

What Matters Most: A Pastor's Reflection

What Matters Most?

This lesson, based on 2 Timothy 4:7, explores the speaker's reflections on what has truly mattered over 40 years of ministry. It emphasizes focusing on core principles rather than "perilous pursuits" that divert from essential goals.

Highlights

- The speaker was prompted to reflect on "what mattered most" after 40 years in ministry by Pastor Jason Murphy.
- Many pursuits in ministry can be "perilous" and not the best use of time.
- Opportunity does not always equal obligation.
- The speaker acknowledges not always perfectly adhering to these principles but consistently returning to them.
- What mattered most was not buildings, numbers, or the praise of men, but rather deeper, more foundational aspects of faith and service.

Key Information/Topics

The speaker identifies 10 dominant things that have mattered most:

1. The Glory of God:

- Always asking: "Does this glorify God?"
- Worshiping, living for Him, bearing spiritual fruit.
- Acknowledging past instances where actions did not glorify God and learning from them.

2. The Presence of God:

- Experiencing the simple pleasure of God's presence.
- Avoiding "emptiness of soul" from being too busy.
- Walking in the Spirit, acknowledging His leadership, and engaging in prayer.
- Communing with God to be conformed to His image, leading to personal integrity.
- Repentance for sin and lack of fellowship.

3. My Family:

- Avoiding provoking children to wrath through anger, absenteeism, or abuse.
- Investing time (Love is spelled T.I.M.E.).
- Investing teaching (e.g., video devotions while traveling, regular family devotions).
- Recognizing family as the "first ministry."

4. The Flock of God (Local Church):

- Loving the local church and its people.
- Striving to be the best pastor possible.
- Overseeing programs and curricula.
- Protecting the flock from internal and external threats (Acts 20:28).
- Serving as a servant leader and enjoying fellowship with the congregation.
- Desire to finish the race "still in love with Jesus, still in love with Terry, and still in love with the local church."
- Appreciation for the "intense loving spirit" of Lancaster Baptist Church.

5. A Lost World and Souls:

- The primary reason for entering ministry.

- Belief in heaven and hell, and the brevity of life.
- Practicing soul-winning locally (door-knocking, maintaining soul-winning lists) and globally (supporting missionaries, SLC Asia, Central America).
- Emphasizing thorough discipleship.

6. Faithfulness to the Word of God:

- High priority on spending time in the Word and rightly dividing it.
- Desire for the church to be a place where people know "what the Bible says."
- Respect for textual and verse-by-verse preaching.
- Quoting Mueller: "The vigor of our spiritual life will be in exact proportion to the place held by the Bible in our life and thoughts."

7. The Generations Following Me:

- Continuous consideration of the impact on future generations.
- Understanding that "things that leaders do in moderation are often done in excess by the next generation."
- Maintaining standards and convictions despite pressure to change.
- Training up children in the way they should go.
- Considering students (e.g., West Coast Baptist College), staff (29 former staff now pastoring), and young people in the church.
- Limiting personal liberty to avoid becoming a stumbling block (Romans 14).
- Stewarding the pulpit carefully, considering the influence of speakers on social media and their endorsements.

8. My Standing in Christ:

- Thankfulness for confidence in Christ (Philippians 1:6).
- Learning to prioritize friends over critics.
- Remembering that acceptance is always in Christ (Ephesians 1:6).

9. America's Need for Revival:

- Revival is "getting us back to God," not just a particular position.
- Quoting Leonard Ravenhill: "Give me revival in my soul and in my church and in my nation, or give me death."
- Pastors and churches should be "salt and light."
- Standing against social justice movements that subtly influence churches (e.g., themes in songs, virtue signaling, acceptance of feminism, homosexuality).
- Critiquing the replacement of soul-winning with "snarky attitudes" related to social justice.
- Encouraging pastors to speak to issues like abortion and gay marriage.
- Example of confronting an assemblyman about his voting record on sex-change laws, emphasizing God's view over political alignment.
- Belief that "every city needs a prophet of God" to speak truth.

10. To Be Faithful to My Calling:

- A continuous striving, not an attained state.
- Encouragement to evaluate personal pursuits and eliminate those that don't truly matter.

Task

- Reflect on your own "perilous pursuits" and identify areas where you might be spending time on things that don't truly matter.
- Evaluate your actions and priorities against the 10 points discussed, considering how they align with "what matters most."