



ARISE & BUILD

Cheerful Givers

Biblical Lessons on Stewardship

by George Grant

PARISH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
A Congregation of the Presbyterian Church in America
Franklin, Tennessee

ARISE & BUILD Generosity Initiative 2022

August 14 – September 25

Aug 14

Kick-off Sunday

Sermon: Haggai 1:1-11, A House for My Name.

Sabbath Supper Potluck after third service

Aug 20

Men and Boys Study: *Westminster Confession*

at the Parolini House, 4:30pm

Aug 21

Sermon: Haggai 1:12-15, Living in the Happily Ever After. Youth

Color War in the evening at church, 6:30pm

Aug 28

Sermon: Haggai 2:1-9, And Yet Again.

Youth Bible Study, 6:30pm

Sept 1

24-hour Prayer Vigil

Sept 4

Sermon: Haggai 2:10-19, Grace Upon Grace.

Youth Bible Study, 6:30pm

Sept 7

Men's Bible Study at church, 6am.

First Wednesday Prayer, 6:30pm.

Prodigal Prayer, 7:30pm.

Sept 11

Commitment Sunday

Sermon: Haggai 2:20-23, The Choosing of God.

Youth Bible Study, 6:30pm

Sept 18

Sermon: Jude 1-3, Contending for the Faith.

Youth Bible Study, 6:30pm

Sept 25

Celebration Sunday

Sermon: Jude 4-25, Abandoned for the Sake of Gain.

Sabbath Supper after 3rd service.

ARISE & BUILD: A Vision from Nehemiah

In 536 BC, when the Jewish people returned from exile after the 70 years of Babylonian captivity, they found their homes and villages devastated. Jerusalem's walls had been turned to rubble and the Temple of Solomon was an abject ruin.

But they were home.

So, the people gladly began to do the best they could with what they had. They had long prayed, "Next year in Jerusalem." Amidst the paucity and the lack, they rejoiced in the Lord's goodness.

As time went by though, the paucity and scarcity began to wear on them. Year after year they became more and more discouraged, exhausted, and distressed. After sixteen years of barely scraping by, they had to wonder: would their beloved home ever be adequate for them, for their children, for their grandchildren?

That is when Nehemiah showed up. After surveying the monumental task of restoring Jerusalem's glory, he set before the people a vision of hope and a plan to make that hope a reality. It would not be easy. It would involve risk. It would require sacrifice.

Everyone acknowledged that the work had to be undertaken. So, when Nehemiah said to them, "Arise and build," they did (Nehemiah 2:18).

The parallels with Parish are obvious. Though our present facilities are hardly rubble and ruin, they are without a doubt woefully inadequate. We're home, but all of us have grown weary, longing for a more accommodating home for our thriving covenant community.

So, without a doubt, it is time for us to hear and heed Nehemiah's challenge afresh. It will not be easy. It will involve risk. It will require sacrifice. But as was the case for the Jewish people so long ago, so it is with us: it is time for us to "Arise and build."

George Grant

INTRODUCTION: OUR GOD REIGNS

Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

2 Corinthians 9:6

A woman came with an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard, very costly, and she broke the flask and poured it over Christ's head. Some there were indignant at the wasteful extravagance. But the Lord said, "Let her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a good thing."

Mark 14:3,4, 6

Everything we are and everything we have come to us as a gift from the Lord God Almighty. This is because everything that is now, ever was, or ever will be is His domain, His possession, and His provision. The Bible makes this clear from start to finish:

"The Lord God Most High is the possessor of heaven and earth."

Genesis 14:22

"Behold, to the Lord your God belong heaven and the highest heavens, the earth and all that is in it."

Deuteronomy 10:14

"The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world, and those who dwell in it. For He founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the rivers."

Psalms 24:1-2

The pages of history are littered with the sad remains of mankind's attempted autonomy and independence from the Lord. Thinking that they were in control, that they were sovereign, that they were the source of their power, influence, and possessions, even the greatest kings, most brilliant innovators, and most competent leaders of history have in the end had to face their ultimate inadequacy, mortality, and impotence. Take the story of Nebuchadnezzar for example:

"All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar: at the end of the twelve months he was walking about the royal palace of Babylon. The king spoke, saying, 'Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of majesty?' While the word was still in the king's mouth, a

voice fell from heaven: 'King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: the kingdom has departed from you. And they shall drive you from men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. They shall make you eat grass like oxen; and seven times shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses.'"

Daniel 4:29-32

He was the greatest king of the ancient world. His reign was resplendent with glory, honor and power. The city that he built was utterly magnificent, unrivaled in its scope and vision. The empire that he assembled was mythically proportioned, unrivaled in its strength and valor. The reputation that he forged was terrifyingly universal, unrivaled in its supremacy and vastness. And yet, Nebuchadnezzar was still but a man.

He thought he was something more. He imagined for himself a majesty that transcended that of all other men. He reveled in the storehouse of his great pride. He boasted of his invincibility. He thought that everything he had and everything he was came as a result of his efforts, his abilities, and his cunning.

But then, God humbled him. He decreed that Nebuchadnezzar would be reminded of the frailty and dependence of human flesh. He decreed that the great king would be forced to acknowledge a King greater still.

"Immediately the word concerning Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled; and he was driven away from mankind and began eating grass like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven, until his hair grew like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws."

Daniel 4:33

The demise of Nebuchadnezzar was a vivid demonstration to all the citizens of Babylon that God alone is sovereign and all-mighty, (Revelation 17:14), that God alone is exalted and praised (Psalm 148:13), that God alone is the possessor of all greatness, power, glory, and majesty in heaven and on earth (1 Chronicles 29:11).

The lesson was not lost on the king or his subjects:

"But at the end of that period, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever. For His dominion is an everlasting dominion; and His Kingdom endures from generation to generation. And all the inhabitants of the earth are counted as nothing, but He does according to His

will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. And no one can ward off his hand or say to him: 'What hast Thou done?' At that time my reason returned to me. And my majesty and splendor were restored to me for the glory of my kingdom, and my counselors and my nobles began seeking me out; so I was reestablished in my sovereignty, and surpassing greatness was added to me. Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt, and honor the King of heaven, for all His works are true and His ways just, and He is able to humble those who walk in pride."

Daniel 4:34-37

Nebuchadnezzar had to learn the hard way that God and God alone is, "Supreme of all" (Isaiah 40:17-18). He had to learn that God is, "The King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Timothy 6:15). He had to learn that, "The Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. Hallelujah" (Revelation 19:6).

As the Apostle Paul later expressed it, the entire creation reflects the preeminence and the centrality of Christ's ongoing regency:

"For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in the earth, visible or invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him: and He is before all things and by Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence."

Colossians 1:16-18

The Bible is absolutely clear on this point. There is nothing in heaven above or on earth below that escapes His jurisdiction or His providence. As the maker and sustainer of the heavens above and the earth below, God rules the forces of creation:

"I know that the Lord is great, and that our Lord is above all gods. Whatever the Lord pleases, He does, in heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps. He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth; who makes lightnings for the rain; who brings forth the wind from His treasures."

Psalms 135:5-7

"He sends forth His command to the earth; His word runs very swiftly. He gives snow like wool; He scatters the frost like ashes. He cast forth His ice as fragments; Who can stand before His cold? He sends forth His Word and melts them; He causes His wind to blow and the waters to flow."

Psalms 147:15-18

“For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things.”

Romans 11:36

“The Lord has made everything for His own purpose.”

Proverbs 16:4

As the sustainer of all providence and purpose, God rules over the whole course of history:

“He works all things after the counsel of His own will.”

Ephesians 1:11

“Remember the former things long past, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying, My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure.”

Isaiah 46:9-10

“For not from the east, nor from the west, nor from the desert comes exaltation; but God is the Judge; He puts down one, and exalts another.”

Psalms 75:6-7

“Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast. The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the plans of His heart from generation to generation”

Psalms 33:8-9,11

As the sovereign over both men and cultures, God rules over the hearts and minds and ways of us all:

“A man’s heart devises his way, but the Lord directs his steps.”

Proverbs 16:9

“For in Him we live, and move, and have our being.”

Acts 17:28

“It is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.”

Philippians 2:13

“For this God is our God for ever and ever, He will be our guide even unto death.”

Psalms 48:14

As the King over all kings and the Lord over all lords, God rules all the nations of the earth:

“For the Kingdom is the Lord’s, and He rules over the nations.”

Psalm 22:28

“Why are the nations in an uproar, and the peoples devising a vain thing? The kings of the earth take their stand, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed: Let us tear their fetters apart, and cast away their cords from us!” He who sits in the heavens laughs, the Lord scoffs at them. Then He will speak to them in His anger and terrify them in His fury.”

Psalm 2:1-5

“The Lord nullifies the counsel of the nations; He frustrates the plans of the peoples.”

Psalm 33:10

“And they sang the song of Moses the bond-servant of God and the song of the Lamb, saying, ‘Great and marvelous are Thy works, O Lord God, the Almighty: Righteous and true are Thy ways, Thou king of the nations. Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? For Thou alone are holy; for all the nations will come and worship before Thee, for Thy righteous acts have been revealed.’”

Revelation 15:3-4

“Arise, O God, judge the earth! For it is Thou who dost possess all the nations.”

Psalm 82:8

God rules everything and everyone, everywhere and at all times—because as the maker and creator, His provenance is over all. For, “The Lord has established His throne in the heavens, and His sovereignty rules over all” (Psalm 103:19).

Nebuchadnezzar had to learn all this the hard way. Thankfully, we don’t have to. In fact that is the brilliance of learning to practice Biblical stewardship (the proper use of our time, talents, and possessions), is that it is a constant reassertion at the most practical level of our lives that God is God. Learning the disciplines of sacrificial giving, the exercise of our gifts, mutual ministry, care for the poor, laying up an inheritance for our children, careful management of our money, looking after the orphans and widows in their distress, and blessing our community is ultimately the most practical demonstration of what it is that we truly believe.

This month-long devotional booklet is very intentionally aimed at getting us as a covenant community into the Scriptures. The selected Biblical passages are purposefully exemplified and elucidated only by a handful of historical illustrations and notable quotations. Although financial seminars, capital campaigns, and stewardship drives are helpful resources to equip and enable our families to do what we ought to do, only the revelation of the Lord in His Word is sufficient to equip and enable our families to be what we ought to be.

May we become those who proclaim with our calendars, our wallets, and our callings the glorious reality that, “Our God reigns” (Isaiah 52:7).

CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP

Give Cheerfully

2 Corinthians 9:7

Give Generously

2 Chronicles 31:5, 1 Chronicles 29:14-17, 1 Timothy 6:17-19

Give Systematically

Deuteronomy 14:22, Genesis 28:16-22, Proverbs 3:9-10

Give Reverently

Matthew 2:11, Deuteronomy 14:23, Leviticus 22:20, Malachi 1:6-9

Give Proportionally

1 Corinthians 16:2, Deuteronomy 16:17, Exodus 35:5, Ezra 2:69

Give Joyfully

2 Chronicles 24:10, 29:17, and 29:36, 2 Corinthians 8:2

Give Willingly

2 Corinthians 8:12, Exodus 35:21-22, 1 Chronicles 29:6

Give Regularly

Deuteronomy 16:16, 1 Corinthians 16:12, Nehemiah 10:35-39

Give Faithfully

Deuteronomy 14:27, 2 Chronicles 31:4-8

Give Expectantly

Malachi 3:8-10, Genesis 28:20-22, Luke 6:38, 2 Corinthians 9:6-11

Give Eternally

Matthew 6:19-20, 1 Timothy 6:19, Mark 10:21, Hebrews 11:13-16

Give Extravagantly

John 12:1-8, Mark 12:41-44, 1 Chronicles 29:2-9, Exodus 35

Give Thoughtfully

Haggai 1:3-11

WEEK ONE

The Need of the People of God to Arise and Build

(Neh 1:3, 2:17)

“And they said to me, “The remnant there in the province who had survived the exile is in great trouble and shame. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are destroyed by fire.”

Nehemiah 1:3

“Then I said to them, “You see the trouble we are in, how Jerusalem lies in ruins with its gates burned. Come, let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer suffer derision.”

Nehemiah 2:17

SERMON NOTES
Sunday, August 14: *“A House for My Name”*
Haggai 1:1-11

It's never the perfect time

Meanwhile, it's all about me

Consider your ways

Setting priorities

URGENCY AND PATIENCE—WILLIAM WILBERFORCE *Stewardship of Time and Care for the Poor and Despised*

Again and again the Scriptures underline the importance of each moment that passes. It is an ethical imperative to act and act quickly when lives are at stake, when justice is perverted, when truth is in jeopardy, when mercy is at risk, when souls are endangered, and when the Gospel is assaulted. We are admonished to “make the most of our time” (Ephesians 5:15). We are to “redeem the time” (Colossians 4:5). We are to utilize “every day to the utmost” (Hebrews 3:13). In short, we are to sanctify the time (Ecclesiastes 3:1-8). Decisiveness, determination, single-mindedness, constancy, diligence, and passion must inform our agenda. Such is the characteristic of holy zeal.

At the same time, the Bible makes it plain that victory will not be won in a day, however fervently we act. It will take time—perhaps generations. In the interim, we are to rest and rely on God’s “very great and precious promises” (2 Peter 1:3). We are to trust that His sovereign working will indeed make all things right (Romans 8:28) and that His good providence will by no means be thwarted (Ephesians 1:11). Though the times are hard and all the earth cries out under the burden of wickedness, injustice, and perversion, we have the assurance that God’s purposes will not ultimately be frustrated. We need not be anxious (Philippians 4:6). We need not worry (Matthew 6:25). We need not fret (Luke 12: 22). Instead, we are to be patient in hope (Romans 8:5). We are to be patient in affliction (Romans 12:12). We are to be patient in our preaching (2 Timothy 4:2). We are to clothe ourselves in patience (Colossians 3:12). And we are to endure in patience (Revelation 3:12). The pace we set must be steady. Because the task we face will not soon be dispatched. Such is the characteristic of holy patience.

Our stewardship of time calls for both: urgency and patience. We must be zealous for that which is good and right and true. But we must also persevere by resting in God’s good providence.

Perhaps no man in all of history demonstrates the integration of these two godly virtues as well as William Wilberforce (1759-1833) did throughout his life. A member of the British Parliament, he introduced anti-slavery measures year after year for 40 years. He never wavered. He never tempered his fervency. And yet, he never resorted to revolutionary insurgency. He stood fast and firm. Finally, in 1833, as he lay dying, word was brought him that the bill to outlaw slavery everywhere in the British Empire had

finally been passed. The dream for which he had struggled for decades was now within sight of fulfillment. His steady patience and uncompromising urgency had finally won the day.

As a youth Wilberforce had been a witty, somewhat dissipated man about town who had misspent his time at Cambridge and squandered his considerable talents on silly amusements. He was a member of the high society elite and he reveled in it. A friend of William Pitt—who later became Prime Minister—and himself a Member of Parliament, Wilberforce seemed assured of a bright political future. But then in 1784, after winning his election in Yorkshire, he accompanied his sister to the Riviera for her health. As an afterthought, Isaac Milner, a tutor at Queen's College Cambridge and acquaintance from college days was asked along.

Milner was a deeply pious evangelical Christian. He shared his testimony with the vacationers—particularly urging Wilberforce to commit his life to Christ. Wilberforce had always thought of himself a believer. But it was soon all too evident to him that a total commitment to Christ was demanded by the nature of the Gospel itself. He struggled in anguish for several months—during which time he read Philip Doddridge's *The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul*. Here was a faith far deeper than anything he had known. He fell under the sway of the Good News once and for all. He would never be the same. Neither would the British Empire.

After he returned home he had to wonder if it was proper for him to continue to hold a seat in the government. He confided his dilemma in Pitt. The ever-ambitious Pitt, wanting Wilberforce as an ally, urged him to remain. Still unsettled in his conscience, Wilberforce spoke to his pastor, John Newton. Best remembered as the author of the hymn *Amazing Grace*, Newton had been converted while a blasphemous sailor and slave trader. He too counseled Wilberforce to remain in politics—in order to be a champion of godly causes.

Shortly thereafter, Wilberforce not only determined to take up various causes, which would raise the standard of life and morals in England; he took up the abolitionist cause. He was supported in his efforts through the years by a group of Evangelical stalwarts known as the Clapham Sect—they were called that because a goodly number of them lived in the village of Clapham. Rarely in history have so many owed so much to so few. These dozen or so Clapham men and women not only fought side by side with Wilberforce through all those wearying years against slavery but also against every other sort of modern vice. They fought for everything from education for the poor masses, support of Bible societies, and private relief organizations to

protection of day laborers, creation of Sunday Schools, and establishment of orphanages.

But the greatest achievement was their provocation in Wilberforce's life of both urgency and patience that led to the abolition of slavery. As David Vaughan has portrayed in his fine biography, *Statesman and Saint*, just days after he heard the good news, Wilberforce died "altogether content—at last."

Prayerfully contemplate the following questions:

What does it mean to “sanctify the time”? (Ecclesiastes 3:1-8)

What is holy patience? (Revelation 3:12)

How does Wilberforce exemplify “holy zeal” by sanctifying his time?

How was Wilberforce able to be patient regarding the abolition of slavery in England?

Do you view the world and the things in it as belonging to God? How is that manifested in your daily walk with God?

DAY 1: GOD'S WORLD

For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the hills, and all that moves in the field is mine, the world and its fullness are mine.

Psalm 50:10-12

The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, declares the Lord of hosts.

Haggai 2:8

Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all.

1 Chronicles 29:11, 12

The Lord says, the land is mine. For you are strangers and sojourners with me.

Leviticus 25:23

But who am I, and what are my people, that we should be able thus to offer willingly? For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you. For we are strangers before you and sojourners, as all our fathers were. Our days on the earth are like a shadow, and there is no abiding. O Lord our God, all this abundance that we have provided for building you a house for your holy name comes from your hand and is all your own.

1 Chronicles 29:14-16

The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein.

Psalm 24:1

The world does not consider labor a blessing, therefore, it flees and hates it . . . but the pious who fear the Lord, labor with a ready and cheerful heart; for they know God's command and will, they acknowledge His calling.

Martin Luther

DAY 2: GOD'S PROVISION

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

James 1:17

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

Ephesians 1:3

If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

Matthew 7:11

God answered Solomon, "Because this was in your heart, and you have not asked possessions, wealth, honor, or the life of those who hate you, and have not even asked long life, but have asked wisdom and knowledge for yourself that you may govern my people over whom I have made you king, wisdom and knowledge are granted to you. I will also give you riches, possessions, and honor."

2 Chronicles 1:11, 12

Riches and honor are with me, enduring wealth and righteousness. My fruit is better than gold, even fine gold, and my yield than choice silver. I walk in the way of righteousness, in the paths of justice, granting an inheritance to those who love me, and filling their treasuries.

Proverbs 8:18-22

O Lord, you will ordain peace for us, for you have indeed done for us all our works.

Isaiah 26:12

Whatever God orders and whatever God guides, he provides. God's work, done in God's way, never lacks for God's supply.

J. Hudson Taylor

DAY 3: STEWARDSHIP

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. Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.

Colossians 3:17, 23, 24

For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's.

Romans 14: 7,8

Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me five talents; here I have made five talents more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.' He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.' But his master answered him, 'You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed?'

Matthew 25:19-21, 24-26

Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy.

1 Corinthians 4:2

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Matthew 6:19-21

In this world a person can only be complacent if he or she is young enough, has money enough, is well enough, and, at the same time, lacks compassion for those about him. As soon as we face reality, the obscenity of the present situation strikes us in the face.

Francis A. Schaeffer

DAY 4: OUR GIVING

And he sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums. And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny. And he called his disciples to him and said to them, "Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box. For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on."

Mark 12:41-44

Jesus looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the offering box.

Luke 21:1

For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have.

2 Corinthians 8:12

So they came, both men and women. All who were of a willing heart brought brooches and earrings and signet rings and armlets, all sorts of gold objects, every man dedicating an offering of gold to the Lord. And the leaders brought onyx stones and stones to be set, for the ephod and for the breastpiece. All the men and women, the people of Israel, whose heart moved them to bring anything for the work that the Lord had commanded by Moses to be done brought it as a freewill offering to the Lord.

Exodus 35:22, 27, 29

And all the princes and all the people rejoiced and brought their tax and dropped it into the chest until they had finished. And whenever the chest was brought to the king's officers by the Levites, when they saw that there was much money in it, the king's secretary and the officer of the chief priest would come and empty the chest and take it and return it to its place. Thus they did day after day, and collected money in abundance.

2 Chronicles 24:10, 11

Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as you can.

John Wesley

DAY 5: WHAT GOD ENTRUSTS TO US

Beware lest you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.' You shall remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day.

Deuteronomy 8:17, 18

If riches increase, set not your heart on them.

Psalm 62:10

Take care lest you forget the Lord your God by not keeping his commandments and his rules and his statutes, which I command you today, lest, when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and live in them, and when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied, then your heart be lifted up, and you forget the Lord your God.

Deuteronomy 8:11-14

Thus says the Lord: "Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me.

Jeremiah 9:23,24

Surely all mankind stands as a mere breath! Surely a man goes about as a shadow! Surely for nothing they are in turmoil; man heaps up wealth and does not know who will gather!

Psalm 39:5,6

It is better to be of a lowly spirit with the poor than to divide the spoil with the proud.

Proverbs 16:19

The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who live in the clefts of the rock, in your lofty dwelling, who say in your heart, "Who will bring me down to the ground?" Though you soar aloft like the eagle, though your nest is set among the stars, from there I will bring you down, declares the Lord. All your allies have driven you to your border; those at peace with you have deceived you; they have prevailed against you.

Obadiah 1:3-7

As thunder follows lightning, giving follows grace. When God's grace touches you, you can't help but respond with generous giving.

Randy Alcorn

DAY 6: BLESSED GIVING

They shall not appear before the Lord empty-handed.

Deuteronomy 16:16

So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow was there gathering sticks. And he called to her and said, "Bring me a little water in a vessel, that I may drink." And as she was going to bring it, he called to her and said, "Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand." And she said, "As the Lord your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. And now I am gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it and die." And Elijah said to her, "Do not fear; go and do as you have said. But first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterward make something for yourself and your son. For thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'The jar of flour shall not be spent, and the jug of oil shall not be empty, until the day that the Lord sends rain upon the earth.'" And she went and did as Elijah said. And she and he and her household ate for many days.

1 Kings 17:10-15

Then while yet unmarried with no income, Jacob, made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will keep me in this way that I go, then the Lord shall be my God, and of all that you, O Lord, give me I will give a full tenth to you."

Genesis 28:20-22

For in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For they the Macedonian Christians gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints in Jerusalem.

2 Corinthians 8:2-4

People go through 3 conversions: The conversion of their head, their heart, and their pocketbook. Unfortunately, not all at the same time.

Martin Luther

DAY 7: THE TITHE

But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and every herb, and neglect justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.

Luke 11:42

You shall tithe all the yield of your seed that comes from the field year by year, that you may learn to fear the Lord your God always.

Deuteronomy 14:22,23

You shall not delay to offer from the fullness of your harvest and from the outflow of your presses.

Exodus 22:29

Abram gave him a tenth of everything.

Genesis 14:20

Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, 'How have we robbed you?' In your tithes and contributions. You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you. Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need. I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of your soil, and your vine in the field shall not fail to bear, says the Lord of hosts.

Malachi 3:8-11

As soon as the command was spread abroad, the people of Israel gave in abundance the firstfruits of grain, wine, oil, honey, and of all the produce of the field. And they brought in abundantly the tithe of everything. And they faithfully brought in the contributions, the tithes, and the dedicated things.

2 Chronicles 31:5,12

First things belong to God. The first day of the week belongs to God. The first hour of the day belongs to God. The first portion of your income belongs to God. When you make God first, He can help you.

James MacDonald

WEEK TWO
A Prayerful People Ready to Build
Nehemiah 1:4-11

“As soon as I heard these words I sat down and wept and mourned for days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven.”

Nehemiah 1:4

“O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, and to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name, and give success to your servant today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man.”

Nehemiah 1:11

SERMON NOTES
Sunday, August 21: “*Living in the Happily Ever After*”
Haggai 1:12-15

Witness the *Ordo Salutis*

Trust and obey

The promise of Immanuel

To the work

A VICTORIAN LADY—ANNA BOWDEN

Stewardship for the Poor and Despised, the Widowed and Orphaned

India in the nineteenth century was no place for a lady—or at least, it was no place for an impressionable young lady, born and bred in the comfort and ease of Victorian England. It was a rough and tumble world of stark brutality and crass occultism. It was a chaotic and untamed spiritual negev.

The bestial cult of Kali enslaved millions in wretched fear and perversity. The cruel and impersonal rigors of Brahmanism racked millions more with the fickle whims of fashion and fancy. Still more were gripped in the bizarre downward spiral of fatalistic self-abasement, inhuman social stratification, and raw moral corruption of Vedacism. And besides these divergent branches of Hinduism, a jangling kaleidoscope of competing cosmic visions—Muslim, Sikh, and Buddhist—kept the great Asian sub-continent in under the pall of pagan tyranny and unrest.

Anna Bowden (1852-1873) was a consummate Victorian debutante. She was a lady. But she burst fearlessly onto that awful cultural landscape with faith, hope, and love. With a remarkable singleness of heart and soul, Anna left her family's comfortable Notting Hill social orbit of staid and privatized Anglicanism to enroll in Henrietta Soltau's mission training school in London. Formed as an adjunct to the work of J. Hudson Taylor's China Inland Mission, the school provided candidate screening and intensive preparation for women who had yielded to the call of overseas evangelization.

Late in 1871, Robert Campbell-Green, an itinerant Scots Presbyterian evangelist working in southern India, visited the school to deliver a short series of devotional talks on the many new missionary inroads that he had recently witnessed in the Mysore, Madras, and Pradesch provinces. He related the brutal realities of the dominant Hindu culture—the awful disrespect of the poor, the weak, the helpless, and the low-born as well as the spiritual captivity to dark and damning passions. Anna was completely mesmerized. She felt an irresistible call to take the good news of the Gospel and the succor of Christ to that desperate land. Though only midway through her training, she immediately—almost impulsively—committed herself to the fledgling work there. A month later, she set sail for Conjeevaram.

Her idealistic travel journal conveys the overriding vision that she carried into the work, “I know not the challenges that face me among peoples who

live but for death. I do know though, the grace of the Savior that has called me to die but for life.”

When she arrived in Conjeevaram—a seacoast town about twenty-five miles north of Kancheepuram and about forty miles south of Madras—she discovered that the mission compound of Campbell-Green had been abandoned. Apparently, there was nothing to indicate what had happened or where the missionaries had gone. The only other English-speaking residents in the region—a small community of Scottish fabric exporters—could only say that the mission had been vacant for quite some time and that the residents of the compound had suddenly disappeared without a trace.

Despite this staggering turn of events, Anna remained undeterred. Working with the occasional and begrudging aid of the Scots merchants, she refurbished the mission’s decrepit facilities and reopened its tiny clinic and school. And although most of the local residents generally maintained a cool distance, Anna’s tender and magnetic personality drew innumerable children and outcasts, “untouchables”, into her circle. After only three months, her solitary efforts had begun to reap a bountiful harvest.

It was not long, however, before Anna’s jubilant optimism ran headlong into trouble. A fairly new Hindu reform movement had begun to spread in southern India—the Arya Samaj. Dedicated to the purification of Hinduism and a return to the traditional values of ancient paganism, the adherents of Arya Samaj were bitterly anti-Western and anti-Christian. They sought a ban on “proselytism” and reinstated such practices as immolation and *sarti*, the ritual sacrifice of widows on the funeral biers of their husbands, as well as *deyana* and *kananda*, cultic forms of female infanticide.

As Christians like Anna began to venture out to the “uttermost parts of the earth” during the nineteenth century’s burst of missionary fervor, it was inevitable that they would be forced to confront the awful fruits of untamed heathenism. They circled the globe only to find the specters of endemic poverty, recurring famine, unfettered disease, and widespread chattel slavery. Cannibalism, ritual abuse, patricide, human sacrifice, sexual perversity, petty tyranny, paternalistic exploitation, live burials, exterminative clan warfare, and genocidal tribal vendettas were ugly realities they discovered throughout Africa and Asia.

Anna simply could not stand idly by in the face of such horrors. Almost immediately she helped to set up a rescue network, providing ready escape for damned women and girls. Describing her motivation for such a course of action, she wrote, “The mandate of Holy Writ is plain. We must clothe

the naked, feed the hungry, shelter the shelterless, succor the infirmed, and rescue the perishing. I can do no less and still be faithful to the high call of our Sovereign Lord.”

Apparently, her crusade began to exact a toll on the traditionalist Hindu movement because early in 1873, Swami Dayanand Sarasvati, the leader of Arya Samaj appealed to Queen Victoria’s viceroy to have Anna stopped. In an attempt to keep the peace, the British administrator ordered Anna to refrain from any activities that were not “directly related to the operation of the missionary outpost.” Anna replied saying that rescuing innocent human life was indeed “directly related” to her mission work and that in fact, it was “directly related to any form of Christian endeavor, humanitarian or evangelistic.” She argued that the very image of God in man, His communicable attributes, the tangible manifestation of His character in the midst of this poor fallen world demanded that “Christian ideas be paired with Christian actions” and that “Christian doctrine be paired with Christian culture.” Impatient and dissatisfied with the viceroy’s meek handling of Anna, Sarasvati dispatched an angry mob of his followers to the mission compound. They burned several of the buildings to the ground, raped a number of the young girls who had come to live there, and tortured and killed Anna.

But that was not the end of Anna’s impact. The “clash of absolutes” that she helped to provoke highlighted the unbridgeable gulf between Christian ethics and heathen brutality. Her daring example sparked a revival within the missionary community in India and her journals—published shortly after her martyrdom—made a stunning impact throughout England. Perhaps most important of all, her commitment stimulated and mobilized the church to call on the government to fundamentally alter the essence of the policy of “non-interference,” not just in India, but wherever the Gospel went out around the globe, and to enforce a universal legal code rooted in the Christian vision of justice—which was in turn rooted in the very character and attributes of God.

Anna Bowden was a lady—an “elect lady” (2 John 1). And, India in the nineteenth century was just the place for her.

Prayerfully answer the following questions:

How did Anna Bowden extend hospitality to the outcasts through her work in India? (Hebrews 13:2-3)

How can the community at Parish Presbyterian Church live out the call to care for the poor in our midst—not just the poor we don't know? (Leviticus 25:35-37)

Anna Bowden attended to the impoverished and to those who had been abused by the pagan culture. What equivalents do we have of this in our own society?

List three ways you and your family will show hospitality to the poor and despised in and around Franklin.

DAY 8: TRUSTING GOD

Whoever trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will flourish like a green leaf.

Proverbs 11:28

As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.

1 Timothy 6:17

Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.

John 14:1

Job said: "If I have made gold my trust or called fine gold my confidence, if I have rejoiced because my wealth was abundant or because my hand had found much, and my heart has been secretly enticed, and my mouth has kissed my hand, this also would be an iniquity to be punished by the judges, for I would have been false to God above."

Job 31:24,25,27,28

Those who trust in their wealth and boast of the abundance of their riches? Truly no man can ransom another, or give to God the price of his life, for the ransom of their life is costly and can never suffice, that he should live on forever and never see the pit. For he sees that even the wise die; the fool and the stupid alike must perish and leave their wealth to others. Their graves are their homes forever, their dwelling places to all generations, though they called lands by their own names. Man in his pomp will not remain; he is like the beasts that perish.

Psalms 49:6-12

He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.

Jim Elliot

DAY 9: DECEPTIVE RICHES

For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.

Revelation 3:17

For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?

Mark 8:36

And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who hear the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.

Mark 4:18,19

And Jesus said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."

Luke 12:15

Do not toil to acquire wealth; be discerning enough to desist. When your eyes light on it, it is gone, for suddenly it sprouts wings, flying like an eagle toward heaven.

Proverbs 23:4,5

When goods increase, they increase who eat them, and what advantage has their owner but to see them with his eyes?

Ecclesiastes 5:11

For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

1 Timothy 6:10

Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.

Galatians 6:7

You are only poor when you want more than you have.

Dave Ramsey

DAY 10: TRAINING OUR CHILDREN TO GIVE

Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.

Proverbs 22:6

For I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice.

Genesis 18:19

And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.

Deuteronomy 6:6,7

We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders that he has done. He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children, that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments.

Psalms 78:4-7

Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Ephesians 6:4

I never would have been able to tithe the first million dollars I ever made if I had not tithed on my first salary, which was \$1.50 a week.

John D. Rockefeller

DAY 11: LEARNING CONTENTMENT

Now there is great gain in godliness with contentment, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content.

1 Timothy 6:6-8

He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income; this also is vanity.

Ecclesiastes 5:10

Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, lest I be full and deny you and say, "Who is the Lord?" or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God.

Proverbs 30:8,9

Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread "

Matthew 6:9-11

Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

Philippians 4:11-13

A Christian should follow his occupation with contentment. . . . Is your business here clogged with any difficulties and inconveniences? Contentment under those difficulties is no little part of your homage to that King who hath placed you where you are by His call.

Cotton Mather

The trouble with most people is their earning capacity doesn't match their yearning capacity.

Dave Ramsey

I have watched over 100,000 families over my years of investment counseling. I always saw greater prosperity and happiness among those families who tithed than among those who didn't.

Sir John Templeton

DAY 12: GOD AND OUR RESOURCES

“If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in that which is another’s, who will give you that which is your own? No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.”

Luke 16:11-13

The wage of the righteous leads to life, the gain of the wicked to sin.

Proverbs 10:16

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Matthew 6:19-21

How much better to get wisdom than gold! To get understanding is to be chosen rather than silver.

Proverbs 16:16

Why should a fool have money in his hand to buy wisdom when he has no sense?

Proverbs 17:16

Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy.

1 Corinthians 4:2

Your bank and credit card statements are theological documents. They tell who and what you worship.

Brian Kluth

Day 13: The Consequences of the Way We Live

Whoever loves pleasure will be a poor man; he who loves wine and oil will not be rich.

Proverbs 21:17

Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.

Galatians 6:7

And whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I kept my heart from no pleasure . Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun.

Ecclesiastes 2:10,11

The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth.

Ecclesiastes 7:4

But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power.

2 Timothy 3:1,2,4,5

A widow who is self-indulgent is dead even while she lives.

1 Timothy 5:6

Be not among drunkards or among gluttonous eaters of meat, for the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty, and slumber will clothe them with rags.

Proverbs 23:20,21

Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living.

Luke 15:13

Your use of money shows what you think of God.

J.C. Penney

DAY 14: WHAT TO LIVE FOR

And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings.

Luke 16:9

These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.

Hebrews 11:13-16

For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have.

Hebrews 13:14,16

Abraham was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.

Hebrews 11:10

Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

1 Corinthians 3:12-15

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

2 Corinthians 5:10

Only one life, 'twill soon be past; only what's done for Christ will last.

C.T. Studd

WEEK THREE

The Calling to Arise as Servants of the Lord and Build

Nehemiah 2:20

“The God of heaven will make us prosper, and we his servants will arise and build...”

Nehemiah 2:20

SERMON NOTES
Sunday, August 28: *“And Yet Again”*
Haggai 2:1-9

So, is this it?

The Lord of Hosts

The promise of the covenant

The latter glory

HOWEVER DIMLY—WENCESLAUS OF BOHEMIA

Stewardship of Resources

“The happy appearance of our Christ in the world has made for a new dispensation of civic virtue. Because the Lord abides forever, He has established His Throne for judgment, and He will judge the world in righteousness. He will surely execute judgment for the peoples with equity. The Lord also will be a Stronghold for the oppressed, a Stronghold in times of trouble. As a consequence, His earthly Vice-Regent must needs be a bastion of justice, mercy, and humility.”

Wenceslaus of Bohemia (907-929)

The legendary generosity and charity of Good King Wenceslaus of Bohemia, is no mere Yuletide fable. The young prince lived a life fraught with conflict and tragedy. Both his mother and grandmother, victims of court intrigue and anti-Christian conspiracy, were murdered when he was young. Likewise, he was the object of several plots, coups, and revolts—the last of which ultimately succeeded in ending his own short life and reign.

Yet, despite such persistent opposition and adversity, he was a model Christian servant-leader. Indeed, in contrast to the hubris of many lords and princes of the day, he styled himself “the mere vice-regent of Christ’s reign and rule in this realm.” He believed it was his calling and responsibility as a first generation Christian prince in the midst of a fiercely pagan culture “to reflect, however dimly, the offices of Christ in this world as a visible token of His happy appearance.” Thus, he reformed the penal system. He criminalized abuse of children and outcasts. He denounced wickedness in all its nefarious forms. He modeled personal virtue and humility. He guarded the family and the church from attacks within and without. And he exercised great compassion on the poor and helpless.

His royal grandparents, Borivoy and his queen, Ludmila, had been converted and baptized despite the strong opposition of a number of noble Czech families who wished to maintain their control over the Pagan cultus. Borivoy and Ludmila had a son, Ratislav who ultimately ruled the realm in their stead—a compromise with those powerful families designed to preserve the tenuous peace. In time, he married Drahomira, daughter of the chief of the Veletians, a Slav tribe from the north. Together, they had twin sons Wenceslaus and Boleslaus.

His godly grandmother Ludmila raised Wenceslaus while Boeslaus remained with his mother and father in the court. As a result, the future king was not only raised as a Christian, he was able to witness first hand the sacrifices believers had to undergo—apart from all the political intrigue of the royal court.

Wenceslaus was still young when his father died in battle. His mother Drahomira served as the regent for her sons. Alas, she was greatly influenced by the powerful pagan families still in Bohemia. She allowed a series of fiercely anti-Christian policies to be implemented throughout the land. During the persecutions that broke out, Ludmila was assassinated while she was praying. Though still just an adolescent, Wenceslaus found support from among the common people. After several months of struggle, Drahomira and Boleslaus were driven out and Wenceslaus was made ruler. He straightway announced the initiation of Scriptural standards of justice, mercy, and forgiveness—without prejudice—to all within the kingdom.

The little realm soon prospered under the young king's benevolent rule. Wenceslaus cultivated friendly relations with the Carolingian Empire by acknowledging Henry as the legitimate successor of Charlemagne in 926 and as a result, Bohemia enjoyed an extraordinary season of peace to compliment their new-found prosperity.

The poor particularly benefited from this happy estate. Wenceslaus understood only too well that whenever God commanded the priestly nation of Israel to imitate Him in ensuring justice for the wandering homeless, the alien, and the sojourner, He reminded them that they were once despised, rejected, and homeless themselves (Exodus 22:21-27; 23:9; Leviticus 19:33-34). It was only by the grace and mercy of God that they had been redeemed from that low estate (Deuteronomy 24:17-22). Thus they were to exercise compassion to the broken-hearted and the dispossessed. They were to serve. They were to protect. They were to speak the truth—in both word and deed. In short, they were to “reflect, however dimly, the offices of Christ in this world.”

Priestly privilege brings priestly accountability. Prophetic responsibility brings prophetic opportunity. Kingly authority brings kingly trust. Wenceslaus understood this. But he did more than just understand it theoretically, he applied it practically in the administration of his little realm. The result was that he inevitably reflected, “however dimly,” the goodness of grace and the mercies of Christ. He was deeply loved by his subjects. Wherever he went within the borders of the land he was thronged by well-wishers.

Eventually, the young king married and had a young son. Alas, the acclaim and good fortune became a bit too much for his exiled brother, Boleslaus, to bear. He became insanely jealous. And to make matters worse, Wenceslaus's son would now rule after the king died. That meant that Boleslaus would never have the chance to rule. Boleslaus decided to join a party of influential Pagan nobles that had formed against the crown.

Early one morning, as Wenceslaus made his way to church, he met his brother. Boleslaus struck Wenceslaus and they began to struggle. A number of the Pagan lords who accompanied Boleslaus ran up and killed Wenceslaus, who murmured as he fell at the chapel door, "Brother, may God forgive you."

The common people at once began to acclaim Wenceslaus a martyr. Miracles were even attributed to him. In time, Boleslaus, stricken with guilt and remorse, repented of his terrible deed and was himself gloriously converted. Amazingly, Wenceslaus by his death did what he was unable to do while he was living—he not only ensured the complete conversion of Bohemia, he was able to codify his deeds of mercy as a standard for Christian civic justice and mercy. By the beginning of the eleventh century the attempt of Wenceslaus to model, however dimly, the offices of Christ had made his land a beacon light of the Gospel in the midst of this poor fallen world.

Prayerfully consider the following questions:

Can it be said that you are a trustworthy steward of God's resources? Why or why not?

List three things that God has endowed you with that could be given back to Him in some portion in thanks for all He has done.

Is there hope for some reward or recognition attached to your giving? Do you seek only God's favor?

Do you feel compelled to give out of guilt or gratitude?

Do you offer God the first fruits of what he has given you?

Do you tithe from your income but forget justice and mercy?

DAY 15: THE DESIRE FOR MORE AND MORE

But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

1 Timothy 6:9,10

Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he [God] has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

Hebrews 13:5

He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income; this also is vanity. Sweet is the sleep of a laborer, whether he eats little or much, but the full stomach of the rich will not let him sleep.

Ecclesiastes 5:10,12

Bread gained by deceit is sweet to a man, but afterward his mouth will be full of gravel.

Proverbs 20:17

An inheritance gained hastily in the beginning will not be blessed in the end.

Proverbs 20:21

Woe to him who gets evil gain for his house, to set his nest on high, to be safe from the reach of harm!

Habakkuk 2:9

One gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want.

Proverbs 11:24

The most expensive vehicle to operate, per mile, is the shopping cart.

Dave Ramsey

DAY 16: TRUE ABUNDANCE

And he said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."

Luke 12:15

Achan answered Joshua, "When I saw a beautiful cloak of silver and gold, I coveted them and took them. And see, they are hidden in the earth inside my tent."

Joshua 7:20,21

Now there is great gain in godliness with contentment, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content.

1 Timothy 6:6-8

If riches increase, set not your heart on them.

Psalms 62:10

Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain! Turn my eyes from looking at worthless things; and give me life in your ways.

Psalms 119:36,37

Better is the little that the righteous has than the abundance of many wicked.

Psalms 37:16

Better is a little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure and trouble with it.

Proverbs 15:16

But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.

Luke 14:13,14

He who bestows his goods upon the poor shall have as much again, and ten times more.

John Bunyan

DAY 17: GIVING AND BLESSING

According to their ability they gave to the treasury of the work.

Ezra 2:69

Then you shall keep the Feast of Weeks to the Lord your God with the tribute of a freewill offering from your hand, which you shall give as the Lord your God blesses you.

Deuteronomy 16:10

For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.

Mark 12:44

Acts 11:29

So the disciples determined, everyone according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers living in Judea.

For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have.

2 Corinthians 8:12

For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord.

2 Corinthians 8:3

On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come

1 Corinthians 16:2

And going into the house they [the Wise Men] saw the child with Mary, his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.

Matthew 2:11

The only investment I ever made which has paid consistently increasing dividends is the money I have given to the Lord.

James Kraft

DAY 18: GOOD WORKS

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Ephesians 2:10

Mordecai said to Esther, "For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

Esther 4:14

In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

Matthew 5:16

And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God.

2 Corinthians 9:8,11

They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, 19 thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.

1 Timothy 6:18,19

And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works.

Hebrews 10:24

Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

1 Corinthians 15:58

You have not lived until you have done something for someone who can never repay you.

John Bunyan

DAY 19: EXTRAVAGANT GIVING

And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, “You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!” And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said to them again, “Children, how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.”

Mark 10:21-25

So Elijah departed from there and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen in front of him, and he was with the twelfth. Elijah passed by him and cast his cloak upon him. And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah and said, “Let me kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you.” And he said to him, “Go back again, for what have I done to you?” And he returned from following him and took the yoke of oxen and sacrificed them and boiled their flesh with the yokes of the oxen and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he arose and went after Elijah and assisted him.

1 Kings 19:19-21

A woman came with an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard, very costly, and she broke the flask and poured it over [Jesus’] head.

Mark 14:3

There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles’ feet.

Acts 4:34-37

You’ve heard of prayer warriors. What about giving warriors? God has entrusted us with so much. Perhaps He is raising up a great army of givers, and He’s calling us to enlist.

Randy Alcorn

DAY 20: GREAT THINGS

For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him. You have done foolishly in this, for from now on you will have wars.

2 Chronicles 16:9

Jonathan said to the young man who carried his armor, "Come, let us go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised. It may be that the Lord will work for us, for nothing can hinder the Lord from saving by many or by few." Then Jonathan climbed up on his hands and feet, and his armor-bearer after him. And they fell before Jonathan, and his armor-bearer killed them after him.

1 Samuel 14:6,13

And the Lord said to Gideon, "With the 300 men who lapped I will save you and give the Midianites into your hand, and let all the others go every man to his home."

Judges 7:7

Zerah the Ethiopian came out against them with an army of a million men and 300 chariots. And Asa cried to the Lord his God, "O Lord, there is none like you to help, between the mighty and the weak. Help us, O Lord our God, for we rely on you, and in your name we have come against this multitude. O Lord, you are our God; let not man prevail against you." So the Lord defeated the Ethiopians.

2 Chronicles 14:9,11,12

"Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit," says the Lord of hosts.

Zechariah 4:6

Then David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head. [A]nd all this assembly may know that the Lord saves not with sword and spear. For the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hand."

1 Samuel 17:45-47

The world has yet to see what God can do with a man fully consecrated to Him.

Dwight L. Moody

DAY 21: BLESSING OTHERS

The wage of the righteous leads to life, the gain of the wicked to sin.

Proverbs 10:16

God shall bless us; let all the ends of the earth fear him!

Psalms 67:7

One gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want.

Proverbs 11:24

“If among you, one of your brothers should become poor, in any of your towns within your land that the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother, but you shall open your hand to him and lend him sufficient for his need, whatever it may be. You shall give to him freely, and your heart shall not be grudging when you give to him, because for this the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake. For there will never cease to be poor in the land. Therefore I command you, ‘You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land.’

Deuteronomy 15:7,8,10,11

For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do.

Hebrews 6:10

And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.

2 Corinthians 9:8

I am only one, but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something. And because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do the something that I can do.

Edward Hale

WEEK FOUR

Relying on the Lord through Opposition to the Building Nehemiah 4:14-15

“And I looked and arose and said to the nobles and to the officials and to the rest of the people, “Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes. When our enemies heard that it was known to us and that God had frustrated their plan, we all returned to the wall, each to his work.”

Nehemiah 4:14-15

SERMON NOTES
Sunday September 4: “*Grace Upon Grace*”
Haggai 2:10-19

The taint of sin

When I survey

Set your heart and consider

Unwarranted blessing

THE ADULLAM STRATEGY—JAMES STEWART
Stewardship of Culture and Laying Up an Inheritance

In 1824 the Glasgow Missionary Society founded the Lovedale mission station along the banks of the Tyumie tributary of the Keiskama River, deep in the Cape Province of South Africa. The hardy Scots Presbyterians who staffed the station devoted themselves almost entirely to evangelistic work for nearly four decades. Alas, their sacrificial efforts bore little fruit all that time and the Society was considering cutting their losses and closing Lovedale. In 1867 however a young and ambitious Scottish educator, James Stewart (1831-1905), proposed turning the mission station into a mission school. The directors of the Society, who believed that such an enterprise was more than a little quixotic, gave him permission to try.

Stewart had arrived at Cape Town in South Africa some six years earlier in the company of Mary Livingstone, who was on her way back to the African Transvaal to join her pioneer missionary husband, David Livingstone. Stewart intended to spend the rest of his life working with the Livingstones in an effort to establish new industrial enterprises along the Mabotsa frontier on the headwaters of the Limpopo River.

Like Livingstone, he believed he was called to help “open up” Africa’s interior to the broader influences of Western civilization. Once that occurred, he was certain that commerce and Christianity would work hand-in-hand to end the evils of slave trading, tribal warfare, and primitive barbarism. After several wrenching false starts however, he concluded that before his dreams of indigenous development could be realized, the impoverished tribal peoples would have to be much more substantively trained, disciplined, and educated. In order to run businesses, staff factories, and man industries, African men and women would have to be equipped and prepared.

Thus, he conceived of the idea of transforming the old failed mission station into a fully integrated institution of learning. Stewart was the product of a venerable Scottish tradition—an unswerving belief in the merits of education, hard work, and devotion to God that had been drilled into the hearts and minds of Scottish schoolchildren, around the hearth and the blackboard, since the time of the Reformation. He was convinced that such a tradition might well prove to be the key to liberating Africa from the pagan bonds of oppression, ignorance, and brutality.

Irrepressibly passionate but always gentle, stunningly brilliant but always accessible, racked by malaria but “compelled by the love of Christ,” Stewart was one of the most productive, effective, and tireless men in the history of missions. He served as principal of Lovedale for most of the next thirty-eight years and succeeded in making the school into the premiere educational establishment for the indigenous peoples in southern Africa. In addition to a general education, Lovedale offered practical training in sundry industrial arts to those who had, heretofore, only been exploited for unskilled labor: printing, blacksmithing, carpentry, masonry, and wagon-making. They built roads, watercourses and dams. They not only built all the buildings on the Lovedale campus, they actually fabricated all the building materials themselves—they made the bricks, hewed the timbers, forged the hardware, and poured the glassworks.

From the beginning, Lovedale graduates were tapped for a host of responsible positions throughout the vast continent. Stewart’s emphasis on combining a substantive classical Christian curriculum with practical vocational training made his students indispensable to the burgeoning development of Africa. They were involved in church planting, school teaching, entrepreneurial start-ups, and commercial organization. They served in colonial administrations, helped to staff nascent businesses, and formed the basis of the first indigenous African middle class.

During his long and productive years of ministry, Stewart helped to establish two other mission stations, a satellite school, and a fully equipped hospital—and he left a blueprint for a college, which was built after his death. He was lauded as the “educator to a race” and the “father of native African enterprise.” More than a century afterward, Nelson Mandela hailed him as the “model Christian” and South Africa’s “founder of freedom.” Likewise, South African president, Thabo Mbeki, recently asserted that the impact on South Africa of Lovedale graduates was “incalculable in terms of helping us to get to where we are today.”

Tellingly, Stewart called his philosophy of education “The Adullam Strategy.” He took the name from two odd descriptions from the life of David—one when the ruddy shepherd boy had just begun his career, the other when the old king was ready to lay down his mantle.

The first description is found in 1 Samuel 22:1-2 where young David is hiding in the cave of Adullam. There he becomes “the captain” to all the distressed, indebted, and embittered men of the land. It was hardly a promising start. Such a motley crew did not exactly bode well for the foundation of

an enduring kingdom. There seemed to be little nobility in the vagabonds, brigands, and renegades that had attached themselves to David's cause.

The second description is found in 2 Samuel 23:8-39. It had been quite some time since they joined his seemingly hopeless cause, but many of those men were still with David. Somehow though, in the intervening years, they had been transformed from the distressed, indebted, and embittered into the king's "mighty men." Their exploits through the years were now the stuff of legend. Few would have believed that the men who emerged from the cave so long ago could have ever accomplished so much with so little.

Their story was a kind of "David and Goliath experience" repeated again and again and again. Following their giant-killing mentor, they had all learned to transcend their physical limitations. By the grace of God, they had all become giant killers. Against all odds.

Like David, James Stewart willingly served as the captain to a distressed, indebted, and embittered people only to see them transformed into "mighty men." He did not despise the day of small beginnings. Rather, he invested himself in the lives of a motley crew of the least and the last. And by God's grace they too eventually became giant-killers.

The Adullam Strategy is hardly the way we would choose to undertake the great task of cultural transformation. But more often than not, it is the way God, in His good providence, chooses for us. As Shakespeare quipped, "So it ever has been; so it will ever be."

Prayerfully consider these questions:

Take stock of what God has provided for you or for your family. Make a short list of those things, talents, gifts, or resources that God has given to you.

How did James Stewart use his talents and gifts for God's glory?

How were James Stewart and his school similar to David and his mighty men?

What skills do you have that should be shared and taught to increase the spiritual and vocational well-being of others?

Are you willing to struggle through the days of "small beginnings" to achieve results you may never see? What and who will you and your family invest in today and over the coming years, planting seeds for a future harvest? (1 Corinthians 3:7-9)

DAY 22: PARTNERS IN GOD'S WORK

For as his share is who goes down into the battle, so shall his share be who stays by the baggage. They shall share alike.

1 Samuel 30:24

Beloved, it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers, strangers as they are, who testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God. [W]e ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth.

3 John 1:5-8

So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor. For we are God's fellow workers.

1 Corinthians 3:7-9

Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit.

Philippians 4:17

Jesus said, "The one who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and the one who receives a righteous person because he is a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward. And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward."

Matthew 10:41,42

And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

Galatians 6:9,10

Expect great things from God. Attempt great things for God.

William Carey

DAY 23: ENCOURAGING OTHERS

For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission flowing from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others, while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you.

2 Corinthians 9:12-14

There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

Acts 4:34-37

Wealth brings many new friends, but a poor man is deserted by his friend. Many seek the favor of a generous man, and everyone is a friend to a man who gives gifts.

Proverbs 19:4,6

"You are the light of the world, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

Matthew 5:14,16

Giving is a giant lever positioned on the fulcrum of this world, allowing us to move mountains in the next world. Because we give, eternity will be different—for others and for us.

Randy Alcorn

DAY 24: A GENEROUS LIFE

They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.

1 Timothy 6:18-19

I hear of your love and of the faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus and for all the saints, and I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ. For I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you.

Philemon 5-7

I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

John 10:10

Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, as it goes well with your soul.

3 John 2

Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Matthew 6:33

A woman came up to him with an alabaster flask of very expensive ointment, and she poured it on his head as he reclined at table. And when the disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, "Why this waste? For this could have been sold for a large sum and given to the poor." But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a beautiful thing to me."

Matthew 26:7-10

If a pauper gives to God, he'll feel like a prince. If a prince doesn't give to God, he'll feel like a pauper.

Dave Ramsey

DAY 25: HELPING OTHERS

If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?

James 2:15-16

Whoever oppresses a poor man insults his Maker, but he who is generous to the needy honors him.

Proverbs 14:31

But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.

Luke 14:13-14

If among you, one of your brothers should become poor, in any of your towns within your land that the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother, but you shall open your hand to him and lend him sufficient for his need, whatever it may be. You shall give to him freely, and your heart shall not be grudging when you give to him, because for this the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake. For there will never cease to be poor in the land. Therefore I command you, 'You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land.'

Deuteronomy 15:7-11

Whoever multiplies his wealth by interest and profit gathers it for him who is generous to the poor.

Proverbs 28:8

I judge all things only by the price they shall gain in eternity.

John Wesley

DAY 26: THE POOR AND NEEDY

Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Matthew 6:2-4

They do all their deeds to be seen by others. For they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long, and they love the place of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues.

Matthew 23:5-6

And he said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God.

Luke 16:15

How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?

John 5:44

They loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.

John 12:43

If you lend money to any of my people with you who are poor, you shall not be like a moneylender to him, and you shall not exact interest from him.

Exodus 22:25

And you shall not strip your vineyard bare, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the Lord your God.

Leviticus 19:10

The poorest man in the world is the man who has nothing but money.

Dave Ramsey

DAY 27: ACTS OF KINDNESS

And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.

Matthew 10:42

Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will repay him for his deed.

Proverbs 19:17

Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

Matthew 25:37-40

And he sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums. And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny. And he called his disciples to him and said to them, "Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box. For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on."

Mark 12:41-44

If your brother becomes poor and cannot maintain himself with you, you shall support him as though he were a stranger and a sojourner, and he shall live with you. Take no interest from him or profit, but fear your God, that your brother may live beside you. You shall not lend him your money at interest, nor give him your food for profit.

Leviticus 25:35-37

*But we can never prove the delights of His love
Until all on the altar we lay;
For the favor He shows And the joy He bestows
Are for those who will trust and obey.*

John Sammis

DAY 28: THE LOCAL CHURCH

If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you? Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings? In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.

1 Corinthians 9:11-14

Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer deserves his wages."

1 Timothy 5:17,18

For it is written in the Law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain." Is it for oxen that God is concerned? Does he not speak entirely for our sake? It was written for our sake, because the plowman should plow in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of sharing in the crop.

1 Corinthians 9:9,10

One who is taught the word must share all good things with the one who teaches.

Galatians 6:6

And Hezekiah questioned the priests and the Levites about the heaps. Azariah the chief priest answered him, "Since they began to bring the contributions into the house of the Lord, we have eaten and had enough and have plenty left, for the Lord has blessed his people, so that we have this large amount left." Then Hezekiah commanded them to prepare chambers in the house of the Lord, and they prepared them. And they faithfully brought in the contributions, the tithes, and the dedicated things.

2 Chronicles 31:9-12

Take care that you do not neglect the Levite as long as you live in your land.

Deuteronomy 12:19

Prosperity inebriates men, so that they take delight in their own merits.

John Calvin

WEEK FIVE

Perseverance to Build for God's Glory and Renewal of Worship Nehemiah 6-7, 8-12

“And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people, and as he opened it all the people stood. And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God, and all the people answered, “Amen, Amen,” lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground.”

Nehemiah 8:5-6

SERMON NOTES
Sunday September 11: “*The Choosing of God*”
Haggai 2:20-23

The shaking of the Lord

The toppling of thrones

The signet and the robe

One thing, one story

A GENERATIONAL VISION—GERHARD GROOTE
Stewardship of Future Generations and of Culture

Some men's greatness may be seen in how largely they loom over the movements they launched. But greater men are they whose movements loom large over them—even to the point of obscuring them from view.

Gerhard Groote was just such a man.

It would be difficult to find a single page of modern history written about him. But it would be even more difficult to find a single page of modern history that had not been profoundly affected by him. Indeed, as historian Albert Hyma has asserted, "Gerhard Groote is the most important figure in the history of Christendom's great reforms that you—and most historians for that matter—have never heard of before. He established a Christian Renaissance that culminated in the Protestant Reformation."

He lived in the tumultuous days of the fourteenth century. A contemporary of John Wycliffe, Geoffrey Chaucer, and Jan Hus, he saw the scourge of the Black Death sweep a quarter of the population of the world away in a wave of pestilence; he saw France and England locked in the intractable conflagration of the Hundred Years War; he saw the church sundered by the Great Schism that produced two, sometimes three, sometimes even four, popes; and he saw the rise of the universities and the smothering influence of Humanistic Scholasticism. Churches were riven by corruption, kingdoms were shaken by instability, families were splintered by adversity, and the very foundations of Christian civilization in the West seemed to be crumbling.

They were dire days indeed. The problems facing men and nations seemed all but insurmountable. Doomsayers had a heyday.

Groote was raised in the home of a prosperous merchant and received the finest education available anywhere. Alas, he found it difficult to take the claims of his academic masters, his ecclesiastical mentors, and his church peers seriously. Like so many of his contemporaries, he concluded that the overt wickedness of the church and the blatant debauchery of the university mitigated against any serious belief in the Gospel. As a result, he ran from conviction and spent his youth and his wealth on reckless and heedless dissipation. He moved progressively from spoiled brat to party animal to

insufferable boor. When he was finally arrested by grace and converted, he had tasted all the pleasures the Medieval world had to offer—and still he yearned for more.

As an ardent new convert in the midst of a church awash in promiscuous impiety, he lifted up an urgent prophetic voice against the evils of his day. He began to model a life of radical discipleship. And he attracted a strong following in his native Dutch lowlands.

Eventually, Groote's movement came to be known as the Brethren of the Common Life. He and his followers were committed to the authority of the Scriptures first and foremost. They promoted Biblical preaching that was practical and accessible to the ordinary Christian. They pioneered vernacular translations of the Bible. And they founded schools to educate young men and women to be wise and discerning believers as well as effective and successful citizens.

The revival wrought by the movement was genuine, vibrant, and even widely admired. Even so, it could hardly have been expected to put a dent in the overwhelming problems of the day. Indeed, the litany of fourteenth century woes continued, seemingly unabated. When Groote died, some asserted that his efforts at renewal were ultimately stymied by the fierce reality of the circumstances of the day; he was by all such accounts, a failure.

But throughout his life and ministry, Groote was laying foundations for something that might endure well beyond his own life and ministry. He had a multigenerational plan. He understood that it had taken a very long time for Western Civilization to get into the mess that it was in and that no man or movement, no matter how potent or effective, would be able to turn things around overnight. That was why the heart and soul of his plan was to disseminate the Scriptures and build schools. His covenantal theology had led him to have a generational vision—one that enabled him to invest in a future he would likely never see on this earth.

It was a wise strategy. Amazingly, in less than a century and a half the strategy began to bear abundant fruit: it was in those scattered and seemingly insignificant Brethren of Common Life schools that nearly every one of the Reformers would ultimately be educated: Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Melancthon, Bucer, and Beza.

An obscure man changed the course of history—albeit generations later—by simply living out the implications of radical grace and covenantal faithfulness right where he was. He faced the impossible odds of a culture gone

terribly awry. He implemented a generational vision that laid new foundations for freedom and prosperity simply by equipping and enabling future leaders.

His was a distinctly Biblical vision, a sound vision, and thus a rather unpopular vision. And it still is.

Prayerfully contemplate the following questions:

How long did it take for Groot's vision and hard work to bear fruit in changing the culture of the 14th century Europe and eventually the world?

What were Groot's "Brethren of the Common Life" dedicated to first and foremost?

Jan Comenius didn't pursue the multiple opportunities he had for worldly success. Instead, he lived in poverty and maintained his confidence in the Gospel to change the course of men and nations. How do you define success? How do you define success for your family?

What will be the spiritual legacy of your life?

Does your life's work glorify God? How will it bless future generations?

DAY 29: BUILDING PROJECTS

All the men and women, the people of Israel, whose heart moved them to bring anything for the work that the Lord had commanded by Moses to be done brought it as a freewill offering to the Lord.

Exodus 35:29

[David prayed:] “But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able thus to offer willingly? For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you. For we are strangers before you and sojourners, as all our fathers were. Our days on the earth are like a shadow, and there is no abiding. O Lord our God, all this abundance that we have provided for building you a house for your holy name comes from your hand and is all your own.”

1 Chronicles 29:14-16

Therefore King Jehoash summoned Jehoiada the priest and the other priests and said to them, “Why are you not repairing the house? Then Jehoiada the priest took a chest and bored a hole in the lid of it and set it beside the altar on the right side as one entered the house of the Lord. And the priests who guarded the threshold put in it all the money that was brought into the house of the Lord. And whenever they saw that there was much money in the chest, the king’s secretary and the high priest came up and they bagged and counted the money that was found in the house of the Lord. Then they would give the money that was weighed out into the hands of the workmen who had the oversight of the house of the Lord. And they paid it out to the carpenters and the builders who worked on the house of the Lord, and to the masons and the stonecutters, as well as to buy timber and quarried stone for making repairs on the house of the Lord, and for any outlay for the repairs of the house.

2 Kings 12:7-12

We will not neglect the house of our God.

Nehemiah 10:39

If we look externally, there is a difference betwixt the washing of dishes and preaching of the Word of God; but as touching to please God, in relation to His call, none at all.

William Tyndale

A VISION FOR MINISTRY

Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world

James 1:27

I delivered the poor who cried for help, and the fatherless who had none to help him. The blessing of him who was about to perish came upon me, and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy.

Job 29:12,13

And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.

Matthew 10:42

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body.

Hebrews 13:2,3

Paul said, "Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble."

Philippians 4:14

They also honored us greatly, and when we were about to sail, they put on board whatever we needed.

Acts 28:10

But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.

Luke 14:13-14

Our Saviour, Christ Jesus, was a carpenter and got His living with great labor. Therefore, let no man disdain . . . to follow Him in a . . . common calling and occupation.

Hugh Latimer

ELDERS AND DEACONS, WORD AND DEED

The heroine of *My Fair Lady*, Eliza Doolittle, captured the sentiment of most of us when she complained: “Words, words, words—I am so sick of words. I get words all day through, first from him, now from you. Is that all you blighters can do?” She was tired of empty rhetoric—as high sounding as it was. Instead, she wanted to see something real.

Talk is cheap. Promises are a dime a dozen. Most of us have had about all of the spin-controlled sound-bites we can stand. We’ve heard just about all the hollow rhetoric we can tolerate. We all know that actions speak louder than words.

That is a universal truth—no less valid in business or politics or media as in faith or family or church. Good intentions are simply not sufficient in any area of life. There has to be a follow-through. There has to be substance.

John the Apostle admonishes us accordingly, “Let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.” In the Biblical scheme of things, love is something we do, not just something we feel. Mercy is something we extend, not just something we intend. Hope is something we must act on, not just something we harbor. Our orthodoxy must be matched by orthopraxy. Our life together must be marked by both Word and deed.

This does not by any means minimize the primacy of the Word of God in the Christian life. It is simply a recognition that God’s truth will always bear incarnational, tangible, and demonstrable fruit.

The Westminster Confession of Faith highlights this notion asserting that the church has been entrusted with “the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God, for the gathering and perfecting of the saints, in this life, to the end of the world.” In other words, in order to faithfully carry out this stewardship, the mission of the church must be organized around Word and deed—or what Francis Schaeffer called “contents and realities.”

To that end, from the earliest days of the apostolic church, congregations were purposefully structured for Word and deed ministry. Each local body was to be led by elders who were charged with the weighty task of preserving sound doctrine. They were to teach it, exhort it, nurture it, and highlight it in every aspect of congregational life—in both its evangelism and its discipleship, from its worship to its societal presence. They were to bring the Gospel to bear in Word. That fixedness in the Word was to provoke holiness, godliness, and faithfulness in all things.

In addition to the elders though, those early fellowships were also served by deacons—or more literally, servants. They were to translate the truth of the Word into very practical deeds. They were to make evident the beauty of human relationships transformed, reconciled, and restored by the Gospel. They were to provoke abundant evidence of true *koinonia*. At the same time, they were to ensure that covenantal relationships would show forth selfless service crafted in tenderness, empathy, excellence, intelligence, and glory.

According to Acts 6, the deacons were charged with the responsibility of coordinating, administering, and conducting the charitable generosity and stewardship of the church. It seems that because of the spectacular growth of the Jerusalem congregation, the distribution of food to the needy had gradually become uneven and inefficient. A number of the Grecian widows had been overlooked. The Twelve gathered all the Disciples together and said, “It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the Word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers, choose seven men from you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the Word. Thus, these seven men, or deacons as they would later be called, were to practically translate Word into deed. They had as their primary duty the oversight of the mercy ministry of the Church. This was the essence of the diaconal function.

All throughout church history, this sort of practical deeds-ministry has been more or less faithfully carried out by men of passion, conviction, and concern—men like William Olney and Joseph Passmore. Olney and Passmore were deacons for many years at London’s Metropolitan Tabernacle during the pastorate of Charles Haddon Spurgeon. Their busy stewardship of service involved the administration of almshouses, orphanages, relief missions, training schools, retirement homes, tract societies, and colporterages.

In a lecture to young Bible college students in 1862, Olney stated, “Deacons are called of God to a magnificent field of service, white unto harvest. . . . Ours is the holy duty of stopping by the way, when all others have passed by, to minister Christ’s healing. Thus, we take the Good Samaritan as our model, lest the pilgrim perish.”

To that same audience, Passmore said, “It is ironic indeed that our type of diaconal faithfulness comes not from the life of a disciple of our blessed Lord. Nay, not even is our type from the ancient fathers of faith, the Jews. Instead, our type is from the life of a Samaritan. Mongrel, as touching doctrine, this Good Samaritan is all of pedigree as touching righteousness. Oh,

that the Church of our day had such men. Oh, that the church of our day bred such men, men of unswerving devotion to the care of the poor and broken-hearted. Oh, that the church of our day was filled with such men, men driven by the Good Samaritan faith . . . offering both Word and deed, the fullness of the Gospel.”

Sadly, in our congregations today this balanced Word and deed vision is, at best, a secondary notion in the functioning of the church offices. Indeed, instead of meting out the succor of compassion in ministries of service, our deacons are often called upon to spend most of their time sitting on committees and launching building drives. Instead of spending and being spent on behalf of the needy, instead of modeling the Word and deed Good Samaritan faith, our deacons are waxing the floors of the fellowship hall or dusting the dampers, pew by pew, “and goodness knows what other trifles,” as Olney put it. Consequently, we leave our churches and our communities with the impression that the Gospel really is little more than “Words, words, words.”

The observation of John Calvin in 1559 is thus perhaps just as applicable in our own day as it was in his, “Today the poor get nothing more of alms than if they were cast into the sea. Therefore, the church is mocked with a false diaconate . . . there is nothing of the care of the poor nothing of that whole function which the deacons once performed.”

Mobilizing the diaconate for deeds ministry as a compliment to—and even authentication of—the Word ministry of elders would go a long way to bringing fresh renewal to the modern church. As the great Scottish reformer Thomas Chalmers asserted, “It is not possible to maintain orthodoxy through induction. Instead, orthodoxy must naturally be deductive--rooted in the rightful elucidation of the Holy Scriptures and then the practical application thereof. Herein is the first principle of ecclesiology.”

Herein are the beauty, goodness, and truth of the Gospel displayed in the church’s Word and deed ministry.

Be not among drunkards or among gluttonous eaters of meat, for the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty, and slumber will clothe them with rags.

Proverbs 23:20,21

Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living.

Luke 15:13

