

Thank Albert Einstein and Bill Murray for a Happier New Year

According to one of the most brilliant men that ever lived, “*Insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result.*” Albert Einstein is given credit for that short, profound definition. I may have previously shared the redneck corollary, “*If you always do what you always dun, you always git what you always got!*” (That “Southernism” was probably articulated by one of my ancestors.)

Ground Hog Day, the movie released in 1993, was the story of Phil (Bill Murray), a sarcastic, egotistical weatherman who, despite strong complaint, was sent to Punxsutawney, PA to cover the annual Ground Hog day events. (Let me say that we never saw the movie. Thus my information and references stem from online reviews and summaries of the plot and moral of the story.) Phil ended up stuck in that famous little town of 5,913 due to a bad snow storm he had forecast would miss them. And much to his chagrin, he awakened each morning to discover that each “new” day was the same as yesterday. Our ill-tempered weatherman was trapped by his *surroundings, circumstances, and attitude.*

To those men who enter this year on a strong note, having completed a great year with even greater expectations for 2015, God’s continued blessings on you, your business, and families this year. On the surface this lesson may not hold much for you. However I suggest it will be a timely word and good read for someone in your family or circle of influence, lest I write in vain this New Year’s Day missing bowl games. I am hopeful that there will be a word that sticks in your mind and causes you to consider *new* things God may have in His mind for you this new year. He is famous for interrupting men at very inopportune times, who were just minding their own business, to get attention or redirect paths.

We know from the Proverbs of Solomon and other wise men, often the most profound truths are the ones most simply stated. Einstein’s definition of *insanity* is an example. Yet many of us are guilty of thinking or doing the same things repeatedly convinced we are being smart, diligent, or on the right path. We delude ourselves that if we do it long enough, the result will change into what we want. *Insanity!* I confess there were times last year I was in the “chief among sinners” category. As a personal reminder, I may add to my desktop an Einstein bobble-head like those seen in the comical movie *Night at the Museum 2* *Smithsonian* released a few Christmases ago.

Because I am neither a frequent reader of Einstein nor movie goer, I had to arrive at the conclusion that the Holy Spirit had a purpose in bringing together two completely disconnected storylines to the pages of this lesson. That purpose, now obvious to me, is to exhort those who enter the new year living *insanely*, according to Einstein’s definition, and trapped in a *Ground Hog Day* movie kind of existence.

Let’s define and examine the three areas (noted above) in which Bill Murray’s weatherman character was trapped and how they apply to our lives as we move into 2015:

- **Surroundings.** Where we find ourselves today, i.e. our place or position in life. It may be a place you landed indirectly (not by your choice), or directly (results of your decision).
- **Circumstances.** These are consequences of things that happen to us, the sources of which are (1) other people or events outside of our control or (2) results of our own actions or decisions.
- **Attitudes.** Our mental and emotional state of mind that results from our responses to our surroundings and circumstances. **We choose our attitudes.** No one else can do that for or to us.

First of all let me state unequivocally, there are no spectators in life. Some only appear that way. Everyone alive is in the game. We may choose not to actively participate and think we are immune by sitting on the sidelines, but that is another self-delusion. We are in the game whether we choose to be or not. If we choose that latter, life simply passes us by. In most traditional sports, there are two teams engaged. I want to suggest the same is true in life as we know and experience it today. Some will argue that our surroundings and circumstances determine which team we are on, but the Bible teaches otherwise. We are either: ☹ **Victims** or ☺ **Victors.**

We have all been victims at some point in our lives, some more than others. I am always blown away by courageous people, victimized by others, their surroundings, or circumstances who rise above to become victors. They are a testimony to the strength of the human spirit given the right ATTITUDE.

Rest assured, this is not secular humanistic commentary. But let us understand the following statements:

1. All victims who overcome extraordinary defeats and challenges to become victors are not Christians.
2. All Christians who are victims of defeat and difficult circumstances do not become victors.

The last statement is a very sad truth. I want to focus on it in the time and space remaining. There is nothing sadder to God than Christians living defeated lives with bad attitudes. This is not a guilt trip kind of statement; it is biblical truth. Jesus said (the Apostles Paul and Peter echoed) that kind of 'Christian living' results from a simple lack of faith. Not faith in ourselves which would be understandable, but faith in God. *Who He says He is. His power to do what He says He can and will do. That He really is love and loves us completely.*

Christians too often play the victim card when God gives us the trump card...victory in Jesus. Memorize I John 5:4. He gives us victory over sin, enemies, our surroundings, and circumstances. Yes, even over death! But we choose our attitudes. Our attitudes are the outward expressions of our level of faith and the object(s) of our faith. Negative attitudes are birthed in negative thoughts that fill our minds and then rule in our hearts. We have grown accustomed to expecting the worst and content when it results.

Envious and jealous attitudes spring forth when someone else gets something we thought we should have or more recognition than we do. So we pull out our weapons of mass destruction, often our tongues, begin tearing them down. There is a warped and sinful sense of satisfaction when we bring them down to our level. Misery indeed loves company.

Finally, angry attitudes are borne out of a root of bitterness in our hearts, the seeds of which were planted over many years by parents or bullies or other unkind or mean-spirited people in our early lives. Anger fills the heart and expresses itself in rage and distemper taking many forms, emotional and physical. The writer of Hebrews spoke strongly against this. *"(See to it that) no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble and by it **MANY** be defiled".* (Hebrews 12:15)

My dear brothers, Jesus died for more than this! What lost soul is drawn to the men above? Lost people are only drawn to Christ living in us and loving others as He did. We are not perfect as noted above. But Christians who settle for less than God's best are not only useless but destructive to building and advancing the kingdom of God. Put your hammers and chisels away for God did not appoint you to build and shape others into who you want them to become. That is the awesome work of the mighty power of the Holy Spirit. He lives to work on, in, and through all of us. That includes you! You are not a finished product. Repent of your bad attitudes now and carry them no further into 2015. For Christ's sake.

Three Truths to Own, Assimilate, and Apply in 2015 (or ignore and expect a year of Ground Hog daze)

- ✠ It is not about you. It never was about you. It never will be about you. That is pride and arrogance.
- ✠ It is all about God. It was "in the beginning", and it will be at the end: "I am Alpha and Omega".
- ✠ Live with those thoughts in mind. Let them consume you and affect every decision this year.

New Results. Jesus said to John, *"Behold I am making all things new..."* (Revelation 21:5)

Wake up every day this year with these seven truths in your mind and on your tongue:

- ✓ I have new mercies today and will extend them toward others.
- ✓ I have new blessings today and will be a blessing to someone else today.
- ✓ I have provision (manna) today and will share with others from my bounty.
- ✓ I am fully and completely loved by my Father today and will share His love with others.
- ✓ I have new strength for today to deal with problems and any demonic attack that comes my way.
- ✓ I am a victor and not a victim today.
- ✓ I overcome by the blood of Christ and accompanying power and presence of the Holy Spirit in me.

Happy New Year, brothers. My thanks to Albert and Bill for their contributions.

Walter