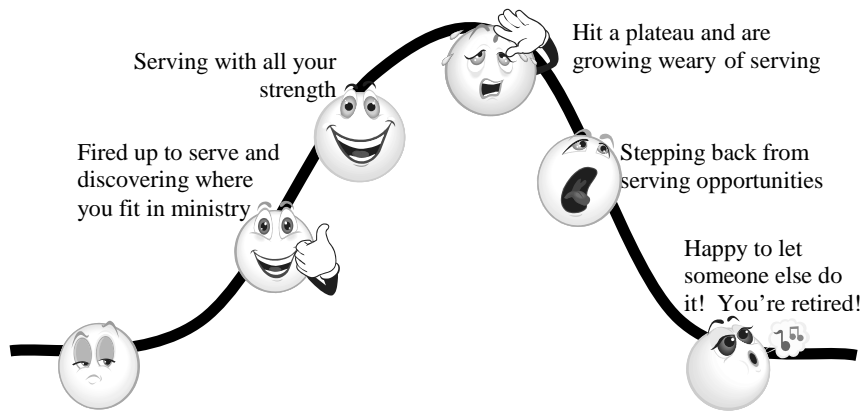


Ministry for a Life-Time
Keeping the Main Thing the Main Thing
Pastor Brad Bigney / Grace Fellowship Church / June, 2010

How Christians Serve



Four Guard Rails to Keep You from Burning Out

I. Never Move On from the Gospel

Just because something's basic doesn't mean it doesn't need to be stressed or repeated. In too many cases the Gospel is just being 'assumed.' Don't ever start assuming the Gospel. Look at it... meditate on it... think about it... rejoice in it... thank God for it.

Regardless of where you're serving... and what you think your gifts are... never lose sight of the Gospel itself - and how what you're doing is promoting and driving home the Gospel itself - to both unbelievers and believers.

Don't ever allow much distance between what you're doing... and the Gospel to creep in... or you'll lose heart.

Romans 1:16 "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek."

I Cor. 15:1-5 "Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you - unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve."

I Cor. 15 BEGINS with the Gospel... and ENDS with an exhortation for us to not lose heart... because the two are closely related!

15:57- 58 "But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

II. Never Lose Sight of Your Savior

Hebrews 12:1-3 “Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus (*NASB – ‘fixing our eyes on Jesus’*), the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.”

- Which are you more aware of? Your efforts to serve your Savior... or what your Savior did to save and serve you?

Watch out! It makes all difference what you're most conscious of as you serve. And Satan wants to shrink your world down to you... and your sweaty efforts to serve God.

III. Never Get Swept Up in Your Own ‘Success’

Don't get distracted by any measure of ministry success that the Lord might give you. Be very careful here. Your greatest joy in life should never shift from the Gospel... and your own salvation... to any visible or tangible results of what God is doing in the lives of people through you.

Luke 10:17-20 “Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, ‘Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.’ And He said to them, ‘I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.’”

He was drawing their attention AWAY FROM ministry results – that come and go – and back onto the primary joy - the joy that comes from the gospel... a personal Gospel... that has our names written in the Lamb's Book of Life!

C.J. Mahaney “Let the Gospel... and the cross always be the treasure of your heart... your best and highest thought... and your passionate preoccupation.” *Living the Cross Centered Life*, C. J. Mahaney, pg. 108

Trafficking in the Gospel should keep us humble. It was designed to do so!

“According to scripture, God deliberately designed the gospel in such a way so as to strip me of pride and leave me without any grounds for boasting in myself whatsoever. This is actually a wonderful mercy from God, for pride is at the root of all my sin... Thankfully, the gospel is engineered to accomplish this deliverance.

Preaching the gospel to myself each day mounts a powerful assault against my pride and serves to establish humility in its place. Nothing suffocates my pride more than daily reminders regarding the glory of my God, the gravity of my sins, and the crucifixion of God's own Son in my place... Pride wilts in the atmosphere of the gospel; and the more pride is mortified within me, the less frequent are my moments of sinful contention with God and with others.” *The Gospel Primer*, Milton Vincent, pgs. 27

IV. Don't Ever Lose Sight of the Fact that You Can't Do it ~ but He Does it through You

2 Corinthians 3:1-6 “Do we begin again to commend ourselves? Or do we need, as some others, epistles of commendation to you or letters of commendation from you? ² You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; ³ clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart. ⁴ And we have such trust through Christ toward God. ⁵ Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, ⁶ who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.”

4:1-7 “Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart. ² But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. ³ But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, ⁴ whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. ⁵ For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake. ⁶ For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. ⁷ But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.”