Signs for Hope

IT IS HARD TO BELIEVE ANOTHER YEAR HAS COME AND GONE!

There are no words to adequately thank you for all you have done to further the gospel by praying for and giving to Signs for Hope in 2014. God alone knows the full impact, not yet accomplished, of each and every prayer, each and every word of encouragement, each and every action, and each and every cent shared on our behalf. Your prayers and obedience to do whatever God leads you to do are vital for His work through Signs for Hope. When I stop and look back, briefly, I am utterly amazed and totally humbled by all God continues to do. It is because YOU are praying and YOU are giving as God leads! Apart from Him we can do nothing! For sure, it is… ONLY GOD!

In 2015, will you please continue to pray for us to be wholeheartedly committed to following our LORD without wavering? Will you join with us as we strive to understand and grasp His love on a deeper level this coming year? Will you continue to share your own prayer opportunities with us, so we can know how better to pray for you and then thank God for how He works in and through those opportunities He allows? If God leads you to join us in Liberia, whenever that will be, will you be obedient to His leading?

There is no greater JOY than to experience with brothers and sisters their full dependence on the promises of our God and sharing in the JOY that only He can give, no matter what, as we submit to His perfect plan, His way, each and every day.

Do you not know? Have you not heard?
The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth.
He will not grow tired or weary, and His understanding no one can fathom.
He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.
Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall;
But those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength.
They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary,
They will walk and not be faint.
Isaiah 40:28-31

From My Heart to Yours...

Can you believe it? Valentine's Day is already being advertised in our stores and on TV. No sooner does Santa exit, but cherubs with hearts and arrows enter.

1 Corinthians 13, known as the "love chapter", is a familiar passage for most of us. Most often it is used in marriage ceremonies or marriage vow renewals. I think it would be a good practice to re-read this chapter at least once every month in 2015.

Let's read it now and pay close attention to what "LOVE" is and what "LOVE" is not.

"If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.

If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.

If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.

Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Love never fails.

But where there are prophecies, they will cease;
where there are tongues, they will be stilled;
where there is knowledge, it will pass away.

For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears.

When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me.

For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love." (NIV)

We must remember this kind of LOVE is not anything that a mere human can accomplish apart from the Spirit of our living God working in and through us. This is one of the Spiritual fruits Galatians 5 mentions. This is NOT a feeling! This is not our CHOICE! This is a COMMAND! And it is a CHARACTERISTIC of a follower of Christ!

If you and I are followers of Christ this is what we must do and honestly it should be what we desire to do to show our gratitude and love for Christ and all He has done and is doing for us!

Twice, not once, but twice, in John 13 & 15, Jesus gives us a "new" command, to love each other as He loves us. This is not an option!

And it is something that ONLY God's Spirit can work in us and it is for His glory, alone. Yes, this kind of LOVE is for HIS GLORY, ALONE!

This is the kind of love, I believe, God desires for us to have for not only each other, but for our "enemies", as well.

"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect." (NIV, Matthew 5:43-48)

Jesus' words, in the Sermon on the Mount are constantly stepping on my toes!

So who, exactly, is our "enemy"? That word enemy, according to the dictionary, means "a person who is actively opposed or hostile to someone or something". And the word hostile means "unfriendly, antagonistic". Jesus, Himself, died for those who were enemies of God (Romans 5:10). That was me and you! Jesus is not asking us to do something He has not already done to the nth degree. And ALL He did and does was and is to glorify His Father in heaven. That is our very same task, to glorify, bring glory to, our Father in heaven, by doing His will!

We can only love others, in this way, because He first loved us!

Now, if we are honest with one another, this could apply to many we encounter on a daily basis and even some of those living within our own homes. Someone who is unfriendly. That can cover a multitude of people and also that ONE we should easily be able to love; the one we have committed our lives to 'until death do us part' and/or those of our own flesh and blood.

Talk about convicting!

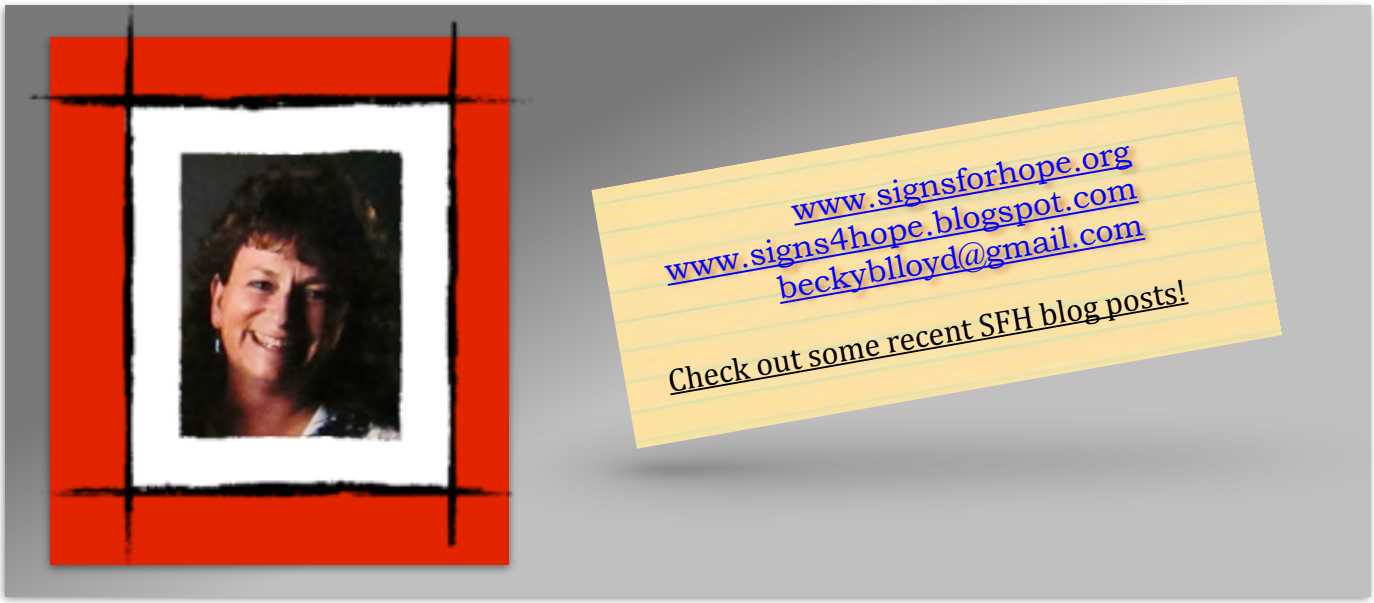
Some of you have adopted deaf and/or hearing children who are hostile/unfriendly towards you because they simply do not know how to be any other way. Others have neighbors, co-workers, family members, acquaintances who are hostile/unfriendly towards you because they do not know how to be any other way. You could say they have a valid excuse, many times, because they do not have the Spirit of God living in them. Still others have those who are hostile/unfriendly towards you, because they "choose" to be that way and at the same time do "claim" to have the Spirit of God living in them.

And you and I are hostile/unfriendly towards others, because we are 'living in sin' and disobeying a direct command of God, while believing our Enemy that we have every right to feel the way we do because of how "whoever" treats us, thus and so.

Whoa! Are you as convicted as I am, right now?!?!

I have much to repent of and much praying to God for Him to do a new work in and through me in this new year.

Join me, in 2015, as we strive to obey this command to love our enemies, everyone who is unfriendly and hostile towards us, with renewed commitment? Better yet, join me in loving God, loving each other and loving our enemies as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it. I cannot begin to imagine the impact this will have, not only on me and you, but everyone we know and EVERYONE WE MEET.

A new SFH blog post:
What If I Give Financially to Signs for Hope…Where Does the Money Go?

Stay Connected with Signs For Hope …