

## **First Things First**

### **Posted by Bob Young**

When we pursue God with reckless abandon, we will win the world, we will succeed.

We have a great opportunity. Having opportunities does not make us uncommon—it is what we do with the opportunity that makes us uncommon, that sets us apart. Catch the vision, because it is from God.

Opportunity to surrender—issues, preferences, desires, engulf all in relationship with God, let him be supreme. What will we do?

Cornerstone teaching, Mk 12:28-31. Questions are important. Knowledge = having right answers, wisdom = right questions. Right questions will lead to right answers, and vice versa. Here is a question. He could have said seek and save the lost. Get first things first. But he did not so respond. Most important = love God, fully! Not haphazardly--fully. Second is similar, love neighbor as yourself. No greater commands. No section of Scripture is more important.

We tend to think of #2 as #1, and #1 as #2. Most churches focus first on #2. Most churches around us love people. But this gets things in reverse. How do we get #1 as #1?

How let God take care of consequences, focus on #1 first. Not know how to do #2 without #1. Primary objective of life = #1. Understand #1 to do #2. God has #1 as #1 on purpose. Start from beginning. It is hard to have a ministry that does this well. We should hold one another accountable for #1, not #2. Pursue, model, teach. Love God, love people, make disciples. We overcomplicate it. It is simple. Love God, and we will do what he wishes, accomplish his purpose.

Did you follow me, or did you do your own thing? Without Christ, only leads to mediocrity. We cannot settle for that—life is too short. Not going to live forever. Not invincible, number our days to gain heart of wisdom. Door of opportunity—watch it go by or sit and wait. Pay attention to commandment #1.

How I connect with God? That is my topic. Determined by whether I see self on rescue mission or treasure hunt. #2 = rescue mission, out to save world. Not primary motive in life. On treasure hunt, #1, treasure in field, buy the field. Jesus was on rescue mission, we are on treasure hunt.

Contrast helps us see, contrast these two: rescue mission vs. treasure hunt.

Passionately pursue God, primary aim is to connect with God, activity I will pursue is activity with God one on one. We can do spiritual activities corporately, but we are missing something one on one with God. Doing things for God not same as loving God. Doing ministry is not the same as loving God, loving people not the same as loving God. Spend time with God. If love, then obey. John 15 = incredible, last minute cram session: bear fruit, fruit that lasts.

When teach how to pursue God, will last. Teach to pursue people, will not last. Connect with God. That is primary. Love God with all my heart, maximum my connection with God. To search minimizes need for God and time with God. Build spiritual roots, God's way or our way? Don't have to defend Jesus.

Spiritual roots—public life vs. private life. Eight spiritual disciplines—one on one time with God, job description, expectation.

**Reading God's word.** Not just verbal—written down. What think of my book? Want to read God's word. Learn something new, just read, not study. Always learning.

**Studying God's word.** Students of word, or students of someone else's interpretation? HS lives in us, he will guide/help us. God has a plan for your life. God has a way. God has a plan for your ministry. Applications, helps.

**Memorizing God's word.** Ps. 34; a fire within us, 119:11—hid in heart. Matt 4, know the heart of God. If not know heart of God, not spending time in word. Be accountable. 2 vs. a week? Even pursuit of ministry can overtake the pursuit of God. Grab onto God's word.

**Meditating on God's word.** Chew it, digest it, let HS teach us. Have the word available for life, think it through. Read it through, and every time we see it, it is different. It applies to life, wherever we are. Illustr: Living in holy fear...the terror of the Lord....how incorporate terror into the life.

**Praying the Word of God.** Prayer of humility, openly confess, submit, obey. Give opportunity for repentance, confession. "Concert of prayer." Humility, request, petition, intercession. Paul asked people to pray for him. So we should intercede. We have opportunity to get in touch with God through his Word. How many people pray for each day? How many pray for you each day? Less than 3. We are under-prayed for and we under-pray. God will have his way when we see the strength in numbers. This is God's power within us.

Foundation: Ex 17, holding up Moses' hands. What's the plan? Intercession, lift up your hands for others in the work of God. Need intercessors, need someone on the hill praying for us, regardless of how strong we may be. Primary thing we need, in ministry, is prayer.

Why would we live prayerless lives, why encourage others to live prayerless lives on our behalf.

### **Listening to God: Hearing the Word of God**

We live too fast, 90 mph culture. Most important thing in life is not speed, but direction. We need to consult spiritual compass. Get quiet before God and listen. Precious times, middle of night, not what I need to do, but what about God? Opportunity to focus, need listening times. Personal retreat day monthly, in addition to regular listening. Whole day listening to God, recharge, refuel. Listen to God, be hearers.

### **Personal Worship: Personalizing the Word of God**

Spiritual discipline—indeed! Not corporate worship, but this is me and God. Personal worship enhances spiritual/corporate worship. We were created for God's glory. Get out of bed, how and when will I spend quality one on one time with God today. Out of that, flows Christian living. Attribute worth to God. Personal worship love notes—prayers! Attribute worth. Give him majesty, splendor.

### **Fasting**

What a way to God's heart! We are addicted to food—we need opportunities to say that there are other priorities more essential. Fasting is underutilized spiritual discipline because we fear hunger. Yet 1/3 goes to bed hungry at night. If we don't eat before going to bed, good chance we can starve to death in our sleep. Is Jesus Lord, or is food lord? When you fast.... Not if.... Why do others fast and your disciples don't? Response: will fast when the time is right.

All of these tie to passion—Mark 12, Matt. 22. If love fully, that is passion. Second is "love your neighbor", that is compassion.

Passion comes before compassion. When these are combined—wow! But it begins with passion. Not have passion for ministry, have passion for God and out of that grows ministry. Not passion for people; that is compassion.

Keep track of what Jesus is giving us. Agape, love, all-consuming, unconditional, never-ending, intensified love. Love the Lord your God... That is passion.

Compassion is people. I fast, not because it is a good idea, because it enhances my passion for God. These enhance my passion for God. That's why we spend time together.

When we connect with people, connectivity with people is our purpose. Problem is that we build surface roots, not in private life. That cannot hold us up in difficult days. Not solid enough.

Note some of these surface roots.

- Self-dependent, faith in me.
- Self-sufficient, no need for God's help.
- Self-centeredness, glorify self. 3 types in ministry: called, self-centered, uninvited
- Self-righteousness, not need grace, have my own.
- Self-absorption, opposite of self-abnegation. Not need others, I have me.

All begins with God. Connection with God helps us find spiritual north on spiritual compass. With a shallow root system, we will crash and burn. Committed my life to intimacy with God, and let him do what he will with my ministry. I can only control the private, not control the public aspects. We assume control over what cannot control. We fail to control what we should control

I have absolutely no control over what God does with my life/ministry. I have absolute control over my personal time with God.

Messiah or messenger? Only one super-hero in universe, you are not him or her.

If we are on a rescue mission, is easy to develop Messiah complex. Do some unscriptural things. Not attract people to self, for if we fail, others will bail out, because they thought we were the Messiah. But if we are seeking God, if we tell of God, we become messengers. That will endure.

We have a lust for appreciation—being on a rescue mission is fun, people appreciate us, we get our strokes. We become victims of circumstances, up one day, down the next. That comes from focusing on people. Focusing on God establishes stability on the roller coaster ride. We are only the messenger. We point people to Him, not to ourselves. Salvation is not from us. We are not it. Point people to God, glorify God, not self. We must get this order correct. We seek numbers, we seek glory. Get back to God. Get back to Christ. God acts in spite of us, not because of us. Let us be content with serving, not being sensational.