

Thinking Clearly
Making the Most of It
June 25, 2017

Announcement Video

**Worship Songs – King of Love / One
Thing Remains
Prayer**

Behind the Scenes – Video

Feature – “My Next Thirty Years”

Good morning everyone.

It think that’s an appropriate song for my age and stage of life ... 30 years ago ... when I was about to turn 30 instead of about to turn 60.

It was at that point that I (along with my

wife, Jetta, and our two oldest daughters Marilyn and Katie), moved to Kansas City from New Jersey ...

- Where I had been happily employed as a Member of Technical Staff for AT&T Bell Labs
- And where, in the evenings and on weekends, Jetta and I served as the volunteer youth directors for our church.

And we moved here because I had come to the realization that, as much as I loved working at Bell Labs, what I really wanted to do – and was probably called by God to do – was to invest my primary vocational energy into young people: specifically, *doing for them what had been done for me* by my church when I was a teenager.

So, I quit that high-paying job, we sold our beautiful home and, in May of 1987, the four of us moved into the Knollwood Apartments off of Davidson Road so that I could attend Midwestern Seminary and eventually become a youth pastor. And, when I turned 30 later that summer – July 14th to be exact – I truly had no idea what my next 30 years were going to look like.

In fact, back then, the very thought of *me*, Rick McGinniss, as a 60-year man was inconceivable, unimaginable and, quite frankly, undesirable because, in my thinking:

<picture> When a person turned 60 they were so far over the hill that they could no longer remember there ever was a hill.

And when a person turned 60 they had one foot in the grave and the other swinging hard in that direction.

But now, here I am. In just a few weeks, I, Rick McGinniss, will be 60.

And I know ... when you all look at me, it's hard to believe that ... but, it's true. I really was born all the way back in 1957 ... which puts me smack in the middle of the Baby Boomer generation and, more importantly, means that I was shaped by the culture of the 1970s.

And some of you know what that was like.ⁱ

**Back then, all the guys either had or wanted to have long hair.
Now we're all just longing for hair.**

Back then, a lot of us were into acid rock.

Now, we're into acid reflux.

Back in the 70s, we wanted to look like Burt Reynolds.

Now, we want NOT to look like Burt Reynolds.

If you were a teenager or a young adult in the 70s, you hoped that one day you might have a BMW.

Now, you're just hoping to have a BM.

In the 70s, everyone was going to a new, hip joint called a disco.

Now, everyone's *getting* new hip joints.

Back then, it was the Rolling Stones.

Now, it's the kidney stones.

In the 70s, we were worried about passing the drivers' test.

Now, we're worried about passing the

vision test.

**Finally, in the 70s, it was “right on”,
“groovy” and “far out man.”
Today it’s ... “depends.”**

Things have changed a lot over the years.

And it seems like it has all gone so quickly. Someone has said “Life is like a roll of toilet paper – the closer you get to the end the faster it goes.” And that’s true.

So, when I was planning out the messages for the summer, I thought it might be beneficial for me to call a brief timeout and reflect on my past 30 years and look ahead *not* to my next *thirty* years but maybe to my next 15-20.

I was talking to my dad the other day (he’s

83) and he said, “The 70s were pretty good for me but the 80s are hard. You have very little energy and everything hurts.”

So, in the interest of avoiding undue optimism, I’ve been thinking about the next decade or two of my life and what that might look like for me; specifically, what God might want to do in me and through me in my 60s and maybe even my 70s.

(I can’t begin to describe how weird it sounds to me to hear those words “my 60s and my 70s” coming out of my mouth).

And since I’m your pastor, I thought that some of that might be of interest to you and, more importantly, *helpful to you* because some of you are where I was 30 years ago with a whole mountain of future and

possibilities ahead of you.

And some of you are where I am right now. You're over the hill and looking down into the valley. In terms of the seasons of life, the intensity of the summer heat is fading and the cool blue skies of autumn are approaching. It's a great time to make hay. But the barrenness of winter is coming and wasting time is not an option.

So, let's get into it.

The way I'm going to do this is to share some things that God has impressed on me over the years that I think might be important to those who are still going up the hill. And then I'm going to talk to those who are in my stage of life and beyond.

Advice to the Youngers

Now, I there are many things I *want* to say to those in their 20s, 30s and 40s – many things I think would be *valuable* to say but, in the interest of time I am going to limit myself to just five pieces of advice that, for me personally, *over a long period of time*, have made me a better person and made my life better ... OR ... *could* have made me even better and made my life even better ... *if only* I had followed them better.

Actually, the first piece of advice on my list falls into that category ...

1. Respect your elders.

After all, the fifth of the 10 Commandments God gave to Moses is ...

*Honor your father and mother.
Exodus 20:12 (NLT)*

And it's expanded in the New Testament to include all older people:

*You who are younger must
accept the authority of the
elders. 1 Peter 5:5 (NET)*

Now, I know that some of you are thinking “well, that’s kind of self-serving: the old guy is telling us right up front that we ought to respect him as he gives us his list.”

And I know it might sound that way, but I assure you that is not my intention. Instead, this is a lesson I have personally had to learn the hard way.

See, back when I was your age ... 25 years old, 35 years old, I believed that *I knew better* than the people who were older than me, including ...

- My bosses
- My parents
- My wife's parents
- The people who were leading the churches I was a part of.
- The previous generation of this country who had worked and voted to set up everything that I was experiencing.

I believed that I knew better than all of those people.

And I believed that with good reason: *in a lot of cases, I really did know better.*

And, in a lot of cases, so do you.

- You're better educated than a lot of people older than you.
- You've had a wider variety of experiences.
- You're quicker mentally just because of your age.

That was true for me. I was smarter at 25 and 35 than pretty much everyone who was in authority over me. And there's nothing wrong with that.

But the problem is ... there becomes a point in life when you can "win" over your parents; win over the people who did it before you showed up on the scene. And sometimes you should.

But *as you do*, you should also know that there will come a day in *your* future when there will be younger people ...

- Who are better educated than you.
- Who've had a wider variety of experiences than you.
- Who are quicker mentally just because of their age.

And the way you have treated your elders will come back to you. You will be treated the way you treat them.

I'll never forget what it was like to start NHCC and be the new kid on the block.

- Not even 5 years later, what I had done was passé.

- 10 years later, I was the old “out-of-touch with reality” guy.
- 15 years later, I was part of the reason churches were so messed up.

I have to tell you that this was not a pleasant experience. In fact it was painful. It made me mad.

And then one day it hit me that this was exactly how *I* had treated *my* elders.

Now, I’ve come to accept that as karma.

And over time, I began to realize how privileged I am because of what others before me had done. And they deserve my respect ... even when I don’t agree with them.

So, I want to warn you who are young before you mess up like I did: *it will come back to you how you treat those who are older.*

I strongly advise you to remember the words of the Apostle Paul:

Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. 1 Corinthians 8:1 (NET)

You can use being smart to make yourself look big and important but it also means you are easily popped.

Therefore, as you seek to “win” in life – to change the things that came before you, to do it better – do that in a loving and patient manner. Honor your elders. Remember that they, too, were once young like you are.

The second piece of advice I have for you if you are among the “youngers” is this:

2. There is no “magic bullet” in life. Your best hope is hard work and discipline.

- You will not win the lottery.
- There is no super-duper pill you can take to lose weight, make you smarter.
- There’s not even an ultimate spiritual experience – a secret prayer or a divine intervention – that will completely and totally change your life forever. (At least, not on this earth right now – that won’t happen until Jesus comes back and makes all things new).

I can't count how many times I thought I had discovered "the key" to life; the "one weird trick" that nobody else knew about that was going to change everything for me without any effort on my part.

But I was wrong. Life doesn't work that way. God doesn't work that way. God didn't set it up that way.

Instead, God has created a cause and effect world where you eventually reap what you sow.

Or, as the Apostle Paul put it ...

You will always harvest what you plant. Galatians 6:7 (NET)

One of the traps that I see Christians (those

of us who believe in and follow Jesus) frequently fall into is believing that *God* is our magic bullet. That if we just believe hard enough, He's going to wave a supernatural wand and everything will change.

But that's not how it works. Jesus didn't heal every sick person He came into contact with.

Now, don't hear what I'm not saying. I realize that God answers prayer. Sometimes there is divine intervention in life. For instance, I can look back at years of ministry here at NHCC (and before) and see God's hand intervening at critical points when we cried out for Him to do something or we were done.

But far more often as I look back I see hours

and hours of hard work ... sometimes foolish work and even wasted work. But it was that work (in conjunction with God and enabled by God) that made the difference. It's why we're here today. Literally.

When God put Adam in the Garden, the assignment was to work; to take the raw materials he had been given and make something more and better of it.

So, stop looking for the magic bullet. Stop hoping you're going to win the lottery. Stop waiting for a miracle. Get busy and with God's help, *work* for what you want.

The third piece of advice I have is specifically for those are parents or will

someday become a parent. And this, I think you'll see, kind of follows on the principle of reaping what you sow.

3. Your kid's greatest teacher in life is *you* (specifically, what you *actually do*, i.e what they see you doing and not doing).

Notice, I didn't say "your kid's greatest teacher *should* be you" or "*could* be you" or "*might* be you."

It is you.

What you do and don't do – what they see in the pattern of your life; what you value; what you invest time and money in – is going to shape them, guide them, influence them, hinder them, prepare them more than anything else.

Now, that probably won't become obvious until much later. When your kids are teenagers they'll pretty much rebel against you and you won't recognize them (who are these creatures and from whence did they come?) but later ...

... you'll see the truth of this verse from Proverbs:

Train a child in the way that he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it. Proverbs 22:6 (NET)

In other words, the training your kids receive when they are young will always be with them. It will shape them, guide them, influence them, hinder them, and prepare them more than anything else.

And the number one trainer in their life is *you* – and not what you say but what you actually *do*.

I say this from personal experience.

- Moving to KC to go to seminary. How will that impact our kids? No money, etc.
- Started NHCC without a youth group. How will that impact our kids?

20 years later, what has happened to my kids?

- Why are they are generous givers? Because we were generous givers. We explained to them how our money worked. They saw us sacrificially give to the Lord's work (and they saw the

financial blessing that followed from that).

- Why are my kids involved and invested in their churches? Because we were involved and invested in our church, and again, we constantly explained why.

So what does that mean for you?

- If you want your kids to love God and the church, let them see you love God and the church. You get up and go when it's cold and rainy or you're tired or there's something more exciting to do.
- If you want your kids to be humble and kind, let them see you be humble and kind.

- If you want your kids to have a good marriage, let them see you work to have a good marriage.
- If you want your kids to have an overcomer mentality instead of a victim mentality then let them see you overcome when you could be a victim.
- If you want your kids to be able to relate well to others, then you work to relate well to them.

The greatest teacher in your child's life is *you*.

Ok, here's the fourth piece of advice and this one has to do with relationships.

Over the years, I have discovered that ...

4. The single most effective strategy for solving almost any relational problem is found in one simple verse in the Bible.

Know what it is?

- It's not "love one another."
- It isn't "judge not lest ye be judged."
- And it's not even "forgive one another as Christ as forgiven you."

It's actually in one of Paul's letters and it kicks off a huge section in which he talks about all kinds of relationships:

- Husband to wife and vice versa
- Parent to child and vice versa
- Boss to employee and vice versa

Here's how the section starts:

*Submit to one another out of
reverence for Christ. Ephesians
5:22 (NIV)*

... who, even though he was God in the flesh, did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many (by dying on the cross in our place as an atonement for our sins). He submitted Himself *to us and for us*; for our benefit.

What Paul is saying here is that because we're so blown away by that – by what Jesus did for us – that's what we should do ... AND, in fact, that's what we CAN do for others.

And it's this one statement that I believe is the single most effective strategy for dealing with almost any relational trouble.

Why? Because, in almost every relational problem for there to be a solution, someone has to go first. Someone has to be the first person to say:

- I will give up my right to be right
- I will listen and not demand to be heard
- I try to will do it your way instead demanding of my own

Someone has to take the risk of going first in submitting to the other person. And that almost leads to a softening on their part to the point where you can now begin to talk about the issue and move towards a solution.

Of course, sometimes it *doesn't* work that way because, again, there's no magic bullet

in life. But, in my own life, I discovered this to be the best strategy in my relationships especially at home with Jetta and my girls.

Here's how it almost always played out.

- Tension comes up in some form and I try to win; I try to get my way. And that fails.
- And then, sometimes (not always) I remember this verse and I try to submit.

And not because I am such a good person, or because this is just what you should do because, honestly, I am not always such a good person and sometimes I just don't want to do what I should do.

Furthermore, sometimes the person with

whom I am having the problem doesn't deserve that good and gracious treatment from me!

But then, I look at Jesus. And I remember what He did for me: that even though I didn't deserve it, He laid down his rights and his life for my sake. And I am blown away by that. I "revere Him" for that. And I want to be like Him.

So I turn to my wife or my kids or my co-workers or my friends and I try to submit to them.

Now, as I have said many times over the years, I am not relationally-wired. I am far more task-oriented by personality. But, over the years, this one principle has done more to increase my emotional and relational

intelligence than any other.

And if you're a young person I highly recommend that you follow it as well. Never lose sight of how Jesus submitted to you and for you. And then submit to others out of your awe and reverence for that.

Alright, one more piece of advice for all you youngsters out there ... and this isn't really advice, it's more just a general observation and principle that can give shape to your life.

5. You have no idea right now what “big things” God might do in you and through you if you will only say yes to Him in the “little things.”

All glory to God, who is able,

*through his mighty power at
work within us, to accomplish
infinitely more than we might
ask or think. Ephesians
3:20 (NLT)*

<Parable of the talents>

<How I got into ministry>

- “Do for them what was done for you” – teach SS / youth program / camp
- “Go to seminary” – be a youth pastor
- “Be part of a church that wants to reach non-church people” – I will do anything
- “Start the church and be the pastor” – shocker!

Now, I don’t tell you that story to say, “oh, be like me and God will make you a pastor,

too” because that’s probably not what you’re supposed to do.

But you – if you’re a Christian – you’re *supposed to do something for God*; something much bigger than you can even imagine or dream right now; something that when you’re 60 years old you look back and say, “oh my gosh, I can’t believe I got to do *that*; that God did that in me and through me.”

- I started a business that did a great service and gave people a job.
- I raised a family that loved God and the church.
- I adopted kids who were abused and unwanted.
- I gave boatloads of money to the Lord’s work and to ministries of compassion.
- I used my skills and my influence to be

a light in the darkness.

I don't know what exactly what it looks like for you but, if you're a younger person who is a Christian, I know there is *something* bigger for you in God's Kingdom than what's going on in your life today.

But you get to that big thing (or things) by saying "yes" to the little things that God puts in your path right now.

Well, that's what I wanted to share with you this morning if you are among those younger than me. And I hope they are helpful to you in some way.

Challenge to the Elders

Now, I only have two things to say to those of you who, like me, are on the downslope. There are only two because we don't have that much time left.

I mean in this service, not in life. Well, maybe that, too.

And I should tell you in advance that some of what I'm going to say might make you a little angry because what our culture is telling us two things about our later years that are simply wrong ... if you are a Christian (one who believes in and follows Jesus) ... and a lot of us are buying into it.

For those of us who have saved well for retirement, the message is:

1. You've done your duty and now it's time for you to "eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die."

OR if we didn't save enough, the message is ...

2. Having to work is bad because, after all, you're *entitled* to your retirement.

And what's so funny about that is that the primary complaint most of us old people have about the younger people is what? "These Millennials, they're just so entitled."

If they think that way – and many do – it's because *our generation modeled it* and we're still modeling it!

So get over yourself!

And I'm making you mad I know. But that's

good because at your age, you need all the adrenaline rush you can get.

Two things I want to challenge you to do – and these are two things that I feel like God has impressed on me so they *might* not be for you (but they probably are).

1. Set some goals for yourself. You're not dead yet!

God has not called you and me, if we're Christians of a certain age, to stop moving forward and just kick back, eat, drink and be merry.

Not only that, you won't be happy long-term because you are designed to be productive. That's part of what it means to be made in the image of God. God is a creator and a producer and we are made to reflect that in

our lives.

Furthermore, God has not said that just because we reach that certain age defined by the government we're supposed to stop working. If you can, good for you. But that is not the measure of success for a Christian.

So, whether you work or whether you don't, you need to have some goals in your senior years. Measurable goals. Significant goals.

How do you do that? Two step process.

1. Ask yourself this question: *What, if I don't accomplish it, will cause me great regret at the end of my life?*
2. Apply the question to significant areas of your life.

For me personally, I've come up with a few and others I'm still working on. For instance

...

- Physical: to stay in shape (160# or less)
- Family: to “end well” with my parents
- Spiritual: to pray more and better prayers (5 mins per day)
- Fun: to regularly break 80 when I play golf
- Financial: to maximize value for retirement (house, investments) so Jetta can eventually pursue other goals beyond working as a teacher.

What are your goals? You need to set some because you're not dead yet.

The second thing I want to say to you if you're a Christian and an old-timer like me ... and this sort of falls into the goal setting category, too ...

2. Invest in younger people – “do for them what was done for you.”

If you're here today and you believe in Jesus and follow Jesus, someone along the way did something to help that happen for you. Someone *invested* in you – maybe directly, maybe indirectly – when you were younger and that's why you are where you are and who you are today as a Christian.

So guess what? You (and I) have an assignment – a goal from God:

Even when I am old and gray, do

*not forsake me, my God, till I
declare your power to the next
generation, your mighty acts to
all who are to come. Psalm
71:18 (NIV)*

Part of your job – part of your calling – as an older follower of Jesus is to make sure that the next generation hears about the power of God in Christ. Part of your calling as an old-timer like me is to do for them what was done for you.

Now, I don't know what that looks like for you but, for me, I've been thinking about it and praying about it *a lot* and having a lot of conversations with our North Heartland leadership team about this.

My view is, as I see my life, I think I can do this for another ten, twelve to fifteen years.

I love what I do. I still think I have some effectiveness at what I do. But, when I get that point - 67, 72 - you've got to ask the question, "what does that mean for North Heartland, to have a pastor that old?" What does it mean to the young people who are a part of this church? I just remember when I was at the church in NJ, the pastor was 50 years old. I thought he was ancient. He and his wife were great. We had our first two daughters there and they helped us with taking care of our kids. He was like my dad. And, I loved Pastor John when he would speak. He was very smart and he knew the Bible. But every once in a while we would have this young guy come and speak. I was 25 or so and the guy was 35 or so, and I liked Pastor John, but when Bill spoke, wow! Because Bill was like me.

I don't know the answers to these questions yet but I do know that my number one career goal over the next few years is to see that more and more of the leadership of NHCC is transferred to the next generation. And if this is your church, you'll probably get to be a part of that in some way. Just sayin'.

Now here's what's scary about that – and this is true confession time for me. Beyond my own three daughters and their husbands, I really don't know any Millennials or Generation Z which follows them. And, quite frankly, I have a bit of trepidation about the younger generation.

That's why most of the people I hang out

with are my age. And I'll bet all of that is true for you, too.

So figuring out how to invest in the lives of younger people ... going to take some work and a little bit of courage; a little bit of stepping out of the comfort zone.

However, one thing research repeatedly shows about Millennials and Gen-Z is that – unlike our generation and the Baby Busters who came after us – *they long to have older people in their lives who will challenge and encourage them. They want our influence.*

Why?

- Because many of them come from broken homes missing a mom or a dad.
- Many of them have been destructively

influenced by their peers through social media.

They need us. And, quite frankly, we need them, too.

So we'd better figure this out – you and me – or when we get to the end of our lives, I think we – and they – are going to regret it.

Conclusion

Back when I was planning this series, I titled this message “making the most of it.”

That was a very lofty title because, if I'm honest about my life to this point, the truth is that I have *not* made the most of it. I have not made the most of my time and what God has given me.

Quite frankly, I have far too often been lazy, stubborn and plain disobedient.

Furthermore, since past performance is typically the best predictor of future behavior, it's almost certain that I will not make the most of what lies ahead for me

... which again is a simple reminder that I need what Jesus did for me. I need grace.

And so do you.

Let's pray.

<PRAY>

Feature – “If We’re Honest”

CLOSING COMMENTS

1. Next week ... Losing Our Religion

2. Fireworks begins today and we're looking good for the first several days. But we still need help beginning next weekend – Friday night through the 4th. Sign up at the FW table or online under “Sign Me Up.”

Endnotes

ⁱ E. Tabb @ <http://www.seniorresource.com/age.htm>