

"97% accurate"—October 2007

We watched a 30-second TV advertisement brought to us by a local Tampa Bay channel promoting the skill of their meteorologist as he predicts the weather. Quick shots of cloudless skies, gorgeous beach settings, happy revelers, weather maps, and complicated up-to-date equipment all contributed to highlight his proficiency. "Sunshine today," his voiceover declared with straightforward confidence. Fast moving visuals of various weather conditions continued as another voice, a bold unbiased tone of authority, declared with wonder, "97% accurate in his forecasts." Everyone in the commercial—now more of a flamboyant testimonial—agreed with admiration that this was indeed a remarkable man.

The funny side of the pretentious boasting hit my daughter-in-law and me in the same way. "Big deal," Eileen laughed, "I live in Florida; the sun shines every day." Out of humorous curiosity, I did some research; in St. Petersburg, the sun shines 361 days a year, and the average temperature is 73.7 degrees. This "Sunshine City" holds a Guinness World Record for logging the most consecutive days of sunshine - a stretch lasting 768 days that began in 1967 (<http://www.stpete.org/ataglance.htm>). When the sun shines all but four days a year—it's no great accomplishment to predict the weather in the Sunshine State!

So, the vanity of the TV station bragging on their weatherman—no, pardon me; their Meteorologist with a Ph.D.—really tickled me and got me thinking about three characteristics of our "profession" as missionaries:

1. Unlike the weatherman, we have the resources that afford 100% accuracy in "our forecasts." The unchanging character of God manifested in the inspired Word of God allows us to "predict" with faithful precision. Let me demonstrate (drum roll please): *"Those who believe are not condemned; those who believe not are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only begotten son of God."* (John 3:18).
2. These certainties then equip us to realize transformation in others that counts for eternity. A friend and successful lawyer, evidently thinking about his contribution to society, once commented to me that it must be nice to go to work each day knowing my job has the potential to change lives forever! He's right, you know; it's a thrill to realize that our work truly matters and will count forever. Our "profession" does not deal with the measly inconveniences and aggravations of a rainy day! No, far from it; we are dealing with eternal consequences!
3. Just as the weather is completely dependent upon God's control, so are any results of our "forecast." This may seem un-motivational or deflating on the surface. However, far from lessening our responsibility, this should motivate us to "get it right" as we minister with confidence. That excites and motivates me! After all these years, I still revel in opportunities to minister.

Don't get me wrong, I appreciate weather forecasts. They are helpful. But, when compared with what we do, there is no real comparison! No Brag—Just Fact!

Remember that as we continue to deal with spiritual entities, we walk by faith, not by sight. I realize too, that we do not always see the results of our hard work (the weatherman *usually* does). Let me encourage you to spend some good quality time with the Lord in personal appreciation of His graciousness in allowing us the precious opportunity to tell others and see their lives changed.

Bill