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Lane's Log



A Jolt for Our Attention

“When I shut Up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land or send a plague among my people...if my people who are called by my name...” (II Chron. 7: 13, 14)

When someone has a heart attack, sometimes doctors will use a defibrillator in order to restart the heart. They do it all the time in ER someone yells, “clear” and then they put the paddles on the chest. A jolt of electric current flows through the paddles in the hopes of getting the heart to start beating again.

PREVIEW

I wonder if God wants to do the same thing with your heart this morning. A once strong spiritual life can start slowing down or even stop beating. Something radical has to be done to restart a heart for God. That's where God brings out His paddles. We see this in 7:13 the verse immediately preceding our passage for today. God says, “When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land of send a plague among my people...if my people who are called by my name...” God had to send a wake-up call to His people and so He sent the drought, the locusts, and the plague. Not because he doesn't care but because He does. He knows it's what it will take to bring the patient back to life.

INNERVIEW

Maybe this explains some of the jolts you've been getting hit with lately. Maybe you've hit bottom because God has been trying to get your attention. You've been asking “why” and God is answering, “Because I want to restart your failing heart.” Maybe you haven't responded to gentler therapies so now He has sent these jolts to bring you back. Maybe you have some pain right now...but please get the point. God loves you just the way you are but He doesn't want you to stay the way you are. He wants you to return to your first love for Jesus. He wants you to re-establish your daily Jesus-time as the center of your life. He desires for you to be a pure child of God who has zero tolerance for sin. And, in order to reach you, He has allowed some situations like drought, locusts, and plagues that are totally beyond your power to fix. He wants you to surrender to Him by following His plan so that you can receive His promises.

REVIEW

If you've been feeling some jolts latterly, consider the possibility that God has sent them to bring you back to life.

Praise God For: His Abundant Kindness!

Thank God For: Faithful Servants!

Ask God's Forgiveness For: Boasting About My Good Deeds!

Ask God To Help: Love Motivate Us!

Ask God To Supply Our Need For: Consideration For Others!

A New Person In The Same Old Situation

*“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”
(II Corinthians 5:17 (NIV))*

“I feel like a new person!” Those may be the words often spoken after one’s conversion experience. They may be the words spoken after making a major decision. They could be the words expressed after the confession of a sin. They may be heard upon completion of a major medical procedure. Parents may say it (or feel it at least) after they receive a phone call with news that their child is safe and well. For others it is a statement that was spoken once long ago in a far away land in a frame of mind almost forgotten. Life has been rough since then. The newness of life has long since worn off and faded away. There is nothing about their life that feels new, or fresh, or at times even like life. They are tired. They are sad. They are empty. They are looking at the sunrise not as the “first day of the rest of your life,” but as one more day in a miserable existence.

PREVIEW

As you read the two precious paragraphs you probably had images of people you know who fit both descriptions. What is the difference? What causes one person to see the sunrise as bright and clear and beautiful and “new every morning,” while another sees only the ‘chasing after the wind’ that will follow the sunrise? Certainly the events of the previous day may have something to do with how we feel when the sun comes up. Our attitude and disposition obviously has a lot to do with it. How we feel physically also has an impact on our view on life. Sometimes a change in scenery, or a change of habit, or a change in life will give us a new outlook on life. Sometimes we need it. Sometimes a major change (sorry to use that word so many times in one paragraph) may be the only thing that will bring about the wanted and needed results. Because we like to do things for ourselves, it is possible to depend on these physical changes too much and too often, when there is something beyond us that has the potential to help us see ourselves differently every day.

INNERVIEW

Take another look at what Paul tell us, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” (II Corinthians 5:17, NIV)

Another section of Paul’s writing reminds us of whom we can and should see ourselves, “So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust of more. You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”

REVIEW

When was the last time you said, “I feel like a new person!” and meant it? Are you wishing you could say it today? Maybe it will not require a total makeover of your physical appearance, or that your whole world be turned upside down. It could be that seeing ourselves as God sees us is the answer. Give it a try. You may be a new person waiting to happen. Enjoy being a new person today.

Visiting An Empty House

“Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit” – Galatians 6:18

The house was empty. Except for a couple of crates for a makeshift desk, a lawn chair, the vacuum cleaner, and a change of clothes. The place was empty. Not just empty as in no people around but, empty as in no people, no furniture, no pictures on the wall, no food in the refrigerator, not even a refrigerator. I mean empty. The carpets had been vacuumed. The floors have been mopped. The trash has been removed. The house was empty. Not long ago the house was filled with people, a family. Now it is empty. Not long ago there was talking, singing, and laughter. Now it is silent. Not long ago there were children playing in the backyard. Now the children are passing by on their bikes and looking at this house as the place where a friend once lived.

There are no children here now. There is no television, no radio. The house is empty. It won't be long before a new family will move in and make that house their home. There will be new furniture, new decorations, new cars in the driveway, and new faces in the neighborhood. This empty house will be full again. I wondered, as I sat there in that empty house, about the future. Will the people who live here love each other? Will the children, if they even have children, enjoy the neighborhood? Will they invite their friends into this house? Will God be as much a part of the family of the next residents as He was the vacating residents? Will they live here a long time, or will this just be a temporary resting place? All these questions are beyond my power to answer yet I wonder about them as I sit here in this empty house.

An empty house is like our soul. From time to time we clean everything out. We do it once when we initially commit our life to God, but we do it on other occasions when we make important decisions about our level of commitment, or at certain milestones, or when something tragic shakes us causes us to take stock into where we are, who we are and where we are heading. And, like this house where the family has moved away what is left it has been swept clean ready for a new start. Satan loves it when we clean the house in our soul because he has the opportunity to move in and take up residence while there is nothing to get in his way. If we are not careful to replace what we remove with things of God, Satan will fill our hearts with envy, rage, hatred, lust, and all kinds of evil. But, if we will move in the things of God like forgiveness, hope, joy, peace, grace, joy and of course, love, there is no room for Satan's furniture and he will move on.

Sitting in an empty house has reminded me of how grateful I am that this house has been only our temporary residence, but the Lord has taken up permanent residence in our heart. He helps me clean house every day. He fills my heart every morning. He turns emptiness into fullness. Because of the relationship that has been established through the blood of Jesus Christ, every day I have the opportunity to sit in an empty house. I have the opportunity to make a new start. At the close of each day I am able to sweep out the trash, bag up the garbage, set it by the curb, and let someone haul it away. That trash is the sin in my life. That someone is Jesus Christ. Then, once emptied, I do have a choice as to who will come in and take up residence in my soul.

Auditioning Your Ambitions – The Splurge

“Delight yourself also in the Lord/And He shall give you the desires of your heart” (Psalm 37:4)

The fourth and final movement is the **SPLURGE**-you make the leap. You go all out for it. You put everything on the line. You hold back nothing. The Bible informs us that...

1. “Without faith it is impossible to please him” (**Heb. 11:6**)
2. We are enjoined to “examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith...”(**II Cor. 13:5**).
3. The Bible informs us that “Therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith” (**Rom. 1:17**).
4. We are exhorted to “stand fast in the faith” (I Cor. 16:13) and the believer is to “walk by faith” (**II Cor. 5:7**).
5. Paul affirmed that “the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God” (**Gal. 2:20**)
6. Jesus advised his disciples, “have faith in God” (**Mk. 11:22**).

If you believe it, you can conceive it. If you conceive it you can perceive it. If perceived you can achieve it. If you can achieve you will received it! **Believe it!**

Faith escorts us to a den of lions and shows us an unarmed man sitting in their midst, one who would be a suitable meal to quiet the nocturnal rumbling of their hungry stomachs. Yet, we see them on their best behavior as though they were advance students of the school of etiquette. Faith takes us on an exciting excursion to the post card picturesque beauty of the Jordan Valley.

Bids us to pause a moment to take in its scenic beauty of Palms and Sycamore. Then leads us to Jericho where there are walls pronounced by architect and contractor to be impregnable. We watch in awe as the walls comes tumbling down at the sound of blowing horns and marching feet.

Faith then leads us to a battlefield and shows us giants slain by midgets. It takes us to valleys to watch dry bones become standing armies. It takes us to beautiful gates as we watch the lame spring to their feet praising God. It was through faith that the heroes of faith subdued kingdoms wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to fight the armies of the aliens.

**Faith....Believes the unbelievable, Reaches for the unreachable;
Asks for the unthinkable; Hopes for the impossible;
Lives for the incredible; Prepares for the unexplainable.**

Auditioning Your Ambitions – The Surge

“Delight yourself also in the Lord/And He shall give you the desires of your heart”
(Psalm 37:4)

At the core of faith, there is that innermost, indivisible cell called commitment. Faith always commands some decisive action. More often than not, it represents an irreversible decision. Faith is peeling the orange. It's cracking the egg. It's opening the can of soda! Faith is delivering the ice. Now you either consume it, or throw it away. Faith is serving the soufflé hot from the oven! You must eat it, or watch it deflate. What's left cannot be saved or stored.

“**What is Faith?** It is the confident assurance that something we want is going to happen. It is the certainty that what we hope for is waiting for us, even though we cannot see it up ahead.” “Faith is the daring of the soul to go farther than it can see” where reason must stop, faith takes a daring leap into the unknown. Faith is not a leap in the dark. Faith is a leap into the light. Faith is taking God at his word. Information has been given, accepted as true and is being acted upon.

FAITH SEES THE COMING....

- **Spring** in spite of the current winter showers, in spite of the current drought. **Prospects**, in spite of the current circumstances.
- **Solution**, in spite of the current problems.
- **Dividends**, in spite of the current difficulties.
- **Fruit**, in spite of the current barrenness.

“Lord, give us the faith to make the move at the right time in the right way. Protect us from the false security that indecision foolishly promises. Today we shall move from faith and not be mesmerized by fear.

Praise God For: Christ our Redeemer;

Thank God For: Wise Men;

Ask God's Forgiveness For: Half-hearted Commitment;

Ask God to Help: All Who Come to Him;

Ask God to Supply Our Need For: Recommitment to Him.

Auditioning Your Ambitions – The Urge

“Delight yourself also in the Lord/And He shall give you the desires of your heart”

(Psalm 37:4)

Birds were designed to fly. The air under the wings of a bird is the natural habitat of the flying fowl. Water is the natural habitat of the fish. Faith is the native air to be breathed in and out by believers. The divine quality of dreaming what you want to be, where you want to go, what you'd love to do, projects you hope to achieve, goals you'd like to reach—all of which makes you uniquely gifted for growth in the walk of faith. The walk of faith is really a symphony in four movements, the **urge**, the **purge**, the **surge** and then the **splurge**.

The first movement of faith is the **urge**—deep within you there is a voice that says, “There is something more.” Success never happens until you make it happen. And you make good things happen when you make decisions that cause a movement to begin. Remember, life by its very nature rejects protectionism.

Do you refuse to make decisions because problems and perils might result? Do you want to play it safe? That's one of life's rare impossibilities! When you play it safe, you can be sure you will face the dangers that inevitably come: boredom, lack of growth, stagnation, emotional death! The zest that comes from decisions will be gone. What is left is a shriveling and shrinking spirit with false promises of security.

Strong faith is often the expression of deep desire. Likewise doubt is the lack of desire. A host of conscious or subconscious forces can keep you from wanting to believe. Fears of what God might do to your life or in your life can keep you from wanting to believe.

Success is not accident. Success is a commitment—not a coincidence! Each new year is an appointment to become an authentic optimist. Each new day is justification for being enthusiastic about life again. Each dawning is God's invitation to start over and build a new life, beginning with the present moment. Each week is an opportunity to make new and noble resolution! Every Monday morning you have a standing appointment to meet new opportunities! So, the first movement of faith is the movement of urge. Decide today where you want to be five, ten, twenty years from today.

Praise God For: Being Our Savior

Thank God For: Salvation

Ask God's Forgiveness For: Choosing Sin

Ask God To Help: Those Who Don't Know Him

Ask God To Supply Our Need For: Deliverance From Sin

Steps Toward Higher Altitudes

“Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on...”
(Phil. 3:12, 13)

1. *Are you humble about this area of your life?* _____ If you haven't been, take this to the Lord right now. Ask him for an attitude of humility. Meditate on the Scripture that says “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble (**James 4:6**)”. Trust that God will give you the attitude of humility that you desire.
2. *Are you teachable in this area of your life?* _____ If you haven't been, commit this to the Lord as well. Determine that you will listen to the counsel of others in this area. Seek out the counsel of someone whom you maybe have not listened to before in this area, but whom you know has something good to say about it. Listen to them, and glean insight.
3. *Take Action.* What one action can you take *today* that will move you in the direction of your desired growth goal. Make this action doable, but stretching. Do it today. Learn to do something *now* to move you forward. After that is done, plan and take another step forward within the next couple of days. Keep taking one step at a time in the direction of your desired growth goal.
4. *Recognize the power of your past to sabotage your efforts.* Is a past sin, failure, or success hindering you from moving forward? If so, identify it, and deal with it appropriately. If it is sin, make sure you have genuinely confessed it and repented of it before the Lord. If it is failure, ask God for a positive lesson you can learn from it, and write that here: _____

Draw encouragement from the lesson. If it is a success, decide you will use that success to encourage you toward further progress.

5. *Test your goal to make sure you are setting your sights on God's goals for you.* Is this the type of goal God wants you to accomplish? Does it reflect balance? Is it something you can earnestly pray about, and ask God to accomplish it for his glory? If you need to retool your focus, do it now.

Continue with Setp 3—Taking action, until you have achieved the goal, or state of growth that you desire.

Praise God For: Reconciliation

Thank God For: Peacemakers

Ask God's Forgiveness For: Strained Relationships

Ask God To Help: Bring Peace To The World

Ask God To Supply Our Need For: Tenderness

A Check List for Spiritual Growth

“Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on...” (Phil. 3:12, 13)

If you would grow in faith, you must add to your faith, virtue. You must seek to be a good person. Virtue is the conformity to a standard of right, possessing moral excellence, and integrity. Go through this spiritual growth checklist to measure your growth.

1. **Do I Live What I Teach?** Deciding what to be is more important than deciding what to do. “Hold on to instruction, do not let it go, guard it well, for it is your life” (*Prov. 4:13*).
2. **Do I Do What I Say?** A person of integrity will do what they promise they will do. They will keep their word. “Simply let your “Yes” be “Yes” and your “No be No” (*Matthew 5:37*).
3. **Am I Honest With Others.** When a person loses his credibility, he forfeits a trust that may never be regained. “*I will always speak the truth and refuse to tell a lie*”. (*Prov. 8:7*)
4. **Do I Put What Is Best For Others Ahead Of What Is Best For Me?** A person of integrity will remember he is here to serve others rather than here to be served. “*Be humble and consider others more important than yourselves*” (*Phil. 2:3*).
5. **Am I Striving To Become More Like Christ In All Of The Seven Christian Virtues?** “*And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and the virtue knowledge; (6) And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; (7) And to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity. (8) For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (9) But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins*” (*II Pet. 1:5-9*).

Inside Renovations

"Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on..." (Phil. 3:12, 13)

One of the many "fast food" establishments recently did a complete overhaul of their facilities. Leveled the old place. Started over from scratch. The new place opened advertising that the service would be much more efficient as a result of the upgraded facilities and equipment. I should have known that it was too much to ask, but I thought I would give the drive thru a try. Not only was the service no better than before, it may have been worse. Sarcastically I thought to myself as I drove away with my cup of coffee dripping on to my hand, "doesn't the new paint look nice!" Once again proving the old point, it's what's inside that counts.

PREVIEW

I have the same feeling of disappointment every fall when the new line up of television shows come out. For weeks we hear about the new drama that promises to be the "Television event of the century." When it finally airs it is just more of the same old stuff. Same Story, Same Characters, Same Message. From a distance it looks new and exciting. Upon closer examination there is not much substance. The same sort of let down has occurred a time or two when buying a new product. From automobile, to computer, to software, to shoes the result is the same. Advertised as the "best ever." Or, promoted as "the latest and most advanced" I walk away wondering, what was so special about that?

INNERVIEW

Jesus talked quite a bit about not being fooled by outward appearances. He talked about how it's what comes out of a person, from the inside that counts, not what goes in. He talked about the need to clean the inside of the cup and not just the outside. He spoke of the pure heart that produces pure fruits. Sometimes I feel like that new fast food place. I do a complete makeover. Clean everything. Get a complete upgrade. Start from scratch. Put new paint all over everything. Start out with a lot of commotion. Before long, I'm back to the old ways. Sometimes I'm worse than before. I wonder if people ever walk away from me and sarcastically say, "Doesn't he look nice!"

REVIEW

The older I get the more I am realizing that there is only so much physical restoration that can take place in this body. Outwardly, not much is going to change from here on out (at least not for the better). But, there is much that can be done for the inside. My spirit can be renewed. My attitude can be improved. My outlook can be more positive. My disposition can be more pleasant. My words can be more encouraging. My thoughts can be more pure and holy. My heart can be more sensitive. With that kind of reconditioning, maybe people will leave me feeling refreshed, and encouraged, and cared for, and uplifted, and joyful. When you do your next renovation time use less paint and more purity. Spend less time primping and more time praying. Focus on the inside more than the outside. And, while you are at it, stay away from the drive thru. It's the inside that counts.

Personal Growth And Progress

“Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on...” (Phil. 3:12, 13)

Sometimes we're such perfectionists. We miss the fact that we're progressing, because all we can see is that the goal of becoming like Christ seems to stay so distant. “But I'm so far away,” you lament. “Sometimes it seems I'm making no progress at all.”

No one will ever be perfectly like Christ, this side of glory. But, as someone has suggested, the key question at any point in time is this: Which way are you facing—toward Him or away from Him? Or, more specifically, which way are you moving—toward Him or away from Him?

If you asked God for ways to measure your progress you would hear words like “becoming,” “increasing,” and “developing.”

BECOMING is a process word. Are you becoming a person of faith?

Increasing is a dynamic word. Do you have any increasing sense of hope, linked to Him and His promises?

DEVELOPING is a maturation word. Have you been developing a loving concern for the needs of others—so many of them—who are hurting and struggling too?

GIVE YOURSELF TIME. Some things cannot be rushed. No instant masterpieces, here. God's workmanship (Ephesians 2:8 – the Greek word is *poiema*, from which we get the word poem) is you. You and I are God's creation. WE might even say we are His “poetry,” His way of singing a song of hope to a broken world.

GIVE YOURSELF SPACE. Don't let anyone force you into his mold. Your relationship with God is the main issue. What does He think of you? What does He ask of you? People may offer their own interpretations and perspectives on these questions. But the final issues are between you and Him. And He is more kind, loving, gracious, gentle, forgiving, and creative than any of us can imagine.

GIVE YOURSELF TRUTH. Don't play anybody's game, even your own. No pretending allowed. No hypocrisy required. You can be yourself. If you force it, it will just take longer. If you fake it now, you may never be able to tell when it's real.

Praise God for: His Spirit

Thank God For: Good Fathers

Ask God's Forgiveness For: Neglecting Time With Him

Ask God To Help: Children Who Miss Their Fathers

Ask God To Supply Our Need For: Strength For Each Day

Personal Growth And Progress

"Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on..." (Phil. 3:12, 13)

I fear that one of the tragedies of the modern church and counseling psychology is that we don't teach people to take the time to enjoy small victories. WE are so caught up in the ultimate victory that we don't take notice of the daily victories God is executing in our lives.

PREVIEW

Even God took time to evaluate his day and ultimately his week. Do you remember that as God moved in creation, he created in stages? He didn't create the world in one day. At the end of each day, the last thing he did was look back over what he had done that day and say "It was good".

On the first day he had not finished everything he had purposed to do for creation. He looked back over the day and said "For a day that's pretty good work." He praised himself and said, "It is good." We need to tell struggling people, saints with sinner problems "You've got to stop every now and then and celebrate how far you've come. You might not have done everything you set out to do. You might still have some more creative acts to do, but you need to look back from whence you've come and say, "Lord, you helped me make it this far, and that is good. I know this has to be done. I know the other is still lacking. I know I need to work on that over there. But Lord, I'm grateful for the progress of the day. I may not be what I want to be. I may not even be what I appear to be. But I'm grateful that I'm not what I used to be. By grace and guidance, strength and Spirit I'm not what I used to be."

INNERVIEW

You can't wait until you arrive to celebrate. Every time you see an accomplishment, say thank you. Every time you experience victory, you ought to say thank you. When you begin saying that was good, not only do you enjoy the savor of feeling victory as you travel, but you also re-fire yourself. You help energize yourself so you can do what you have to do on the second day. Some of us are so busy trying to get where we are going that we don't stop to thank the Lord on the way.

REVIEW

If you are going to get the release of power for day two, day three, or day four, you have to look back over the activities of this day and say "Maybe I haven't conquered all the problems of the world today, but there is some light where there used to be darkness. I'm walking in that light as he is in the light, and I have fellowship one with another; and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin. I thank you that I'm making progress."

Personal Growth Worksheet

“Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on...” (Phil. 3:12, 13)

If you are feeling like your growth has plateaued, I encourage you to take this worksheet home and use it to help you move forward in your personal growth.

But today, I want to ask you, “How are you doing in your spiritual growth?” Is there one of these steps that is hindering your balloon from rising? Growth is natural. Each of these 4 helps the balloon rise. But if we don’t do any one of these, it serves as a piece of lead in our balloon, hindering the progress of our rising growth.

- Today maybe you have really been a bit smug about your spiritual life, feeling like you have attained quite a bit in the Lord, and don’t really need to learn anything new. I encourage you to become humble and teachable.
- Today maybe you have a humble and teachable heart, but you have not taken specific action to grow. Maybe that action is starting a daily quiet time, or getting into a small prayer group, or beginning family devotions. What action do you need to take today?
- Maybe what is tripping you up is your past. Put it in perspective! Leave your sin at the cross, learn from your failures, and let your successes lift you.
- And maybe you have struggled with submitting to God’s goals and purposes for you. Trust Him today. He loves you and understands you. Setting your heart on goals pleasing to Him will assure that you will climb the ladder and find it leaning against the right building!

Praise God For: His Strength

Thank God for: Putting me in situations where I feel over my head.

Ask God’s Forgiveness For: My fear

Ask God To Help: Those who are feeling inadequate

Ask God To Supply Our need for: Faith

Putting The Past In Perspective (2)

“Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on...” (Phil. 3:12, 13)

The fourth step toward reaching higher altitudes in our lives is “Putting the past in perspective.” Have you noticed that the past has a persistent way of tripping you up?

LEAVE YOUR SIN AT THE CROSS....In *Romans 8:1-2* Paul wrote: “Therefore, there is now not condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.” Look what Hebrews says [by the way, we don’t know who wrote Hebrews. Some believe it was Paul, others, Apollos, and others think it was someone else]. *Hebrews 10:14* -...”by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.” *Hebrews 9:14* – “How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!” Do you have nagging sin from the past? Leave it at the cross! He has made you perfect already through his blood, so that you can get on with your life, and get on with serving God!

LEARN FROM YOUR FAILURES....Failure is the opportunity to begin more intelligently. When Edison was seeking to invest electric light, he had over 9,000 failed attempts when a reporter interviewed him about his many failures. The reporter asked if he were discouraged by his many failures and Edison responded “no, now I know 9,000 ways not to make a light bulb.” After over 10,000 failures, Edison finally succeeded. Your mistakes do not have to be purposeless and painful. They can be purposeful and less painful, if you learn and grow from them.

LET YOUR SUCCESSES LIFT YOU....Don’t let your success hold you back from trying for more. Let your successes lift you. Let them encourage you to rise even higher. When a teenage boy named David, faced a veteran 9-foot warrior named Goliath on the battlefield, David drew encouragement from the successes God had brought him in the past. David said: “[I] have been keeping [my] father’s sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. [I] have killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them...The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.” [*I Samuel 17:34-37*]. David knew from past experience that God would help him. And he remembered that and drew encouragement from that.

So do you. If you are facing a challenge in your finances right now, draw on past successes and miracles that the Lord has brought to encourage you that he will help you through this challenge. If you are at a plateau at work, but have experienced success in the pass, draw encouragement from that, and trust God to help renew your vision and vigor for your career now.

Allow the Lord to encourage you with past victories, and draw strength for your present needs

Putting The Past In Perspective

“Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on...” (Phil. 3:12, 13)

*The fourth step toward reaching higher altitudes in our lives is “Putting the past in perspective.”
Have you noticed that the past has a persistent way of tripping you up?*

What About Our Past Can Limit Our Growth And Development In The Present?

PREVIEW

Paul had much in his past that could have tripped him up. First, he had sinned, in big ways! In Acts 8:1, we learn that Paul gave approval to the killing of a leading Christian named Stephen. In fact, Paul oversaw a major effort on the part of the Jewish religious leaders to imprison and kill Christians. Murder is no small sin. And murdering God’s people is a blot that easily could have haunted him for a lifetime.

INNERVIEW

Second, Paul had significant failures in his lifetime. Besides the failure of being on the wrong side of the fence earlier in his life, which resulted in the imprisonment and killing of Christians, Paul experienced failure in a number of ways. He rejected John Mark as a companion, but later admitted his wrong and brought John Mark back onto his leadership team. Paul experienced little success in the city of Athens. Later in his life, many of the people he had won to Christ, in what is now modern Turkey had distanced themselves from Paul and his leadership. Paul had some real disappointments that could have tripped him up.

REVIEW

Finally, the greatest thing that could have hindered Paul from further growth and development in his life was his tremendous successes. He had accomplished and experienced so much, it would have been easy to become comfortable, satisfied and virtually “retire” from growth, development and progress in his life.

Praise God For: His example of boldness through Christ.

Thank God For: Bold Christians.

Ask God’s Forgiveness For: My Embarrassment of Him.

Ask God To Help: Christians in the Minority.

Ask God To Supply Our Need For: Creative Ways to Witness for Him.

Taking Action

“Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of Me.” (Phil. 3:12)

You cannot wait for God and others to initiate change in your life—**YOU** must take action. We may have a realization that we need to change, grow, develop or obtain higher altitudes, but we must muster the courage to take action. We must do as Paul, “press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of him.”

PREVIEW

Mark McCormack, in his book *The 100% Solution*, said: “What I have come to understand is that there are **two kinds of mistakes**; mistakes that come from trying too hard and mistakes that come from not trying hard enough. **Mistakes that come from trying too hard are mistakes you recover from.** You even benefit from them because they teach you to wield your muscle with greater discretion. They are windows of discovery.”

Do not wait for a better time. Start now, and use what God has given you. There are only ten (10) numerical digits, but notice what Einstein did with them. There are only three (3) primary colors, but observe Michealangelo’s creative mastery of them. There are only seven (7) notes, yet Beethoven, Bach and Mozart created musical wonders with them.

INNERVIEW

Some people recognize the need to grow spiritually, but others take action and see spiritual growth in their lives. Some people recognize the need to change bad habits in their lives, but others take action and see spiritual growth in their lives.

Some men recognize their need to be better husbands and fathers, and now millions of men across the country are taking action to grow and become more of the men of God that they want to be.

REVIEW

When working with God, our lives change and we rise to new altitudes. Look at Paul’s words in Philippians 2:12 “...*continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.*”

Praise God For: Helping Me Be Honest.

Thank God For: Young People Who Want To Do What Is Right.

Ask God’s Forgiveness For: Mishandling The Truth.

Ask God To Help: Young People To Learn Honesty.

Ask God To Supply Our Need For: Commitment To Truth.

Being Teachable

“Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of Me.” (Phil. 3:12)

*The Second step toward higher altitudes is “Be teachable.”
We see this in the same part of the passage.*

“Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect...”

If we are humble, we are willing to learn from others. And if we are willing to learn from others, we can grow, and move to new altitudes in our lives. You will never be successful in any area of your life, spiritual or secular, until you have a sincere dissatisfaction with where you are going in grace.

PREVIEW

You win the race not by out running someone else but by outrunning *self*. That is what makes the Christian journey so intriguing. We do not have to worry about racing against each other. Every time I am on the racetrack, I am trying to out run Lane. I am better today than yesterday and if the Lord lets me live until tomorrow I have to be better tomorrow than today. God does not expect you to be the best, he only expects you to be your best.

INNERVIEW

Too Many of Us Sacrifice the Better On The Altar of The Good. You do not get any better until you become dissatisfied with the good you are doing. Some of us think that because we are good that is all right. You do not become satisfied until your good becomes better and the better becomes best. Until you become filled with a sincere dissatisfaction you are going to continue growing downward.

Many of us are not successful in our homes, jobs, school and aspirations because we are satisfied with where we are. A satisfied man is not a growing man. People who are not teachable or eager to learn are people who do not grow. They remain in a rut, “stuck on being stuck.” Those who have eagerness and a willingness to learn are the ones who keep growing, developing and advancing.

REVIEW

It is that way in every area of our lives. If we want to grow in our walk with the Lord, we need to listen to the scripture, the words of our minister and the thoughts of people more spiritual than ourselves. We need to be teachable. If we want to grow in our relationships, we need to allow people who are stronger than us, in this area, speak into our lives.

If our financial area needs improvement, we should admit our need for the wisdom of those more astute financially than ourselves. A teachable spirit is an essential step toward higher altitudes in any area of our lives.

Being Humble

“Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of Me.” (Phil. 3:12)

The first two (2) steps are found in the first part of the passage.

“Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect...”

Steps 1 and 2 are “Be humble” and “Be teachable.”

We see no pride or arrogance in Paul. He was not a know-it-all. He had a humility that is remarkable, when you consider what he actually had attained in his life.

PREVIEW

Look at some of the accomplishments that Paul could have listed on his resume.

- He had a prestigious education (studied under Gamaliel (**Acts 22:3**), who was the most famous Jewish teacher of his time. It was the equivalent of saying, “I have my law degree from Harvard...”)
- He was born a citizen of Rome (**Acts 22:25-29**). There were only 3 ways to obtain a Roman Citizenship: 1) Do some outstanding service for Rome; 2) Buy it at a considerable price; 3) Be born into a family of Roman citizens. Paul was born a Roman citizen.)
- He was an up-and-coming leader at a young age.
- He was highly successful in his career. He was a great pioneer of the Christian church and established the church outside of the shores of the eastern Mediterranean.
- He was a noted author, penning 13 books of the New Testament.
- He had a rich relationship with God, and enjoyed noted friendships over the entire Roman Empire.

INNERVIEW

There was not another greater than Paul in living the Christian life and yet this great trophy of grace and model saint said, “I have not yet arrived.” By birth he was a Benjamite. By racial identity he was a Jew. By citizenship he was a Roman. By training he was a Pharisee. By trade he was a tent maker. By conversion he was a Christian. By adoption he was a child of the King. By assignment he was an ambassador of Jesus Christ. By the grace of God he was what he was He said “I ain’t perfect yet. I’m not going to act like I’ve already gotten there. I am not yet fully mature but I do have a sincere dissatisfaction with where I am.”

REVIEW

Paul exhibits humility. He says this in one of his letters: “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant...” (**Philippians 2:3-7**).

Stretching Your Mind

“Any enterprise is built by wise planning, becomes strong through common sense, and profits wonderfully by keeping abreast of the facts.” - Proverbs 24:3 (LB)

Ken Blanchard is a genius at expressing insights in simple ways. One of his key concepts in **“Putting the One Minute Manager to Work”** is this:

Don't Just Do Something – SIT THERE!

Too often, many of our problems arise from acting before thinking. In the frantic pace of today's marketplace it is easy to get caught up in the *activity trap*. We confuse *activity* with *productivity*. We think “I'm so busy, I must be accomplishing something!” In reality, we may just be spinning our wheels. Like sitting in a rocking chair, you can expend a lot of energy and create a lot of motion...but still not make any progress.

PREVIEW

Progress and Productivity always require thought! The Bible Says this:

- *A wise man thinks ahead: a fool doesn't and even brags about it!” - Prov. 13:16 (LB)*
- *A good man thinks before he speaks...” – Prov. 15:28 (LB)*
- *The wise man looks ahead. The fool attempts to fool himself and won't face facts. – Prov. 14:8 (LB)*
- *A wise man is cautious and avoids danger; a fool plunges ahead with great confidence.” – Prov. 14:16 (LB)*

INNERVIEW

Unfortunately many parts of your work seem to conspire to keep you from thinking!

Pressures...deadlines...appointments...and interruptions fill our day so you have no time to think. You stay so busy swatting mosquitoes that you have no time to drain the swamp. Nothing is as important to your job as *thinking* yet nothing is harder to find time for. The solution is to *SCHEDULE “THINK” TIME*. Make a daily appointment with yourself to simply think about your work. Think about *what you do, how you do it, and the results* you are attaining. ***“Any enterprise is built by wise planning, becomes strong through common sense, and profits wonderfully by keeping abreast of the facts.” - Proverbs 24:3 (LB)***

REVIEW

Your mind is like a muscle. It develops with use. The more you develop it, the more productive you will be. And productive people will always be in demand as we move into the 21st century. Your brain is *God's gift* to you. What you do with your brain is your *gift* to God. Think about it!

Getting Past Blame

“So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God” (Romans 14:12)

I recently received the following in an e-mail, “Did you catch the news report about the woman who sued the weatherman? A woman heard a local weatherman predict fair skies and warm weather. She took him at his word and dressed accordingly. Predictably, the forecast proved erroneous. The sky opened, the rain fell and the temperature dropped dramatically. As a result of dressing as the weatherman’s prediction indicated, the woman caught the flu, missed four days of work and income. She sued the weatherman and the station for damages as well as emotional distress!”

PREVIEW

Fewer and fewer people accept responsibility for anything these days. It is easier and easier to blame others for troubles, mistakes, and failures. While the case of the woman and the weatherman is extreme, it illustrates a problem that needs addressing. There is comfort in blaming others because it removes the heat and the attention from you. Blaming shifts responsibility away from me toward you. Blaming someone for a problem seems to make one look better in the eyes of those who watch. However, in most cases, blaming “boomerangs”. When one refuses responsibility for his life, actions, work, ethics, health and countless other areas, he demonstrates irresponsibility. Irresponsibility can be hidden only so long.

INNERVIEW

RULES FOR EMBRACING RESPONSIBILITY:

Before accepting an assignment or agreeing to do something, arrive at a full understanding of your role, functions and accountabilities. Once you sign on, commit to follow through. Adopt a “no excuses” policy when it comes to performance. Step up to your part of the task and take it on. Work hard. Give credit to others as you succeed. Freely and openly accept criticism and responsibility for things that may go wrong.

REVIEW

Be honest with yourself, your peers, and your superiors. If you make a mistake, own it immediately. If you need more information, admit it quickly. Do not play games. Recognize the value of humility. Take care of your business and leave the business of others alone. Chances are you have more than enough on your own plate! Ask for help when you need it and freely give it to others when they ask for it. Regard yourself as a team player rather than an island. “So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God” (*Romans 14:12*)

Questions For Self Examination

“You are better off to have a friend than to be all alone, because then you will get more enjoyment out of what you earn.” (Ecclesiastes 4:9) (LB)

How long has it been since you have stopped and taken time to assess your personal progress? How long has it been since you have taken time to take a good look at yourself and determine how you are doing in your personal relationships? All of us have periodic examinations – health, financial, automotive and even our teeth are examined. Why not take a few moments and examine your relationships? Take a few moments to answer these questions, and see how you are doing.

1. ***How much have I learned about the people with whom I live and work?*** Do I know and understand them better than I did a year ago? “Just as iron sharpens iron, friends sharpen the minds of each other.” (**Proverbs 27:17**)
2. ***How many new people have I become acquainted with this year?*** “You are better off to have a friend than to be all alone, because then you will get more enjoyment out of what you earn.” (**Ecclesiastes 4:9**)
3. ***Have I alienated anyone in the last year?*** Was it avoidable? What have I done to restore the relationship? “Making up with a friend you have offended is harder than breaking through a walled city.” (**Proverbs 18:19**)
4. ***Is my personal reputation as good or better than it was a year ago?*** What events have most affected my reputation? “A good reputation and respect are worth much more than silver and gold.” (**Proverbs 22:1**)
5. ***Have I faced any personal challenges during this past year?*** If so, how did I handle them? What did I learn in the process? “Even if good people fall seven times, they will get back up.” (**Proverbs 24:16**)
6. ***Have I learned any new skills in the past year?*** How have my interpersonal skills, analytical skills or judgment improved? “Everyone with good sense wants to learn.” (**Proverbs 18:15**)
7. ***Has my self-discipline improved?*** Have I improved in being able to control myself? “Correction and self-control will lead you through life.” (**Proverbs 6:23**)

An Insight On Integrity

“Simply let your “Yes be Yes and your No be No” (Matthew 5:37) (LB)

In the book **Developing the Leader Within You**, **John Maxwell** wrote, *“When people have integrity, their words and their deeds match up. They are whom they are no matter where they are or whom they are with. People with integrity are not divided (that is duplicity) of merely pretending (that is hypocrisy). People with integrity have nothing to hide and nothing to fear. Their lives are open books.”*

Integrity is indispensable for a person who wishes to lead others. Whether you lead as a father, mother, teacher, or C.E.O. – **Integrity** is a staple that must be developed, cultivated, protected, and cherished in order to effectively lead.

Five Ways to Demonstrate Integrity:

8. **I Will Live What I Teach** – Deciding what to be is more important than deciding what to do. “Hold on to instruction, do not let it go; guard it well, for it is your life.” (Proverbs 4:13)
9. **I Will Do What I Say** – A person of integrity will do what they promised they would do. They will keep their word. “Simply let your “Yes be Yes and your No be No.” (Matthew 5:37)
10. **I Will Be Honest With Others** – When a leader loses credibility, he forfeits a trust that may never be regained. In any endeavor, trust and honesty allow individuals to cooperate so that they can all prosper. “I always speak the truth and refuse to tell a lie.” (Proverbs 8:7)
11. **I Will Put What is Best for Others Ahead of What is Best For Me** – A Person of integrity will remember they are there to serve others rather than to be served. “Be humble and consider others more important than yourselves.” (Philippians 2:3b)
12. **I Will Be Transparent and Vulnerable** – A person can be closed and uncaring, but the people with the most genuine integrity will be those whose arms and hearts are open to those they lead. “When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.” (Matthew 9:36)

Be a Person of Integrity

I would be true, for there are those who trust me. I would be pure, for there are those who care. I would be strong, for there are those who suffer. I would be brave, for there is much to dare. I would be friend of all – the foe, the friendless; I would be giving, and forget the gift; I would be humble, for I know my weakness; I would look up, and laugh, and love, and lift.

– Howard A. Walter

The Question of Protection

“If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Rom. 8:31 NIV)

The question is simply, “Who can be against us?” Who is against you? Is disease, inflation, corruption or exhaustion against you? Do calamities confront and fears imprison you? We can list our foes much easier than we can fight them, but that is not the question. The question is, *“IF GOD IS FOR US, WHO CAN BE AGAINST US”*?

Preview

Four words in this verse deserve your attention. Read slowly the phrase, “God is for us”. Please pause for a minute before you continue. Read it again, aloud. God is for us. Repeat the phrase four times, this time emphasizing each word. (Come on, you’re not in a big hurry!) God is for us!

God is for us! God is for us! God is for us! God is for you! Your parents may have forgotten you, your teachers may have neglected you and your siblings may be ashamed of you, but within reach of your prayers is the maker of the oceans, God! God is for you; not “may be”, not “has been”, not “was”, not “would be”, but “God is”! He is for you today, at this hour and at this minute. There is no need to wait in line or come back tomorrow. He is with you. He could be no closer than he is at this moment. His loyalty will not increase if you are better or lessen if you are worse. He is for YOU!

Innerview

God is for you. Turn to the sidelines; that’s God cheering your run. Look past the finish line; that’s God applauding your steps. Listen for him in the bleachers, shouting your name. Too tired to continue? He’ll carry you. Too discouraged to fight? He is picking you up. God is for you!

Review

God is for you and if he had a calendar, your birthday would be circled. If he drove a car, your name would be on his bumper. If there is a tree in heaven, he has carved your name in the bark!

God is FOR YOU and WITH YOU! Knowing that, who is against you? Can death harm you now? Can disease rob your life? Can your purpose be taken or your value diminished? No. Though hell itself may set itself against you, no one can defeat you. You are protected. God is with you!

- Praise God for: His Strength
- Thank God For: Friends I Have Been Able To Bless
- Ask God’s Forgiveness For: Not Helping When I Could Have
- Ask God To Help: The Blind and Deaf
- Ask God To Supply Our Need For: Someone To Assist

Turning Bad Days Into Better Days

“Is your life full of difficulties...? BE HAPPY, for when the way is rough, your patience has a chance to grow. So let it grow and do not try to squirm out of your problems. For when your patience is finally in full bloom, then you’ll be ready for anything, strong in character, full and complete”.

(James 1:2-4) (LB)

Have you ever thought you had a bad day? List to the story of Mr. Jones:

“One day Mrs. Jones decided to get rid of some bad hair spray that she had. She decided that a good way to dispose of it would be to spray it into the commode. Shortly afterward, her husband Mr. Jones came home. As was his usual custom, he went to the reading room (Bathroom) to relax. As soon as he was comfortably seated, he lit a cigarette and tossed the match between his legs into the commode. You guessed it; the hair spray exploded and blew Mr. Jones heavenwards. Unfortunately for Mr. Jones, the shower bar stopped his ascent. After the ambulance arrived, the driver asked Mrs. Jones how Mr. Jones incurred a burnt backside and a concussion at the same time. She began to explain what happened as the ambulance attendants were carrying Mr. Jones downstairs. The ambulance drivers were so tickled that they dropped Mr. Jones down the stairs and broke both of his arms! Poor Mr. Jones, it definitely was not his day. He suffered one burned backside, one concussion and two broken arms.” (**Charles Lowrey** – *SBC Life- October 1995. P. 10*).

Mr. Jones definitely had a bad day. However, not all of our days that we label bad are as bad as Mr. Jones. The majority of our days are exactly what we make them. Many circumstances outside of our control effect our days. However, there is one thing not seen on the inside – it is something called **attitude**. So how is your attitude today?? How Important Is Your Attitude?????

Charles Swindoll spoke no small truth when he wrote concerning attitude, “*We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have and that is our attitude. I am convinced that life is 10% of what happens and 90% how I react to it. And so it is with you, we are in charge of our Attitudes.*”

The Bible Says, “*Is your life full of difficulties...? BE HAPPY, for when the way is rough, your patience has a chance to grow. So let it grow and do not try to squirm out of your problems. For when your patience is finally in full bloom, then you’ll be ready for anything, strong in character, full and complete.*” (**James 1:2 – 4**) (LB)

- Your Attitude Determines Your Approach to Life
- Your Attitude Determines Your Relationship With People.
- Often Your Attitude Is the Only Difference Between Success and Failure.
- Your Attitude at the Beginning of the Task Will Affect its Outcome More than Anything Else.
- Your Attitude Can Turn Your Problems Into Blessings.
- Remember – Only You Control Your Attitude!!!

Implement Your Plan

“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, (16) Redeeming the time, because the days are evil”. (Eph. 5: 15-16)

Calling time a problem or tyrant is a misnomer because it focuses on the symptoms rather than the disease. Time measures motion and change is activities determined by our decisions, and motivated by our goals and values. The tyranny of the urgent is more than a question about time. Tension and frustration mount when we are performing the wrong tasks or trying to cram too many of the right activities into a given period.

Implementing your plan is not much of a challenge. The difficulty will come when you have to say “no” to urgency. Often other people will attempt to force their agenda on your priorities. Some of us simply need to be courageous enough to say “no” to the urgent requests of other people.

In His short time on earth, Jesus consistently resisted calls of urgency. On one occasion Jesus drew large crowds to hear his teaching and receive healing of their diseases. He healed them into the night, and then went to bed. Before the sun rose the next morning He went off by himself to pray. As the day progressed people came from all over to be healed by Jesus. They had urgent requests, but he was nowhere to be found. Eventually they found him and urged him to stay and meet their needs.

But He replied, “I must preach the Good News of the Kingdom of God in other places, too, because that is why I was sent.” So he continued to travel around preaching in synagogues throughout Judea. (Luke 4:43-44) (NLT)

Praise God For: His Goodness!

Thank God For: The Wonder of His Love!

Ask God’s Forgiveness For: Becoming an Effective Soul Winner!

Ask God To Help: Me Find Words to Praise Him!

Ask God to Supply Our Need For: Hearts Stirred to Praise!

Budget The Hours (2)

(Lane's Log is a continual series)

“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, (16) Redeeming the time, because the days are evil”.
(Eph. 5: 15-16)

Author C. S. Lewis said it this way. “Put the first things first and you’ll get the second things too. Put the second things first and you’ll get neither”.

The Bible Says It This Way:

“Your heavenly Father already knows all your needs, and he will give you all you need from day to day if you live for him and make the Kingdom of God your primary concern.”

(Matthew 6:32 – 33) (NLT)

In other words, go after the eternal things. Prioritize and put first things first and God will throw in all the rest.

What are the big rocks of life?

1. Put God first by seeking him in prayer and reading about him in the Bible.
2. Commit yourself to his cause and serve other people.
3. Prioritize time with your family.
4. Block out segments of your week to spend with your kids.
5. Do it intentionally or you may never get around to it.
6. Nurture your relationship with your spouse.
7. Spend time communicating with one another.
8. Search for activities that you both enjoy.
9. Plan regular dates to keep the fire of romance burning, take time for the people in your life.
10. Don't forget to prioritize for yourself, read for personal growth.
11. Schedule regular consistent exercise; develop your talents and abilities.
12. Maybe you have always dreamed of writing a book or playing a musical instrument.
13. Perhaps there is a sport that interests you.
14. Maybe you are an artist, painter, sculptor or woodworker.

Find those things that energize you and make time for them. Psalm 39 reminds us to be aware of how we use our time: My life is no longer than the width of my hand...human existence is but a breath. We are merely moving shadows and all our busy rushing ends in nothing. **(Psalm 39: 5, 6) (NLT)**

Praise God For: His Friendship

Thank God For: Childhood Friends

Ask God's Forgiveness For: Avoiding Responsibility

Ask God To Help: The Discouraged

Ask God to Supply Our Need For: Friends

Establishing Time Priorities

“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, (16) Redeeming the time, because the days are evil”. (Eph. 5: 15-16)

You cannot develop a daily task list until first you have established some priorities. All tasks cannot be done at the same time or in one day. The tension you will face when deciding your priorities is the tension between what is most important and what is most urgent.

Priorities are established by asking, what will bring the most profit? What can help me become most effective? What will move me closer to the accomplishment of my long-range goals?

When deciding your priorities, ask these questions.

- How urgent is this task?
- How important is it?
- How often must it be done?
- Can someone else do it more effectively?
- Is it part of a larger task to which I am committed?
- What will happen if this task or project is not done at all?
- Is this the best way?

Our priorities are not necessarily static. Several reasons account for changes in priorities:

- Incomplete goal setting.
- A value given to another project without any kind of goal to support the project.
- No coordination of tasks.
- Disorganization
- A firefighter mentality (tackling what is most urgent rather than what is most important).

Some people decide their priorities by using the ABC system. That is, a project or task needing to be done first is assigned an A. The second most important task is assigned a B, and so on. You can develop the prioritizing plan best suited for you.

Taking Time To Redeem Your Time

“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, (16) Redeeming the time, because he days are evil”. (Eph. 5: 15-16)

Search the page of Scripture, and you will find one consistent truth in reference to living of our lives. That truth is this: Time is a limited resource that should be treasured.

The brevity of life is a theme that appears like a flashing beacon throughout the Bible. James says that our life is like a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes (James 4:14). What then should be our response to the brevity of life? Moses’ prayer is that God will “teach us to number our days and recognize how few they are; help us to spend them as we should.” (Living Bible Translation) Because time is brief, we should manage it as a valuable commodity.

Thus, the realization of life’s brevity leads to two very distinct desires: (1) to invest time wisely and (2) to spend time freely. Which application is “correct”? Actually, both applications are correct. Time is a limited resource. Some of it should be invested in spiritual pursuits: strengthening our spiritual life, leading other people to faith in Jesus Christ and ministering to the needs of others. Ralph Waldo Emerson summarized it well, when he lucidly lined, “The best use of time is to spend it on something that will outlast it.”

So far we have discovered that time is brief and therefore, valuable. Some of it is to be invested in eternal pursuits; some of it is to be spent on those things that bring fullness to our lives: family, work, friendships and recreation.

Sages and Time-Management experts have reminded us for years that we really never can save time. We can only spend it. How effectively do you spend time? Do you plan time carefully? Do you treat your minutes and hours as the truly precious resources they are? And more importantly, do you spend your hours achieving the personal and professional goals most important to you?

When we consider our stressful lifestyle, time is not the problem. The problem is how we manage our time. Our stress will become worse if we do not make gutsy changes in our time and lifestyle choices.

Praise God For: Reconciliation

Thank God For: Peacemakers

Ask God’s Forgiveness For: Strained Relationships

Ask God to Help: Bring Peace to The World

Ask God to Supply Our Need For: Tenderness

Looking Like Jesus In Desperate Times

“Sharp words cut like a sword, but words of wisdom heal.” (Proverbs 12:18)

The day after Carl Joseph came to town the local newspaper in Hazelton, Pennsylvania carried the headline, “Man Who Looks Like Jesus Arrives.”

Joseph has wandered through forty-seven states and thirteen countries over the last nine years. A picture of him in the *Washington post* looks very much like the Jesus of movies and storybooks. He had the standard look of a Hollywood Jesus of Nazareth with flowing hair, beard, head at an angle, and white robe.

Preview

He is a 39-year-old man with Catholic background who sometimes hitchhikes but usually walks everywhere on bare feet. A *post* story said: “He owns nothings but the robe and blanket he wears on his back and never takes money for any reason. For food and shelter, he relies on the goodwill of people he meets along the way. Somehow, he is always immaculate, down to the fingernails. The controversial man who was once arrested in Toledo for trespassing at an adult theater draws big crowds. They listen to him for hours on his typical theme of God’s love and grace. When he stops, hands go up. “Why do children die?” Asks one. “Are angels real?” Another inquires. “How can we be happy?”

Innerview

Joseph doesn’t claim to be Jesus but he tries to model his life on Jesus’ example. People trust him with their innermost thoughts. They tell him about their drug addiction or depression. They ask him to pray with them. I’m not urging you to give up business attire for white robes and go everywhere on bare feet. Maybe he’s just “nutty.” But there is more to the story...

A woman who had lost custody of her two sons because of drug addiction asked to talk to the man, and he obliged her. She had remained drug clean since that day. A physician asked him to speak with a woman whose husband was dying and he consented. They prayed together and she found peace in coping with his death. We need someone to challenge our cynicism and invite us to focus on God.

Review

The task of Christians is to furnish a sense of what it is like to have Jesus roaming the world. Wherever we go, the winsome aroma of his presence should surface. Chaos gives way to calm, fear to hope and indifference to unfeigned concern. People begin to trust you, ask you to pray for them and take heart from your concern. Such a presence changes situations and people for the better.

Your task today is to re-create Christ’s presence. Treat people so they will know that someone who “looks like Jesus” took the call, handled a complaint, sensed the anxiety or shared the grief. The secret is not clothing; it’s attitude.

Choosing Success Successfully

“I don’t try to please myself but him who sent me.” (John 5:30)

It is so easy to forget what really matters in life. We tend to think that titles, power, and money make all the difference. So many of us would like to have the position in the company, athletic prowess, or beauty that another has, so we set our life courses accordingly. And we accumulate degrees and plaques. We focus on making more money. We starve and sweat to have a trim body.

Preview

There’s nothing intrinsically evil about any of these things. But are they the main ingredients to a life well-lived? Do they make a lasting difference? Will they have any value for eternity?

Here’s a little quiz that might help make the point I have in mind:

- Name the six wealthiest people in the world.
- Name the last five Academy Award winners for best actor and actress.
- Name the four most recent Heisman Trophy winners.
- Name the last three winners of the Miss America pageant.
- Name two people who won the top prize on who wants to be a Millionaire?

My guess is that you weren’t able to answer all five questions. Maybe you couldn’t answer three – or even one. Me either! But these are the people who are the best of the best in their fields. It’s surprising how quickly we forget things that seem so important at the time they happen. The applause dies down. Things that seemed so significant at the moment fade from memory and are forgotten. Now here’s another quiz for you. See if you do any better on it:

Innerview

- Name six teachers who helped you during your educational career.
- Name five people with whom you enjoy spending some of your free time.
- Name four personal heroes whose life stories have inspired you.
- Name three people who have helped you through some difficult time.
- Name two people you can always trust to honor a confidence.

I’ll bet you did better generating answers to this set of questions than the first one. Why? The people who really matter in our lives aren’t the ones with awards and money but the ones with character and compassion. Shouldn’t this insight be instructive to all of us about what to pursue with our lives?

Review

Don’t climb the ladder of success only to find you’ve lean it against the wrong wall. I think it was the late Erma Bombeck who once wrote: “Don’t confuse fame with success. Madonna is one, and Helen Keller is the other”.

When Paying Attention Pays

"Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time forth and for evermore. From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, the LORD's name is to be praised." (Psa. 113: 2, 3)

"If life isn't teaching you anything, you're just not paying attention." This became crystal clear to me as I recently read an internet mail received. It listed things the author had learned from the process of living. I have edited and added a few things that have come to my own attention, as well. I think this article makes a profound point.

PREVIEW

- *I've learned that the best classroom in the world is simply to sit at the feet of an elderly man or woman and listen.
- *I've learned that to ignore the facts does not change them.
- *I've learned that I can always pray for someone, even when I don't have the strength or resources to do anything else for them.
- *I've learned that when you harbor bitterness, happiness docks elsewhere.
- *I've learned that when you hold a grudge against someone for a real or imagined offense, you are only letting that person continue to hurt you.
- *I've learned that I can forgive, even when my enemy isn't asking for pardon.

INNERVIEW

- *I've learned that the Lord didn't do everything in one day, so it must be all right for me to accept that I can't either.
- *I've learned that I often can't choose how I feel, but I can always choose what I do about my feelings.
- *I've learned that life is tough but that God's strength is sufficient.
- *I've learned that no matter how serious your life requires you to be, everyone needs a friend with whom to kick back and act goofy.
- *I've learned that love, not time, heals all wounds.
- *I've learned that money can't buy class or happiness or peace.

REVIEW

- *I've learned that when you're in love, you can't hide it – even if you try.
- *I've learned that a smile is the easiest and least expensive way to improve your looks.
- *I've learned that just one person saying "You've made my day!" Makes my day.
- *I've learned that loving is more fundamental to happiness than being loved.

**So what has life been teaching you lately?
If nothing comes to mind,
Maybe it is because you are not paying attention**

Consciously Clearing the Clutter

And whatever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him. - (Col. 3:17)

“I don’t know about you, but I am running hard for the finish line! I am giving it everything I have! No sloppy living for me! I’m staying alert and in top condition. I refuse to be caught napping, telling everyone else all about it, and then missing out on it myself.” This is the message of (*I Cor. 9:26-27*).

One of the common denominators of successful people is a single-minded focus, allowing them to concentrate on first things first. Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote in the *Conduct of Life*, “Concentration is the secret of strength in politics, in war, in trade, in short, in all of human affairs.” While many people squander their physical and mental abilities, successful people learn how to focus, concentrate and persist. Yet even those with a clear sense of purpose sometimes lose their focus and their ability to concentrate on priorities. Why? I have found it is usually the result of too much internal clutter. I have identified four types of clutter that I strive to keep out of my life. The benefit is that I am more able to concentrate on that which I do best.

Emotional Clutter – This is the relational baggage that can accumulate when we don’t forgive those who have wronged us, when we hold a grudge, or when we carry a chip on our shoulder because of a grievance long past. The price of holding on to emotional clutter is too high. Not only will it steal energy from your focus, but it has serious emotional and spiritual consequences as well.

Administrative Clutter – Years ago, I discovered the need for a system to help me deal with multiple projects and multiple deadlines. I have at least 20 things to accomplish in the next three days, and I will be able to complete them because I have learned to organize. I do not waste time looking for things or wondering what comes next. There is nothing magical about my system. Find one that works for you and do it.

Calendar Clutter – This is simply mastering the basic principle of time management. You must prioritize your work and spend your best effort on that which will yield the most return. Take a few moments to start listing all the things you have done in the last 24 hours that gave you no return whatsoever. Why did you do them? Do they need to be done at all, or can someone else better do them for you? I have not mowed my lawn in over 30 years. Some people enjoy working in the yard, I don’t. Why would I give a couple of hours a week to something that has no payoff for me when I could give those same hours to concentrate on my priorities?

Trivia Clutter – I always lose at Trivial Pursuit because I don’t commit to Memory anything that I can find quickly in a book or from someone else. It is not that I have a bad memory; I just do not see the value in allowing insignificant things to detract me from my focus. Most people try to live in the path of a flood of trivial phone calls, emails, and meetings. I recommend removing the trivia.

With clutter-free living, you will find your focus clear and your anxieties diminished. More importantly, you will see a level of productivity previously never experienced. You are set free to concentrate on what you were created to accomplish!

The Secret To Evaluating Your Success

“And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.”
(Col. 3:15)

“I don’t know about you, but I am running hard for the finish line! I am giving it everything I have! No sloppy living for me! I am staying alert and in top condition. I am not going to get caught napping, telling everyone else all about it, and then missing out on it myself.” This is the message of (*I Corinthians 9: 26 – 27*). We all want to be successful; however it is how we define success for ourselves. For some, success is measured in the amount of dollars in our bank accounts; for others, success is measured by how we can serve others around us. Yet many have no clue how to even begin to measure their success. **Here are a few questions to ask yourself about your success:**

1. ***What is the mission (purpose) of your life?*** - A purpose propels you forward. It is the anchor from which you create a plan. A mission gives you focus and perspective.
2. ***How does what you are doing and how you are doing it, fit your personality?*** - Struggles occur when we are moving against the current of what is in alignment with our being.
3. ***Do you enjoy doing what you do?*** - Is it fun, or a pain in the neck? Do you look forward to doing it again, and for how long?
4. ***If you are paid for what you do, is the compensation adequate (according to your measure)?*** - When we feel inadequately paid for the work we do, we get resentful and angry. Both emotions are reactions to how we view ourselves and our value.
5. ***If you don’t get paid for what you do, does it matter to you?*** - Doing what is fulfilling and fun brings a bigger value to our own lives than money.
6. ***Is your mission (purpose) congruent with what you are doing?*** - Living by our values in our work keeps us focused and propelled forward rather than dragged.
7. ***Have you made peace with those aspects of your work that you detest?*** - Consider what options you have available to you so you do not have to handle this unpleasantly yourself: Delegate, outsource, or eliminate it altogether.
8. ***Are you measuring your success by your own yardstick?*** - Evaluating whether success is our definition or someone else’s is vital in putting it in perspective.
9. ***Are you giving your service/product your signature?*** - One aspect of being successful is knowing that what we offer is truly our own. Becoming close and personal with our clients creates a sense of connection which brings fulfillment and satisfaction.
10. ***Are you being genuine in your interactions with people?*** - Taking an active interest in the people you meet opens up new ideas and acceptance of things outside of your comfort zone. People intuitively sense a sincere person from a phony.

Six Secrets for Successful Living

“Any enterprise is built by wise planning, becomes strong through common sense, and profits wonderfully by keeping abreast of the facts.” (Proverbs 24:3) (LB)

“We have heard the message, just as they did. But they failed to believe what they heard, and the message did not do them any good.” (**Hebrews 4:2**)

It does not take a rocket scientist to figure out that our nation is obsessed with success. Everywhere you look, you can see information teaching us how to be successful. If it is not a “How to” book at the bookstore, it is a “How to” commercial teaching us how to be successful with our money, relationships, business, appearance or any area of our life. Even on the Internet, a search revealed 886,612 hits about “success.” What does the Bible teach about this? After all, God’s Word is the Owner’s Manual for all of humanity.

The Bible Teaches That Successful People

Fence Their Feelings – They live by the commitments they have made and not by their feelings. Most accomplishments are the result of people who do what is right even when they do not feel like it. Moods must be managed. “Losing self-control leaves you as helpless as a city without a wall.” (**Proverbs 25: 28**)

Mind Their Mouths – They engage their minds before they accelerate their mouths. “Keep what you know to yourself, and you will be safe; talk too much and you are done for.” (**Proverbs 13:3**)

Anchor Their Anger – How well do you weather the storms that tempt you to lose your cool? “It is wise to be patient and show what you are like by forgiving others.” (**Proverbs 19:11**)

Manage Their Minutes – Take control of your clock. Set your own schedule. Give attention to your agenda. REMEMBER: If you do not determine how you will spend your time, someone else will decide for you! “Act like people with good sense and not like fools...Make every minute count.” (**Ephesians 5: 15-16**)

Invest Their Income – Learning to live on less than what you make personally and investing the difference is essential to successful living. A budget’s value is that it tells your money where to go rather than leaving you wondering where it went! “The wise man saves for the future, but the foolish man spends whatever he gets.” (**Proverbs 21:20**)

Hone Their Health – Maintaining and improving your physical condition has a direct correspondence to how much you accomplish and how long you can enjoy your ministry achievements. “Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit...So use your bodies for God’s glory.” (**I Corinthians 6: 19-20**)

*“We have heard the message, just as they did. But they failed to believe what they heard, and the message did not do them any good.” (**Hebrews 4:2**)*

The Power of A Nagging Conscience

“Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.” (Phil. 3:12)

“I took this piece from the Acropolis a long time ago,” said the note. “I am very sorry. Please return it to where it belongs.”

The note of apology was unsigned, and its author’s identity remains a mystery. It was received earlier this year accompanied with a small piece of marble at the Greek consulate in Houston. The episode was announced by the Greek Ministry of Culture in Athens last month. The ministry said the rock would be entrusted to the archaeological service to determine the area of the ancient Acropolis to which it should be restored.

PREVIEW

Stories like this one may become rare. It is conscience that causes people to write apology notes and return purloined items. Conscience is not being cultivated by this generation. It is considered a liability rather than a moral virtue.

Conscience is an internal monitor of behavior. It functions much as a blinking red light on your car’s instrument panel. When your engine overheats or the oil needs changing, sensors warn you. When you tell a lie or break a promise, the inner discomfort you feel is a warning against the corruption of your character.

INNERVIEW

The tricky thing about conscience is this: Refusing to heed its warnings dulls its sensitivity and eventually disables it altogether. The Bible calls this process “Hardening the heart.” And a hard heart is the ruin of virtue.

Pornography is not one’s right of personal expression. Lying is not acceptable so long as you are not caught. It is not right to turn a blind eye to racism, child abuse, poverty, and other forms of insult to the image of God that attaches to every human being.

REVIEW

The best way to keep your conscience intact is to pay attention to it. The workplace is still under God’s sovereignty and requires integrity. People in your family are to be treated with dignity and respect. When your conscience tells you a moral boundary has been crossed, it is doing yourself a favor, uncomfortable as the feeling is, by inviting yourself back onto spiritually safe ground.

“While I keep silence, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me...Then I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not hide my iniquity; I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,’ and you forgave the guilt of my sin” (*Psalms 32: 3-5*).

Just in case your conscience calls today, determine now not to hang up

An Unread Love Letter

“So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God” (Romans 14:12)

James Bracy wrote his wife a love letter, and she received it a few days ago. Nothing unusual about that, you say? What if I add the fact that it was written 46 years ago? As you might expect, there is more to this story!!!

PREVIEW

In 1955, Mr. Bracy was stationed in California with the U.S. Army. He wrote Sallie Bracy at her parents' home in Virginia. He placed the required six cents of postage on his letter and mailed it at the post office. His letter was found last month by a construction crew in the process of dismantling the old building. It apparently fell between two walls in the mail room and remained there undiscovered for all these years.

Was Mrs. Bracy disinterested because so much time had passed? “No! If anything” she said, “it means more to here now than when he wrote it so long ago.” What if we felt that way about heaven's “love letter” to us?

INNERVIEW

During National Bible Week in 1998, Jay Leno did one of his occasional on-the-street interviews. “Can you name one of the Ten Commandments?” he asked. “God helps those who help themselves?” Offered someone. “Freedom of speech?” guessed another.

“Name one of the apostles,” Leno challenged his audience. They couldn't come up with even one. Then he asked if they could name the Beatles, and with one voice they shouted, “George, Paul, John, and Ringo!”

Recent surveys indicate that biblical illiteracy isn't uncommon in America. One survey has 12% saying Noah was married to Joan of Arc. Another revealed that only 42% of those quizzed could identify who preached the Sermon on the Mount.

REVIEW

Is it because the Bible is such an ancient document? Is it because we have a mistaken notion of what we'd find there? Are we just too busy to read or study?

Sallie Bracy cherishes her husband's four-page letter from 46 years ago. It is more precious than anything in her scrapbook because of the unusual and circuitous route by which it reached her. I feel something similar to that about my Bible. Yes, it was first written a long time ago however it has survived centuries against the determined efforts of many to destroy it. Then, when I finally pick it up to read, I discover it tells a love story that involves you and me.

If time with the Holy Scripture is not part of your routine, may I suggest you begin with the Gospel of John? I think you'll be thrilled by what you find there.

When Honesty Is Tested

*“I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.”
(Psalms 139:14)*

Ascension Franco Gonzales was sitting alone last Monday night, by a Los Angeles bus stop. As an armored truck passed, Gonzales saw a clear plastic bag tumble onto the street...The guards riding inside the armored truck were totally unaware that part of their load had fallen.

PREVIEW

Mr. Gonzales looked and saw bundles of \$20 bills. He ran into the street and recovered the clear bag and the loose bundles of \$20 bills. The 22-year-old man actually feared for his life thinking someone would see him with the clear bag and kill him for its contents! Gonzales began walking and looking through trash cans for something opaque enough to cover the bag of money.

With the money concealed in a sack, he took a taxi home. He told eight of his friends what had happened and they tried to help him decide what to do. Gonzales, after all, is not a wealthy man. He makes \$1,300 per month washing dishes and sends \$800 each month to his family in Mexico. He is an undocumented immigrant living in the United States whose money has been used by his family to pay for an indoor toilet and a cousin's funeral.

INNERVIEW

In the meantime, the armored truck company discovered \$203,000 cash money was missing. Police began a fruitless search. The possibility of an inside job at the company was being discussed. There were no clues that would have reasonably led to Mr. Gonzales having the money.

“Are you going to keep it?” asked his friends, “Are you going to return it?” Gonzales wrestled with the question. ON Tuesday morning, the TV news broadcasted a story about the missing money. This is the part of the report that Gonzales remembers most vividly: The announcer asked, “Is there anyone in Los Angeles honest enough to hand in so much money.”

REVIEW

Around 11:00 A.M. Gonzales called the police. Officers came quickly and counted the cash, finding all the money there. “I am surprised and pleased,” said a detective. What a sad commentary that such honesty astounds us.

Question: *What would you have done? More important question: What do you do with company postage, office long distance, petty cash, or other items at your disposal each day? The real test of honesty is in the little things of life.*

Good character isn't *created* in moments of crisis or novel opportunity, just *revealed*. And honesty, like all virtues, is a habit learned through practice.

An Act of Encouragement In A Crisis

“If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Rom. 8:31 NIV)

Bernie Williams has played with the New York Yankees since 1991, and that’s longer than any other player on the fabled baseball team’s current roster. The switch-hitting center fielder plays his defensive position gracefully to chase what appears to the world as base hits and he suddenly turns them into fly-ball outs.

PREVIEW

Bernie steps to the home plate with a piece of lumber in his strong hands. On any given pitch, he can crush an opposing pitcher’s best offering into the seats of Yankee Stadium or any other ballpark in the major leagues. In game 5 of the 2001 American League Championship Series, he swung at a fast ball and catapulted it into left-center field for a two-run homer in a 12-3 win over the Seattle Mariners, placing the Yankees into the World Series.

I mentioned Bernie’s name because even if you are a baseball or Yankee-hater, you will enjoy this story. In the midst of a death, heartache and tears of New York City after the events of September 11, Yankee manager Joe Torre carried some of his players to a National Guard Armory where families of the missing persons were supplying materials to make possible DNA identification.

INNERVIEW

“We didn’t know how we’d be received, so we waited outside the armory in a van and had someone give us a feel of when to enter,” Torre said. “All of a sudden the people looked up and opened their arms to us. The most touching moment was where Bernie (Williams) went up to one woman and said, ‘I don’t know what to say, but you look like you need a hug.’ And he hugged her.”

You’re right. Bernie Williams probably wasn’t at risk for that hug, but you might be in today’s workplace. Sexual harassment is sometimes imagined and often real. But there are other ways to acknowledge and affirm our brothers and sisters in the human family. Handshakes, high-five, memos, just a simple “Thank you,” or a sincere “Can I help?” Will do. There ‘s not one of us who doesn’t need the rest of us.

REVIEW

Playing professional baseball must be fun. Getting a game-winning hit has to be exhilarating. Encouraging and comforting fellow-strugglers is sacred. You may see someone today whose heart needs a lift; hug your mate or high-five a buddy. Welcome the new person. It will be a spiritual moment for both of you.

Praise God For: *His Sacrifice For Us;*
Thank God For: *The Perfect Gift;*
Ask God’s Forgiveness For: *My Selfishness;*
Ask God To Help: *Friends Put Friends Above Self;*
Ask God To Supply Our Need For: *Self-Denial.*

Why Bossing Isn't a Blessing

"Care about each other as much as you care about yourselves." (Philippians 2:4a (LB))

"I'll show 'em who the boss is! He said. Thus, began a process that angered each person in the sales group. It also led to the resignation within thirty days of the first-and fourth-highest annual producers for last year.

"I hope he's satisfied now," said one of the team members who stayed – only because of a tough employment market in her field. "He proved he could have the last word on everything. He also cost us the biggest accounts our company has had for years and placed the remaining employees in an impossible situation for this year's bottom line. We're all looking for ways to get off this sinking ship."

PREVIEW

Sound familiar? Have you ever dealt with a similar situation? The unpleasant reality is insecure and/or selfish people just do not make good leaders. Whether in business, family or church situations, the rise of a woman or man to a position of authority means trouble for everyone in the group. The reason why this is true seems obvious: Most people seem to understand power in terms of the right to boss, browbeat and bully others.

INNERVIEW

People with a deficient concept of leadership have a tendency to put distance between themselves and their group. They worry about "image". Most of them are big on intimidation tactics. They are stingy with praise and generous with criticism. In their own words, they like to "keep people guessing" about what comes next. There tends to be much turnover in businesses, divorces in families and divisions in churches operating with this style management.

Occasionally you learn about an environment that operates by a different set of leadership principles. You are sometimes fortunate enough to teach at a school or work for that person. People feel empowered rather than micromanaged. They sense trust rather than suspicion. They are treated with respect rather than contempt and condescension. In these environments, they both thrive at their tasks and remain intensely loyal to their leaders.

REVIEW

Today much is said concerning value-driven leadership, servant leadership, or spiritual economics. Whatever we call it, it is simply the modern re-discovery of the Golden Rule and the leadership style of Jesus. "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve," he said (Mark 10:45).

If you want to upgrade your environment, learn to use the power you wield for blessing instead of bossing. This strategy honors both God and others.

Praise God For: *His Kindness;*
Thank God For: *The World's Givers;*
Ask God's Forgiveness For: *Being More of a Taker;*
Ask God to Help: *Cab and Bus Drivers;*
Ask God to Supply Our Need For: *Strength To Help Others.*

The Promise to Remember A Kindness

“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into him marvelous light.” (1 Peter 2:9)

“I’ll never forget what you’ve done for me! It has made all the difference, and if I *ever* get the chance to repay your kindness...”

Have you ever made this statement to a surgeon, attorney, teacher or mentor? Perhaps you expressed that sentiment to someone who was your tenth-grade best friend or college roommate. Maybe it was your mother, father, sister or brother. I suspect we have all made those sincere declarations.

PREVIEW

But here’s the tough question: Have you carried through? The emotional expression of gratitude for kindness is easier than remembering to pay back or perhaps to pass along similar goodwill when circumstances change.

In 1867, Columbia, South Carolina, was trying to recover after the devastation of the Civil War. The New York Firemen’s Association learned the city was still using bucket brigades to fight fires. So New Yorkers raised money to buy Columbia a fire wagon. When it was lost during shipment, the same people took up yet another collection and sent a second one.

INNERVIEW

City officials spoke with one voice to thank New York for its gift and vowed never to forget so great a kindness. A former Confederate, Col. Samuel Melton was so dumbfounded by the generosity of men who had only a few years earlier served in the Union Army, that he spoke on behalf of South Carolina’s capital city and promised to return the favor “Should misfortune ever befall the Empire City.”

In the aftermath of September 11, Students at White Knoll Middle School Led a drive to raise the \$354,000 necessary to replace one of the fire trucks lost that day. Spurred on by the historical anecdote just related, the South Carolina Remembers Fund Received a total of \$510,000.

REVIEW

During the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day parade in New York in 2001, four students made good on Columbia’s 134-year-old promise. “When we presented the check of \$354,000 to Mayor Giuliani,” said Staci Smith, “he had the biggest smile on his face.” The extra money will be used to upgrade the truck or to buy other firefighting equipment needed by the New York Fire Department.

Spend a few minutes today reviewing your personal life history for any outstanding debts you owe persons for kindness received. If something specific comes to mind, let the story of some middle-school children remind you to carry through in some practical way with your promise never to forget.

The Challenge to Make A Difference

“I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.” (Eph. 4:1)

When have you stopped to give thanks for your career? Your career places you in an elite group that states what you choose to do for earning a livelihood. You expect your career to pay your bills, provide for family responsibilities and provide a certain standard of living. You probably also expect your career to provide certain less-tangible rewards as title and social standing.

PREVIEW

Do you have a **calling**? Consistent with the way most people hear this term, a calling involves a clear sense of being commissioned by God for a task. It is your pursuit of the sovereignty of God concerning who you are and what you are doing with your life. It is the sense that God’s hand is on you and he has genuine pleasure in what you are doing. The real secret to fulfillment in one’s life is to have career and calling merged together. I believe God has given you an opportunity to make a difference in the world. I am convinced God wants you to *change* the world and see your job, business or profession as an extension of the kingdom of heaven.

INNERVIEW

The sense that one’s career is also a holy calling should not startle us. If slaves-become-Christians were counseled to “render service with enthusiasm, as to the Lord and not to men and women, knowing that whatever good we do, we will receive the same again from the Lord” (*Ephesians 6: 7-8*), then surely you are supposed to be the best employee or employer the Acme Widget Company has ever seen. If not, why not? About paycheck or promotion, do something that contributes to the good of your world. Let your routine tasks reflect the character and excellence heaven is building into your life. Understand that your work is inseparable from your spiritual life and reflects its authenticity. When your faith cleanses and consecrates your workplace to God, you have found a calling larger than your career.

REVIEW

Paul refers in *Ephesians 4:1*, “I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye, walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called”. First, he states that he is in Nero’s prison, but he is not Nero’s prisoner. He is a prisoner of the Lord. He further states, because of this, he is expected to walk worthy of his vocation. What is his Vocation? It is using who you are and what you do to help transform lives to the Glory of God. Your job is where you work to provide payment for bills and be able to participate in your vocation. Solomon put it this way: “There is nothing better for mortals than to eat and drink, and find enjoyment in their work. This, I saw, is from the hand of God; for apart from him who can eat or who can have enjoyment?” (*Ecclesiastes 2: 24-25*).

How will you change the world today?
God is ready to be your partner

A Desire to Know Him Better

“One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life...” – Psalms 27:4

I KNOW HIM, BUT I WANT TO KNOW HIM BETTER.

I KNOW HIM AS...

- A journey of time and the convener of eternity. (But I want to know Him better).
- The object of history’s gaze and the bridegroom of the church. (But I want to know Him better).
- My grandmother’s God and my grandfather’s friend. (But I want to know Him better).
- My soul’s full hope, my Anchor Sure and steadfast (But I want to know Him better).
- The light of my life and the hope of my days. (But I want to know Him better).
- Our purchase price at the gates of hell. (But I want to know Him better).

I KNOW HIM AS....

My Comfort in Crisis; My Help in Helplessness; My Friend in Loneliness; My Joy in Sorrow; My Peace in Perplexity; My Salvation in Sinfulness; My Solution in Problems; My Glory in Grief; (But I want to know Him better).

My Wealth in Poverty; My Strength in Weakness; My Wisdom in Decisions; My Stability in Stumbling; My Victory in Battles; My Light in Darkness; (But I want to know Him better); My Deliverance in Defeat; My Forgiveness in Faults; My Assurance in Adversity; My Hope in Heartaches; My Song in the Night; My Faith in Fears...I know Him, ***BUT I WANT TO KNOW HIM BETTER!***

Praise God For: His Grace!

Thank God For: Deep Contentment!

Ask God’s Forgiveness For: Worrying!

Ask God To Help: The Discontented!

Ask God to Supply Our Need For: Grace in Every Circumstance!

Trust God Fully

“One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life...” – Psalms 27:4

Preview

God could trust David because David trusted God. Therefore, God promoted David, because David promoted God. So, we are not at all surprised to find that David's life no honor was denied him.

No tribute was withheld from him. Every vault or every band in the nation was open to him. Every piece of paper currency had his picture on it. Every man was ready to defend him. Every woman was ready to gratify him. Every newspaper published his exploits, and magnified his face on the front page.

Innerview

GOD TRUSTED DAVID, BECAUSE DAVID TRUSTED GOD! David learned well the lesson his father taught him “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct your paths” (Proverbs 3: 5-6).

The Hebrew word for “trust” is BATACH, meaning “to rely on”. Another word akin to trust is the Hebrew word for lean “SHAAN” meaning to place confidence in. At the root of this original Hebrew term is the idea of throwing oneself down and lying extended on the ground, casting all hopes for the present and the future upon another thus finding shelter and security there. We are *commanded* by our Lord to cast ourselves fully and absolutely at His feet.

Throw yourself completely upon the Lord-that is, cast all your present and future needs on Him who is your intimate Savior-God...finding in Him your security and safety? Do this with all your mind, feeling and will. In order to make this possible, you must present your concern in each of your circumstances. Then He (having taken full control of the situation) will thoroughly smooth out and straighten your paths, removing each obstacle along the way (Proverbs 3: 5, 6 THE LANE'S TRANSLATION).

Review

IF GOD FOR SOME REASON, HASN'T given you your miracle, keep trusting him. If he has not supplied your need, keep on trusting him. If he has not solved your problem yet, keep trusting him. If he has not removed your burden, keep trusting him. If he has not calmed your crisis, keep trusting him. If he has not answered your prayer, keep trusting him.

GO AHEAD AND TRUST HIM....He has never failed a test; He has never lost a battle; He has never told a lie; He has never misunderstood a situation; He has never broken a vow; He has never refused an individual; He has never disappointed a soul.

To Know Him Is To Love Him

“One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life...” – Psalms 27:4

The “one thing I desire”, serious enough to get out of my comfort zone and pursue is to know God intimately and love him dearly. I desire this enough to extend myself and pursue it rigorously. I WANT TO KNOW GOD INTIMATELY AND LOVE GOD DEARLY.

Preview

We love him because he first loved us. How do you know God loves you? He gives us many evidences: God loves you; you’re never out of his sight. He cares about every detail of your life. He has good plans for your life. He forgives you; and is lovingly patient with you. God loves you infinitely more than you can imagine.

The greatest expression of God’s love was the sacrifice of his son. “God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). If you want to know how much you matter to God, look at Christ with his arms outstretched on the cross, saying, “I love you this much! I’d rather die than live without you.”

Innerview

Since love is the energy of life, the motive of praise, the heartbeat of worship, the center of joy and the life of faith; we should love Him enough to please Him. His will must become our will. I WANT TO OBEY A PLAN THAT PLEASES HIM. I WANT TO BELONG TO A CHURCH THAT PLEASES HIM. I WANT TO WEAR A NAME THAT PLEASES HIM. I WANT TO WORSHIP IN A WAY THAT PLEASES HIM.

For after all, He’s the....

Foundation that never shakes; **Truth** that never lies; **Friend** that never forsakes;
Conqueror that never loses; **Supply** that never quits; **Fountain** that never clogs.

Review

Light that never dims; **Deliverer** that never disappoints; **King** that never ages;

Lord that never berates; **Shepherd** that never overlooks; **Beginning** that never ends;

Beauty that never pales; **Comfort** that never departs; **Physician** that never ‘charges’;

Star that never falls; **Help** that never hinders; **Prize** that never withers;

Joy that never subsides; **Master** that never intrudes; **Way** that never deceives;

Hope that never fades; **Rock** that never moves; **Strength** that never weakens;

Wisdom that never misleads; **Glory** that never ceases; **Bridge** that never collapses;

Reward that never depreciates; **Anchor** that never fails; **Judge** that never misjudges.

Love God Dearly

“One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life...” – Psalms 27:4

My determined purpose is that I may know Him that I may progressively become more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him, perceiving and recognizing and understanding the wonders of His person more strongly and more clearly.

Preview

The truth is-you are as close to God as you choose to be. Intimate friendship with God is a choice, not an accident. You must intentionally seek it. Like any friendship, you must work at developing your friendship with God. It won't happen by accident. It takes desire, time, and energy. If you want a deeper, more intimate connection with God you must learn to honestly share your feelings with him, trust him when he asks you to do something, learn to value what he values, be interested in what he's interested in, care about what he cares about, and desire his friendship more than anything else.

Perhaps you were passionate about God in the past but you've lost that desire. That was the problem of the Christians in Ephesus-they had left their first love. They did all the right things, but out of duty, not love. If you've just been going through the motions spiritually, don't be surprised when God allows pain in your life.

Innerview

Rick Warren, correctly insists that pain is the fuel of passion-it energizes us with an intensity to change that we don't normally possess. C. S. Lewis said, "Pain is God's megaphone." It is God's way of arousing us from spiritual lethargy. Your problems are not punishment; they are wake-up calls from a loving God. God is not mad at you; he's mad about you, and he will do whatever it takes to bring you back into fellowship with him. But here is an easier way to regain your passion for God: Start asking God to give it to you, and keep on asking until you have it. Pray this throughout your day. "Lord, more than anything else, I want to know you intimately."

Review

God told the captives in Babylon, "When you get serious about finding me and desire me more than anything else, I'll make sure you won't be disappointed. (Jeremiah 29: 13) (Msg)."

There is nothing, absolutely nothing, more important than developing a friendship with God. It's a relationship that will last forever.

Praise God for: life's adventures!

Thank God for: family!

Ask God's forgiveness for: fear of new things!

Ask God to help: feel His protection!

Ask God to supply our need for: a sense of adventure!

Pursuing God Regularly

“One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life...” – Psalms 27:4

How long since you gave the LORD a portion of undiluted, uninterrupted time listening to his voice, studying his ways and seeking his will? If you spent time reading the Gospels, Observing the spiritual life of Jesus, a distinct pattern would be observed. He spent regular time with God, praying and listening. Mark says, “Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed” (Mark 1:35 NIV). Luke tells us, “Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed” (Luke 5:16 NIV). Let me ask the obvious. If Jesus, the Son of God, the sinless Savior of mankind, thought it worthwhile to clear his calendar to pray, wouldn't we be wise to do the same?

Preview

Not only did he spend regular time with God in prayer, he spent regular time in God's Word. We don't find Him opening a leather-bound personalized copy of the Bible, but we do however, see him in the throes of the wilderness temptation, using the Word of God to deal with Satan. Three times he is tempted, and each time he repels the attack with the phrase: “It is written in the Scriptures” (Luke 4: 4, 8, 12), and then he quotes the verse. Jesus is so familiar with Scripture that he not only knows the verse, he knows how to use it.

Innerview

I am aware that many of you are experiencing a difficult challenge to have a daily meditation and devotion. Some of you have tried before and were not successful. Others have a hard time concentrating. And everyone is busy. So rather than spend time with God, listening to his voice, we are tempted to let others spend time with Him and allow us to benefit from their experience. Would this rationale work in any other areas of your life?

You don't say, “Vacations are such a hassle, packing bags and traveling. I'll send someone else on vacation for me. When he returns, I'll hear all about it and be spared all the inconvenience.” Would you do this? I didn't think so! Do you allow someone to eat on your behalf? Do you say, “Chewing is such a bother? My jaws grow so tired, and the variety of tastes is so overwhelming. I'm going to hire someone to chew my food, and I'll just swallow whatever is given to me.” Have you ever entertained such a thought? Probably not! There are certain things no one can do for you and spending time with God is one of them.

Review

Spending time with God is a firsthand experience. When God asks for your attention, he doesn't want you to send a substitute; he wants you. He invites you to vacation in his splendor. He invites you to feel the touch of his hand. He invites you to feast at his table. He wants to spend time with you. And with a little training, your time with God can be the highlight of your day.

Talking To God Frequently

“One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life...” – Psalms 27:4

You can talk to God, because God listens. Your voice matters in heaven. He takes you very seriously. When you enter his presence, he turns to you to hear your voice. No need to fear that you will be ignored. Even if you stammer or stumble, even if what you have to say impresses no one, it impresses God, and he listens. He listens to the painful plea of the elderly in the rest home. He listens to the gruff confessions of a death-row inmate. When the alcoholic begs for mercy, when the spouse seeks guidance, when the business man steps off the street into the chapel, God listens intently and carefully. He is interested in what interests you.

Preview

When a friend told Jesus of Lazarus' illness he said, "Lord, the one you love is sick". He did not base his appeal on the imperfect love of the one in need, but on the perfect love of the Savior. He didn't say, "The one who loves you is sick." He said, "The one you love is sick." The power of the prayer, in other words, does not depend on the one who makes the prayer, but on the one who hears the prayer.

We can and must repeat the phrase in manifold ways. "The one you love is tired, sad, hungry, lonely, fearful, and depressed." The words of the prayer vary, but the response never changes. The savior hears the prayer. He silences heaven, so he won't miss a word. He hears the prayer, because he had invited us to come boldly to the throne.

Innerview

You may muzzle a man so that he cannot articulate a syllable, but you have not made it impossible for him to pray. You may cast a man into a dungeon and load his limbs with chains, keeping him from all manner of communication with his fellowmen, but you cannot keep him from having conversation with God. The door has never yet been forged, the dungeon never yet constructed, the adversary never get so mighty that one can keep God from His people.

If the world is ever again, to get on its feet, the church will have to get on its knees. If we are too busy to pray, we are busier than we ought to be.

Review

Remember, it is not the ARITHMETIC of our prayer, how many and how often. It is not the MELODY of our prayers, how sweet they sound and how rhythmic they are uttered. It is not the LOGIC of our prayers, how argumentative they appear. It is not the MECHANICS of prayer, how orderly they are arranged. IT IS THE FERVENCY OF SPIRIT WITH WHICH THEY ARE OFFERED, and the power of the God to whom they are offered.

**The LORD hears His people when they cry out to him, and he
saves them from all their troubles**

Psalms 34: 17

Know God Intimately

“One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life...” – Psalms 27:4

We catch a hint of how to know God intimately, from God’s dealing with Elijah. Remember the command to Elijah was to hide thyself (I Kings 17: 2-6). It was a command to **go hide thyself** in some narrow gorge uninvited by human footsteps, fenced in by nature to form a prophet’s chamber. Go into silence. Go where no depleting distractions prevail. Retire into a lonely place for meditation. Generate power before you try to impart power. Forsake the crowd for the closet. Leave the street for secrecy. Give up your hurry for the hush. *“Be Still and Know that I am God.” (Psalms 46:10)*

After the command the HIDE THYSELF came the commandment to SHOW THYSELF. (I Kings 18:10) *“And it came to pass after many days, that the word of the Lord came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go show thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth.”* We must go to the private place WITH God before we go to the public place FOR GOD. We must spend time in the closet WITH God, before engaging in the conflict for God. We ought to see the face of God before we see the face of men. We need to get the discipline of the private place, to know how to prepare for victory in the public place. We need the solitary place in order to have the sanctifying place. After the hiding comes the showing. After the silence comes the speaking. After the closet, come the conflict. After Cherith, Carmel. You must have praying power, before you can have witnessing power.

How do you begin to know somebody intimately?

1. You must spend time with them.
2. You must talk to them.
3. You must listen to them.
4. You must study their ways.
5. You must seek to please them.

Praise God For: Victory over boredom!

Thank God For: Setting me free!

Ask God’s forgiveness for: Making do!

Ask God to help: The spiritually dead to find life!

Ask God to supply our need for: More intimacy with Him!

A New Person in The Same Old Situation

*"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"
II Corinthians 5:17 (NIV)*

"I feel like a new person!" Those may be the words often spoken after one's conversion experience. They may be the words spoken after making a major decision. They could be the words expressed after the confession of a sin. They may be heard upon completion of a major medical procedure. Parents may say it (or feel it at least) after they receive a phone call with news that their child is safe and well. For others it is a statement that was spoken once long ago in a far away land in a frame of mind almost forgotten. Life has been rough since then. The newness of life has long since worn off and faded away. There is nothing about their life that feels new, or fresh, or at times even like life. They are tired. They are sad. They are empty. They are looking at the sunrise not as the "first day of the rest of your life," but as one more day in a miserable existence.

Preview

As you read the previous paragraph you probably had images of people you know who fit both descriptions. What is the difference? What causes one person to see the sunrise as bright and clear and beautiful and "new every morning," while another sees only the "chasing after the wind" that will follow the sunrise? Certainly the events of the previous day may have something to do with how we feel when the sun comes up. Our attitude and disposition obviously has a lot to do with it. How we feel physically also has an impact on our view on life. Sometimes a change in scenery, or a change of habit, or a change in life will give us a new outlook on life. Sometimes we need it. Sometimes a major change (sorry to use that word so many times in one paragraph) may be the only thing that will bring about the wanted and needed results. Because we like to do things for ourselves, it is possible to depend on these physical changes too much and too often, when there is something beyond us that has the potential to help us see ourselves differently every day.

Innerview

Take another look at what Paul tells us, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (**II Corinthians 5:17, NIV**). Another section of Paul's writing reminds us of who we can and should see ourselves, "So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.

You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness."
(**Ephesians 4:17-24, NIV**)

Review

When was the last time you said, "I feel like a new person!" and meant it? Are you wishing you could say it today? Maybe it will not require a total makeover of your physical appearance, or that your whole world is turned upside down. It could be that seeing ourselves as God sees us is the answer. Give it a try. You may be a new person waiting to happen.

Enjoy being a new person today

Auditioning Your Ambitions - The Surge

“Delight yourself also in the Lord/And He shall give you the desires of your heart.” - Psalm 37:4

At the core of faith, there is that innermost, indivisible cell called commitment. Faith always commands some decisive action. More often than not, it represents an irreversible decision. Faith is peeling the orange. It's cracking the egg. It's opening the can of Soda! Faith is delivering the ice. Now you either consume it, or throw it away.

Faith is serving the soufflé hot from the oven! You must eat it, or watch it deflate. What's left cannot be saved or stored. "What is Faith? It is the confident assurance that something we want is going to happen. It is the certainty that what we hope for is waiting for us, even though we cannot see it up ahead."

"Faith is the daring of the soul to go farther than it can see" where reason must stop, faith takes a daring leap into the unknown.

Faith is not a leap in the dark. Faith is a leap into the light. Faith is taking God at his word. Information has been given, accepted as true and is being acted upon.

FAITH Sees The Coming....

Spring in spite of the current winter

Showers, in spite of the current drought

Prospects, in spite of the current circumstances

Solution, in spite of the current problems

Dividends, in spite of the current difficulties

Fruit, in spite of the current barrenness

“Lord, give us the faith to make the move at the right time in the right way. Protect us from the false security that indecision foolishly promises. Today we shall move from faith and not be mesmerized by fear.

Praise God For: Christ our Redeemer

Thank God For: wise men

Ask God's Forgiveness For: half-hearted commitment

Ask God To Help: all who come to Him

Ask God To Supply Our Need For: recommitment to Him

Auditioning Your Ambitions- The Purge

“Delight yourself also in the Lord/And He shall give you the desires of your heart.” - Psalm 37:4

The second movement of faith is known as the purge. Negative thoughts rush in to destroy your desire and torpedo your dream with negative forces. This movement is filled with discordant notes and contradictions. All the destructive thoughts must be purged. Abort all negative thoughts before they can take an embryonic fix in your mind.

Living the faith stimulates positive emotions. In the same way, doubt constantly feeds negative emotions. Doubt is an anesthetic. Skepticism drains the spirit. Unbelief makes us drowsy. Negative thinking turns us into dreary people, fearful of our fears and worried about our worry. What a despairing cycle! My faith stimulates positive thinking, and positive thinking stimulates me to see all of the possibilities.

Learn 3 simple and natural ways to STOP negative thoughts and reduce stress, worry, tension and stomach acid buildup. You'll stop the negative thought AND step into a more powerful and pleasant place as a result.

1. Listen to all of your thoughts for a day.

Don't try to change anything, just observe when a negative thought comes into your mind.

2. Select one really persistent thought to work on, eg., worry about paying bills.

Ignore the other thoughts for awhile.

3. Each time that thought comes into your mind, say to yourself, "STOP!"

You may have to do this 5, 10 or 20 times before the thought goes away.

4. Notice what's happening when you 'push your STOP button.'

Does the thought stop or persist? Does it diminish or seem smaller?

5. If thinking STOP doesn't work at first, try saying STOP out loud.

That's right, shout it out. Notice what's happening when you say STOP out loud.

6. If saying STOP out loud doesn't work at first, use hand signals for STOP.

You know what that looks like. You command it to STOP like a traffic cop does, as if to say: "I said STOP, you numbskull!!!" And mean it just like a stern cop.

7. Notice what you are thinking now, too.

Are you laughing? Are you embarrassed at talking to yourself out loud and playing traffic cop? Yes?

No? Whatever your reaction, try to concentrate on what you're thinking as you do these exercises.

8. While you are doing these exercises, notice which one works best.

Does one method work better for different types of thoughts? Does the traffic cop work best for worrisome thoughts? Does thinking STOP work best for what you call petty thoughts?

9. Now, use all three methods and find the one that works best for you in any and all situations.

Use these methods for 5 thought-interruptions and you will own a new skill.

10. Your mind can pay attention to one thing at a time only.

If you want to stop any disturbing thought, especially one where you feel helpless, switch to another thought, sing a song aloud or make up anything to otherwise occupy your mind. Laugh at the negative thought and enjoy your win.

Auditioning Your Ambitions -The Splurge

“Delight yourself also in the Lord/And He shall give you the desires of your heart.” - Psalm 37:4

The fourth and final movement is the splurge-you make the leap. You go all out for it. You put everything on the line. You hold back nothing.

The Bible informs us that...

1. "Without **faith** it is impossible to please him" (Heb. 11:6).
2. We are enjoined to "examine yourselves, whether ye be in the **faith**..." (2 Cor. 13:5).
3. The Bible informs us that "Therein is the righteousness of God revealed from **faith** to **faith**"(Rom.1:17).
4. We are exhorted to "stand fast in the **faith**" (I Cor. 16:13) and the believer is to "walk by **faith**" (2 Cor. 5:7).
5. Paul affirmed that "the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the **faith** of the Son of God" (Gal. 2:20).
6. Jesus advised his disciples, "have **faith** in God" (Mk. 11:22).
7. If you believe it, you can conceive it. If you conceive it you can perceive it. If perceived you can achieve it. If you can achieve you will receive it! Believe it!

Faith's Record

Faith escorts us to a den of lions and shows us an unarmed man sitting in their midst, one who would be a suitable meal to quiet the nocturnal rumbling of their hungry stomachs. Yet, we see them on their best behavior as though they were advance students of the school of etiquette.

Faith takes us on an exciting excursion to the post card picturesque beauty of the Jordan Valley. Bids us to pause a moment to take in its scenic beauty of Palms and Sycamore. Then leads us to Jericho where there are walls pronounced by architect and contractor to be impregnable. We watch in awe as the walls come tumbling down at the sound of blowing horns and marching feet.

Faith then leads us to a battlefield and shows us giants slain by midgets. It takes us to valleys to watch dry bones become standing armies. It takes us to beautiful gates as we watch the lame spring to their feet praising God.

It was through **faith** that the Heroes of **faith** subdued kingdoms wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to fight the armies of the aliens.

Faith...

Believes the unbelievable;
Reaches for the unreachable;
Asks for the unthinkable;
Hopes for the impossible;
Lives for the incredible;
Prepares for the unexplainable.

Auditioning Your Ambitions - The Urge

“Delight yourself also in the Lord/And He shall give you the desires of your heart.” - Psalm 37:4

Birds were designed to fly. The air under the wings of a bird is the natural habitat of the flying fowl. Water is the natural habitat of the fish. Faith is the native air to be breathed in and out by believers. The divine quality of dreaming what you want to be, where you want to go, what you'd love to do, projects you hope to achieve, goals you'd like to reach—all of which makes you uniquely gifted for growth in the walk of faith. The walk of faith is really a symphony in four movements, the *urge*, the *purge*, the *surge* and then the *splurge*.

Preview

The first movement of faith is the urge—deep within yourself there is a voice that says, “There is something more. Success never happens until you make it happen. And You make good things happen when you make decisions that cause a movement to begin. Remember, Life by its very nature rejects protectionism.

Do you refuse to make decisions because problems and perils might result? Do you want to play it safe? That's one of life's rare impossibilities! When you play it safe, you can be sure you will face the dangers that inevitably come: boredom, lack of growth, stagnation, emotional death! The zest that comes from decisions will be gone. What is left is a shriveling and shrinking spirit with false promises of security.

Innerview

Strong faith is often the expression of deep desire. Likewise doubt is the lack of desire. A host of conscious or subconscious forces can keep you from wanting to believe. Fears of what God might do to your life or in your life can keep you from wanting to believe.

Review

Success is no accident. Success is a commitment—not a coincidence! Each new year is an appointment to become an authentic optimist. Each new day is justification for being enthusiastic about life again. Each dawning is God's invitation to start over and build a new life, beginning with the present moment. Each week is an opportunity to make new and noble resolutions! Every Monday morning you have a standing appointment to meet new opportunities! So, the first movement of faith is the movement of urge. Decide today where you want to be five, ten, twenty years from today.

A Check List for Spiritual Growth

“Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on...” –Phil. 3:12, 13

If you would grow in faith, you must add to your faith, virtue. You must seek to be a good person. Virtue is the conformity to a standard of right, possessing moral excellence, and integrity. Go through this spiritual growth checklist to measure your growth.

1. Do I live what I teach? Deciding what to be is more important than deciding what to do. “Hold on to instruction, do not let it go, guard it well, for it is your life” Prov. 4:13

2. Do I do what I say? A person of integrity will do what they promise they will do. They will keep their word. “Simply let your “Yes” be “Yes” and your “No be No” Matthew 5:37

3. Am I honest with others. When a person loses his credibility, he forfeits a trust that may never be regained. *“I will always speak the truth and refuse to tell a lie”.* Prov. 8:7

4. Do I put what is best for others ahead of what is best for me? A person of integrity will remember he is here to serve others rather than here to be served. *“Be humble and consider others more important than yourselves”* Phil. 2:3

5. Am I striving to become more like Christ in all of the seven Christian virtues? *“And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue knowledge; (6) And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; (7) And to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity.(8) For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (9) But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins”* II Pet. 1:5-9.

Praise God For: His support

Thank God For: The sensitivity of others

Ask God’s Forgiveness For: my disappointment in others

Ask God To Help: the physically and emotionally needy

Ask God To Supply Our Need For: Immanuel

Personal Growth and Progress (2)

“Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on...” – Phil. 3:12, 13

Sometimes we're such perfectionists. We miss the fact that we're progressing, because all we can see is that the goal of becoming like Christ seems to stay so distant. "But I'm so far away," you lament. "Sometimes it seems I'm making no progress at all."

No one will ever be perfectly like Christ, this side of glory. But, as someone has suggested, the key question at any point in time is this: Which way are you facing -- toward Him or away from Him? Or, more specifically, which way are you moving -- toward Him or away from Him?

If you asked God for ways to measure your progress you would hear words like "becoming," "increasing," and "developing."

Becoming is a process word. Are you becoming a person of faith?

Increasing is a dynamic word. Do you have an increasing sense of hope, linked to Him and His promises?

Developing is a maturation word. Have you been developing a loving concern for the needs of others -- so many of them -- who are hurting and struggling too?

Give yourself time. Some things cannot be rushed. No instant masterpieces, here. God's workmanship (Ephesians 2:8 - the Greek word is *poiema*, from which we get the word poem) is you! You and I are God's creation. We might even say we are His "poetry," His way of singing a song of hope to a broken world.

Give yourself space. Don't let anyone force you into his mold. Your relationship with God is the main issue. What does He think of you? What does He ask of you? People may offer their own interpretations and perspectives on these questions. But the final issues are between you and Him. And He is more kind, loving, gracious, gentle, forgiving, and creative than any of us can imagine.

Give yourself truth. Don't play anybody's game, even your own. No pretending allowed. No hypocrisy required. You can be yourself. If you force it, it will just take longer. If you fake it now, you may never be able to tell when it's real.

Praise God For: His Spirit;
Thank God For: good fathers;
Ask God's Forgiveness For: neglecting time with Him;
Ask God To Help: children who miss their fathers;
Ask God To Supply Our Need For: strength for each day

Steps toward Higher Altitudes

“Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on...” – Phil. 3:12,13

1. *Are you humble about this area of your life?* _____ If you haven't been, take this to the Lord right now. Ask him for an attitude of humility. Meditate on the Scripture that says “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble [James 4:6].” Trust that God will give you the attitude of humility that you desire.

2. *Are you teachable in this area of your life?* _____ If you haven't been, commit this to the Lord as well. Determine that you will *listen* to the counsel of others in this area. Seek out the counsel of someone whom you maybe have not listened to before in this area, but whom you know has something good to say about it. Listen to them, and glean insight.

3. *Take action.* What one action can you take *today* that will move you in the direction of your desired growth goal. Make this action doable, but stretching. Do it today. Learn to do something *now* to move you forward. After that is done, plan and take another step forward within the next couple of days. Keep taking one step at a time in the direction of your desired growth goal.

4. *Recognize the power of your past to sabotage your efforts.* Is a past sin, failure, or success hindering you from moving forward? If so, identify it, and deal with it appropriately. If it is sin, make sure you have genuinely confessed it and repented of it before the Lord. If it is failure, ask God for a positive lesson you can learn from it, and write that here:

_____. Draw encouragement from the lesson. If it is a success, decide you will use that success to encourage you toward further progress.

5. *Test your goal to make sure you are setting your sights on God's goals for you.* Is this the type of goal God wants you to accomplish? Does it reflect balance? Is it something you can earnestly pray about, and ask God to accomplish it for his glory? If you need to retool your focus, do it now.

Continue with step 3--taking action, until you have achieved the goal, or state of growth that you desire.

Praise God For: reconciliation

Thank God For: peacemakers

Ask God's Forgiveness For: strained relationships

Ask God To Help: bring peace to the world

Ask God To Supply Our Need For: tenderness

Personal Growth and Progress

“Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on...” –Phil. 3:12, 13

I fear that one of the tragedies of the modern church and counseling psychology is that we don't teach people to take the time to enjoy small victories. We are so caught up in the ultimate victory that we don't take notice of the daily victories God is executing in our lives.

Preview

Even God took time to evaluate his day and ultimately his week. Do you remember that as God moved in creation, he created in stages? He didn't create the world in one day. At the end of each day, the last thing he did was look back over what he had done that day and say "It was good".

On the first day he had not finished everything he had purposed to do for creation. He looked back over the day and said "For a day that's pretty good works." He praised himself and said, "It is good." We need to tell struggling people, saints with sinner problems "You've got to stop every now and then and celebrate how far you've come. You might not have done everything you set out to do. You might still have some more creative acts to do, but you need to look back from whence you've come and say, "Lord, you helped me make it this far, and that is good. I know this has to be done. I know the other is still lacking. I know I need to work on that over there. But Lord, I'm grateful for the progress of the day. I may not be what I want to be. I may not be what you want me to be. I may not be what others expect me to be. I may not even be what I appear to be. But I'm grateful that I'm not what I used to be. By grace and guidance, strength and Spirit I'm not what I used to be."

Innerview

You can't wait until you arrive to celebrate. Every time you see an accomplishment, say thank you. Every time you experience victory, you ought to say thank you. When you begin saying that was good, not only do you enjoy the savor of felling victory as you travel, but you also re-fire yourself. You help energize yourself so you can do what you have to do on the second day. Some of us are so busy trying to get where we are going that we don't stop to thank the Lord on the way.

Review

If you are going to get the release of power for day two, day three, or day four, you have to look back over the activities of this day and say "Maybe I haven't conquered all the problems of the world today, but there is some light where there use to be darkness. I'm walking in that light as he is in the light, and I have fellowship one with other; and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin. I thank you that I'm making progress."

Praise God For: His firmness

Thank God For: Saying no when I need it

Ask God's Forgiveness For: My resistance to His Will

Ask God to Help: Teens and Parents to better communicate

Ask God to Supply Our Need For:

Open communication - Being Teachable

February 21, 2013

The second step toward higher altitudes is “Be teachable.” We see this in the same part of the passage. “Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect...”

If we are humble, we are willing to learn from others. And if we are willing to learn from others, we can grow, and move to new altitudes in our lives. You will never be successful in any area of your life, spiritual or secular, until you have a sincere dissatisfaction with where you are going in Grace.

Preview

You win the race not by out running someone else but by out running self. That is what makes the Christian journey so intriguing. We do not have to worry about racing against each other. Every time I am on the racetrack, I am trying to outrun Lane. I am better today than yesterday and if the Lord lets me live until two-morrow I have to be better tomorrow than today. God does not expect you to be the best, he only expects you to be your best.

Innerview

TOO MANY OF US SACRIFICE THE BETTER ON THE ALTAR OF THE GOOD. You do not get any better until you become dissatisfied with the good you are doing. Some of us think that because we are good that is all right. You do not become satisfied until your good becomes better and the better becomes best. Until you become filled with a sincere dissatisfaction you are going to continue growing downward.

Many of us are not successful in our homes, jobs, school and aspirations because we are satisfied with where we are. A satisfied man is not a growing man. People who are not teachable and eager to learn are people who do not grow. They remain in a rut, “stuck on being stuck”. Those who have eagerness and a willingness to learn are the ones who keep growing, developing and advancing.

Review

It is that way in every area of our lives. If we want to grow in our walk with the Lord, we need to listen to the Scripture, the words of our minister and the thoughts of people more spiritual than ourselves. We need to be teachable. If we want to grow in our relationships, we need to allow people who are stronger than us, in this area, speak into our lives. If our financial area needs improvement, we should admit our need for the wisdom of those more astute financially than ourselves. A teachable spirit is an essential step toward higher altitudes in any area of our lives.

**Praise God For: being Truth;
Thank God For: Gospel Ministers
Ask God’s Forgiveness For: hiding the truth;
Ask God To Help: truth be shared and received
Ask God To Supply Our Need For: boldness to speak truth**

When Attitude Determines Altitude

February 19, 2013

*Have you noticed how we get in ruts? We do the same things, use the same phrases, go to the same restaurants, make the same mistakes, have the same arguments and talk about the same subjects.
Zig Ziglar says "A rut is simply a grave with the ends kicked off."*

Preview

In a world of give and take there are very few men willing to give what it takes. Paul the peerless preacher and a separated saint dared to be different. In loftiness of Spirit, in singleness of purpose, in grandeur of character, and consecration of commitment; Paul is seldom equaled and almost never surpassed.

Innerview

Despite the fact that Paul had enjoyed a rich relationship with the Lord for over 25 years, he had revelations from God that he was not even permitted to talk about, he had won tens of thousands of people to Christ, and accomplished more for the Lord than anyone else in his day, this same Paul was pressing on to higher altitudes! If anyone had reason to rest on his laurels, Paul did! But as Tom Peters has said: "Today's laurels are tomorrow's compost." Paul was not smugly satisfied, he wanted to see the Lord accomplish more through his life. His desire was to know the Lord more deeply and obey Him completely.

Review

Philippians 3:12-15a-- "Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus".

Your Attitude Determines Your Approach to Life. Your Attitude Determines Your Relationship With People. Often Your Attitude Is the Only Difference Between Success and Failure. Your Attitude at the Beginning of the Task Will Affect its Outcome More Than Anything Else. Your Attitude Can Turn Your Problems Into Blessings.

Only You Can Control Your Attitude, So...

1. Be humble;
2. Be teachable;
3. Take action;
4. Put the past in perspective
5. Set Your Sight on God's Goal.

Praise God For: enduring the Cross;

Thank God For: the spiritual wisdom of friends;

Ask God's Forgiveness For: hanging on to hurts;

Ask God To Help: children caught in custody battles;

Ask God To Supply Our Need For: friends who challenge us

Being Humble

January 16, 2013

A part of the process of attaining your dynamic destiny is to understand the message that Paul delivers in Philippians 3:12. "Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect..."

Steps 1 and 2 are "Be humble" and "Be teachable." We see no pride or arrogance in Paul. He was not a know-it-all. He had a humility that is remarkable, when you consider what he actually had attained in his life.

Preview

Look at some of the accomplishments that Paul could have listed on his resume. He had a prestigious education (studied under Gamaliel Acts 22:3, who was the most famous Jewish teacher of his time. It was the equivalent of saying, "I have my law degree from Harvard...")

- He was born a citizen of Rome (Acts 22:25-29. There were only 3 ways to obtain a Roman citizenship: 1) do some outstanding service for Rome; 2) buy it at a considerable price; 3) be born into a family of Roman citizens. Paul was born a Roman citizen.)
- He was an up-and-coming leader at a young age.
- He was highly successful in his career. He was a great pioneer of the Christian church and established the church outside of the shores of the eastern Mediterranean.
- He was a noted author, penning 13 books of the New Testament.
- He had a rich relationship with God, and enjoyed noted friendships over the entire Roman Empire.

Innerview

There was not another greater than Paul in living the Christian life and yet this great trophy of grace and model saint said, "I have not yet arrived."

By birth he was a Benjamite. By racial identity he was a Jew. By citizenship he was a Roman. By training he was a Pharisee. By trade he was a tent maker. By conversion he was a Christian. By adoption he was a child of the King. By assignment he was an ambassador of Jesus Christ. By the grace of God he was what he was

He said "I ain't perfect yet. I'm not going to act like I've already gotten there. I am not yet fully mature but I do have a sincere dissatisfaction with where I am."

Review

Paul exhibits humility. He says this in one of his letters: "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant..." [Philippians 2:3-7]

Praise God For: being Truth;
Thank God For: truth that sets us free;
Ask God's Forgiveness For: lack of honesty
Ask God To Help: Alzheimer's victims;
Ask God To Supply Our Need For: courage to live the truth.

Suggestions for Celebrating Christmas

December 19, 2012

Every year we hear people say, "Oh, I dread Christmas. I just hate to think that Christmas is coming again." Those are the people who are celebrating Xmas. They are all caught up in the pressure, the expense, and the materialism of it all.

Here are three suggestions that may be helpful to us in keeping the two separate.

1. Be Sure That You Are Quiet Enough To Hear And See Jesus...

If there is too much noise & confusion & conflict we simply can't hear what God is saying to us.

I think it is extremely important in all the noise and confusion of the celebration of Christmas for us to sit down someplace along the way, take the phone off the hook, turn off the television and listen. In the Bible God says, "Be still & know that I am God."

2. Maybe We Need To Clean House....I don't know about you, but at holiday time it is so easy to find our trash accumulating.

If you are not careful our hearts can become the same way. Sometimes there are so many thoughts, noises and images that we can't see what we're supposed to see. Maybe we need to repent and clean house to make room for Jesus. A cleaning is sometimes necessary if He is to feel welcome, be received in the inn of our heart, soul and our life.

3. We Need To Become Involved In The Lives of People Who Are Hurting...At

Christmas time there is a strong temptation to pat each other on the back, wish each other a merry Christmas, but be immune to the hurt, the heartache and the cries for help coming from the busy streets of the world.

If Jesus communicated anything to us, it was that as Christians we must be concerned about the masses of people who don't know Him and who are in need of Him.

As His ambassadors we have a responsibility to reach out in a very special, loving, unselfish way and communicate the meaning of Christmas.