

7-14-2012, COTR Texarkana

Title: Reflections

Purpose: Provoke people to embrace the spiritual lessons I learned on my sabbatical.

Spiritual Truth: There's no place like home!

Text: Ps 46:10

Topic: Sabbatical, America, Worry, Priorities

Reflections

I. Introduction

A. Sabbatical update (LaNell comments)

1. It's great to be home! The last time I preached we learned what the Bible says about the rhythm of work and rest. Because of your encouragement and support we were able to get away and rest. Thank you! We spent 3 weeks in Colorado and 10 days on the river in Arkansas with one goal, to get rested at a deep level so we could lead the church to impact our world for Christ.
2. It was great to get away but we were glad to come home. Texarkana is our home and COTR is the place we're called to serve. We like being here and we love you. We're honored to be your pastors and we pray God gives us another 10-15 years.
3. I'd like to give special thanks to Pastor Mike and our leadership team for doing such a fine job in our absence.

B. Today: Ps 46:10 (ESV) **Be still, and know that I am God...** I will be exalted in the earth!

1. We're all busy and it's hard to "be still", rest and reflect on our life. If we do, God will reveal Himself and show us His ways. Today I want to share with you some of the things God showed me while I took time to be still about America, worry, how to live my life and accomplishing God's plan for my life.
2. One of the most important things that happened was that I learned to love my wife at a deeper level. We had a good marriage but we were at a plateau. Extended time together made her a better wife. Lol. It made me a better husband.

C. Title: Reflections

D. Purpose: Provoke people to embrace the spiritual lessons I learned on my sabbatical.

E. Spiritual Truth: There's no place like home!

II. I learned that America is in trouble and the solution is to return to God.

A. Palace of the Governors Museum in Santa Fe, N.M. The city of Santa Fe was founded by the Pueblo Indians between 1050 to 1150 C.E.

1. When I went to school I learned that time had been divided by the birth of Christ. B.C., "before Christ" and A.D. Latin "Anno Domini", in the year of our Lord. In 1980 a dramatic reversal in terms began. In order not to offend non Christians Jesus was erased from the calendar, A.D. became C.E., the Common Era.
2. The attempt to remove Jesus and our Biblical heritage from our culture is nothing new. It has been happening in America at an alarming rate. The sad fact is that the God of the Bible isn't welcome in America.
 - a. Example: The Jefferson Lies, page 129.

B. Everybody knows our nation is in trouble.

1. Our economy is broken; the weather is unpredictable, moral chaos is rampant; violence is everywhere, we're divided; confidence in the Federal Government is at an all time low. America is in trouble and an election can't solve it.

2. We all know our nation is in trouble but we assess the cause differently. The secular world says weather problems are the result of manmade global warming; our economy needs more stimulus; school problems can be solved with bigger budgets, political parties say give them power, etc. in short we don't need God; we can solve our own problems. The Bible offers a different solution.

C. Psalm 33:12 (ESV)

¹² **Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD...**

1. "Blessed" means to experience God's kindness, provision and protection. The Bible says that when people fear God and obey His commands He will bless them. When they reject Him He removes His blessing and judgment comes.
2. America was once "One nation under God" (a phrase from the Pledge of Allegiance) but I regret to say this is no longer true.
3. I read 3 books on sabbatical that dealt with America:
 - a. *The Harbinger* by Jonathon Cahn, helped me interpret the signs of the times
 - b. *The Jefferson Lies* by David Barton showed the truth about Thomas Jefferson and how history has been rewritten by secular historians.
 - c. *Indivisible* by James Robinson and Jay Richards dealt with the great political and cultural issues facing America.
4. All 3 books shared a common theme. America has turned her back on God. The solution is to return to God and it's the responsibility of every Christian to call people back to God. We find an example in John the Baptist and Jesus.

D. Matthew 3:1-2 (NLT) In those days John the Baptist came to the Judean wilderness and began preaching. His message was, ² **"Repent of your sins and turn to God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near."**

1. Matthew 4:17 (NLT) From then on Jesus began to preach, **"Repent of your sins and turn to God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near."**
2. Both John the Baptist, Jesus, Peter and Paul called people to return to God. We should follow their example.

III. I learned to trust again, i.e. my life is in God's hands so I don't have to worry.

A. When we got home after Colorado, Rebekah's dog, Tucker, was gone

1. We'd had 2 dogs killed before him and Rebekah and I were worried. We got in the truck to look for him but before leaving we took hands to pray. In the middle of the prayer my phone rang. A neighbor said Tucker is in my garage.
2. I felt the Holy Spirit tell me, you don't have to worry, I know and I care about everything going on in your life. In that "God moment" faith replaced worry. Up to that point I had been worried about something in our life here in Texarkana.

B. Worry and fear attack us when trouble is on the horizon. Faith helps us win the battle

1. Matthew 8:23-26 (NIV) Then he (*Jesus*) got into the boat and his disciples followed him. ²⁴ Without warning, a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. ²⁵ The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!" ²⁶ He replied, **"You of little faith, why are you so afraid?"** Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm.
2. Our mind can make problems bigger than they are and we seem to always imagine the worst. Before we know it we're tormented and paralyzed.
3. A "God moment" can turn worry into peace. It could come during a phone call about Tucker, when you're reading your Bible, during worship or in a dream.
4. 1 Pet 5:7 (NLT) Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you

C. When we see God's hand in small things our faith grows to help us face big challenges

1. LaNell and Rebekah floating on the White River in a storm. God supplied a boat to rescue them.

IV. I learned how to live my life, i.e. it's more important to live for God than myself because my choices in this life will affect me for eternity.

A. Contrast two couples:

1. In Breckenridge we sat near a couple during dinner and overheard their conversation. They were about 50, retired and successful. They boasted of homes throughout the country and \$1,000 dinners for the family. There had an air of arrogance, superiority and seemed self centered. God wasn't in their conversation except to say how much they hated church.
2. In Colorado Springs we stayed with Linscombes, missionaries to the Chamula Indians in Southern Mexico. They, too, were successful but were different. They lived in a beautiful new home and had two nice vehicles but instead of living for themselves they committed their life to serve the Lord. They built a strip mall to generate money to support themselves and fund 25 trips a year to Mexico.
 - a. I sensed the Holy Spirit ask me, "what couple do you want to be like?"
3. Luke 12:15-21 (NLT)
 - ¹⁵ Then he said, **"Beware! Guard against every kind of greed. Life is not measured by how much you own."** ¹⁶ Then he told them a story: **"A rich man had a fertile farm that produced fine crops. ¹⁷ He said to himself, 'What should I do? I don't have room for all my crops.' ¹⁸ Then he said, 'I know! I'll tear down my barns and build bigger ones... ¹⁹ ...Now take it easy! Eat, drink, and be merry!' " ²⁰ "But God said to him, 'You fool! You will die this very night. Then who will get everything you worked for?' ²¹ "Yes, a person is a fool to store up earthly wealth but not have a rich relationship with God."**
 - a. This isn't a story about money or success; it's a story about priorities and a man who lived for himself with no thought of God. He wasted his life on temporary things with no thought for eternity.
4. The application is huge. One day we'll stand before God and give an account of our life. I'd rather be like the Linscombes who said yes to God and served Him instead of the Breckenridge couple who lived for themselves and ignored eternity. God has called all of us to serve Him. Some say yes and some say no.
5. Mission of COTR is to "Connect people to G-F-Ministry-W. We want to partner with you and encourage you to serve God, e.g. Spanish people, NB road, ESL in a restaurant. Mentor people who want a hand up instead of a gov. handout.

V. Conclusion

A. I learned to not let anything stop me from accomplishing God's plan for my life.

B. We climbed a 14'er...(picture's) We started out at 10k feet. When we reached the tree line I saw the top and said "honey let's go for it. If we don't we'll regret it." We had to stop 6-7 times because the climb was hard, the air was thin and we ran out of water. We didn't quit. We made it and we'll remember it the rest of our life.

1. //s to our spiritual calling in life.

C. Ph. 3:13-14 (NIV) [Paul is talking about becoming the person God wants him to be] Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: **Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal to win the prize** for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

1. The top of the mountain is a metaphor for God's calling for your life. Are you straining for what's ahead in your spiritual life? Do you long to hear God say "Well done, good and faithful servant!" or are you living for yourself?

D. *World Magazine, Hall of Fame* story. Whatever you do in life can be a platform to impact the world for Christ. Let's do something big for God together.