

COTR Network Conference
“Milestones”
07/09/26

(PHILIPPIANS 1:27) – ²⁷ Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel...

WELCOME....

- **Real honor to be here with you all.** (I've been connected to you now in part, for many years)
- **While I was a teenager in the student ministry of Pastor Sonny & Susan** (*Church on the Rock South*), a number of you were already ministry colleagues and peers with Pastor Sonny.
 - And I got to watch – amidst a very formational time of my life (discovering ministry)
 - *Philippians 1:27 – Paul is the voice of inspiration to the Philippian leaders*
 - *Differently than Paul – I watched (UP) as one who was inspired...*
 - I want to say THANK YOU – for being leaders and pastors...that have endured...
 - *...standing firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel.*
 - **CAN WE GIVE THE LORD A CLAP OFFERING – HE HAS CARRIED YOU!**

Just a little about me...**in the fall of 2000**, my wife and I moved from Dallas to Tampa...

- **We started Bridgeway Church on April 15, 2001...**so I've had the privilege of watching this church of a few people...now grow and develop for the last 25 years.
- **This April, Pastor Sonny came into Tampa and spoke at our anniversary services...**
 - He gave a talk entitled, PEEK TO PEAK – (You need to have him come...)

When you get the privilege of having your life (*heart, head, hands*) involved with something for that long of a time...**one of the great blessings you receive along the way...are some perspectives...**

- When we started, I was **28** years old...last week, I turned **54**...
- When we started, **my wife and I were about 5-years** into our marriage...
- When we moved there, **my son was about 4-months old**...and last month, he turned **26**...
 - (*And my wife and I have **added 3 girls** to the family since that initial launch.*)

And one of the perspectives I've been learning along the way involves **how you handle milestones**.

Everyone here has had...and will continue to have...MILESTONES.

- You'll have milestones – in your **family**...
 - You'll have milestones – in your **ministry**...
 - (*Independent of ministry*)...all of us will have...**very personal milestones**...

*So, allow me to be a **bit generic**...then we'll get into **some scripture**...and then to a **consideration**.*

Everyone can look **back** at milestones in their life. We also look **ahead** to milestones that are coming.

- **CHILDHOOD**...(First steps // First words // Starting kindergarten // _____)

- **EDUCATION**...(High School // College // Advanced Degree // _____)
- **LIFE**...(Moving out // Buying home // Getting married // _____)
- **MARRIAGE**...(Becoming parent // Certain anniversary // Becoming grandparent)
 - **FITNESS**...(Certain weight // Big goal adventure // _____)
 - **CAREER**...(First job // Lucrative salary // Retirement // _____)

MINISTRY (also has milestones)...(Salvation // Calling // 1st ministry job or mission // Miracle...)

Not too long ago, I saw this particular line regarding the idea of “milestones”.

- “Celebrate your milestones, but don’t mistake them for your finish line.” (**DON’T STOP!**)

Now, we’re going to approach this topic of milestones from 2 angles...and I think the two angles are very supportive and complimentary of one another.

PRIMARY CONCEPT:

Milestones are often an INTERSECTION of God’s faithfulness and our discipleship.

- 1) God has been faithful **with** you...and **to** you...(HE HELPED YOU!)
- 2) Along with that...you’ve been **trying to adhere** to doing things in a God honoring way...
 - TALK FREELY – (YOU’VE BEEN DOING THE HARD WORK!)
 - Somewhere in the past...God moved in your life...and you said **HINENI!**
 - TALK FREELY – (Abraham // Jacob // Moses // Samuel // Isaiah...)

Now, Jesus said something interesting about MILESTONES in the Sermon on the Mount...

(MATTHEW 5:38-42) – ³⁸“You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ ³⁹But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. ⁴⁰And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. ⁴¹If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. ⁴²Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

- **On the surface**, you see that Jesus is calling His followers...**to reject revenge** (getting even)
- **At a deeper level**, Jesus is calling His followers to prefer...**going beyond what is demanded**

The “mile” that Jesus refers to...is not abstract—**it was visibly marked, measured, and enforced**.

- It’s where we get our term, **MILESTONE**.

SHOW PHOTOS – The Roman Road system used **milestones** (Latin: MILLIARIUM)

- Cylinder stone pillars // Placed every Roman mile (~1,000 paces ≈ 0.92 modern miles)
- **Inscribed with:** The emperor’s name // Distance to major cities // Sometimes the road builder
- So, the word mile...(mille, a Roman mile)...and the stone that marked it...was a, **MILESTONE**

LET’S TALK ABOUT WHAT THE MILESTONE IMPLIED:

There was a Roman military law...

- ...That a Roman soldier could legally compel a civilian to carry equipment for one mile.
 - Of course, this was deeply resented by Jews (**WHY? It was a reminder of oppression**).

- INSERT OLD TESTAMENT JEWISH ESCHATOLOGY
 - o 1) Our people suffer
 - o 2) The messiah arrives
 - o 3) The messiah conquers our oppressors
 - o 4) Our people experience liberation – (TALK FREELY...*Jesus was not following this*)

Now, back to the context of Milestones...

- Because roads were marked with stones...**both the soldier and the civilian**...knew exactly when the mile ended – (**The milestones were a visible “stopping point”.**)
 - o So, you can imagine that when you got to the stopping point...**you stopped!**
 - When **requirement** was finished...**you** were finished!

But Jesus says...a milestone can be where you choose...to go beyond what is required of you.

- **CONSIDER: THE RICH YOUNG RULER – (TALK FREELY)**
- *So, think of it like this...*

FIRST MILE	SECOND MILE
Law	Grace
Obligation	Voluntary
External Force	Internal Choice
Earthly Duty	Kingdom Minded

In the Old Testament – there were numerous (metaphorical) milestones for Israel.

(Intersections of God’s Faithfulness and their “discipleship”).

(JOSHUA 4:1-7) – When the whole nation had finished crossing the Jordan, the Lord said to Joshua, ² “Choose twelve men from among the people, one from each tribe, ³ and tell them to take up twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan from right where the priests stood and to carry them over with you and put them down at the place where you stay tonight.”

⁴ So Joshua called together the twelve men he had appointed from the Israelites, one from each tribe, ⁵ and said to them, “Go over before the ark of the Lord your God into the middle of the Jordan. **Each of you is to take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the Israelites, ⁶ to serve as a sign among you...**

...In the future, when your children ask you, ‘What do these stones mean?’ ⁷ tell them that the flow of the Jordan was cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord. When it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. These stones are to be a memorial to the people of Israel forever.

- God was very clear...the stones were something **they’d come back to...not encamp at...**

(Let’s read one more story of a milestone built in honor of the Lord.)

(1 SAMUEL 7:2-4) – ² It was a long time, twenty years in all, that the ark remained at Kiriath Jearim, and all the people of Israel mourned and sought after the Lord. ³ And Samuel said to the whole house of Israel, “If you are returning to the Lord with all your hearts**, then rid yourselves of the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths and commit yourselves to the Lord and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.” ⁴ **So the Israelites put away their Baals and Ashtoreths, and served the Lord only.****

- (EXPLAIN WHAT TRANSPIRES (v5-9)...AND THE VICTORY OF THE LORD)

(1 SAMUEL 7:10-12) – ¹⁰ While Samuel was sacrificing the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to engage Israel in battle. But that day the Lord thundered with loud thunder against the Philistines and threw them into such a panic that they were routed before the Israelites. ¹¹ The men of Israel rushed out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines, slaughtering them along the way to a point below Beth Car.

¹² Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen. He named it Ebenezer, saying, “Thus far has the Lord helped us.”

- In the Old Testament, there are several people who built stone monuments to the Lord...
 - Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, Gideon, Elijah – (They were national milestones!)
 - TALK FREELY – You have milestones in which God helped you even get to this day!

SECONDARY CONCEPT:

Milestones are often an **INVITATION** for an ongoing decision and commitment.

- 1) The Roman Road milestone suggests: “You’ve gone far enough.”
- 2) Jesus calls us to make a different decision and commitment **at the very same milestone...**
 - “Don’t stop where the world stops.”

Leaning into my personal years of perspective of watching this...

- A) Milestones are often the place that **you will remember back on God’s faithfulness** to you...
- B) ...AND, He offers you **a renewed invitation** to go further in your decisions and commitments.
 - **SERVING**: 1st mile = **required** 2nd mile = **voluntary**
 - **FAITH**: 1st mile = **reluctance** 2nd mile = **overflow**
 - **YOUR CALLING**: 1st mile = **restraint** 2nd mile = **release**

So, let me take a moment and lean on something that I have also watched over the years...

- **NOT EVERYONE CONTINUES MOVING FORWARD!**

(PHILIPPIANS 1:27) – ²⁷ **Whatever happens**, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel...

- The aspects of life categorized as, “WHATEVER HAPPENS”...**causes too much turmoil**.
 - ...maybe too much **disappointment**...
 - ...maybe too much **frustration** and **exhaustion**...
- (And not everyone continues!)

I’ve watched people stay in the game...simply to get to their milestone...seeing that milestone as the point that they can finally get out.

- Once the **kids graduate**...we can end this charade of a marriage...
- Once the **building gets finished**...I can stop kidding myself about my ministry...
- Once I get to that **particular milestone**...I’m done!

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- TALK FREELY – I think that has so much more to do with unity of purpose than beliefs.

*In **PSALM 77**, there is such an interesting passage...that we would be blessed by considering...*

(PSALM 77:1-4) – ¹ I cried out to God for help; I cried out to God to hear me. ² When I was in distress, I sought the Lord; at night I stretched out untiring hands and my soul refused to be comforted. ³ I remembered you, O God, and I groaned; I mused, and my spirit grew faint. ⁴ You kept my eyes from closing; I was too troubled to speak.

- EXPLAIN – (**Horizontally** he's so troubled...that it's hijacking his **vertical** perspective.)

So, he begins to **look back to Israel's milestones of God's deliverance**

(PSALM 77:10-11) – ¹⁰ Then I thought, "To this I will appeal: the years of the right hand of the Most High." ¹¹ I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago.

- TALK FREELY – His worship and confidence in God is returning....

(PSALM 77:19) – ¹⁹ **Your path LED through the sea, your way THROUGH the mighty waters, though your footprints were not seen.**

- TALK FREELY – (No footprints...but still entirely led by the Lord...through the waters...)
 - **No footprints...but He is with you...**
 - **No footprints...but He still is providing...**
 - **No footprints...but He is still protecting...guiding...carrying...**
- Sometimes, there are moments or seasons...that there are no perceivable footprints...
 - And yet, you still watch God help you...(and you arrive at a milestone)
 - INTERSECTION – Of God's faithfulness...and your discipleship
 - INVITATION – For an ongoing decision...and commitment

That we can say (arm-in-arm with Paul)...LORD, WHATEVER HAPPENS...

- ...we'll conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ...
- ...that we stand firm in one spirit...(contending as one man) for the faith of the gospel
 - TALK FREELY