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Our World: The message

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Lexey Swall/Staff

Like clockwork, every Monday morning, a new message appears on the announcement sign at the East Naples Baptist Church, on the corner of Shadowlawn and Davis Blvd. The board usually has something clever to say in an attempt to lead you to God, while you lead yourself around town.

— "When we choose to follow Jesus, our whole life changes direction."

Gerald Douglas, 90, has been diligently changing the sign the past three years. An important job considering thousands of people pass by it every week.

On a recent summer day, Douglas shakes his head in agreement with the letters he just put up.

— "Today is a gift from God, use it wisely"

"This is a good message," he says. "God gave your life this day." He hopes the words will make an impact on someone.

In an instant, his prayers are seemingly answered as Naples resident Gabrielle Heard rides up on her bike.

"I really like your reader board," she says, telling him she has read the board the past two years.

"I stopped here to get wisdom," she says.

"Well, the pastor said last week that God would put someone in our path and you are the one," Douglas tells Heard.

— "Bring sunlight to others and you will be warmed."

After carefully considering the spelling and spacing between each letter and word, Douglas gathers the remaining letters from the previous week's message and puts them in a bright orange crate, which he then carries to the trunk of his car.

Douglas says he believes in every word he places on the sign. The phrases come from a book called "Sermons." He admits that on this morning he chose a short one because he couldn't stay out in the morning heat.

"I think I'm doing something for God. Honoring Him," Douglas says. "That's what keeps me doing it."

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