

# **THE DASH**

## **“Glorifying God in the Brevity of Life”**

### Part 4

#### **ENGAGING the Audience**

On June 25, 2009, the king of Pop, Michael Jackson died. Michael Jackson was 50 years old.

In a split second, Michael Jackson’s dash was complete – 1959~2009. There will be no more moon walking, no more concerts, no more lavish spending spree’s.

Think about it for a minute. By the world’s viewpoint, Michael Jackson had it all. He had worldwide fame that was unrivaled. He had hundreds of millions of dollars – more money than he knew what do with. As an entertainer, few have ever enjoyed the success Michael Jackson enjoyed - only the Beatles and Elvis have sold more albums than Michael Jackson’s 300 million albums.

Yet, in the midst of his worldwide fame and popularity, his astonishing wealth, and his virtually unmatched success, Michael Jackson’s dash ended on a very sad note.

When Michael Jackson’s dash came to an unexpected end, he left behind a wake of broken relationships that will never be reconciled. He left behind a tumultuous relationship with his father whom he refused to forgive and be reconciled with. He left behind a fractured relationship with the biological mother of his children. Both of these relationships were so fractured that Michael Jackson intentionally left them out of his will. He also left behind three children who, at the moment he died, were parentless and whose future was at the mercy of the court.

When it came to some of the most important people in his life, Michael Jackson’s dash represents fractured relationships – relationships that will never be healed and reconciled.

Michael Jackson’s dash represents poor stewardship of relationships.

#### **Making the CONNECTION**

Can you imagine dying like Michael Jackson?

Can you imagine your dash coming to an end and leaving behind a wake of broken, unforgiven relationships with people? That’s exactly what Michael Jackson did!

Michael Jackson's tombstone could accurately read – **“A man who had everything accept healthy relationships.”**

### **What Kind of Steward Does Your Dash Represent?**

When it comes to the life we've been given by God, relationships are one of the greatest gifts He has entrusted to our stewardship. God expects us to manage our relationships in a manner that brings Him glory and fame.

Listen carefully!

**Our dash is more about how we steward relationships than anything else!**

When our dash ends it won't matter how famous or successful or wealthy or popular we were. What will matter is how we managed and invested in our relationships with Christ and people.

So, what kind of steward does God see you as at this point in your life?

- Are you a faithful steward of your relationship with God thru Christ Jesus the Lord?
- If you are a teenager, college student, or single adult – are you a faithful steward of your friendships, dating relationships, and the parent-relationship God has called you to honor?
- If you are a parent, are you a faithful steward of the precious relationships God has given you with your children?
- If you are married, are you a faithful steward of the sacred covenant relationship God has given you with your spouse?

### **Exploring the SCRIPTURE**

There isn't a person here this morning that hasn't failed to faithfully steward their relationships at some point in his or her life.

Human relationships are hard, aren't they? They're messy! They're fragile! They're easily broken!

Why?

We are sinful people! We are people who struggle daily with pride, selfishness, lust, greed, materialism, envy, covetousness, addiction, and jealousy just to name a few of our many battles with sin. When we succumb to these sins, and others, we fracture our relationship with God and people.

In **Colossians 3**, God teaches us thru the Apostle Paul how we should steward our relationships.

Last week, in examining the beginning of this text, we learned the first key to stewarding our relationships. Do you remember what it was? Our key was found in Colossians 3:1-3 where Paul writes...

*"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."*

What's the first key to stewarding our relationships for the glory of God?

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

The first 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 in our lives, our divine and human relationships break down.

In verses 5-11, Paul reminds us that this is precisely why sexual immorality, impurity, evil desires, covetousness, anger, wrath, malice, slander, gossip, deception, and prejudice enter our lives and wreak havoc on our relationships. All of which, by the way, are relational sins. Sexual immorality, covetousness, anger, slander, gossip, lying, and prejudice – these all involve another person.

Twice in these same verses, Paul commands us to **"put to death"** and **"put away"** these sins, which produce broken relationships with God and people. Paul exhorts us to literally kill and strip away these sins from our lives.

Now that we've put to death and stripped away those sins that fracture our relationships with God and people, it's time to clothe ourselves with the right garments.

## Colossians 3:12-17

In Colossians 3:12-17, God says...

*“**Put on** then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these **put on** love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts toward God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”*

Last week, Paul exposed the sin we need to kill and out off in order to be faithful stewards of our relationships. In verse twelve, Paul shifts gears by telling us what we need to **“put on”** in order to faithfully steward our relationships.

Just like the imperative commands Paul gave us to kill and strip off certain sins, he also urges us with an imperative command [“put on”] to clothe ourselves with a certain attitude towards people.

But, notice what Paul does before he exhorts us to clothe ourselves with the right attitude towards people. Paul reminds us of who we are in Christ.

Look carefully at Paul’s opening statement...

*“Put on then, **as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved...”***

In order to be the faithful stewards of our relationships that God has called us to be, we must never forget who we are thru Christ Jesus.

Who are we?

**We are the “elect” of God!**

We have been chosen by Christ to “bear fruit” for His glory.

*“You did not choose Me, but **I chose you** and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit...” (John 15:16)*

We are the ones whom God “predestined for adoption” before the foundations of world were created.

*“Blessed be the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as **He chose us** in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him.” (Eph. 1:3-4)*

We are people who were predestined by God to become His adopted children and heirs to His glorious Kingdom.

*“In love **He predestined us** for adoption through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will, to the praise of His glorious grace, with which He has blessed us in the Beloved.” (Eph. 1:5-6)*

We are the ones who have been “called out of darkness into the marvelous light” of Jesus Christ.

*“But **you are a chosen race**, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him **who called you** out of darkness into His marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.” (1 Peter 2:9-10)*

**We are the children of God who have been called to live “holy” lives!**

*“As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as He who **called you** is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’” (1 Peter 1:14-16)*

**We are the “pleasure” of God the Father!**

*“In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent His only Son into the world, so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be a propitiation for our sins.” (1 John 4:9-10)*

**The Second Key**

Here’s the second key to faithfully stewarding our relationships with God and people. Are you ready?

**Never forget who you are by God’s grace thru faith in Christ Jesus the Lord!**

You are a chosen child of the holy God. You have been made holy and called to live holy. You are the pleasure of God. Being a faithful steward of your relationships hinges on you understanding and embracing who you are by God's grace.

**We will never love people in a God-glorifying manner until we understand how we have been loved by God thru Christ Jesus.**

Just like the first key, the second key cuts to the core of all broken relationships. When we forget who we are by God's grace thru faith in Jesus Christ, divine and human relationships break down.

- **Have you forgotten that you have been chosen by God's grace alone to receive salvation thru faith in Christ Jesus?** God chose you when you could not choose Him.
- **Have you forgotten that God has called you out darkness and total depravity to live a life of holiness and righteousness?** You were dead in your trespasses and sins. (Eph. 2:1-3) You were a child of wrath. (Eph. 2:3) You possessed a heart of stone. (Ezek. 36:26-27)
- **Have you forgotten that God chose you and adopted you into His glorious Kingdom?** You were a spiritual orphan prior to God's grace.
- **Have you forgotten that you are the pleasure and delight of God the Father? God rejoices in you!** God sings over you! Thru Christ Jesus, your life brings God the Father great joy. (Zech. 3:17)

If the answer is yes to these questions, then there is a good chance that your relationships with Christ and people are suffering – if not completely broken.

When we stop seeing ourselves for who we are in Christ Jesus, we will stop seeing others and loving others the way God has called us to. And, when we stop seeing others and loving others thru the eyes and mind and heart of Christ, our relationships break down.

As a result, as Paul so graphically explains in verse 5-11, we sin against people sexually. We covet what other people have and thus become idolaters. We slander and murder people with our angry words. We lie and deceive people with our manipulative desires. We judge people with hearts full of pride of prejudice.

### **The Antidote**

So, what's the antidote?

The antidote is that we must "put on" the right things.

To begin with, we must **put on the attitude of Christ Jesus!**

Paul begins by telling us that we must put on...

*"...compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience..."*

Is this not the attitude that drove Jesus Christ to the Cross of Calvary that He might be an atoning sacrifice for your sins?

Paul puts it more succinctly in Philippians 2:5-8, when he writes...

*"Have this mind [attitude] among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking on the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."*

Is this not the Lord that Moses proclaimed on Exodus 34:6-7?

*"The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin..."*

Do you wear the attitude of Jesus Christ – an attitude of compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience towards others?

The second antidote is, for many Christians, the toughest one of all – forgiveness. If you are you going to be a faithful steward of your relationships, then you must **forgive others with the same intentionality that Jesus Christ forgives you** every time you sin against Him – which is daily to be sure.

Look what God exhorts us to do...

*"...if one has a complaint against another, forgive each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so also you must forgive."*

Do you forgive others that way Jesus forgives you? Have you forgotten, neglected, or just outright rejected the truth that we have been redeemed by Christ Jesus to be ambassadors of reconciliation?

God says...

*"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to Himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and **entrusting to us the message of reconciliation**. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us." (2 Cor. 5:17-20)*

How are you stewarding the message of reconciliation that God has entrusted to you? If there is anyone in your life, no matter who they are or what they've done to hurt you, that you are refusing to forgive? If so, then you are not faithfully stewarding God's ministry of reconciliation.

The third antidote is to **love people with the love of Christ!**

God says...

*"And above all these put on love, which binds everything together."*

Agape love is best defined as "the love God has for us through Jesus Christ."

As we've already seen through the words of Moses, God's love is unconditional. God's love is longsuffering. God's love is slow to anger and abounds in steadfastness and patience. God's love forgives sin and iniquities. God's love doesn't keep score. God's love doesn't waver. God's love continues without reciprocation. God's love endures all things. God's love never fails! (1 Cor. 13)

Are you an agape lover of people? Do you love people the way God, thru Jesus Christ, loves you?

Finally, the last antidote is **the indwelling Word of God!**

God says...

*"Let the Word of God dwell in you richly..."*

The word dwell literally means to "inhabit for the purpose of influencing for good." Is the Word of God inhabiting you and influencing you for good?

Remember and celebrate who you are in Christ. Put on the attitude of Jesus Christ. Forgive people the way Jesus Christ forgives you. Love people the way Jesus Christ loves you. Allow the word of God to inhabit you and influence you. Stewarding your relationships for the glory of God hinges on these principles.