

Carpe Dominum

¹⁰ He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. ¹¹ He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. ¹² Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—

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children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

Dead Poets Society is a 1989 American drama film starring Robin Williams. Set at the conservative and aristocratic Welton Academy in the northeast United States in 1959, it tells the story of an English teacher who inspires his students through his teaching of poetry.

In 1959, shy Todd Anderson begins his senior year of high school at Welton Academy, an elite prep boarding school. He is assigned one of Welton's most promising students, Neil Perry, as his roommate and is quickly accepted by Neil's friends: calm Knox Overstreet, overachiever Richard Cameron, best friends Steven Meeks and Gerard Pitts, and beatnik Charlie Dalton.

On the first day of classes, they are surprised by the unorthodox teaching methods of their new English teacher, Welton alumnus John Keating, who encourages his students to "make your lives extraordinary", a sentiment he summarizes with the Latin expression *carpe diem*.

In subsequent lessons, he stands on his desk to teach the boys how they must look at life in a different way, tells them to rip out the introduction of their poetry books which explains a mathematical formula used for rating poetry, and has them make up their own style of walking in a courtyard to encourage them to be individuals.

Today I want to encourage you like John Keating to make 2015 extraordinary by looking at life in a different way. But not with *Carpe Diem* but with *Carpe Dominum*

Let me explain. Our starting point is the gospel reading from John. The controversy of Jesus' virgin birth has subsided. Matthew and Luke had had to deal with that 20 years before.

Now the Christian church faced a new challenge. Politically, Domitian is now emperor. As Emperor, Domitian strengthened the economy by revaluing the Roman coinage, expanded the border defenses of the Empire, and initiated a massive building program to restore the damaged city of Rome.

But he poured out his rage upon Christians including St John who was boiled in oil and then sent to Patmos. The book of Revelation was written with the persecution of Domitian in the background.

Religiously, Christianity faced a new enemy/heresy known as Gnosticism. Gnosticism (from *gnostikos*, "learned", from *gnōsis*, knowledge) describes a collection of ancient religions whose adherents shunned the material world created by the demiurge and embraced the spiritual world.

Gnostic ideas influenced many ancient religions that teach that *gnosis* (variously interpreted as knowledge, enlightenment, salvation, emancipation or 'oneness with God') may be reached by practicing philanthropy to the point of personal poverty, sexual abstinence and diligently searching for wisdom by helping others. However, practices varied among those who were Gnostic.

In Gnosticism, the world of the demiurge is represented by the lower world, which is associated with matter, flesh, time and, more particularly, an imperfect, ephemeral world. The world of God is represented by the upper world and is associated with the soul and perfection. The world of God is eternal and not part of the physical. It is impalpable and timeless.

Gnosticism is now the basis of New Age teaching.

With this heresy challenging Christianity, John writes his gospel. From the very beginning, he stomps on the very ideas of Gnosticism by declaring that the Word ie God ie knowledge was in

the beginning of all things. He was with God and was God.

And this God became flesh and dwelt among people. He is the real deal displaying the glory of God full of grace and truth. He is the real light that shines in the darkness and the darkness cannot put it out.

He was no idea or thought but a real living person. He was and is Jesus. Real life was not found in secret knowledge or good deeds or abstinence from all pleasures but found in a person Jesus.

In the opening verses of his gospel, he strikes at the lies of the Gnostic heresy. He then opens up the way to experience this life that is found in this person Jesus. Salvation and eternal life was not to be found in a series of religious rituals but in a relationship with the living God.

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The gift of life was to become a child of God. This relationship with God by being a child opened up all sorts of possibilities and opportunities. But at the heart of this gift was a brand new life where the rubbish of the past was healed, forgiven and a new dimension of life was entered into.

It was about love and acceptance by God and yourself. It was about a new beginning in life with the freedom to start again on a new life path with Jesus.

The key to this brand new life is found in the word that we have translated receive. *He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.*

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The greek word is lambano. This verb, used in v. 12 (and a related verb *paralambano* in v. 11), has both an active meaning -- "to take, to take hold of" -- and a passive meaning -- "to receive". In one case, the subject actively seeks to possess something. In the other case, the subject accepts what is given by another. The difficulty in translating this one word illustrates opposing thoughts about faith. Is it something we have to reach out and grab or is it something that is given to us that we passively accept, (but actively respond to)?

While both meanings, active and passive, are present, I would go further to suggest that the meaning to take , to take hold of, needs to be emphasized.

Carpe Dominum: Seize the Lord. Seize the lifeword that Jesus is and gives.

A quick look of the people that John mentions in his gospel indicate that they were people who encapsulated *Carpe Dominum: Seize the Lord*

The first people we meet are the disciples who were followers of John the Baptist, met Jesus and seized the lifeword that Jesus gave them. Next we meet the servants at the wedding who when told to fill six jars with water never battered an eyelid but seized the life word that Jesus gave them and they saw water turned into wine.

We meet a member of the Jewish ruling party who wanted to know the secret of life and Jesus invited him to seize the life word that was given and be born of the Spirit. Then we meet the woman at the well who had a chequered life to say the least but was looking for something more. She seized the lifeword when she was offered living water.

Then we meet the man who was an invalid for 38 years and locked into his sick perspective. He met Jesus who suggested a new way at looking at healing. Rather than waiting for the pool to be stirred and then be the first one in, he could be healed with one command. He seized the life word that Jesus is and gives.

And the list goes on through John's gospel: people who met Jesus and seized the life word that Jesus gave them.

They did not have a long time to think about it: to phone a friend! They had to *Carpe Dominum: Seize the lifeword that Jesus is and gives*.

So we face 2015 with hopes and dreams for our lives and church life and I guess some fear and trepidation and even uncertainty.

Last year we learnt about the 7 realities of experiencing God from Henry Blackaby:

1. God is always at work around you.
2. God pursues a continuing love relationship with you that is real and personal.
3. God invites you to become involved with Him in His work.
4. God speaks by the Holy Spirit through the Bible, prayer, circumstances, and the church to reveal Himself, His purposes and His ways.
5. God's invitation for you to work with Him always leads you to a crisis of belief that requires faith and action.
6. You must make major adjustments in your life to join God in what He is doing.

7. You come to know God by experience as you obey Him and He accomplishes His work through you

This year God is upping the ante! We move from words to action. *Carpe Dominum: Seize the lifeword that Jesus is and gives.*

We are going to look at our life as individuals and as a church from a different perspective by standing up on our seats like Robin Williams' character did and suggested so that you can see the world and life from God's perspective.

2015 will be different. Look for Jesus and His life word for you.

Carpe Dominum: Seize the lifeword that Jesus is and gives.

Walking Free: We are praying for 20+ clients each month. We now have clients in Toowoomba where a local team has been praying for them.

We are now moving to the next phase of the ministry where we are adding to our ministry team beyond Liz and I in Adelaide. We have now 8 people being trained to come on team.

We are exploring with a church in Toowoomba to establish a healing team in that church.

We have been invited to Albany, WA to teach and minister in August.

Praise God for His provision. Thank God for our wonderful sponsors who enable this ministry to continue.

- Pray for our training day in Toowoomba on Saturday Nov 22 and in Adelaide on Saturday December 6.
- Pray for God's direction about the establishment of a healing centre in Toowoomba.
- Pray for our clients as they seek God's freedom and healing for their lives.
- Pray for the monthly prayer meeting on the first Thursday of each month and for those who come: Nena, Margaret, Lesley, Diana, Ann.

Please pray for people at Toowoomba who have faithfully supported us: Hal and Debbie, Robyn and Jamie, Jenny, Desley, and Craig.

Hawthorn Church: We are looking to put a new foundation in our church in 2015: **New Beginnings.**
We have now had ten new people come to church in 2014.

Praise God for the new people coming. Pray for the courage to embrace the new thing that God has for us.

Family: We rejoice that we are near our family and we see them often. We are enjoying our grandchild, Jennifer, and we look forward to a new arrival for David and Maddy in August. My mother is still alive and needs some support.

Pray for our family that they continue to serve God and His Kingdom purposes.

India: Pray for Pastor Devadas, his brother Pastor CH and Rev Sambabu as serve God and spread the good news. Their congregations are growing as they implement some of the suggestions that I gave when I visited them last year.

Kenya: We have a new church in Kenya, named after our ministry. He has called it Walking Free Church. We have supplied bibles and prayer support for his new work.

- **Please pray for Isaac Otiento as he and all his followers as they discover Jesus.**
- **Pray as to whether we are to visit them and teach them.**

Thank you again for all our sponsors. If you would like to become a sponsor, it is a matter of a one off or regular donation to the following:

Walking Free Renewing Ministries Gift Fund
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