



WOW: Word Of the Week

PONDER

December 20, 2023

The funeral was over. I was sitting at the house with the family as evening fell. The phone rang. I heard only one side of the conversation, “We are sitting around and putting up the memories.”

In Luke 2:19, Mary is contemplating all that has happened in the events surrounding the birth of her son. She is gathering up the pieces so she will not lose them (preserve, keep, treasure up). She is putting everything together as she tries to understand (combining, thinking, pondering).

The end of the year is a good time for pondering. Mary pondered the details of the very beginning of Jesus’ life. We do well to think clearly about past, present, future. We must cherish the memories or they will escape us. The nature of human beings is that we remember selectively. Sometimes we can remember the positives and forget the negatives. As often, more often, we remember the negatives and fail to ponder the positives.

As 2023 concludes, I am pondering. Next week’s WOW will be the last one of 2023—and the last one for a while. As I have announced in my mission newsletter and elsewhere, I am taking a break. Jan and I will be pondering – putting up the memories, always preparing to make new memories. After 55 years of ministry together, 25 years in local churches, 15 years in the universities, and 15 years in mission work after my retirement, we are pondering the next phase of our lives.

An old song, *Precious Memories* (original lyrics by Roy Acuff), says in part, “As I ponder, hope grow fonder....” Jan and I are hopeful as we think about the future – different than the past, anticipating new open doors, challenges, opportunities.

Enough about me. I write for you. This WOW is for you! Not quite two weeks remain in 2023. Time to ponder. Time to reflect, remember. Memory is what helps us grow. Memory connects us to the past. Often overlooked is that memory informs and forms our future. The etymology of the word “ponder” is related to that which has weight.

Ponder. What really matters? When all is said and done? What is worthy of our time, resources, conversations, prayers? What tugs at your heart continually? What will you do in 2024? Goals, hopes, dreams, aspirations? What will you talk about? What will you pray about? Where is your heart?

I pray that your heart is aligned with God’s heart. May we seek first His things, kingdom things! May your end-of-year ponderings point you to eternal priorities is my prayer.