



From the President

The Day I Was Deaf

by Evangelist Wil Rice IV

The hum of unintelligible voices bounced off the floor, stucco walls, and high ceiling of the lovely church building where I had just finished preaching the Wednesday evening service. I could not understand anyone in this robust crowd who had gathered for the mid-week service in El Progreso. My wife Sena and I had just landed in Honduras a few hours before, and neither of us speaks much Spanish beyond, “No habla español.” So I headed for the one man I believed I might be able to communicate with: the deaf man.

José is perhaps in his twenties, with bright eyes and a ready smile. I discovered that our versions of sign language were sufficiently compatible to carry on a fairly good conversation! Talking to José reminded me of two very important things.

First of all, I was reminded just how isolating it can be to be deaf, particularly in countries where there is not yet much awareness of the need. I had more in common that night with this one deaf man than I had with a room full of hearing people. I was, essentially, the second “deaf” man in the auditorium. There was instant rapport between us, two “deaf” men in a sea of sound.

The American missionaries, a splendid pastor and team, had worked hard to learn the language of the country in order to communicate the vital message. But almost no one, in this country or that, can talk to a man like José. As my grandmother Cathy Rice used to say, “The

Deaf only know what someone has taken the time to tell them.” Of course, this is true of hearing people as well; but the average deaf person knows few people who share his language and even fewer who will invest in his life.

The second thing I remembered as I stood near the platform talking to José is that the only way to outlive your years on this earth is to invest in the lives of others. This twenty-something who stood before me did not even know a language with which to express himself until he was a teenager! How did he learn? Obviously, someone who cared enough to learn sign language taught him! The gentleman who taught José left his own far-away home in order to minister to people like José. Because of his efforts, I could understand José, and José could understand Bible preaching.

And here is the kicker: José’s teacher learned sign language from my grandmother years ago! Grandmother was born 101 years ago; she will never meet José on this earth. But José’s life will never be the same because of the cascading results of her life. Each of us should meet people in heaven we never knew on earth who are there because of our investments of the time, opportunities, gifts, and life we steward.

This summer is certainly a harvest time at camp, but every day is a day to plant the things worth cultivating, the things that will grow after we are gone. Now is a time to look beyond self, to live beyond self, and to invest a life worth living.



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Twitter, Tweets, And Tranquility

by Evangelist Bill Rice III

I do not like Twitter. There, I said it.

You don't like Twitter, Bill?

Nope, I don't. Let's deal with some of your possible concerns with my statement.

1. "Bill, you're not going to change the course of social media. Twitter is here to stay."

I know. You're right!

2. "Sad to say, Bill, but this is a generational thing. Twitter is loved and utilized by the young. You're showing your age."

Oh, give me a break! Donald Trump tweets, and he is old. Hillary Clinton

tweets, and she is old. Bernie Sanders tweets, and the guy is ancient! I would not like Twitter if I were twenty!

3. "So, you are saying I should not use Twitter."

No, I am not saying you should not use Twitter; I am saying I don't like it!

4. "But Bill, many of the people who use Twitter are godly folks who love the Lord. Many preachers, missionaries, and Christian educators use Twitter."

That is certainly true.

5. "People use Twitter to advance the cause of Christ."

I can't deny that!

6. "Then why don't you like Twitter?"

Ah, great question! Okay, here is the reason I don't like Twitter. Twitter has more to do with celebrity than it does substance. In other words, a tweet is more about the person speaking than

it is about what the person is saying. One can't develop a thought with Twitter. Time and space prevent it.

The news media will say, "Here is what Joe Celebrity tweeted about politics." My theory is that people care more about the fact that Joe said something than they do about what he said.

Mary and I were at dinner with our kids, Nathan and Wren Watson, and I was casually fussing about Twitter.

"I could say anything on Twitter," I said. "It wouldn't have to make sense."

They listened with polite boredom.

"I could say," I continued, "Tranquility is not found in a steam engine."



While the statement is true, I suppose, it is hardly brilliant or meaningful. Well, three weeks later, my son-in-law Nathan gave me a beautiful canvas picture of a steam engine. This 15x25 print of a train is captivating. And across the picture are these attention-grabbing words: "Tranquility is not found in a steam engine."

When I saw the beautiful picture and read the words written across it, I had forgotten that I was the one who made the statement.

"So," I thought, "this is beautiful picture, but what does the stupid statement mean?"

Then Nathan reminded me of the one who made the statement in the first place. Me!

The captivating picture and beautiful script

give the reader the impression that the worthless sentence is somehow important. It isn't, of course, but it *looks* like it is.

That's how I see Twitter.

"Great to see old friends today," tweets one.

"Love ice cream with the grandkids," chirps another.

Okay, fine. It is just that I'm always left saying, "So...?"

Recently, Troy Carlson sent a tweet saying the Duncans (new staff members) had arrived at West Branch. To me that makes sense. The purpose of the tweet was to highlight the celebrity, in this case West Branch. We don't know how Dennis and Lynda Duncan felt when they arrived. We don't know from whence they came. We don't know what they drove. We just know they are at West Branch!

"The Donald said...."

"Hillary tweeted...."

"Bernie says...."

The three points in these three tweets are Trump, Clinton, and Sanders.

You may be wondering why this is of any importance to me. Here is the answer. In Isaiah 1:18, the Bible uses the word *reason*. In II Timothy 4:2, the Bible uses the word *reprove*. In I Timothy 3:2, the Bible uses the word *sober*. All of these words have to do with thinking, debating, or convincing one in a discussion. Christians should be thinkers because the people to whom we speak think. Or at least they should be encouraged to think.

A sermon is not a tweet or a collection of "sound bytes." The Lord reasons with us, and we should reason with each other. When we discuss a Bible truth, it is the truth that is important, not the fact that the speaker is a celebrity!

Tranquility is not found in a steam engine. #Steam The perfect tweet!

BACK AT THE RANCH...



New York City Trip



Webber Work Day



Florida Day of Champions.....



Open House.....

NEED FOCUS



We are excited to announce that we are adding SOCCER to our sports tournament at the Ranch!



If you would like to help us with the upstart of our soccer tournament, we have several needs: shin guards, soccer balls, and nets. We also plan to build our soccer goals, which will bump the cost up to around \$2,000. To donate to our soccer fund, click "Donate" on our website, www.billriceranch.org, or mail a check with "Soccer" on the memo line. Thank you for your help. It's going to be a great summer!

For any questions, please contact Matt Downs, 615-893-2767, ext. 105 or mtdowns@billriceranch.org.

When God Answers Prayer

It was quite a day earlier this spring when God answered two major prayer requests within eight hours. With lofty development goals come lofty price tags. The Lord had already provided much of what we needed to complete the sanitation, water, propane, fire protection, and cabin projects this spring; but we still needed well over \$100,000 to cover the expected costs. I was quite surprised, to say the least, to be handed a check for \$150,000! I got the impression that the giver was as surprised as I was. All we can say is that God answers prayer.

The other answer to prayer was every bit as surprising but for different reasons. Several years ago we began asking the Lord to sell a home so that Bill Rice Ranch friends, Dennis and Lynda Duncan, could relocate from western Tennessee to West Branch. It never happened. At some point, we all accepted the Lord's answer on this and moved on. Then this spring, quite out of nowhere, the Lord sold their

house. It was not even on the market! In more ways than I could explain here, it is clear that the Lord's timing was perfect.



Dennis & Lynda Duncan
New West Branch Staff

It was interesting to me that day to compare these two answers to prayer. In one case, the Lord met a need I had prayed for that very morning. In the other, He answered a request I had not uttered in more than a year. You cannot convince me that both were not clear answers to prayer. It does not always work this way; but, back when the Lord gave me peace to stop praying for the sale of the Duncans' home, He knew it was already scheduled to be answered. Of course, He knew this about the money, as well; and in that case, He expected me to keep asking.

Not every prayer has the same result; but when you keep your heart sensitive to the Lord, He can give you confidence, whether His reply is immediate or down the road.

Very soon, approximately **100 summer staff members** will arrive at the Ranch to volunteer their time as counselors, operational staff, and Ranch Hand workers. Every one will come trusting God to provide their needs in response to their giving the summer to the Lord. **The Ranch is also trusting the Lord to provide** what we will give them as a weekly volunteer allowance to take care of minor expenses they have while here. We give out volunteer allowances weekly beginning **June 11**, before the first week of camp.

Would you pray about entering into this **FAITH PROJECT** with us? Whether you have a little or a lot that you can share, your gift will be greatly appreciated and reap eternal dividends. You might consider one of these FAITH PROJECT levels:

FAITH PROJECT Level	Gift Amount	Provides for
Level 1	\$50 gift	one counselor for one week
Level 2	\$135 gift	one Ranch Hand position for the summer
Level 3	\$270 gift	one operational staff member for the summer
Level 4	\$450 gift	one counselor for the summer



Everyone sending a **gift marked "FAITH PROJECT"** will receive a **personal note from a summer staff member** you are supporting, sharing how God has used them and worked in their lives this summer.

As you read this, we are sprinting around the final lap to accomplish the spring project goals. Lord willing, these accomplished goals will give us permanent occupancy of the West Branch campground. With all this work to do, we are still need the Lord's help. Contractors and volunteers are working. Campers are scheduled to come. We are asking the Lord for an additional \$10,000-\$20,000 this spring to serve as a buffer as unexpected expenses arise. (Whatever comes in beyond the need will go toward the next stage of development.) Would you pray for us to see these projects through and, more importantly, to see the Lord's blessing in a powerful way as we use the campground this summer?

Visit **www.westbranchAZ.org** for the latest information on our campsite development.



Calendar OF EVENTS

SPRING RETREAT

Father & Son Adventure..... **May 20-21**

SUMMER CAMPS

Youth I/ Junior I/ Deaf I..... **June 12-17**
Day Camp..... **June 20-24**
Youth II/ Junior II/ Deaf II..... **June 26-July 1**
Family I..... **July 3-7**
Independence Day Retreat..... **July 4**
Youth III/ Junior III/ Deaf III..... **July 10-15**
Youth IV/ Junior IV/ Deaf IV..... **July 17-22**
Youth V / Junior V / Deaf V..... **July 24-29**
Family II/ Deaf Adult Camp..... **July 31-Aug. 4**
Deaf Adult & Interpreters' Retreat..... **Aug. 4**

WEST BRANCH EVENTS

Youth Camp..... **June 20-24**
Junior Camp..... **July 5-9**
Youth Conference..... **September 10**

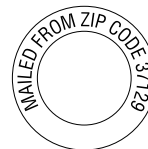
FALL RETREATS

Elementary Retreat 1..... **Aug. 25-26**
Elementary Retreat 2..... **Sept. 9-10**
Junior High Retreat..... **Sept. 12-14**
Ladies' Retreat..... **Oct. 6-8**
Men's Challenge..... **Nov. 3-5**
Couples Retreat..... **Dec. 1-3**



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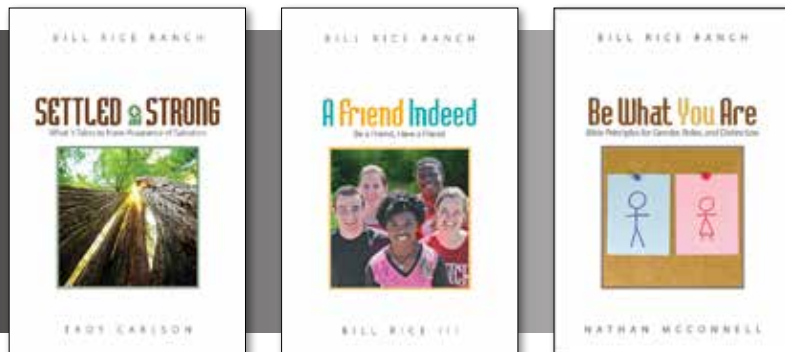
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Independence Day RETREAT July 4

All-day event for the whole family!
Cost: Adults \$15, Kids \$10
Register early and save!

Enjoy great preaching, swimming,
a rodeo, two meals, Cowboy Town, and
spectacular fireworks!



FAMILY CAMP

WEEK I
JULY 3-7

(Jerry Sivnsky & Todd Sivnsky)

WEEK II
JULY 31-AUG. 4

(Mike Edwards & Chris Edwards)

Fill My CUP Ladies' Retreat

October 6-8

Cost: \$95



Guest Speaker:
April Goetsch

- Helpful Bible Teaching
- Encouraging Fellowship
- Delicious Meals
- Country Craft Fair

Host Speakers: Mary Rice, Wil & Sena Rice

MEN'S CHALLENGE

NOVEMBER 3-5 COST: \$85

SOLID PREACHING • GREAT FOOD • UPLIFTING FELLOWSHIP

4th Annual

**TARGET
CHALLENGE**

Target shooting contest—prizes will be awarded!



Doug Jackson,
Pastor

Make your plans now—register today!

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