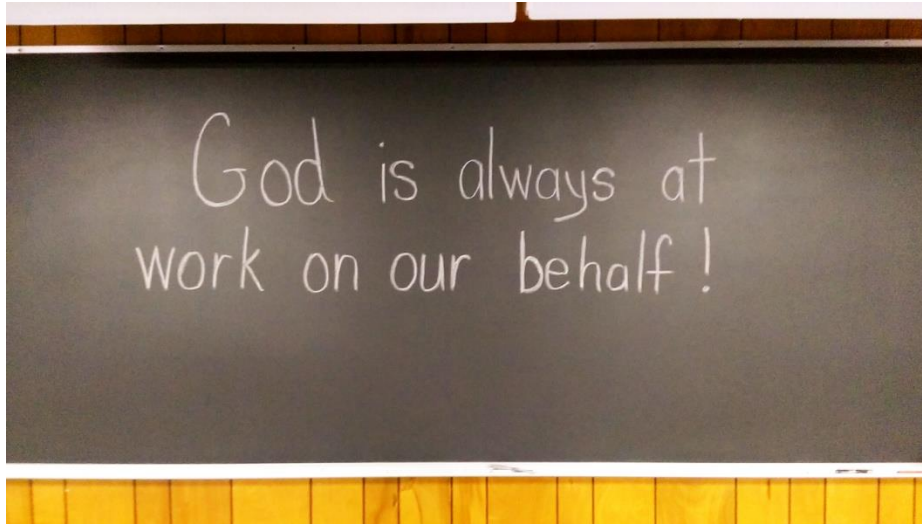


IT'S NOT JUST A CLEVER SAYING



Shortly after the Gatlinburg fire, our Sunday School teacher asked us to share our story. To get the full context of what has happened, we have to go back to the beginning.

In July 1996, we bought a house (or a 'cabin' as it is called locally) in Gatlinburg, TN and immediately put it on an overnight rental program. We named the cabin "All Decked Out" because it had three decks. We worked very hard to decorate the cabin in an Americana theme and make it truly "all decked out."

Ten years later, in 2006, we realized the rental agency wasn't doing its job. So we decided to sell the cabin. We listed it with two realtors over the period of a year and didn't get a single showing. Meanwhile, we decided we could rent it out ourselves, using the Internet. And when nothing came from our real estate listings, we decided to try to sell it ourselves. We put signs in front, made flyers, designed a website, and listed it on lots of places on the Internet. We had several showings, but could never close a deal.

In 2008, we had to do a lot of maintenance and our rentals weren't covering our costs. The first Sunday of 2010, Dave read this in the Bible – in Luke 14:23 – "Go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in, that My house may be filled." We started praying earnestly. Dave's prayer went like this: "Lord, I have done all the compelling I know how to do. I've listed the cabin on every website possible – either for sale or for rent. I don't care what You do, but please do something – either fill it with renters or sell it."

That afternoon, we got two reservations. By the end of 2010, our rental reservations had increased by almost 300% and stayed up. We also still kept the cabin listed on 'for sale' sites and still kept the signs up.

By 2014, we realized that the Lord was filling the cabin, not selling it. Our average annual occupancy was over 50%, which was double the average for Gatlinburg. But as we got older, the work of maintaining the cabin and managing the rentals became more difficult. Even though our daughters were helping a lot, it was hard work. However, the Lord was making it clear that we should keep renting. So we took down all the Internet listings. We left the signs up at the cabin, just in case somebody might be interested in buying it.

In August 2016, the Lord challenged Dave with this question: "Are you really trusting Me for All Decked Out? Do you believe I can sell it without you doing anything?" We agreed that was possible, so we took the signs down. We continued to pray our prayer: "Lord, please fill All Decked Out until you sell it."

Now we come to November 2016.

- Saturday, November 26 – Dave says to Phyllis, “I think the Lord may be getting ready to sell All Decked Out. We usually have around 8-10 bookings for the next year by this time, and we only have one.”
- Sunday, November 27 – We walk into our Sunday School classroom and find this sentence written on the blackboard – “God is always at work on our behalf!” (See photo above of the actual blackboard.) Dave thinks, “Yes, I agree with that,” and he did – in his head.
- Monday night, November 28 – God answers our seven-year prayer. Fire sweeps through Chalet Village North – above Gatlinburg (and many other areas). When the smoke clears, All Decked Out is nothing more than four cement block walls. Everything else has been burned – and it all happened in less than 15 minutes!

As He does so often, our Lord chose His timing and His way of ‘selling’ our cabin. He sold it to the insurance company in such a way that we didn’t have to wait for a buyer to show up, we didn’t have to pay a real estate commission, we didn’t have to haggle over price, and we didn’t have to worry about having an unhappy buyer. Only the Lord could come up with a plan like that!

That brings us to Sunday, December 4. We walk into our Sunday School classroom and the sentence is still on the blackboard. “Now,” Dave said, “I understand that sentence in my heart, not just my head!”

Why? Because it’s not just a clever saying. That sentence is reality. Look at what the sentence says:

- GOD – Not some government official, not a world body, not a successful business person. This is the Creator of the universe, the Supreme Being, the One who always was and always will be.
- IS – Not past tense or future tense. Now! In the present.
- GOD IS – this is the I AM of the book of Exodus. When God says “I am,” how do you finish that sentence? The answer: with anything you need Him to be.
- ALWAYS – every second, of every minute, of every hour, of every day, of every week, of every month, of every year, of every decade, of every century – of every lifetime.
- AT WORK – God works! Work is not the result of the fall of mankind. Adam was given work to do in the garden before the fall. God worked to create the heavens and the earth. God works – and He is still working always.
- ON OUR BEHALF – God’s work isn’t just busy work. He is working for us. He is managing the universe for us. He is ordering events and situations for us. His work has purpose and meaning.

The thought expressed in the sentence comes from a well-known (and sometimes misquoted) Bible verse – in Romans 8:28. It reads, “And we know that all things work together for good, to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.” For us, the first three words are key – “And we know...”

Yes, we still sorrow at the loss of All Decked Out. We owned it longer than any other house. It was the location of many of our special family times together. But we are assured in 2 Samuel 22:31, “As for God, His way is perfect.”

If you are a believer, you can rejoice with us in the way our Lord and Savior has worked to bring about His perfect plan. If you do not know Christ as your Savior, we trust that this story will give you the desire to not just know more about Him, but to truly know Him. We are praying for you to accept

Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, recognizing that He died to save you from your sins. We would be happy to talk with you or send you a Bible. Please write to Dave@dbaseler.org if we can help.

We also encourage people to pray for the many who have suffered loss in the Gatlinburg fires and don't have the assurance we have that the Lord is working on their behalf. Pray for the other 2,386 families who have lost their homes. On average, about a third of the homes lost were occupied by permanent residents. Those people have lost all their worldly possessions. Also pray for the families of the 14 people who lost their lives in the fire – and for many other families who are still missing loved ones. We believe the death toll will rise, because there are still dozens of people missing who may never be found. Pray for the two teen boys who apparently willfully started the original fire in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, as well as their parents. These boys have been arrested. If convicted, they could 'lose their lives,' as they may spend decades in prison.

And praise God with us for the work He is doing on our behalf as it relates to All Decked Out. Our God makes no mistakes – ever!

Dave and Phyllis Baseler
December 11, 2016