

A SENSE OF URGENCY AS GOD'S STEWARDS

- Key Scriptures
 - ◆ Ephesians 5:15-16 “Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil”
 - ◆ Col 3:23, “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men;”
- Application
 - ◆ Stewardship is not just about money or time that God has given us but about ALL that He has given us
 - ⇒ two questions that I think are interesting
 - * What have you done with my Son, Jesus Christ?
 - ◇ If the answer is “nothing” then the result is rejection on God’s part
 - ◇ If the answer is “I put my faith in Him” then the result is acceptance into His eternal Kingdom
 - * What have you done with the resources that I have given you to further My Kingdom: time, money, gifts, talents,.....?
 - ◇ This is the question we want to address today
 - ◇ The urgency is that God has given us all these things for a purpose – Kingdom Work!!
 - * Our goal should be “to know Christ and make Him known”
 - ⇒ So we will look at what God has given us: time, money, gifts, abilities, talents, family, church, relationships
 - ⇒ Major balancing act
 - ⇒ But placing God first – “all these things will be added unto you” Matt 6:33
 - ⇒ Want to look at each of these individually
 - ◆ Time
 - ⇒ The verse in Ephesians 5 mentions time specifically
 - ⇒ This is one of God’s most significant blessings
 - * Every day that we wake up He has given us an additional 24 hours
 - * This is true of everyone that wakes up
 - * Other blessings are not as universal
 - ⇒ Question is, what do we do this gift each day?
 - ⇒ The first thing I would urge each of us is to set a time aside for a personal devotional
 - * How can you get to know God if you don’t spend time with Him?
 - * How can you “Seek first the Kingdom of God” if you have no idea how to apply that?
 - * How can you expect to have fellowship with God if you don’t talk to Him?
 - * You have physical food daily – isn’t Spiritual food more important?
 - ⇒ The sense of urgency
 - * I Thess 5:1 – 3, “Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.”
 - * We do not have a clue when Christ will return again
 - * From end times in the Bible, it is clear that with world events the way they are we are close
 - * 2 Pet 3:9, “The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”
 - * There is a job that needs to be done and God needs us as seed planters urgently

◆ Money

- ⇒ This is one that everyone thinks of right away because this one hurts the most
- ⇒ There is a sense that the “church always wants my money”
- ⇒ However, like everything else whose money is it?
- ⇒ We are responsible for being good stewards of what God has given
- ⇒ However, look at this relative to time
 - * Unlike time, we each have a different amount money we are blessed with
 - * However, we are blessed with “sufficient to meet all our needs” – Matt 6:25 – 34
- ⇒ He has said He will always provide our needs – and He has always been faithful in our lives
 - * And I would be the first to suggest that is because we have been faithful in our stewardship
 - * We have always treated it as “God has blessed us with this” and we “want to give Him our first fruits”
- ⇒ My only regret over the years is that I didn’t begin this soon enough in my life
 - * Did the typical thing of trying to pay off all our bills before worshipping God with our first fruits
 - * Resulted in being poor stewards of how God had blessed
- ⇒ Here is the sense of urgency
 - * We should worship with our first fruits, not last fruits
 - * There is a whole world of people to reach out their for eternity
 - * Our first fruits that we offer in worship are the primary source of funding

◆ Gifts, abilities and talents

- ⇒ Cliff preached on gifts last Sunday
 - * There are nine key ones that are for us today
 - * Have you found yours?
- ⇒ Participants versus spectators
 - * Have always made a point when moving to a new church to find out what God would want me to do
 - * Mexico is prime example
 - ◇ We know God has called us to there
 - ◇ We don’t know why yet
 - ◇ But we have made a large number of contacts and have a wide variety of opportunities to serve
 - * Side benefits
 - ◇ Immeasurable blessings to see God at work and to be part of that work
 - ◇ Fellowship with other believers
 - ◇ Seeing the fruits of your labor
 - √ You may never see it in this lifetime
 - √ But you know you are part of the winning team and making things happen
- ⇒ Sense of urgency is very clear
 - * We want to see Christ build His church
 - ◇ It is clear, by all the circumstances surrounding this church plant, that God wants this church
 - ◇ Since He Himself planted the church, He wants it to grow
 - * To grow, He needs each of us that He has drawn to this church to be actively involved
 - ◇ Each of us have been called to serve in one capacity or another
 - ◇ Even though we are a small church, there is a lot of work to be done
 - * God has given us gifts for specific reasons
 - ◇ It is our responsibility to use them for His Kingdom work
 - ◇ He gives us the gifts to be participants not spectators
 - * What benefits are to be derived from this?
 - ◇ Receive the blessings of knowing you are involved in God’s Work for His Kingdom
 - ◇ Know that you are involved in generating “fruit” in working out your salvation
 - ◇ Get to know people and develop relationships with those involved in Kingdom Work

◆ Relationships

⇒ People are of highest importance to God

- * He created man in HIS image – Psalms 139 – He wove us in our mother’s womb
- * He created us to have “fellowship” with Him

⇒ God brings various people in our lives for a reason

- * He uses people to reach people
- * We must be good stewards of the relationships that God brings into our lives
- * There is a sense of urgency and good stewardship
 - ◇ God has placed these people in our lives,
 - ◇ It is imperative to allow God to accomplish His purpose in and through us

⇒ Family

- * How do you establish a good family relationship?
 - ◇ Talked about Eph 5 last Sunday concerning husbands, wives and children
 - ◇ It takes a desire, time and energy – all need to make the investment
 - √ Dr. Kraft – never stop courting your spouse
 - √ Have “dates” with your family
 - ◇ Communications
 - √ So extremely important
 - √ Frank, honest and open discussions
 - √ You need to “listen” not just hear – Steiff puppet
 - ◇ Now with our kids we maintain contact via “Words from Dad”, instant messenger, e-mail and phone
- * We placed God at the center of our marriage early on
 - ◇ We still have the notebook of the devotionals we shared at the beginning of our marriage
 - ◇ Does that mean we have a perfect marriage?
 - ◇ No, I am still in it – that says enough right there
- * Couple celebrating 45 years of marriage in Hawaii
 - ◇ Luau MC asked how they managed to make that happen
 - ◇ Answer was, “it took the three of us”
 - ◇ MC laughingly asked who the third person was – the answer was well worth it
- * It takes commitment, time and energy but a worthy investment

⇒ Church family

- * Just a couple of things I want to say about this
- * First, it is so important to find a church family – especially when you move to a new area
- * Second, when you have found a Bible-believing church – get involved
- * By doing this first of all find new friends rapidly and develop solid relationships
 - ◇ Key is you have to get involved and initiate the process
 - ◇ It is difficult if you just sit around and wait for someone to approach you
 - ◇ When involved with serving, you are rubbing shoulders and naturally develop relationships

⇒ The “lost” or unbelievers

- * This is characterized by the word “evangelism” – reaching out to others
- * Key verse: Acts 1:7, 8: “He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”
- * Witness - what does that involve?
 - ◇ Spreading the gospel by telling others
 - ◇ But that is only part of it – spreading gospel by the way we live, an item generally overlooked
 - ◇ Story of friend in Arizona
 - √ You knew every Scripture you quoted
 - √ You never judged me
 - ◇ Actions speak louder than words is a real truism when it comes to demonstrating God’s love

- * How can we do evangelization so that it is a natural part of our lives?
 - ◇ Plant seeds – I Cor 3:6 “I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow.”
 - ◇ Live your life **“today”** as you truly are living eternally
 - ◇ Some personal examples
 - √ People inquiring as to what is different about me
 - √ People “coincidentally” brought in our lives
 - √ Global Media Outreach
- ⇒ People that we consider casual acquaintances
 - * Why is it important to establish even a minor relationship?
 - ◇ There are no such things as coincidences in life – God has purpose for each encounter
 - ◇ If these encounters are truly God-ordained, we should want to respond accordingly
 - ◇ If each encounter is approached as God-ordained, opens our minds up to “planting seeds”
 - * First thing we must be careful of is don’t jump to conclusions based on first or outward appearances
 - ◇ This is always a natural tendency
 - ◇ But need to view from God’s perspective
 - √ They are created in God’s image
 - √ They may be soul that doesn’t know God and they should see God in you
 - * Secondly on how we should treat them
 - ◇ Matt 7:12, “So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.”
 - ◇ This is usually called the Golden Rule
 - ◇ Note who is to take the initiative
 - * On all my business travels and encounters with people I have tried to take this approach
 - ◇ Kirsty said once on a trip, “is dad like this with everyone he runs into?”
 - ◇ My motivation was for them to see a portrait of Jesus Christ within me – even maybe only short
 - ◇ Actual interesting side benefit
 - √ People treat you the way you treat them
 - √ Have you ever noticed that?
- ⇒ So what is the urgency associated with relationships?
 - * God and the church are all about people
 - ◇ All the different levels of relationships we just talked about
 - ◇ People are the most important thing to God and so it should be with us as well
 - * Family – a God established institution with clearly defined commands
 - * Church family - Col 3:23, “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men;”
 - * The lost or unbelievers
 - ◇ 2 Pet 3:9. “The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”
 - ◇ We must have this same mindset regardless of who we come in contact with
 - * Casual encounters - “we will only see this person for a second” and dealing in any way with them

- Summary

- ◆ Assume that each can answer the question, “What have you done with My Son” in the affirmative
- ◆ But what about the second question, “What have you done with the resources I have given you to further My Kingdom?”
 - ⇒ Have you given the “first fruits” of these resources? Have you helped build My church?
 - ⇒ What have you done with the relationships I have brought into your life?
- ◆ We are talking Kingdom and eternity business here