



Give Thanks

# TRAILNOTES

NOVEMBER 2020

The Christian life is a journey.

TrailNotes speaks to forward movement, paying attention to the "landscape" we are passing through in this trail-laced wooded hillside and valley, not to mention the world beyond. TrailNotes is an unfolding, ongoing journal of the people who share the trail with us and the things we're learning and doing.

## ElderTalk

## GIVE ME YOUR EYES

JADAÉ FOX

*"Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." Hebrews 12:2 NKJV*

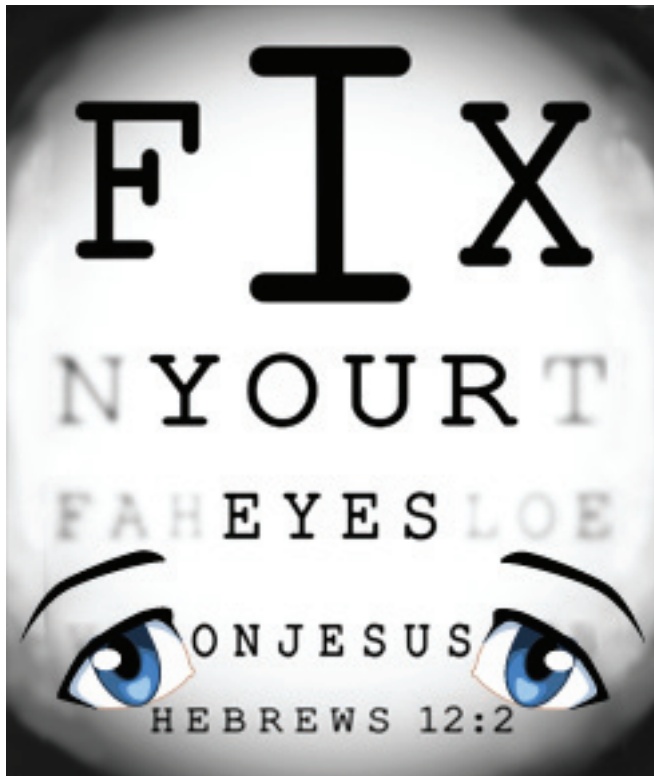
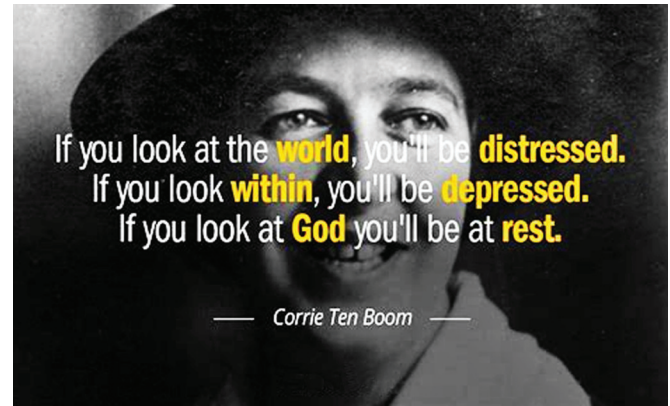
If you are a parent or teacher, then you know how hard it can be to get a kid's attention. When I am talking to my children or teaching in a classroom, you may hear me say,

*"Give me your eyes please. Do I have your eyes?"* I will tell the kids, *"If I don't have your eyes, then I likely don't have your ears either."*

Thanks to my parents, I learned early on how important it is to get a person's attention when you have something important to share with them. Once you have their attention (their eyes), they can hear you.

Like parents with their children, God is also trying to get our attention. He will use many things to

capture our attention like a difficult situation, a conflict with family or friends, sickness, the loss of a job, or the death of a loved one. Sometimes hard times may make us ask, "What did I do to deserve this?" It is not necessary punishment that brings hard times on us; however, punishment is another way that God gets our attention. (Hebrews 12:6)



Hardships come to everyone, believers and non-believers alike. Ultimately, they come from sin, whether our own sin or someone else's. As a believer, you can be sure that God has a purpose for allowing them to come into your life. (Romans 8:28) Regardless, I am sure of this: God is doing something! It is like He is saying, "Give Me your eyes please. Do I have your eyes?"

If you want to hear God, it starts with learning to pay attention. This can look differently for each of us. It is going to take practice and intentionality. Find a regular time to remove distractions and give time to listen to the Lord. For me, this is early in the morning before anyone else is up. I put aside the electronics. I spend time reading the Bible and praying. Then I take some time to listen for the Lord. For others, it might be listening to music and reading a hard copy of the Bible. Once God has your attention, then a relationship can grow, trust is built, and your ability to hear Him will improve. The more you make time to listen, the more you will see that God is speaking all the time.

In I Kings 19: 9-12 Elijah does not hear God in the  
(continued on page 2.)

## GIVE ME YOUR EYES *(concluded from p. 1)*

windstorm. He does not hear God in the earthquake or the fire. God used those things to get Elijah's attention. But it was the small, still voice that the Lord used to speak. When I want my children or class to really listen, I will lean in and whisper.

In Matthew 14:22-33 Peter was called out of the boat by Jesus. He had his eyes fixed on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. As soon as Peter took his eyes off Jesus, he started to sink.

I am sure that one thing God is doing in the midst of these crazy COVID-19 times we are in, is getting the attention of people. As God's people, we have the privilege and responsibility of being a light in the darkness and bringing hope to those who are hopeless and fearful.

May God use this situation to call His people to action and bring unbelievers to faith. In this season of Thanksgiving may we be continually grateful, not only that our Creator wants our attention, but that He will go to such great lengths to get it.

Does God have your eyes? How has He been trying to get your attention?

## Naomi (King) and David Burleigh announce **TWINS!** in Bozeman, MT



**"HAPPY AND HEALTHY!"**

**Born 10-9, 36 weeks, 4 days**

**Nora Elaine 6 lbs 8 oz 20.5 in at 2:27 am**

**Griffen Milo 6 lb 9 oz 20 in at 2:25 am**

## Dan Gates stands ready to feed the ones in need! *(part of the McKee Circle effort)*



### NOVEMBER 2020

- 31** Fall Work Week starts. Continues through Nov. 6. Turn clocks back an hour at night!
- 1** Jadaé Fox preaching. Daniel 6:1-28,
- 7** Men's Retreat with Harvest Christian Church, Elyria, at Grace Fellowship Church. 9 am to 6:30 pm. Cost \$35 includes lunch and dinner. Theme: "Men for This Hour." Please register with David Szafranski (440-864-5802) or Gary Christofferson (440-309-5984) by November 1.
- 8** Eric Byrom preaching. Daniel 7:1-28. 🍷🍷  
Operation Christmas Child Collection Sunday.  
Circle Church Leaders Meeting. 2 pm. (Zoom)
- 14** Women of Grace meeting. 10:30 am to 12:30 pm.
- 15** Robert Key preaching. Gifts of the Spirit.  
Operation Christmas Child Collection deadline.
- 21** Men's Prayer Breakfast at GFC. Bring a sack breakfast. 9:00 am.
- 22** Jon Vega preaching. Daniel 8:1-27. 🍷🍷
- 26** **HAPPY THANKSGIVING!**
- 29** Celebration Worship. First Sunday of Advent!

Special thanks to Steve Phillips who has just stepped down from having served our church by hosting a men's group for 30 years at his home!

# How to recognize a Christian Citizen

J.I. PACKER

*Ed.'s Note: Theologian J.I. Packer, who died July 17, 2020 at the age of 93, helped millions of evangelical Protestants articulate and understand what they believe. This is part of an article he first wrote in 1985 that pumps truth that's needed as desperately today as it was in 1985.*



## *What should the Christian Citizen do?*

The New Testament does not speak about active political participation, for the very good reason that this was not an option for first-century believers. The Roman Empire was not a democracy, and most Christians were not Roman citizens. They were a small minority from the lower end of the socioeconomic spectrum and were viewed as eccentric deviants from the older eccentricity of Judaism. They had no political influence, not any prospect of gaining any. So the only politically significant things they could do was pay their taxes, pray for their rulers, and keep the peace.

Present-day representative democracy, however, opens the door to

a wider range of political possibilities and thereby requires of us more in the way of responsible commitment than circumstances required in New Testament times.

That commitment may be summarized:

1. All should keep informed; otherwise we cannot judge well about issues, vote well for candidates, or pray well for rulers. Political ignorance is never a Christian virtue.
2. All should pray for those in power. The secret efficacy of prayer is enormous, as Scripture reveals.
3. All should vote in elections and referendums, whenever expressions of public opinion are called for. We should be led in our voting by issues rather than personalities, and not by single issues voted in isolation, but by our vision of total community welfare. This is one way, real or small, in which we may exert influence as the world's salt and light. (Matt. 5:13-16)
4. Some should seek political influence by debating, writing, and working within the political party with which they are in nearest agreement. Clergy should not ordinarily do this, since it will be a barrier to the acceptance of their ministry by people who disagree with their politics. It is, however, very desirable that laypeople with political interest should be encouraged to see the gaining and exerting of political influence as a field of Christian service alongside the fields of church life, worship, and witness.
5. Some should accept a political vocation. Who should do that? Those in whom interest, ability, and opportunity coincide, and on whom no rival career has a stronger claim; those for a vision for improving

man's lot globally, advancing international peace, replacing unprincipled discrimination with justice, and furthering public decency; those, finally, who are prepared to work with patience, humility, tolerance, and integrity, fleeing fanaticism, riding rebuffs, and putting the public interest before their own. The Bible histories show that God wants some of His servants as professional politicians, leading and shaping society well, and the discovery that one is fitted for the role is a *prima facie* summons from God to go ahead and embrace it.

Let none, however, be starry-eyed at this point. The choice is costly. The political path is rough traveling. The goldfish bowl of public life exposes one constantly to pitiless criticism and to live there requires resilience and involves major self-sacrifice. Politics is a power game, and the envy, hatred, malice, and self-seeking duplicity, which the power game regularly draws out of the sinful human heart, is too familiar to need comment here. No politician of principle can expect an easy passage, certainly not the Christian.

But whoever thought that the fulfilling of any aspect of Christian vocation would be easy? The words with which Sir Frederick Catherwood ends his book, *The Christian Citizen*, are worth frequent pondering:

*"We must be humble and not opinionated. We must be prepared to find that we are sometimes quite wrong and be able to admit it. We serve our fellow-men because of our love for a Lord who gave His life for us, a debt which, however well we serve, we can never repay. So whatever we do, we do it from a sense of duty and because it is right."*

*(Excerpted from Sept. 2020 Christianity Today.)*



## Christians consider the moral weight of the Ballot...

**Michael Austin**, Eastern Kentucky University:

“Christians must follow their conscience as Romans 14 describes. That conscience should be informed by the Holy Spirit, Scripture, reason and wise voices in the church. We have to accept that followers of Jesus vote differently as they seek to be faithful to Him.

“It is wrong, however, to vote for someone who isn’t a morally decent person, whose character falls below the minimum standard to handle the responsibility of governing. And Christians must focus on those who are marginalized and oppressed in our society: the unborn, women, minorities, the poor, and others who suffer injustice. There will always be tensions in voting our values. We need wisdom and grace to navigate that.”

*(Christianity Today . Sept.2020)]*

**Lucinda Kinsinger**, author:

“I am a part of a heavenly kingdom, not an earthly one. A sure way to cement that distinction in my own mind and to free myself of cloying ties and compromise is to stay out of government. I have never voted for a US president, a state representative or even a mayor.

“I asked my dad, a wise Mennonite minister, ‘When is it a sin to vote?’ He said, ‘It becomes a sin when people put their trust in government and human systems and lose their trust in God and His ability to control the affairs of men.’ I couldn’t say it better than that. As Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar, ‘*The Most High is ruler over human kingdoms and gives them to whomever He wishes.*’ (Daniel 4:32)”

*(Christianity Today, Sept 2020)*

**Greg Locke**, pastor Global Vision Bible Church, Mount Juliet, TN:

“The Bible is extraordinarily clear on these matters. I believe it is a sin to vote for someone who will not protect the value of life. Abortion is the watershed issue of our day, and if the church doesn’t stand against it, we will usher in further judgment from God. I also think it’s impossible for a Bible-believing Christian to vote for someone who stands against the nation of Israel.

“We’ve become so apathetic and lukewarm in the way that we think, and we have allowed the culture to so overtake the church that we have become cowards. For far too long we have been told that the church must remain silent on the issues. Because we have done just that, our silence has become our surrender and the culture has now devastated this beautiful nation. It is time for God’s people to push back.”

*(Christianity Today, Sept. 2020)*

**John Piper**, author & Bible teacher:

“This is probably as close as you will get to an answer on how I will vote in the upcoming election. Actually, this is a long-overdue article attempting to explain why I remain baffled that so many Christians consider the sins of unrepentant sexual immorality (*porneia*), unrepentant boastfulness (*adazoneia*), unrepentant vulgarity (*aischrologia*) unrepentant factiousness (*dichostasiai*) and the like, to be only *toxic* for our nation, while policies that endorse baby-killing, sex-switching, freedom-limiting and socialistic overreach are viewed as deadly.

“The reason I put those Greek words in parentheses is to give a graphic reminder that these are sins mentioned in the New Testament. They destroy people. They are deadly forever. And through persons, they destroy nations. (Jeremiah 48:29-31)

“Forgiveness through Christ is always possible. But where humble repentance is absent, the sins condemn. ‘*Those who practice such things deserve to die.*’ (Romans 1:32.)

“Where does this leave me as I face a civic duty on November 3? Here is my answer. I do not require anyone to follow me. I will explain to my unbelieving neighbor why my allegiance to Jesus sets me at odds with death—death by abortion and death by arrogance.

“I will not develop some calculus to determine which path of destruction I will support. That is not my duty. My calling is to lead people to see Jesus Christ, trust His forgiveness for sins, treasure Him above everything. That calling is contradicted by supporting either pathway to cultural corruption and eternal ruin.

“With a cheerful smile, I will explain to my unbelieving neighbor why my allegiance to Jesus sets me at odds with death—death by abortion and death by arrogance. I will take him to Psalm 139 and Romans 1. And if he is willing, I will show him how abortion and arrogance can be forgiven because of Christ. (Ephesians 1:7) I will invite him to become an exile—to have a kingdom that will never be shaken.”

*(desiringgod.org, Oct 22, 2020)*

### Grace Fellowship Church

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Eric Byrom Presiding Elder/ Pastor

Jadaé Fox Elder

Andy Heining Elder

Robert Key Elder

Jon Vega Elder

Kay Berry and Jadaé Fox Office

(A complete list of church functionaries will return next month)