

SEEDS OF THOUGHT

Trusting in God does not necessarily mean leaving your door unlocked at night.

Farming can be a risky business. You depend on that tiny seed in the palm of your hand. Then there are weeds, insects, disease, drought, floods, the high cost of tractors, rising fuel and fertilizer prices, late frosts, scorching summers, unknown yields, volatile harvest revenue, complicated government regulations ... Why do I keep doing it? ... Because I can't get the dirt out from under my fingernails.

Age can be a greedy predator of life. Feeding it too much of yesterday can often make it have a strong desire for the hours of today and tomorrow.

A wagon filled with high-minded words is no better than the horse it is hitched to.

Beware the man who espouses something a hundred different ways while proclaiming it to a hundred different people. Sheer coincidence will prove him right at least once. And when that happens, inverted odds are, he will claim it is what he had been saying all along.

As a farmer, I get up every morning and work the fields. Yeah, it's hard work, but the wheat doesn't lie or deceive; the corn only takes what I willingly give it to produce a bountiful crop; the apple trees don't greet me with violence; the beets don't promote an ideology that destroys the innocent. My hope is that I will be able to continue working hard to help feed those around me. What could possibly keep me from it? Could it be the actions of those for whom there are no consequences? I hope not.

There are many key elements in a successful marriage. One key that is especially important is to not say something unless you can think far enough ahead of time to know not to say it.

Ah, the lazy days of summer. I'll take an ice-cold lemonade and the shade of an old oak while I enjoy the birds singing their version of a Beethoven classic. But then guilt begins to rear its ugly head and goad me into work. It's a good thing the lawn mower is broken.

Very few of us will ever be front-page heroes, but most of us can help our neighbor find their lost dog.

Even though your wife is an avid gardener, wisdom behooves you to not buy her a load of manure as an anniversary gift.

A government that continues to grow with its promises of benevolence is an inherent danger to freedom. It will eventually reach a size where the self-interest grip of those who benefit from that large government will be stronger than freedom itself.

A bountiful fall harvest comes from a spring and summer of hard work.

Beware of the politician whose answer to a question relies on a quote from Yogi Berra, “I wish I had an answer to that because I’m tired of answering that question.”

Never plant more rutabagas than you can eat yourself.

Evolution and horse racing have a lot in common. A horse has certain irrefutable biological truths. Evolution has certain irrefutable biological truths. Some horses are longshots at 100 to 1 odds. Evolution carries odds closer to a gazillion to 1.

My first planting of strawberries covered a modest twenty square feet. When they began to bear, I got one strawberry. The squirrels got fifty-two. I bumped up the plot the next year to a hundred

square feet. I got four strawberries and six more squirrels. Last year, I hit on just the right amount of square footage—one acre. Now, I get enough for at least twenty breakfasts.

When a new year is ushered in with rousing celebrations, do you have optimistic hope for the days that come? Or are you glad that the old year has fled the land? Or is the answer too close to apathy? Perhaps the question opens a window into your spirit that you want to remain closed.

If fourteen straight days of rain have prevented you from planting your spring garden and you find yourself getting all depressed, then buying a St. Bernard puppy will help you get over the depression about your garden.

You'll know you're having a bad day when five mechanics in black dress uniforms with somber facial expressions come into the dealer service waiting room and they present you with a tiny little casket with your pickup truck keys inside.

Today, plant a tree in honor of your children and grandchildren. Tomorrow, teach them how to plant one of their own for their children and grandchildren.

Freedom costs very little, unless you're the one who dies for it.

Both the covering of seed with earth and the covering of man with earth, in the hope of emerging new life, requires faith.

The evolution of Thanksgiving Day has moved it from a day of celebration by the Pilgrims for their first harvest to a declaration as a national holiday to the day before Black Friday shopping.

Why are so many willing to pawn their spirit for a pittance when God invested so heavily in it?

If you want to attract armadillos to your garden, then sprinkle soil insects over the entire garden area; otherwise, don't.

It seems like the line between right and wrong has become very fluid. The danger lies in who gets to move that line.

Fine words can enrich, and a generous heart can produce good fruit for the spirit, but you still won't have many tomatoes to eat if you plant them in January.

Do you ever try to figure out who's behind the mask of that little kid hollering 'trick or treat' at your door? ... Naa-ahh ... That would be too much like trying to figure out the people at work.

If you feel a nap is in order and you want to try to talk your wife into planting those fifty apple trees in the orchard, then citing Eve in the Garden of

Eden as justification will probably have little effect in convincing her to do it.

I once knew a man who claimed to know everything there was to know. I didn't believe him, though. He couldn't even name one person who was smarter than he was.

So, your last homegrown tomato cost \$7.32. It's the principle.

It is very difficult to talk with someone who thinks they know everything, especially when so much of what they know simply isn't true.

The journey of cotton from a boll in a farmer's field to a beautiful, finely stitched quilt or fabric project is full of nature, science, technology, skill, creative spirit, and love.

Evil often comes in an attractive package.

You can do all the progressive thinking that you have a mind to do, but you still won't harvest corn from a field of Johnsongrass.

In mathematics, if you have a fixed equation and the variables always have the same values (such as $a + b = c$, where a is always 2 and b is always 3 = 5) then it will always yield the same solution. But if you change your values or selectively leave something out of the equation, then you can get most any solution that you choose.

I like saying the word 'mulligrubs'. It just kind of rolls off the tongue.

mulligrubs – an American dialect term originating in the Tennessee to Indiana region; it denotes bad temper or sulkiness; *Billie must have a case of the mulligrubs cause he just hit me on top of the head.*

We plant a lot of heirloom varieties here on the farm. This word is seldom planted in commercial circles today: growlery – a place to escape to when the world around you has put you in a bad mood: created by Charles Dickens in *Bleak House*. Frederick Douglas built a growlery (small stone cabin) at his home where he frequently went to think in seclusion.

I'm confused. How can there be so many "leading" authorities with totally opposite views on the same subject? Are some "leading" us down the wrong path?

Choosing a well-traveled path, if it's wrong, means you will have a lot of company being lost.

It used to be, when I was a kid, you could be frightened by hearing a scary ghost story around a campfire on a dark night. Just a few short years later, as an adult, that same level of fright can be

brought on by a simple blue screen on your computer.

Think of all the things that require faith in this world: that the traffic light won't suddenly turn green in all directions, that your car will start in the morning, that it is safe to eat out at a restaurant, that clean water will come out of the tap, and so on. Yet, many scoff at the idea of faith in a higher being.

If you need someone a thousand miles away to forcibly take your money (and, of course, take their cut) so they can help your neighbor, then perhaps it is you who need more help than your neighbor.

I bought a new mower for my old tractor the other day. While hooking it up to the hitch and pto, I noticed a label that said “ if this label is missing, call 1-XXX-XXX-XXXX. Uh? ... no, that's too obvious.

Now Hiring Church Positions

Parish CEO – A Doctorate in Theology degree is required. Must have excellent skills in Administration and Asset Management, especially in gold, real estate, capital campaigns, and a large staff. Higher consideration is given to candidates with a corporate mindset and a proven record of hierarchical advancement. Benefits include comfortable housing allowance, generous pension, health insurance, and paid holidays. Positions available – 8,421

Shepherd – The candidate must be able to tend sheep including existing flock, newborns, and strays. Positions available - 1

Before you pass on to whatever garden God has waiting for you, try to visit the Giant Sequoias or even a forest ablaze in fall.

As long as you don't have to drive in it, there is adventure in an early morning fog. Everything looks different. What will be new when the sun begins to lift the veil of mystery? Imagination usually fades with the fog as you realize that

nothing has really changed but your perception of it.

Further evidence of the reality of death in small town America is the ample number of funeral homes, florists, and beauty salons along Main Street. Business must be a little slow, though, in one town. I ran across a billboard on the interstate that read, “Smith Brothers Funeral Home and U-Haul Dealership. Ask us about our complete moving package.” I’m still pondering the theological implications of such a package.

Old age can give you an excuse to break the rules. Just don’t wait so long that you no longer have the strength to exercise the option.

A moral cancer can metastasize and hardly be noticed. It will, one day, end the life of the individual, the community, the nation, or even an entire civilization.

Ride the horse of anger if it is just, but always know when to dismount.

I enjoy putting out wild bird seed in the garden to feed the birds, but sometimes I feel like the fire ants enjoy it more.

Enforcement of the law can be very confusing. For example, are you only breaking the law if you get caught?

A forward-looking individual should still frequently check the rearview mirror.

Some days I like to sound more sophisticated, so I plan to use an imported word. Today it is:

avant-garde (ah-vant-gärd') – *French* – ahead of one's time; innovative: *Bobby was considered an avant-garde painter in his third-grade class.*

There's a chill in the air – time to grab a sweater; the maples are ablaze in color – time to grab a camera; apples beckon to be picked – time to make some cider; autumn is putting on a grand finale – time to contemplate life.

Age gradually leads us to the sunset of life, but sunsets can be beautiful, bathing what's around us with an orange glow that gives perspectives not seen before.

As the calendar of life continues its forward march, I look back and wonder how I could have been so dumb on April 16, 1972 and September 25, 1989 and March 23, 1996 and ... oh, never mind.

The laws of physics can be quite distasteful sometimes. For example, when the road to the top is long, arduous, and seemingly never-ending, you finally reach the peak, and then time follows what gravity demands and races downhill at breakneck speed.

In the equation of human life, the ascent of age is relative to the descent of certain priorities. The point on the timeline of age's ascension where priority loses its grip on the amassing of assets

will affect the contour of one's path to a continued life.

To hold tiny seeds in the palm of your hand, and then walk among giant sequoia is the journey of a miracle.

Exaggeration can be calculated mathematically by taking one-half the sum of the truth and a lie, and then multiplying it by π .

There seems to be little concern by those in power regarding the astonishing metamorphosis of ordinary, reasonable men into fools of the highest order when they get behind the wheel of an automobile.

A fool doesn't know his enemy and often dies a fool. A wise man knows his enemy and often dies trying to protect the fool.

The demand for freedom is high, yet for those who already have it, appreciation is often low. In the marketplace of ideas, noble words expand its value, yet for those who buy into it, their embracing of its high price tag means its lofty cost is often borne by a few.

A spirit of joy abounds in a garden when those who dwell therein feel at home.

You might want to choose another time to welcome the new family into the neighborhood if there are three gentlemen riding their motorcycles around inside the house.

Perhaps you should reevaluate your Church Finance and Stewardship program if the major need upon which this year's stewardship campaign focuses on consists of the addition of a motorcycle lube pit and air compressor for the Sunday School room.

Most everyone has experienced situations that could be considered somewhat dangerous. Sometimes, you just have to “man up” and face the danger head on. Other times, you have to ... well, let me just put it this way: if you walk into a room and find fourteen women with twenty crying babies sitting in a circle and they are chanting things you have never heard before, then it is time to consider a hasty departure.

Inherent genius takes the complicated and makes it simple. Manufactured genius takes the simple and makes it complicated.

There is only one thing that every man, woman, and child alive can't afford to do, and that's nothing.

Steel is not mined from the earth. It begins as iron ore and is heated, hammered, purified, and pressed until it becomes steel. And, so it is with the human spirit. Trials, tragedies, and a hundred

other life experiences can yield the strength of a locomotive and the sharpness of a scalpel.

When a law is not enforced, it is no law, but merely words crafted by very expensive makers of the law. Either enforce the law or get rid of it and find makers of the law with at least 10% more common sense.

The yoke of religion can be a heavy burden in following Christ.

Both ego and arrogance travel a road fraught with potholes of stupidity.

Silence is often obscured by an ethereal mist. To summon it, we must leave behind the worldly distractions that engulf us. Called on by wisdom, silence sparkles with the light of a diamond. Called on by fear, silence remains as dark as a moonless night.

Will there be dogs and cats in heaven? I don't know for sure. It seems kind of hard to imagine that God would create such gifts for humankind and there not be some provision for future companionship. I say we should hedge our bets and treat them like God does have future plans for them.

He sat on the bench facing the track, waiting for the first train of the morning to arrive. It always brought hope for a new day of success as it pulled into the station. Any possibility for better times requires him to board the train today. He cannot wait until tomorrow. But he must also be prepared to disembark if the train starts down any mistaken track of yesterday.

Some fields have so little of anything useful to harvest that it's not worth starting up the combine.

Wisdom borrowed will flourish and grow. Wisdom squandered will die a slow death.

Hindsight enables us to see the past. The senses enable us to see the present. A wise future takes both into account when moving forward.

Gardening extends the life of clothing for years. You can wear jeans with holes in them well beyond when, well ... when it no longer becomes fashionable to wear jeans with holes in them.

Lutherans, Catholics, Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Pentecostals, and many others all profess to worship the same God, but sometimes you wouldn't know it. With over 200 identifiable Christian denominations in the United States alone, there should be enough common ground to do great things and make a difference in the world around us. In the end, all of them have some things right. None of them have all things right.

The solid mass of flowers in a landscape bed of annuals can be absolutely beautiful, but there is still something just as fascinating in discovering the single bloom of a wildflower along the roadside.

Kindness with a smile is one of the few things that can be universally translated.

Sometimes the language and technology of electronics, computers, and modern communication can be very confusing. What's not confusing, though, is sitting in sunny Florida with my smart phone and watching live coverage of a blizzard bringing 3 feet of snow and 50 mile per hour winds up north.

Middle age can bring many changes in life; when going to the gym to build bulging arms and a rock-hard abdomen just doesn't seem worth it because you don't have anybody you want to impress anymore unless they are young and there is too much competition for that; when you look at your little black book and decide to buy a new one because so many names of girlfriends or boyfriends have been crossed out and replaced with doctors' names; when you start to make decisions

on going out at night based on what time you have to get up in the morning.

Ah, there is no more charitable a man than one who gives of other people's money. I once knew a man who gave ten dollars to a beggar on the street. He told the beggar he would give him more the next day if he would bring back a receipt for the meal he purchased with the money. The beggar did as he was told, and the man gave him exactly what the receipt said. When I remarked how much I admired him for his generosity, he said, "Oh, I just turn in the receipt with my expense voucher and get my money back from work."

Wisdom behooves you to make that farm sales call at another time, if after ringing the doorbell, you hear someone inside yell, "that's not the cops, is it?".

I'd like to think there was a time when politeness was common currency. Today, the quality has become so rare that it evokes meritorious response

for the slightest expenditure. Perhaps it is just societal inflation, but I think it lies more with the decline of interest rates and a gold standard as solid backing.

I have the utmost respect for the modern soldier, and I am in awe of their physical conditioning that enables them to carry all their gear into battle. I get tired carrying all the protective gear I need to just prune the bougainvillea bush out front.

Will Rogers once said, “Congress is so strange. A man gets up to speak and says nothing, nobody listens and then everybody disagrees.” Not much has changed in the last century. Today it would be something like, ‘Congress is so strange. They pass a 2000-page bill, loudly proclaim victory, and pridefully boast of their moral superiority – all before reading the bill.’

Modern education has produced a wealth of highly intelligent people carrying the PhD banner. Somewhere in the course of real life something

has gone awry, though. For when a very expensive PhD comes up against a certificate for passing sixth-grade common sense, the PhD often loses.

Motivation can be a hard car to derail on the train of success. Just try discouraging your dog when he knows there's another biscuit in your hand.

Sometimes, the foreign language of computers in this modern age can get downright depressing. Terms like bits, rebooting, malware, interfacing, and algorithms can cause my ancient brain to overheat. I'm forced to find a big shade tree and work on my '66 Mustang. But then ... I think. How many of today's generation would know what a throwout bearing, posi-traction clutch, four-barrel carb, or competition lifters would mean? Then I stop thinking and pat the hood of my trusty stallion.

Truth borne on a thorn is painful, but it is still the truth. Truth borne on a flower evokes far less

blood, and it is still the same truth as that borne on a thorn.

How long can a structure stand when built upon the shifting sand of public opinion using materials from the shallow mining of the latest polls?

If the time you spent today does not reward you with the wonders of the life around you, then that time has been ill spent.

It's time to start pulling out the Christmas decorations and check the stores for that one new item that we buy each year. But I refuse to buy anything put out by the big boys on July 5th. If I wait long enough, and they keep putting out Christmas decorations earlier and earlier, then eventually they'll be back to starting in December again.

The elite shape by fiat. The blacksmith shapes by hard work and sweat.

I am such a bad farmer that the aphids have put out a travel brochure on my farm.

Consider the irony – Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ with festive lights and nativities that are all made in a country that oppresses and imprisons Christians.

Write to your congressman or congresswoman and encourage him or her to introduce a bill requiring all citizens to own a rake. If they seem agreeable to such a bill, call your stockbroker, and buy some stock in a garden tool manufacturer.

I feel like a kid again when a butterfly lands on my hand.

If the cloth of a man's reputation hides the true nature of his character, they shall both live in loneliness.

The debate has gone on for a long time with ardent followers in each camp. Who is man's best friend – dog or cat? A dog is usually eager to show that it is them with slobbery, affectionate kisses and loyal obedience. A cat is more subtle with a low rhythmic purr and gentle rub. Anything more from a cat might be perceived as stooping to admit it is them.

What would an eccentric farm be if it didn't have a small plot of clichés. This week we're going to plant: "Keep your powder dry" – *always be prepared for action*; This dates back to the days when the gun powder and the ball were loaded separately into the gun. Wet powder would not fire, so to be ready for battle you had to keep your powder dry.

One of the traits of a truly wise person is the ability to exercise common sense or good judgment in a variety of situations. Such wisdom rises to another level when the prudent individual can hone their insight from the experience and bad judgment of someone else.

If you sell your honor for the sake of money, you will probably find your purchasing power in eternity to be somewhat limited.

You should probably consider reopening your wallet if during the passing of the offering plates you observe that the gentleman next to you has attempted to insert two one-dollar bills in the plate, causing a little red light to activate and the man to be bathed in the brightness of a huge spotlight accompanied by a monotone voice saying, “Cheapskate alert. Cheapskate alert.”.

If you lean toward conservative with religious matters, you’ll know the church you are visiting is not for you, if upon entering the narthex area, you observe that all four members of the ushering staff have green hair and are wearing pink Bermuda shorts with tiny little yellow flowers all over them. Obviously, that is not proper ... They should have had pink hair with pink Bermuda shorts.

There is no more formidable a force than a nation of freedom-loving and morally courageous men and women. Yet, that nation is easily vanquished when its foundation is fractured by the slow eroding of the virtuous ground around it.