

AHDB – Think Smaller

8/7/22

Walking w/ God – John 10:1-5, 27-28

Sunday AM

One of my favorite movies is, *The Patriot*. And one of my favorite lines in the movie occurs when Mel Gibson's character is preparing his youngest two sons to rescue his eldest son after being captured. As they are preparing their muskets for the rescue, he says, "What have I taught you about shooting?" And their response was, "Aim small, miss small!"

What a great line – for life. DYK that line was not originally in the script but was coined by the technical advisor as he was teaching the actors how to shoot a muzzle-loaded rifle – and Gibson liked the line so much; it found its way into the final script.

To *aim small, miss small* means that when you're aiming at a target (no matter the target), don't aim at the whole target, but zoom into a small section w/in the target. That way, if you miss, instead of missing everything, you'll still hit a part of the whole target.

For me – to *aim small, miss small* is about **zooming** in on what is most important/essential to make sure we can accomplish what we're wanting to achieve.

A little over a year ago, after getting *Unleashed*, our church leaders laid out a plan for our church for the next 6-7 yrs to – *Aim Higher, Dream Bigger*. It was a challenge for us to be all we could be for God's glory.

The plan includes (6) *endeavors* we believe God wants us to engage in over the next few years so we're fully engaged in G.C. ministry on our campus, in PTC, across the US – and ultimately, around the world – b/c we know *to whom much is given, much is required*.

To help you remember – let me quickly recap the plan.

- Shine Brighter
- Think Smaller
- Live Bolder
- Build Stronger
- Share Wider
- Go Farther

Shine Brighter

Based on the quote – *The light that shines the farthest shines the brightest at home* – after 15-20 yrs of deferred maintenance due to debt, we've spent this last year trying to shore up things on our campus – seeking to shine brighter – and we've made a serious dent.

Facility Wise

- We've renovated the Children's area/playground
- We've renovated most of the office space
- We've addressed a number of AC units
- We're soon to paint the exterior of the church
- We're soon to address our landscaping/parking
- We're soon to address more tech/security needs

Of course, there are still a # of areas we're planning for over the next few years including a new roof, W.C. seating, and renovating the F.H./kitchen.

Ministry Wise

- We've made great strides coming back from Covid w/ a refocus in our children and student areas
- We're ready to launch a new focus w/ men/women
- We've totally revamped our membership process.
- We've begun rebuilding our mission engagement and partnership at the Bridge and abroad.
- We've realigned our staff for more effectiveness

As we step into year 2, the challenge will be to **Think Smaller** – that is, to *aim small, miss small*. It's to be a year to refocus to zoom in on the most essential relationships in our lives! It'll be about returning to that which is most necessary that's been pulled apart by the speed, busyness, and intensity of our culture.

To *Think Smaller* is to live **intentionally relational** in our relationships w/ God, our families, our church, and our world. It's an invitation to zoom in, and dig deeper, w/ the people our lives intersect w/ daily, calling us to lean into life and into the G.C. as we engage the world around us for the glory of God.

When it comes to relationships, it all begins w/ our relationship w/ God – not just that we know Him, but that we're walking daily w/ Him. SEE – *how a person relates w/ God directly influences every other relationship in their life*. For in loving God w/ all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength, it influences how we love our families, friends, and the world around us.

Next, we need to zoom into our relationships w/in our homes – that is, husbands w/ wives, parents w/ kids, and even, grandparents w/ their grandkids. We need to recommit ourselves to setting aside the time to nurture these people closest to us in this busy, hectic world that's constantly pulling at the seams. **Charlie's Story**

Third, we need to reconsider where we derive our primary relationships outside of our families – which I believe is supposed to come from our friendships and fellowship w/in the church where we worship/serve God – *relationships intended to spur us along towards love/good deeds*. The Bible teaches us that God desires for us to dig deep into true *koinonia* so we might encourage one another to the greater things of God.

Finally, God has called us to be laser-focused on engaging the lost world around us for the sake of the Gospel – not becoming like the world, but living His love before others to influence them to His grace. In this G.C., we must be intentionally relational to allow Christ in us to influence the Christ-less among us so they too might experience His love.

W/ this in mind, I want to talk briefly w/ you today about zooming in on **your relationship w/ God**.

Recently, I heard a very disturbing stat, that if true, burdens me greatly. It's a stat that explains too much, and should cause each of us to run to God for help. **Only 7% of professing Christians have a daily Q.T.?**

You heard me right – 7%. (example) And if you're right now thinking... So, what's the big deal? Folks, this is a huge deal. For it's out of our love and pursuit of God that our lives work, that we find daily truth and wisdom to guide us, and that God gives us the ability to love others (our spouse, kids, friends, colleagues – even our enemies) in the same way God loves us.

LISTEN – if God is real, and Jesus is truly the only way, truth, and life (as He said) – then there's nothing more essential, more critical, than walking daily w/ Him under the guiding influence of the H.S.

Not only did Jesus model this in His pursuit of spending time w/ the Father, but He taught this idea thru-out His earthly ministry. **Turn w/ me to John 10.**

¹ “Truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him b/c they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger, but will run away from him b/c they do not recognize the stranger’s voice...”

¹⁴ “I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me...” ²⁷ “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.” John 10:1-5, 14, 27

In this text, Jesus is calling out the Pharisees for basically high-jacking the Israelites w/ their religious rules instead of guiding them to be the sheep of God. Of course, Jesus also drops (2) of the I AM discourses on them (saying He is the Gate/Good Shepherd).

But it’s the detail He shares w/in the discourse that should grab our attention, that is, He has a relationship, an intimacy, w/ His sheep where He speaks to them and they respond to his voice and follow Him.

Listen – sheep won’t just follow any voice, but only the voice of their shepherd. And God, our shepherd wants to speak into our lives every day to guide our steps. This reality has been true starting w/ Adam/Eve in the Garden and still holds true today.

Yet, ***if we don’t practice His presence***, our lives will never hear God speak b/c we will be tuned to our own will/ambitions and to the ways of the world, instead of to His will and our relationship w/ Him. And the result will be that we venture into this life absent of God’s leading likely to live as if God doesn’t exist.

He invites – *Be still and know I am God...* Ps. 46:10a

To be still is to sit before and quiet ourselves before the Lord long enough to recognize that He’s God and we’re not. It’s to connect w/ the will/plan He desires for us to discover, and then, to it live out as we trust Him w/ all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength.

And this begins w/ setting aside time each/every day to commune w/ the Creator – in what we call a Q.T.

A QT refers to our daily time w/ God when we shut out as much outside interference as possible to enter into intimacy/transparency w/ our Creator. It’s a time to get alone w/ God to make Him central to our lives. It’s a daily time of intentional contemplation of the Divine. ***It’s when we quiet our lives long enough to practice the presence of God.***

In this time, we might sing, pray, read a devotional, meditate on Scripture, or just be still to know He is God. Ultimately though, there’s just (1) objective – **to commune w/ and hear His voice and align w/ Him**

LWF – in its basic form, ***the Christian life is knowing God, hearing His voice and obeying His leading.*** It’s engaging God so *He might fill us w/ the knowledge of His will thru all the wisdom and understanding that the H.S. gives, so that we may live a life worthy of the Lord to please him in every way.*

Thus, a QT isn’t a *verse a day to keep the devil away* or a read the Bible in a year marathon. It’s not maneuvering thru a prayer gauntlet remembering every missionary or every person in our prayer journal. *It’s a daily pursuit of intimate contemplation on God where a person centers their life on God and His will for their lives by listening intently to His voice and leading in their life.*

The primary purpose of a QT isn't for gathering principles or gleaning spiritual produce, but to cultivate a relationship w/ a Person, *to have a heart occupied w/ Christ*. It's to cultivate a spiritual romance w/ God...
Herb Hodges

Let me say it another way – the goal of a Q.T. is to tune into the correct frequency w/ God so you hear Him clearly to know Him and to discover His will. It's hearing God as you navigate the challenges of life so your life works and makes a difference for His glory.

This means – to get on the correct frequency w/ God, you must be consistently frequent w/ God.

Recently, one of our church members, knowing my conviction on this topic sent me a video worth sharing.

Video: Listen to the Voice – David Gibbs

To ZOOM into God to hear God speak:

- Begin w/ a **SEEKING** Heart SHOW Up
- Follow a **SIMPLE** Plan TUNE In
- Engage in **SHARED** Accountability SPEAK Out

A believer's first responsibility w/ each new day is to bring his soul into happy relationship w/ God to hear God speak into their life to guide their steps. *Muller*

I want to invite to *aim small, miss small* in your walk w/ God by recommitting today to walk daily w/ Him.