder how I could have been so dumb on April 16, 1972 and September 25, 1989 and March 23, 1996 and ... oh, never mind.

The laws of physics can be quite distasteful sometimes. For example, when the road to the top is long, arduous, and seemingly never-ending, you finally reach the peak, and then time follows what gravity demands and races downhill at breakneck speed.

In the equation of human life, the ascent of age is relative to the descent of certain priorities. The point on the timeline of age's ascension where priority loses its grip on the amassing of assets will affect the contour of one's path to a continued life.

To hold tiny seeds in the palm of your hand, and then walk among giant sequoia is the journey of a miracle.

Exaggeration can be calculated mathematically by taking one-half the sum of the truth and a lie, and then multiplying it by π .

There seems to be little concern by those in power regarding the astonishing metamorphosis of ordinary, reasonable men into fools of the highest order when they get behind the wheel of an automobile.

A fool doesn't know his enemy and often dies a fool. A wise man knows his enemy and often dies trying to protect the fool.

The demand for freedom is high, yet for those who already have it, appreciation is often low. In the marketplace of ideas, noble words expand its value, yet for those who buy into it, their embracing of its high price tag means its lofty cost is often borne by a few.

A spirit of joy abounds in a garden when those who dwell therein feel at home.

You might want to choose another time to welcome the new family into the neighborhood if there are three gentlemen riding their motorcycles around inside the house.

Perhaps you should reevaluate your Church Finance and Stewardship program if the major need upon which this year's stewardship campaign focuses on consists of the addition of a motorcycle lube pit and air compressor for the Sunday School room.

Most everyone has experienced situations that could be considered somewhat dangerous. Sometimes, you just have to "man up" and face the danger head on. Other times, you have to ... well, let me just put it this way: if you walk into a room and find fourteen women with twenty crying

babies sitting in a circle and they are chanting things you have never heard before, then it is time to consider a hasty departure.

Inherent genius takes the complicated and makes it simple. Manufactured genius takes the simple and makes it complicated.

There is only one thing that every man, woman, and child alive can't afford to do, and that's nothing.

Steel is not mined from the earth. It begins as iron ore and is heated, hammered, purified, and pressed until it becomes steel. And, so it is with the human spirit. Trials, tragedies, and a hundred other life experiences can yield the strength of a locomotive and the sharpness of a scalpel.

When a law is not enforced, it is no law, but merely words crafted by very expensive makers of the law. Either enforce the law or get rid of it and

find makers of the law with at least 10% more common sense.

The yoke of religion can be a heavy burden in following Christ.

Both ego and arrogance travel a road fraught with potholes of stupidity.

Silence is often obscured by an ethereal mist. To summon it, we must leave behind the worldly distractions that engulf us. Called on by wisdom, silence sparkles with the light of a diamond. Called on by fear, silence remains as dark as a moonless night.

Will there be dogs and cats in heaven? I don't know for sure. It seems kind of hard to imagine that God would create such gifts for humankind and there not be some provision for future companionship. I say we should hedge our bets and

treat them like God does have future plans for them.

He sat on the bench facing the track, waiting for the first train of the morning to arrive. It always brought hope for a new day of success as it pulled into the station. Any possibility for better times requires him to board the train today. He cannot wait until tomorrow. But he must also be prepared to disembark if the train starts down any mistaken track of yesterday.

Some fields have so little of anything useful to harvest that it's not worth starting up the combine.

Wisdom borrowed will flourish and grow. Wisdom squandered will die a slow death.

Hindsight enables us to see the past. The senses enable us to see the present. A wise future takes both into account when moving forward.

Gardening extends the life of clothing for years. You can wear jeans with holes in them well beyond when, well ... when it no longer becomes fashionable to wear jeans with holes in them.

Lutherans, Catholics, Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Pentecostals, and many others all profess to worship the same God, but sometimes you wouldn't know it. With hundreds of identifiable Christian denominations in the United States alone, there should be enough common ground to do great things and make a difference in the world around us. In the end, all of them have some things right. None of them have all things right.

The solid mass of flowers in a landscape bed of annuals can be absolutely beautiful, but there is still something just as fascinating in discovering the single bloom of a wildflower along the roadside.

Kindness with a smile is one of the few things that can be universally translated.

Sometimes the language and technology of electronics, computers, and modern communication can be very confusing. What's not confusing, though, is sitting in sunny Florida with my smart phone and watching live coverage of a blizzard bringing 3 feet of snow and 50 mile per hour winds up north.

Middle age can bring many changes in life; when going to the gym to build bulging arms and a rock-hard abdomen just doesn't seem worth it because you don't have anybody you want to impress anymore unless they are young and there is too much competition for that; when you look at your little black book and decide to buy a new one because so many names of girlfriends or boyfriends have been crossed out and replaced with doctors' names; when you start to make decisions on going out at night based on what time you have to get up in the morning.

Ah, there is no more charitable a man than one who gives of other people's money. I once knew a man who gave ten dollars to a beggar on the

street. He told the beggar he would give him more the next day if he would bring back a receipt for the meal he purchased with the money. The beggar did as he was told, and the man gave him exactly what the receipt said. When I remarked how much I admired him for his generosity, he said, “Oh, I just turn in the receipt with my expense voucher and get my money back from work.”

Wisdom behooves you to make that farm sales call at another time, if after ringing the doorbell, you hear someone inside yell, “that’s not the cops, is it?”.

I’d like to think there was a time when politeness was common currency. Today, the quality has become so rare that it evokes meritorious response for the slightest expenditure. Perhaps it is just societal inflation, but I think it lies more with the decline of interest rates and a gold standard as solid backing.

I have the utmost respect for the modern soldier, and I am in awe of their physical conditioning that enables them to carry all their gear into battle. I get tired carrying all the protective gear I need to just prune the bougainvillea bush out front.

Will Rogers once said, “Congress is so strange. A man gets up to speak and says nothing, nobody listens and then everybody disagrees.” Not much has changed in the last century. Today it would be something like, ‘Congress is so strange. They pass a 2000-page bill, loudly proclaim victory, and pridefully boast of their moral superiority – all before reading the bill.’

Modern education has produced a wealth of highly intelligent people carrying the PhD banner. Somewhere in the course of real life something has gone awry, though. For when a very expensive PhD comes up against a certificate for passing sixth-grade common sense, the PhD often loses.

Motivation can be a hard car to derail on the train of success. Just try discouraging your dog when he knows there's another biscuit in your hand.

Sometimes, the foreign language of computers in this modern age can get downright depressing, Terms like bits, rebooting, malware, interfacing, and algorithms can cause my ancient brain to overheat. I'm forced to find a big shade tree and work on my '66 Mustang. But then ... I think. How many of today's generation would know what a throwout bearing, posi-traction clutch, four-barrel carb, or competition lifters would mean? Then I stop thinking and pat the hood of my trusty stallion.

Truth borne on a thorn is painful, but it is still the truth. Truth borne on a flower evokes far less blood, and it is still the same truth as that borne on a thorn.

How long can a structure stand when built upon the shifting sand of public opinion using materials from the shallow mining of the latest polls?

If the time you spent today does not reward you with the wonders of the life around you, then that time has been ill spent.

It's time to start pulling out the Christmas decorations and check the stores for that one new item that we buy each year. But I refuse to buy anything put out by the big boys on July 5th. If I wait long enough, and they keep putting out Christmas decorations earlier and earlier, then eventually they'll be back to starting in December again.

The elite shape by fiat. The blacksmith shapes by hard work and sweat.

I am such a bad farmer that the aphids have put out a travel brochure on my farm.

Consider the irony – Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ with festive lights and nativities that are all made in a country that oppresses and imprisons Christians.

Write to your congressman or congresswoman and encourage him or her to introduce a bill requiring all citizens to own a rake. If they seem agreeable to such a bill, call your stockbroker, and buy some stock in a garden tool manufacturer.

I feel like a kid again when a butterfly lands on my hand.

If the cloth of a man's reputation hides the true nature of his character, they shall both live in loneliness.

The debate has gone on for a long time with ardent followers in each camp. Who is man's best friend – dog or cat? A dog is usually eager to show that it is them with slobbery, affectionate kisses and loyal obedience. A cat is more subtle with a low rhythmic purr and gentle rub. Anything more from a cat might be perceived as stooping to admit it is them.

One of the traits of a truly wise person is the ability to exercise common sense or good judgment in a variety of situations. Such wisdom rises to another level when the prudent individual can hone their insight from the experience and bad judgment of someone else.

If you sell your honor for the sake of money, you will probably find your purchasing power in eternity to be somewhat limited.

You should probably consider reopening your wallet if during the passing of the offering plates you observe that the gentleman next to you has attempted to insert two one-dollar bills in the plate, causing a little red light to activate and the man to be bathed in the brightness of a huge spotlight accompanied by a monotone voice saying, “Cheapskate alert. Cheapskate alert.”.

If you lean toward conservative with religious matters, you’ll know the church you are visiting is not for you, if upon entering the narthex area, you observe that all four members of the ushering staff have green hair and are wearing pink Bermuda shorts with tiny little yellow flowers all over them. Obviously, that is not proper ... They should have had pink hair with pink Bermuda shorts.

There is no more formidable a force than a nation of freedom-loving and morally courageous men and women. Yet, that nation is easily vanquished

when its foundation is fractured by the slow eroding of the virtuous ground around it.

Much is made of the wisdom of ancient Greeks. Back then, tossing an apple to a girl was a traditional proposal of marriage. If she caught it, she would have accepted the proposal. Nowadays, I don't think my wife would catch the apple. I know she would catch jewelry, though. How we advanced to this point in civilization, I'm not sure, but there must be a conspiracy involved in it somewhere.

Skills are often honed to precision by repeated exposure to difficult situations until one conquers each piece of the difficulty one at a time.

Regularly work the soil of the mind, whether virgin or long-productive, and you can harvest a bountiful imagination until the seasons are no more.

I was never very good at gambling. If the odds of me being right were about 50/50, nine times out of ten I would be wrong.

This year I tried an experiment in my garden. I alternated rows of beans with rows of weeds. I thought there might be a chance the weeds would stay in their own rows ... They didn't.

Deciding which trail to take isn't that hard if you've taken the time to get to know The Almighty. The hard part is riding down that trail with an empty saddle beside you.

At the back corner of the farm, I have two neighbors that join at the boundaries. One has a cow/calf operation and the other has a dairy farm. Every once in a while, when both cows are in their respective pastures, the animals will meet at the back fence. They stick their heads across the fence and moo at each other. I'm not sure what they are saying (I didn't do very well in bovine language class, so don't quote me on this), but it could be just

neighborly pleasantries. I doubt that they're talking about the price of milk or beef. When was the last time you mooed, I mean talked, to your neighbor across the fence?

Sometimes you can tell a lot about a man's religion when you see how he treats his dog or cat.

Don't you just hate it when you are having a spirited discussion with someone, and they give a good example to counter your argument?

One of the best ways to exercise the virtues of patience and politeness is to talk with someone about a subject in which you know a great deal and in which they know very little but believe they know a great deal.

We can learn a lot about looking at the bright side of things from a cat. When Smoky, my feline in residence, feels it's time for a nap, she will always

seek out the sunshine coming through the window. As the sun moves across the sky coming through at different angles, she will reposition herself numerous times to stay in that sunshine.

Read God's Word, saddle up your horse and get ready to ride. Don't forget to cinch her up if you're serious, though, cause you'll fall off a lot if you don't. And that ain't pretty!

If you know you're going to die tomorrow gather round your family and plant an apple tree today.

Just explaining to your plants that you completely forgot to water them has little merit as a recovery practice within the scientific community. In fact, most plant psychologists feel that it could lead to physical signs of a strained relationship.

There are a lot of people on this earth who are so stubborn that you could spend a whole year trying to convince them of a fact and not gain an inch.

About your only hope is that they experience what it is they're espousing. Then you'll quickly run out of highway.

As a young man, I thought I knew almost everything, whether it could be confirmed or not. Then I grew older and discovered that I knew very little about everything that I professed to know earlier. Now that I am an elderly citizen, I am entitled to know everything again, whether probable or not.

The tragic result of not holding men accountable for the consequences of their actions will produce a generation of fools who have no idea why their conscience is bankrupt.

Success in convincing someone of the benefits of any given idea is made much easier if you can make it appear that someone else is going to pay for it.

An architecturally magnificent old church can be very inspirational, but the majesty of a building fades with the declining number of people within its walls.

An eloquent prayer to God is all well and good. Sometimes, though, you just have to cinch down the saddle and ride to your destination, whether it's raining or not. While you're on the trail, there's nothing to keep you from continuing to pray, even if it's not quite as eloquent in the pouring rain.

My wife is always on my back about spending our egg money on the slot machines. I tried to put her at ease by telling her that I had a feeling I was going to break even today.

My horse can be pretty stubborn sometimes. If there is a new trail I want to go down and he

doesn't like it, he will stop and shake his head no. I get the feeling that he thinks he knows more than I do.

As time advances and I near the end of this earthly home, I walk the garden (a little slower) and still stand in awe of all the plants around me. Although I still won't plant any brussels sprouts, I do welcome that red plump tomato. If death should come knocking at my door, I'd love to give it one last tour of my garden.

One of my regrets is that I failed to cultivate more trees of knowledge when I was younger.

Knowledge provides shade and shelter to reflect on all the life that God has given to me. It is a fountain of comfort to draw upon when you get older.

In the world of science, a morsel of fact can lead to a whole universe of truth a billion miles away. Repeated enough times and that whole universe becomes an undeniable truth without any further witness; until the next morsel of fact comes to question.

