

## 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
    - ⇒ Purpose Driven Life poses 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
      - √ There 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