

August Newsletter 2021

Thank you so much for your faithful support this month. We truly appreciate you and the Lord will use your giving for the kingdom as we place it in His hands with faith. Here's where we are in....

In Circumstances:

Sometimes small plans work out better than larger ones. One of the things the Lord has taught us this month is to not necessarily overshoot goals, but recognize our limits. The KISS (keep it simple stupid) technique comes to mind.

Even spiritually this can sometimes be good advice. I noticed me studying and reading all over the place trying to prepare what I was going to teach about this fall in the small group. Then the Lord, gently told me. "You know you are trying to figure out what this means and how this and that connect and how to figure out ways to teach the Word, have you tried just doing what it says rather than worry about the millions of meanings it could contain?" Just obey and trust me! John 5:39-40, "You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, ⁴⁰ yet you refuse to come to me to have life." Blessed is the one who hears the Word and obeys it." Lk. 11:28

I was reminded of a time, when I was talking to a friend, John, I was trying to explain what taking up your cross meant, and I started to speak of positional and progressive sanctification, and he said I like to keep things more simple, doesn't it just mean to lay everything at the cross and follow Him? It was some words to that effect. Which person do you think would be more probable to obey? Most likely, the one that keeps it simple! Do you know who actually complicated things in order to uphold the law? The Pharisees, and they missed the whole point and crucified Jesus, their own Messiah!

2 Corinthians 11:3, "But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ."

Another translation: "But I am afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ."

When we are devoted to Christ, the small things the ones that if devoted to over time grow bring peace to our souls if we would just listen to the Spirit to direct us in them, rather than being distracted by the "spectacular". Even more so, if you look at the healings of Jesus in the New Testament, many if not all the people that were healed had "simple faith"- they didn't have to exegete a passage into 50 different anecdotes, they just went to Jesus and begged and asked and believed, and it was through faith they were healed. Think of the centurion, "don't go to my house, just say the Word and it will be done. Or the woman with bleeding problem over 20 years, if I just touched his cloak I will be healed.

On the other hand, religion is what complicates things. The Lord also told me don't get caught up just trying to be a "spiritual" person, because that is the same thing as a religious person and it is a burden. Rather be like a child to enter my kingdom, they have an innocent faith and believe what their dad tells them in black and white no matter what. If daddy tells me, it's true! You don't have to necessarily understand how God does what he does, because he is God and we are human and we will never completely understand, but we can most certainly trust that He will do His mysterious and glorious kingdom work in our midst if we simply do what He says and trust in Him and place all our faith in Him.

1 Samuel 15:22, ²² But Samuel replied:

"Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the LORD?"

To obey is better than sacrifice,
and to heed is better than the fat of rams.

What I am not saying is that seeking understanding and wisdom is not worthwhile, what I am trying to say is that seeking Christ (our wisdom and righteousness) will bring about a more healthy order and no matter how much we desire to understand what God is trying to show us, we won't understand if we don't obey him, because the wisdom we seek is experiential and relational, not just head knowledge. So we seek wisdom in more than a book, but also in life itself, in all areas. "The wisdom of the prudent is to give thought to their ways, but the folly of fools is deception." Proverbs 14:8 And again we give thought to our ways in order to improve them.

So really what I am hearing from all this is Matthew 11:28, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Obey God with peace, not taking the load upon yourself to create the outcomes or results, leave those up to Him, He is God and we are not. I really believe one of the biggest burdens we can experience freedom from in Christ is the freedom from religion- "the law" (having to work at piety on our own, rather than place faith in the holiness and grace of Jesus Christ). So Paul exhorts us, "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by the yoke of slavery." Galatians 5:1

For salvation we all understand this, but placing the results or outcomes of our obedience/efforts in God's hands likewise needs to be in faith in Christ and not faith in ourselves or what we can come up with or do in our current life circumstances.

2 Cor. 3:6-9, "I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. So neither the planter nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow." Sometimes we can get caught up in trying so hard to understand up God is up to, we can forget about our part, to obey and follow Him. Another way to say that is looking too much in the future can cause you do not live fully in the present.

In Fundraising:

This month, mostly I helped take care of the kids while Rocio goes to night classes. We did continue the small group at Stonebridge Church in August and it was a huge blessing. That being said, as of July by God's grace and goodness, we have \$48,345.00 in pledges and one-time gifts. In the Partners account is \$20,220.75 (part of the \$48,345.00). Thanks to the Lord that puts us at 48% of the launching goal.

Both of these proverbs have really given me some strength or a "push" to persevere:

"Like clouds and wind without rain is one who boasts of gifts never given." Proverbs 25:14

"The way of the sluggard is blocked with thorns, but the path of the upright is a highway." Proverbs 15:19

The first really is a good way of saying if you tell someone you are going to do something, do it. Or we will be as it describes in 1 Cor. 13 as clanging symbols just making empty noise if without love. Oh Lord help us put our love in action! The first verse really spurred me on to finish well.

The second verse really helps to not give excuses, but really search for opportunities. It would seem as though the sluggard has a negative view and the upright a positive view. I don't really think it is to mean that the righteous have everything simple, but more of having a mindset of Phil. 4:13, "I can do anything in Christ you give me strength." Rather than seeing the obstacles as bigger than God.

Here are two more verses that are similar to the second proverb:

"What the wicked dread will overtake them; what the righteous desire will be granted." Proverbs 10:24

"A sluggard's appetite is never filled, but the desires of the diligent are fully satisfied." Proverbs 13:4

Spiritually

Really with so many things going on at once, Rocio and I really feel burned out and tired a lot. It is hard when life keeps going and going and we are dragging behind. I had this one thought, “when the more we try to get things to come together, it seems like the more they fall apart (regarding plans).” Then I am just reminded of that one verse that say all things come together in Christ Jesus: “For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.” Col. 1:19, also look above this verse... He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.” I was just thinking, the cross in that moment didn't look much like things were “coming together” much either, but what men intended for evil, God intended for good for the saving of many (Acts 4:27-28). The cross was planned beforehand, and was no mistake. So when life sometimes seems like it may not come together, remember God's sovereignty is the one making the tapestry with every gazillion little threads, and we can see but only a glimpse of it. The awesome thing also that the Lord is showing me more and more is that the more we are willing to receive and be with other people, the Lord can use this to help us see the way forward, when many times by ourselves trying to figure it out it just doesnt seem to work as well.



