

Dear Supporters,

Each year I sit down to write this letter and think, how can I make this letter not sound like just a repeat of last year's letter and/or maybe even the year before. Sure, there are those years when something really notable happens and I get to talk about that. Things such as last year when I talked about the calendar companion book finally being in print. However, I sit here thinking about 2018, and looking back I can't think of a notable thing that happened other than the fact the number of people we send our materials to just keeps growing. Each time we go to the post office to mail off *Shaqahs*, calendars, and/or books, we check the mail and there is almost always more orders waiting for us. I will admit there are days when I wonder how we are going to keep doing this, and as I sit down looking at 2018 that thought is what comes to mind most predominantly.

I think the point of 2018, as mundane as it may sound, is just that we got through it. That may not sound terribly different than what I have said about past years but it really is the bottom line. It is so often the mistake of churches, organizations, and ministries of all types to be looking for the new and spectacular thing. We have this need as humans to try and find something else that excites us. As an organization we want to find that new thing that makes us seem dynamic, the thing that will keep the people coming back for more. There is no shortage of churches who are counting the number of people each week and who start to panic when they see the numbers go down at any point. They start to worry they have not done something to really bring the people in for awhile, and start looking for something that will make their church "fresh" and attract attention. This so often is the cause of people falling away from the true path of God. Running the race, fighting the fight, and staying the course is not something that on a week by week basis seems very dynamic. It's usually hard and even arduous at times.

I never have worried about seeming dynamic and don't really think about the ministry from that perspective, until I get to this letter and wonder what I'm going to write about. However, I do some days get down on how arduous the task can seem. I'll just be honest, there are those days we go to the post office just glad to get off the last of the orders we were backed up on and find in the box a whole stack more and just wonder, how? How can we keep up this pace? Today as I write this letter I consider those two thoughts and how contradictory they are. So many want to seem dynamic so they may keep the numbers up in their churches or at least the donations flowing into their ministry. They spend their time looking or trying to come up with the next big thing and even sacrifice their beliefs to accomplish it at times. However, what makes me proud of Living Springs is that we do not do that. We do not have time to sit around and think about the next big thing we will do. We already have people who have been waiting to get answers to Q&As from a long time back now. It takes so much of our time to get each issue of *Shaqah* out to everyone who gets it, it seems we only just get it done and we are behind schedule to get another one out.

While that is very hard work at times, I have to stop and think about how blessed we have been to keep on doing it! In 2018 Living Springs saw no shortage of funds. We are by no means a rich ministry, that's not what I'm getting at, but we have been so busy with everything there is to do and keep up with, worrying about funds does not even cross my mind most days anymore.

It just seems there is always enough. We take orders to the post office and spend a small fortune in postage, yet the money to pay for it is always there. We get more orders and the numbers increase, yet we somehow are able to keep sending stuff out the door. I look at this and it really is what there is to say about 2018 and how it has gone. It has gone issue after issue of *Shaqah*, production run after run of calendars, and here we are. We made it, and we go into 2019 simply doing the same. What a blessing it is to think, we have changed nothing. We are not lazy, but we have made no effort to do anything notable, and yet God has continued to provide and bring an increase in the number of people we have had the great blessing to minister to. In this, we see how much work there is to do when one is willing to simply teach the Word of God day after day with no concern for anything other than to feed those who desire to hear. Thus, I have to stop and think, is that not the greatest blessing of all?

It is at the same time as this letter we prepare to send out the 100th issue of *Shaqah*. I suppose we could blow the trumpets and throw the confetti, but so often it is my thought that outside all the noise is where the real meaning is. As I look back on all the ways the publication has changed from those first issues until now, I am also struck by how much it has not. The production has changed from those early days of printing some masters and taking them to a copy shop, then to printing them on a large format desktop printer, and then to having two business quality printers of our own today. However, the message and what we do with the writing is still what it was always intended to be. It's just a continual steady step by step teaching of God's Word. In many ways I am struck by how little progress through the verses of Genesis, "Following the Biblical Stream" has covered, yet it is pages upon pages of teaching when stacked altogether. That series has also been coupled with "The Bible As A Book" for so long now I have trouble remembering when both these segments were not part of each issue. However, it too has a long way to go, and so as long as God gives the ability, there is plenty more issues of *Shaqah* to come.


In April of 2019, Living Springs will celebrate its 25th anniversary as an organization, but this too will come and go in the midst of work almost too hard to keep up with. No time for a party, no time for anything big, just the question, what is the most pressing thing that needs to be done next? This might all sound a bit down but that is not my point. My point is that life in this world is like that for the most part. We try to dress it up and we try to emphasize the happy times and special moments, but most days are about getting work done. So, at the risk of sounding a bit like letters I've written in past years, I say again this year, how blessed we are to continue serving in the work of The Lord. The milestones we have reached are the result of putting one foot in front of the other each day and grinding it out. It might be hard, arduous, even mundane at times, but I think those words have come to be looked at in far too negative a light. When we serve The Lord we say, this is the day The Lord has made, I will rejoice and be glad in it, not because there are exciting new things to do necessarily, but because it's another day to spend learning and growing in The Lord. (Ps. 118:24)

In God is our life and strength. In His Word there are always things to learn and be reminded of. In each day there is the opportunity to draw closer to God and gain a walk that brings more meaning to our lives and gets us closer to the hope of what heaven is about. It's not all about the glamour and excitement. In truth, it is far more often about putting in the work, and it is my prayer that in 2019 we might all find a renewed strength, and maybe more importantly a renewed appreciation for the everyday work that brings us to our goal. We love to talk about one

day obtaining the crown, but the way we do that is by carrying our cross each day. Most things worth having take effort to obtain, and overcoming our fleshly desire to focus on God differently takes effort. We do it because of the reward it brings not just in the end but in our day by day lives. Just like with *Shaqah*, we may think nothing much has changed, but it has done the work it was intended to do. We think we haven't made it very far, but then we look at the body of work that has been accomplished. There is a work that is growing in each of those who truly set their affections on things above and not on the things of this earth. (Col. 3:2) These are the things that can be hard to see and appreciate, but they are there if we have been willing to put in the effort!

As I say thank you to those who made this ministry possible throughout this last year, that is the thought I want to leave. One thing that will never change about writing this letter is how much it brings tears to my eyes to have people to say thank you to and who say thank you to us. I thank The Lord always for what we are able to do because getting it done is what's most important. I thank The Lord always for those who have given to this ministry. It's never about the amount, it's about trusting in The Lord that He can make it enough. Prayer does that, and so I end this letter with a big thank you to all those who support this ministry in prayer, and I pray each of you will have a 2019 filled with the work of drawing closer to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

Sincerely,



Philip E. Busby
Executive Director
Living Springs
2018