



**MONDAY, December 28, 2009:**

Those of you that are a part of the FMCOG family have probably heard me mention that I am enjoying reading Jan Karon's bestselling "Mitford Series." The series tells the story of an Episcopalian priest who pastors a church in a small town in Western North Carolina. I'd like to quote a little section from the third novel in the series (These High, Green Hills)...

Father Tim has just made his hospital rounds and one of the nurses had a question for him. And I quote...

*"There's something I've been wanting to ask you, Father," said Nurse Kennedy, walking with him along the hall.*

*"Shoot."*

*"Why is it God so often breaks our hearts?"*

*"Well. Sometimes He does it to increase our faith. That's the way He stretches us. But there's another reason, I think why our hearts get broken."*

*She looked at him.*

*"Usually," he said, "what breaks is what's brittle."*

*She nodded thoughtfully. "So we have to be careful of getting hard-hearted?"*

*"Bingo," he said, putting his arm around her shoulders as they walked to the end of the hall."*

I wish I could be there with you as you read this today to put a comforting arm around your shoulder - I can't. But I do send this prayer for you and your New Year...

*"Oh God, keep our hearts tender this New Year. Help us to have a tender conscience, a tender love toward You and toward all your children. Help us to be quick to forgive and quick to trust You when life gets hard. Amen"*

**SCRIPTURE: 2 Kings 22:19**

**TUESDAY, December 29, 2009:**

*"One of the great lessons I have learned in life is that you are not going to win every game." \_Tony Dungy, Head Coach of the 2007 Super Bowl Champions, the Indianapolis Colts*

When I think of the life of Paul, I can't think of a more competitive man. He had drive about him. He was a true winner. Yet Paul had setbacks, bad days and on some days felt despondent and lonely. But in the end, he finished his course and he kept the faith.

I find both Coach Dungy and the Apostle Paul refreshing. You and I are not going to win at everything we do every time. There are going to be good days and bad days in 2010. We are going to win some and we are going to lose some. But remember, that is not really the point. The point is being a good and faithful servant. Jesus has won the victory; if you have him, you have victory.

So as you face a new year, don't be so hard on yourself. Give this new year your best effort. Strive to win and win big, but also take time to laugh, love and leave a legacy that will matter long after "the game" is over.

**SCRIPTURE: John 17:4**

**WEDNESDAY, December 30, 2009:**

Isaiah 54:17 *No weapon formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue which rises against you in judgment you shall condemn.*

*This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is from Me," says the LORD.*

Isaiah 54:17 is one of Christianity's favorite verses, and rightly so; it is a wonderful promise.

But remember, God's word is sharper than a **two**-edged sword; it cuts both ways.

It is easy to embrace the positive side of this verse, but I want to remind you that you can be on the wrong side of this verse as well.

"How?" You may ask. One way is with your words. Remember, words are powerful. Matter of fact they are weapons. When you find yourself speaking against one of God's children you are using a weapon against them. As a result, you will not prosper.

Furthermore, remember, **you** are one of God's children. When you speak negatively about yourself or about your circumstances, you will not prosper.

I wish I had more space to devote to this thought, but let me challenge you to think about this principle; it could revolutionize your life.

**SCRIPTURE: Proverbs 18:21**

**THURSDAY, December 31, 2009:**

Deuteronomy 10:14 *"Indeed heaven **and the highest heavens** belong to the Lord your God, **also** the earth with all that is in it."*

The expression "highest heavens" (plural) in today's Bible verse intrigues me. And then, it is a little humbling the way our home (planet earth) is referred to.

It's as if Moses is reminding us: "See the wide open sky above you – that belongs to God. Furthermore, there are "heavens" way beyond what you can see that belong to God also. Oh, and by the way, this little planet called earth is His also."

Today I am reminded that we must not be overly consumed with today and with our narrow perception of time and space. God has a whole lot more out there, and you and I are slated to be a part of it.

As you look back over 2009 and anticipate 2010, don't be too consumed with losses or gains. Life here on earth matters – it matters a lot – but it does not define what the majority of our existence is going to be.

**SCRIPTURE: 1 Corinthians 2:9**

*"God takes full responsibility for the life that is wholly devoted to Him."*