

THE DASH

“Glorifying God in the Brevity of Life”

Part 3

Opening SCRIPTURE

In the Gospel of Matthew, Matthew records that a lawyer once tried to trick Jesus by asking Him what the greatest commandment was in the Old Testament Law. Jesus replied...

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Matthew 22:36-39)

Prayer of Contemplation & Blessing

ENGAGING the Audience

John Wesley once said...

“The Possessor of heaven and earth placed you here, not as a proprietor, but as a steward.”

A proprietor is someone who possesses an exclusive right or title to something.

If we're honest with each other, when it comes to life, we like to think that we are proprietors, don't we? We like to think that we own the exclusive rights and titles to everything in our possession.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

John Wesley reminds us that we are not exclusive owners and titleholders of what we have in this life. God is the Proprietor – we are His stewards. Everything we have and enjoy belongs exclusively to God and He has called us to manage and invest these gifts for His glory and the furtherance of His kingdom.

Making the CONNECTION

Relationships are one of the most valuable gifts God has entrusted to our stewardship.

Have you ever considered the Great Commandment to be a stewardship verse?

Most people haven't!

Yet, that is precisely what the Great Commandment is. The Great Commandment is a call for every Christian to manage and invest in their relationships for the glory of God and the furtherance of His kingdom.

To be specific, the Great Commandment focuses on two types of relationships – a vertical relationship with God and horizontal relationships with people.

Let's stop and think about the Great Commandment for a minute. When He was sarcastically asked to define humanity's greatest purpose and mission in life, Jesus emphasized relationships. Jesus didn't mention money, fame, success, or education. Nor did Jesus mention evangelism, missions, or building cutting-edge church facilities.

The single greatest call on your life is to manage and invest in your relationship with God thru Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. God gave you His only Son and, thru the Cross and Resurrection, He gave you forgiveness, salvation, peace, and hope. In return, God expects you to invest in a personal and intimate relationship with Him.

Likewise, your second greatest purpose in life is to manage and invest in the divinely appointed human relationships God has placed in your life. Think about the divinely appointed relationships that God has placed in your life right now. These relationships include your spouse, your children, your parents, your siblings, your church family, your friends, and your coworkers. Like our relationship with Him, God also expects that we manage and invest in these relationships.

How are we managing and investing in our relationship with God? God gave and sacrificed His only Son, Jesus Christ, so that He could have a relationship with you and me. Think about that! God nailed His Son to the Cross of Calvary because He longed to be in a personal relationship with us.

What are we doing to deepen our love and passion for God?

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5
Poor Average Great

How about your human relationships? Husbands and wives, how are we managing and investing in our marriage? Parents, how are we managing and investing in our children? Children, how are you managing and investing in your relationship with your parents, siblings, and schoolmates? Adults, how are we investing in our relationships with our church family, friends, and coworkers?

What are we doing to deepen our love and passion for the God has placed in our lives?

1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5
Poor Average Great

Unfortunately, statistics abound that reveal poor stewardship in the area of relationships.

Consider this...

- The average Christian spends less than 10 minutes per day communing with God. That's just a little over one hour per week. **That's not good stewardship!**
- The average married couple spends four minutes per day in meaningful conversation with each other. That's not even 30 minutes per week. **That's not good stewardship!**
- 55% of married women with two or more children say that they have a date night with their husband once every six months or less. **That's not good stewardship!**
- According to the Barna Research Group, 85% of parents with children under 13 believe they have the primary responsibility for teaching their children about Jesus Christ. However, the survey of 1,010 adults found that this same percentage of parents have no plan for the spiritual development of their children and do not consider it a priority in their lives. **That's not good stewardship!**

Exploring the SCRIPTURE

Why are so many people poor stewards of their relationships with God and people? How do we change course? How do we become faithful stewards of our relationship with God and people?

Let's turn to Colossians 3 for our answer.

In most Bible translations, this chapter is called "**Put on the New Self.**" When you read this chapter carefully, it becomes clear that Paul is challenging us to be faithful stewards of our relationships. Divine and human relationships are the object of everything Paul discusses and commands in this chapter.

Let's read together Colossians 3!

Our Relationship with God thru Christ Jesus (vs. 1-3)

To begin with, Paul emphasizes our relationship with Christ. Look at what Paul says...

*“If then you have been raised with Christ, **seek** the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. **Set your minds** on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.”*

Twice in these opening two verses, Paul gives us Greek verbs in the imperative mood – a mood that emphasizes urgent action.

These opening two verses hold the key to faithful stewardship of our relationships with God and people. The key is simple...

Keep the gaze of your eyes, the meditations of your mind, and the desires of your heart fixed on Christ Jesus and His Kingdom!

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus commands us to...

“Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.” (Matthew 6:33)

In his letters to the Philippians, Paul writes...

“...whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is a any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.” (Philippians 4:8)

The key to enjoying intimate, God-glorifying relationships with God and people is having eyes, thoughts, and desires that have been captured by the glory and splendor of Christ and His heavenly Kingdom.

Yet, the moment our gaze tumbles from the glory of Christ; the moment our thoughts wander away from the promise of heaven; the moment our desires seek the world instead of the Word, our relationship with God and people deteriorate at an alarming and destructive rate.

This principle cuts to the core of all broken relationships. When Christ and His Kingdom fall by the waste side, divine and human relationships break down.

Right now, today, what are your eyes fixed on? What are your thoughts meditating on? What are your desires longing for? If the answer isn't Christ and His Kingdom, then there is a good chance that your relationships with Christ and people are suffering.

Roadblocks to God-honoring Relationships (vs. 5-11)

In verses 5-11, Paul transitions from our relationship with Christ to our relationship with people.

In these six verses, I want you to see two very important verb phrases.

The first comes in verse 5 when Paul says, **“Put to death...”** This is another imperative mood verb demanding urgent action. This verb literally means to deprive of power and stop completely. What does Paul demand that we “put to death”? What does Paul urge us to deprive of power and stop completely?

“Sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desires, and covetousness.”

When we take our eyes off Christ and His Kingdom, we fall into sexual immorality, impurity, evil desires, and covetousness – all of which are sins that radically affect our relationship with Christ and people.

The second verb phrase comes in verse 8 when Paul says, **“Put them all away...”** Once again, this is an imperative mood verb demanding action. This verb literally means to “strip off” and wholly separate oneself. What does Paul demand that we “strip off” and separate ourselves from?

“...anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another...”

When we take our eyes off Christ and His Kingdom, we succumb to anger and hatred toward others, we gossip about and slander other people, and we deceive people thru lying – all of which are sins that radically effect our relationship with Christ and people.

Do you see what happens when we take our eyes off of Christ and His Kingdom? Our relationship with the Triune God becomes cold, dry, and indifferent. And, when this breakdown occurs in our heavenly relationship, breakdown in our earthly relationships is only a matter of time.

Wrestling with the CONSEQUENCES

The consequences of taking our eyes off Jesus Christ profoundly impacts our human relationships.

Why are so many Christians living passionless, cold, and indifferent lives that seem void of the joy and power of Christ? The gaze of their eyes, the meditations of their mind, and the desires of their heart have been hijacked by our world.

Why are so many Christian teenagers and Christian marriages falling prey to sexual immorality? The gaze of their eyes, the meditations of their mind, and the desires of their heart are not fixed squarely on the glory of Christ and His heavenly kingdom.

Why are we as Christians so covetous of possessions we already have plenty of? The gaze of our eyes, the meditations of our mind, and the desires of our heart are not fixed squarely on the glory of Christ and His heavenly Kingdom.

Why are we as Christians being held captive to anger and hatred toward other people who have hurt us, offended us, betrayed us, or abandoned us? The gaze of our eyes, the meditations of our mind, and the desires of our heart are not fixed squarely on the glory of Christ and His heavenly Kingdom.

Why do we as Christians slander and gossip against brothers and sisters in Christ – tearing down the redeemed of Christ and dividing the Body of Christ? The gaze of our eyes, the meditations of our mind, and the desires of our heart are not fixed squarely on the glory of Christ and His heavenly Kingdom.

Why do we as Christians deceive and lie with our words? The gaze of our eyes, the meditations of our mind, and the desires of our heart are not fixed squarely on the glory of Christ and His heavenly Kingdom.

God-Glorifying Stewardship

We all have a “dash” and it’s but a mere a vapor.

Does your dash represent a life that is stewarding your relationship with God and people in a manner that brings God glory?

Does your dash represent a life that has mismanaged relationships?

There is no better time than right now to start making your dash count when it comes to the relationships God has entrusted to your care.

Your first step toward becoming a God-glorifying steward of your divine and earthly relationships is to...

Keep the gaze of your eyes, the meditations of your mind, and the desires of your heart fixed on Christ Jesus and His Kingdom!