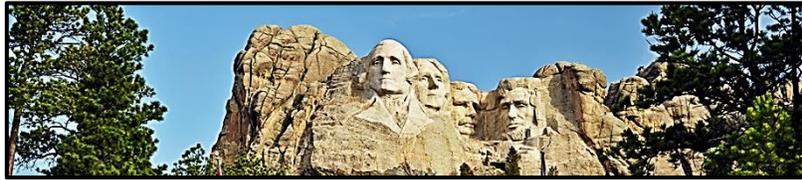




CULTIVATE A LISTENING HEART



You could inscribe these words on the tombstones of many Americans: hurried, worried, buried. **We are the only nation on earth that actually has a national monument called Mount Rushmore. And we can be so busy that we don't have time for God.** I would like to go to church, but I am so busy this time of year . . . I would like to pray, but there's so much going on—so many responsibilities . . . I would like to invest in the kingdom of God, but I have other financial commitments. People are so preoccupied with their lives and what they are doing that they don't have time for God. — Greg Laurie

I was challenged by this quote from Paul Miller's book: ***A Praying Life***:

"Learning to pray doesn't offer you a less busy life; it offers you a less busy heart. If you are not praying, then you are quietly confident that time, money, and talent are all you need in life. You'll always be a little too tired, a little too busy. But if, like Jesus, you realize you can't do life on your own, then no matter how busy, no matter how tired you are, you will find the time to pray."

"We spend so little time waiting on God, waiting to hear the Holy Spirit's directives. God is speaking, and communicating God, but someone must be listening on the other end. God's eyes still roam over the earth, looking for attentive, submissive hearts so he can show himself strong and mighty on our behalf."

*Isaiah 55:2-3: Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare. Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live." Let's ask God for the blessing of a childlike heart such as young Samuel had, so that when the Lord calls our name, we too can answer, **Speak, for your servant is listening.**" I Sam. 3:10 - Cymbala*

"When I am praying the most eloquently, I am getting the least accomplished in my prayer life. But when I stop getting eloquent and give God less theology and shut up and just gaze upward and wait for God to speak to my heart, He speaks with such power that I have to grab a pencil and a notebook and take notes on what God is saying to my heart." — Tozer

WHERE IS YOUR FOCUS?

Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith. Heb. 12:1-2

FIX your eyes on Jesus ... not a casual glance, not just a Sunday glance. I am FOCUSED on HIM! We often seek Him last, not first. *Help me to seek you first, not second, third, or last.* Too often I find myself gazing at my circumstances and glancing at Jesus instead of the other way around. Someone said: **A vertical focus will keep you from horizontal panic.** How true!

Helen Howarth, who wrote ***Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus***, responded with enthusiasm when asked how she was doing "*I'm doing well in the things that count.*" This, despite her infirmities, living on government assistance in a sparse bedroom at the end of her life. Helen's life was a testimony to the joy that is found when we fix our eyes upon Jesus. Maybe it's time we sang that familiar song again: ***Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace.*** We Facebook more than we seek His face.

“The dangerous assumption we unknowingly accept in the American dream is that our greatest asset is our own ability. The American dream prizes what people can accomplish when they believe in themselves and trust in themselves, and we are drawn toward such thinking.

*But the gospel has different priorities. The gospel beckons us to die to ourselves and to believe in God and to trust in his power. In the gospel, God confronts us with our utter inability to accomplish anything of value apart from him. This is what Jesus meant when he said, **“I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”***

Even more important is the subtly fatal goal we will achieve when we pursue the American dream. As long as we achieve our desires in our own power, we will always attribute it to our own glory. To use Adams’s words, we will be “recognized by others for what (we) are.” This, after all, is the goal of the American dream: to make much of ourselves. But here the gospel and the American dream are clearly and ultimately antithetical to each other. While the goal of the American dream is to make much of us, the goal of the gospel is to make much of God.

In direct contradiction to the American dream, God actually delights in exalting our inability. He intentionally puts his people in situations where they come face to face with their need for him. In the process he powerfully demonstrates his ability to provide everything his people need in ways they could never have mustered up or imagined. And in the end, he makes much of his own name.

Consider the story of Joshua outside of Jericho, a strong city with massive walls surrounding it. Certainly, Joshua was anxious about leading the people of God in his first battle as commander. I can imagine the sense of inadequacy he felt as he contemplated the task before him.

That’s why, at the end of Joshua 5, we see him alone, wondering about the combat that lies ahead. But suddenly God appears. In that moment God promises Joshua that his side will win the battle, and he gives Joshua the plans.

You can almost picture Joshua as he listens, thinking. What will it be? A frontal assault? A trick of some kind? Or just lay a siege and starve them out? Put yourself in Joshua’s shoes as you hear these battle plans:

March around the city once with all the armed men. Do this for six days. Have seven priests carry trumpets of rams’ horns in front of the ark. On the seventh day, march around the city seven times, with the priests blowing the trumpets. When you hear them sound a long blast on the trumpets, have all the people give a loud shout; then the wall of the city will collapse and the people will go up, every man straight in.

Let’s be honest. That’s weird. If you’re Joshua, you’re wanting a second opinion at this point.

Why did God design this battle plan for taking the first city in the Promised Land? Don’t miss what God was doing. He was divinely orchestrating the events of his people so that in the end only he could get the glory for what would happen. Read the rest of Joshua 6, and you will see them take the city of Jericho just as God had outlined.

But notice carefully what you don’t see. You don’t see all the Israelites going up to the trumpet players and telling them what an incredible job they did that day. I can almost hear them now: “Abishai, I’ve never heard you play that well.” Nimrod, when you hit the high C, that was beautiful, man.” No, instead you see the people of Israel realizing that only God could have done this. This is how God works. He puts his people in positions where they are desperate for his power, and then he shows his provision in ways that display his greatness.” - Platt

Bruce Wilkerson wrote: *“When you first began to serve the Lord, your relationship was young and vibrant. It had to be because your competence was weak, but over time your competence increased. At this stage, the fulfillment you experienced from your competence approximately equaled the fulfillment you experienced from your relationship with the Lord. Pretty soon, your competence became apparent to all. You had never been more productive for God.*

*But your walk with Him began to suffer. Your satisfaction dropped. So, you threw even more energy into your work, hoping to recapture your former fulfillment. Put relationship with Me first. If you do, you’ll find the joy that you’re missing now and so much more. **God didn’t want me to do more for Him, He wanted me to be more with Him.** I saw the real reason my busy Christian life now left such a bland taste in my mouth—I’d become an expert at serving God but somehow a novice at being His friend.”*

The LORD often touches my heart and draws me close to Himself through music. ***Hymn of Heaven*** has been a blessing!

How I long to breathe the air of Heaven where pain is gone, and mercy fills the streets. To look upon the One who bled to save me and walk with Him for all eternity. Oh, there will be a day when all will bow before Him. There will be a day when death will be no more. Standing face to face with He who died and rose again Holy, holy is the Lord.

Hymn Of Heaven

Phil Wickham

How I long to breathe the air of Heaven
Where pain is gone, and mercy fills the streets
To look upon the One who bled to save me
And walk with Him for all eternity

There will be a day when all will bow before Him
There will be a day when death will be no more
Standing face to face with He who died and rose again
Holy, holy is the Lord

And every prayer we prayed in desperation
The songs of faith we sang through doubt and fear
In the end, we'll see that it was worth it
When He returns to wipe away our tears

Oh, there will be a day when all will bow before Him
There will be a day when death will be no more
Standing face to face with He who died and rose again
Holy, holy is the Lord

And on that day, we join the resurrection
And stand beside the heroes of the faith
With one voice, a thousand generations
Sing, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain"
"Forever He shall reign"

So let it be today we shout the hymn of Heaven
With angels and the saints, we raise a mighty roar
Glory to our God who gave us life beyond the grave

Holy, holy is the Lord
Holy, holy is the Lord
Holy, holy is the Lord

We are to be the sweet aroma of Jesus but sometimes we have spiritual BO. Just as we would not apply our favorite perfume on top of old body odors, we cannot apply the fragrance of Christ with sin in our life. We must begin with a time of cleansing: **If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.** I Jn. 1:9 Nothing so quickly robs us of our joy and love in the Lord and short-circuits His power in our lives than unconfessed sin.

When you plant a garden, do you reserve a spot for weeds? How ridiculous would that be! Yet, in our spiritual lives we sometimes reserve spots for “weeds”- for sins we are unwilling to give up. If I want a beautiful yard, I must intentionally deal with the weeds. The same is true in a spiritual sense. We can’t ignore the “weeds”. We need to confess our sin - not make excuses for it. Let’s ask the LORD to recapture our hearts and let us see our sin as He sees it and genuinely repent. *Regret focuses on something that cannot be changed. Repentance focuses on what needs to change.*



Twice a year Dave comes to clean my pool filters. The filters collect dirt and grime, which must be washed away for the pool to function as it should. The dirty filter stands in stark contrast to the one that has been cleaned. I’m grateful for this word picture which reminds us that Jesus forgives our sins and cleanses us from all unrighteousness!



The first time Dave came to clean my pool filters I shared with him how Jesus had changed my life. His response: *You’re just like my wife – always happy!* Dave told me that his wife knows Jesus, but he does not. When he called last week to reschedule because he was sick, I assured him I would be praying for him. He immediately told me that his wife had asked him, *“Don’t you have a customer who prays for you?”* We never know when we might be an answer to someone’s prayer!



I recently met Tyler at the Post Office. As we walked in, I thanked him for wearing a helmet. We left at the same time and chatted outside for a while. The Lord opened the opportunity to ask where he was spiritually. He said he used to believe when he was young but doesn’t believe now because of some things that have happened. I assured him that God loves him and wants to have a relationship with him. He said I know we won’t live forever and when it’s my time I hope I will pass judgment if God judges. Oh, how my heart breaks for Tyler who will be eternally lost without Jesus. I told him I would pray for his safety as he commutes daily from Mesa to Scottsdale and ask the Lord to reveal Himself to him. He thanked me and waved as he left. I’m praying for Tyler and hope our paths cross again!

The Greatest Gift – Steve and Annie Chapman

You can give your children houses, you can give them land,
the riches of your efforts and all your best laid plans.

But of all that they inherit, of all that you could "will"
please include the unseen treasure of the life that God has filled.

Someday the house will crumble, time will turn the land to dust.
And when all accounts are empty where will you invest their trust?

But if the riches that you give them, is the wisdom of His ways,
then the wealth you leave your children will last through all their days.



Jonathan is an incredible father, and I am grateful that he loves and follows Jesus! I sent him a fun shirt for Father’s Day – made him laugh!

Keeping my eyes on Jesus,

Sara