

CRIBB<S> NOTE – JUNE 6, 2010

Life is filled with mystery, wonder, excitement, dull moments, and endless adventures into hopefulness, gaiety, and sadness. We are surrounded by reminders of life's most essential elements. How much time do you spend observing and experiencing the infinite expressions of life's true meaning? When do you stop and pay attention to the lives of others? What are you doing right now to help you focus on the things that really matter?

As we near the end of spring, are you aware of the many changes that have occurred in the past few weeks? Do you remember winter? Are you looking forward to summer? There have been so many events this season that provided opportunities to think deeply about what is taking place around us and what is happening to us. The Earth is alive. People are affected by activities that have troubled our souls or brought great smiles to our faces. We have been disturbed at times, yet overcome with joy as well.

One of the great gifts we share in Southern California is the ability to move easily into the variety of climates and terrains that are available to us within an hour's drive. The beaches offer refreshing air and the constant tidal shifts of the Pacific Ocean.

Recently, my family spent an afternoon at the beach. It was a lazy day as we lounged in the sand. The warmth of the sun blended nicely with the cool breeze from the ocean spray. That time transformed our brief stay into an unimaginable respite. It felt like a three-day vacation instead of the actual three-hour break. Everything came together and gave us time to read, reflect, recreate, and rest. It was fun, cheap, and appreciated.

Earlier this year, my son and I started taking quick getaways to Mt. Baldy for lunch. What a difference the mountains make. Just about 20 minutes off the freeway and we are there. The first time we went it snowed. The crisp, damp air filled our lungs and put us in the mood to play and explore. Although we were quite close to our suburban home, the change was pronounced and incomparable. We have a better understanding about the mountains' possessive power. They draw us to them. We came back changed and very grateful.

Traveling into the desert is a retreat to my early childhood. My parents took my sisters and me to Palm Springs almost every weekend from Los Angeles. It was like our second home as my father helped to start a new church there.

Urban life and desert dwelling have few similarities. The sweeping winds blow sand with such force that it is nearly impossible to see clearly. Survival skills are tested when the desert flares up. Sweltering heat blasts across its unforgiving floor during the summer, and bone-chilling temperatures drop to freezing degrees in the winter. Nature presents an array of colorful blossoms throughout the year with each seasonal shift.

All of this is so very near, but each is a distinctive region. This is our home.

Just as the weather changes and the regions are different, so it is with life. Each moment is unlike what precedes it or what comes next. The key is to find that rhythm where balance resides. Then, we concentrate on the intentional pauses that allow us to know where we are, what we are thinking, what is going on, and who we are at the present time. This makes us aware, conscious of our environment and humanity.

From suburbia to the core of the inner city, a vast range of complex realities spread across the Greater Los Angeles Basin. Languages, tastes, cultural diversity map out a landscape of global connections in proximity to familiar and strange enclaves. People testify to the varied patterns of terrestrial integrity that make up our Southland habitat. Though we are many and dissimilar, we are one band of Angelinos.

We navigate the hazardous intersection where Culture and Civilization come together. Avoiding collisions and culture clashes is a daily preoccupation of residents here. We learn to honor the values and unique contributions all of us make in this special place. We are challenged everyday to retain our rich heritage as a hybrid society; representative of every corner on the planet.

Now is a good time to remember who we are together and what we have to give the world. We are the composition that makes this life experience filled with mystery, wonder, excitement, and endless adventures. We thank God for it all.

-Pastor Art Cribbs