



ISSUE

22.1

January 5, 2020

# Faithful Sayings

BULLETIN  
OF THE  
OLSEN PARK  
CHURCH OF  
CHRIST

## Services

Sunday: 9:00 AM

10:00 AM

11:00 AM

Wednesday: 7:00 PM

## Elders:

Pat Ledbetter

Brady McAlister

Jeff Nunn

## Deacons:

Steve Dixon

Ryan Ferguson

Ben Hight

Blake McAlister

Walker McAnear

Sam Nunn

Lance Purcell

Justin Smiley

Kevin Wise

Trevor Yontz

## Evangelist:

Kyle Pope

## “It Is What It Is”: Tribute to Ray

By Kyle Pope

On December 17th we lost a faithful member of this local church: Ray Aplin. Many have passed over the years who were very important to our work, but Ray was unique. The example he set will long be remembered and no one will ever fill the void left by his absence.

A few of our members knew him years ago. He was a twin and the son of an elder in a church in Dumas. He was married. He was a trained nurse and he rode a motorcycle to every state west of the Mississippi! Then the **“difficult days”** came (Eccl. 12:1). Ray had a stroke and was paralyzed on one side of his body. I am told that when this happened, Ray fought back, worked hard, and restored his body to full functioning. Then he got meningitis, and his paralysis returned never to leave him.

At some point during these trials, his wife left him. The rest of his life he would walk slowly with a cane, dragging one foot and struggling to use his paralyzed arm and hand. He could only speak a few words and certain phrases. “Are you doing good today?” someone might ask him. He would respond, “No body’s told me any different!” As he struggled to get words out, in frustration he would point to his head or mouth and say, “It’s right

there.” If you said, “I’m sorry Ray,” almost every time he would say, “It is what it is!” I never heard him complain, offer excuses, or act with rudeness to anyone in spite of his almost constant pain and discomfort.

Job said, **“Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him”** (Job 13:15, NKJV). Before I met him, his mother had moved to Amarillo to help him, and together they were both at services every time the doors were opened. As time went on, her health declined, but together with him on a cane and her pushing her own oxygen tank they would be here. When she passed away, he continued his

faithful service to the Lord, driving himself as long as he was able.

Peter taught, **“as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby”** (1 Pet. 2:2). Ray would be among the first to arrive at every service, not only during regular periods of worship but also during gospel meetings, signing up to get audio CDs of the lessons. He was also at other special studies, summer Bible studies, or home Bible studies every time he possibly could. Beyond any doubt, Ray brought more visitors with him on a regular basis, both family and friends than any other member! When Olsen Park changed our Sunday services to 9:00, 10:00, and 11:00 a.m., he not only made it for all three studies, but also visited South Georgia (another congregation in Amarillo) for their 6:00 p.m. service each week. He truly loved God’s word and God’s people!

Paul taught, **“Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor”** (Rom. 12:10, NASB). Since 2006 some of the men at Olsen Park have met for breakfast at a restaurant in town. Rain, snow, hail, or dust storm, Ray drove would be at breakfast as long as he possibly could. When he could no longer drive, he had his brothers drive him. The staff knew him by name and memorized his order—“special, hash browns crispy, raisin toast.” He liked to take home the extra cinnamon rolls and they would bag



Olsen Park Church of Christ

them up for him. In the months he could no longer come they regularly asked about him, remembered him in prayer, and tried to take food to him before his death. He certainly had, **“a good testimony among those who are outside”** (1 Tim. 3:7, NKJV).

In the time I knew him, Ray never preached a sermon, taught a Bible class, offered an invitation, led a prayer, served at the Lord’s table, served as an elder, deacon, preacher, or Bible class teacher—he couldn’t do those things. But few have served the Lord more faithfully or played as vital a role in the strength and work of this local church than Ray Aplin.

It’s easy for most of us to focus on what we can’t do. We say, “I can’t do such and such, because of this or that reason.” I’m sure there were times Ray must have struggled with the challenges of his condition. It wasn’t fair! Why should such a sweet, dear man have to bear so much? Some might be angry with God or blame Him like Naomi, saying, **“I went out full, and the LORD has brought me home again empty . . . since the LORD has testified against me, and the Almighty has afflicted me?”** (Ruth 1:21). Whatever inner battles he most surely fought he never for a moment allowed them to hinder his service to God or discourage his brothers and sisters in Christ. Quite the contrary, his example to his fellow believers rang louder and stronger than any sermon this preacher could ever teach!

Those who sat near him during services say that in spite of his inability to speak in normal conversation when it came time to worship God in song the words could flow freely. What a curious thing! How puzzling are the frailties of the flesh. Although his condition had robbed him of the ability to express

the thoughts of his heart in ordinary speech it could not silence his praise and worship of his God. What evidence this was of the true nature of who we are. The last time he came to breakfast he was on a walker and I had to help lift him out of his chair and help him from falling as he walked to the door. But Ray was more than the ailing flesh that imprisoned his soul—he was an eternal spirit made in the image of God! As each painful moment of his earthly life ticked away, he could say with Paul, **“Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day”** (2 Cor. 4:16).

I miss Ray. He taught me not to dwell on self-pity. He taught me not to focus on what I can’t do, but to look for what I can do and do it with every ounce of my being. I’ll miss seeing him at breakfast and before most others arrived at services. He taught me to love God more—not because he spares me from having to



suffer, but because He is my Creator, my heavenly Father, and ultimately the One who will deliver me from all here that is not what it ought to be. He taught me to love God's word more and to treasure time with His people.

I miss him, but I also envy him. The day he passed I told Toni (my wife) what a strange

thing it must be for him—for the first time in decades he no longer struggles to speak. God is the judge, but from all I knew about Ray, he died in Christ. Because of this, he could say as Job would say, **"after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, Whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold,**

**and not another. How my heart yearns within me!"** (Job 19:26-27). Ray now sees what we can only long to see—the God in whom he put his hope and trust. Ray no longer has to settle for just, "It is what it is!" Now "what it is" for Ray is more glorious than words can express. We can only hope for and look forward to the time after the resurrection and final judgment when with Ray we can say, **"Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God"** (Rev. 21:3). Hope to see you soon, Ray.



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# Welcome Visitors

We are so glad that you joined us today.  
Please come again.