

## *Smoky Mountain Reflections. January 2012*

Happy New Year!!! 2012 is here... we have entered the last year of the myan calendar...I can't wait to celebrate December the 22nd, or for Christ to return before that date. Why am I so sure Christ will not return on Dec 21, 2012, well scripture says the second coming will surprise us like a thief in the night, I therefore theorize that because of all the end of time hype about that date it is probably the least likely date for the end of the world as we know it.

Enough about the end January is a time to talk about beginnings, a fresh new year for fresh new things in our lives. It is of course a good time to take a break from regular exercise because all the gyms fill up for the first two weeks of the year. Regular exercise is an important part of a well-balanced healthy lifestyle and part of good stewardship as well. I must sadly admit that the regularity of my exercise has suffered greatly since the days in my life when the Department of Defense regularly tested my physical fitness and how well or poorly I did was recorded on my periodic evaluations. When you are a member of our US military your career sinks or swims (Navy pun intended) on those evaluations or fitness reports. The art of writing military evaluations is an exercise in adjectives, saying more with less, and using key phrases that will help or hurt a career with the stroke of a pen. Words like "lacks initiative" or "needs improvement" will stop a career dead in its tracks, while a popular phrase in my day like "sustained superior performance" would insure the quickest advancement possible.

Every organization has some sort of process, formal or informal to give feed back and to help motivate towards improvement. As I take a glance at the society I live in in the month that I reach half a century in age, I wonder what sort of evaluation we could give our society to help motivate it towards improvement. First and foremost, the best way to improve your temporal condition is to be assured of you eternal contrition. Faith in Christ is the exclusive path to eternal peace. That being said we can also take actions in this life that can and will help improve our temporal condition as a society. If I were to give our society a fitness report, I am afraid that low marks "lacks initiative" and "needs improvement" would be dominate features on the document.

In the realm of communication, we would do poorly. Diction suffers as languages are always growing and changing to deal with popular pronunciation causing confusion; impor--ant, instead of important, ideal used when idea is meant, oh no you di--ant, wantn to, fixin to, Ebonics, don't ya no, eh, and if you think we have diverse dialects in English, India has 18 officially recognized languages and each or those has multiple dialects. We no longer teach cursive handwriting in school because most of us write with keyboards now. Map reading is a dying skill because our cars have computers that tell us where to go. Most Americans can not even show you where they live on a map of our country. and the written word on paper is being replaced by the written word on screens, encyclopedias have been replaced with Wikipedia. Social networking has replaced for many real person to person networking and interactions. The only thing that is constant is change. Change is not good or bad what we do with it is what is important. We have much confusion in our lives clouding our communication, so with sustained superior performance we can with Gods help cut through all that noise and speak the clearest most important truth of all...God the creator loves you and Christ His son gave His life for you, and the Holy Spirit wants to give to you and sustain your faith in that truth.

In the realm of interaction, we would do poorly as well; Family's are fracturing and being redefined to suit our selfish desires, our communities are oceans of disconnected islands ignorant and apathetic of the pain and suffering next door, our nation and world are collections of bureaucracies all competing for power and wealth, blind to the societies they exist to serve. Why do we wear what we wear? Why do we purchase what we purchase? because the marketer with the best commercial, tapped in to our covetous nature. Good stewardship means not directly or indirectly supporting sinful enterprises in our society. I am not a big fan of Life Way publishing but I applaud their recent action in recalling their pink bibles to avoid being even remotely associated with Planned Parenthood.

I realize this a disjointed collection of observations, but we must as Christians realize that everything we say and do has direct and indirect consequences and the only way for us to promote "sustained superior performance" in our lives is with Gods help and guidance, regular time exercising our faith in His word, and in His service to others. The best way to do this is in light of Jesus summary of the commandments "love the Lord

your God with all your heart soul and strength and your neighbor as yourself. The wonder of it all is we do not have to worry about our evaluation or "fitness report" Because Christ got perfect marks and His evaluation is attributed to us in our Baptism, in and through faith in Him.

Have a blessed 2012 and do not fret over the Myan calendar leave that to the worlds nut jobs

In Christ  
Pastor Portier