

HOW TO HAVE THE BEST YEAR OF YOUR LIFE PUT GOD FIRST AND RECEIVE HIS BLESSINGS

We are just a few days away from a brand new year. I am asking God to make 2009 the best year you've ever had in your entire life, and that it also will be the best year for our church. Would you like that? Will you pray for that?

Clarification

Before we go any further, let me tell you what I don't mean. When I say, "The best year you've had," I am not suggesting that you won't have any trials, you won't get sick, and that you will win the lotto and everybody will be healthy, wealthy, and wise.

There may be more war in 2009. Some of you will get sick and some of us may die. The economy will probably get worse and Iran may attack Israel.

But I am promising you, that if you will put really God first in your life, you could enjoy the best year you've ever had.

Practical "How To"

We talk a lot about "putting God first." Today's sermon is a "how to" sermon. I want to tell you what I believe it means to put God first. I'm going to spell it out. In fact, unless the Lord changes my mind, I am going to talk about this for the next three Sundays (at least).

Scripture Matthew 6:33

The Key to having a great year and a great life is found in Matthew 6:33: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

New Living Translation

". . . He (God) will give you all you need from day to day if you live for him and make the Kingdom of God your primary concern."

What Does it Mean to put God First?

Here is how I believe a person can put God first in their life.

1. First, that person must be saved. You trust Jesus as Savior and Lord.
2. Second, you give God the First Part of every day.
3. Third, you give God the First Day of every week.
4. Fourth, you give God the First Dime out of every dollar.

The First Part of Every Day

Today, let's focus on giving God the first part of every day. A person cannot live a successful Christian life if you don't

spend time with God. One hour a week on Sunday is not enough. You must spend time with God every day.

The Right Time

There will never be any time left over to spend with God or to pursue spiritual things. Therefore, it will be necessary for you to set aside 30 minutes sometime during your busy day and make an appointment with God. He will meet you there at the same time every day. Since each individual has a different schedule, the time selected will vary from person to person. Remember! This is your personal appointment with God. This is not a time of family devotions.

I am asking each of you who are serious to make a commitment today to spend at least thirty minutes every day alone with God. Don't give God your "spare time." Give God your "prime time."

This will not be easy. You will probably have to get up one hour earlier every day just to keep this appointment with God. How many of you keep a calendar of your appointments? Tuelah keeps ours. Put God down for the first appointment every day.

I repeat! This will not be easy! Holidays and vacations are the most difficult.

The Right Tools

You will also have to buy some tools for this. You will need three things:

1. A note book like this one (hold it up). I tried to purchase 200 of these and give them to you today, but no store had more than ten.

2. A pencil or pen that will write. You must take notes. If you don't take notes you are not serious.

3. A Bible you like. This is controversial, but I want you give you my honest opinion. Get a translation that you like and one you can understand. Some insist on the KJV but I prefer one that is easier to understand. Let me illustrate this for you.

3 John, verses 5-8 (KJV)

5. Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers;

6. Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well:

7. Because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles.

8. We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellow-helpers to the truth.

Now, how many of you understand what I just read? Those three verses are the only verses in the New Testament I am aware of that tell us to give money to Missionaries and Evangelists.

Let's read it again from the King James. (Read again)

Now, let's read the same verses from New Living Translation (3 John 5-8)

5. Dear friend, you are doing a good work for God when you take care of the traveling teachers who are passing through, even though they are strangers to you.

6. They have told the church here of your friendship and your loving deeds. You do well to send them on their way in a manner that pleases God.

7. For they are traveling for the Lord and accept nothing from those who are not Christians.

8. So we ourselves should support them so that we may become partners with them for the truth."

The Use of Your Time

Now that you have your time (5:30 a.m.); you have your notebook, pen, and a Bible you can understand.

Mormons won't like this, but it's OK to have a cup of coffee while you spend this time with God.

Your should divide your time into two parts: The first fifteen minutes you pray and the second fifteen minutes you read your Bible.

I recommend you use the Daily Bread. There are two ways to do this. You can read the section for one day or you can read the entire Bible in one year.

Today, I want to focus on the first fifteen minutes on "How to Pray Intelligently."

HOW TO PRAY INTELLIGENTLY AND EFFECTIVELY

A. Prayer of Praise

Begin your prayer time with praise to God. God desires praise and God deserves praise. If you have trouble thinking of things to praise God for, read Psalm 145. For additional insight into the concept of praise, read Hebrews 13:15.

B. Prayer of Thanksgiving

After you have spent a few moments

in praise to God -- move to thanksgiving. Read Philippians 4:6. Here it will be helpful to go down this list and thank God for each of the following:

1. Physical blessings

2. Material blessings

3. Spiritual blessings

4. Some particular person

5. An answered prayer

6. An event

7. Anything else the Holy Spirit puts in your mind.

C. Prayer of Confession

Now that you have spent time in praise and thanksgiving -- it is time for confession. Read 1 John 1:9. Serious Christians must deal with sin on a daily basis. Unconfessed sin brings chastisement. This list may be helpful:

1. Sins of the Mind (Lust, envy, jealousy, covetousness)

2. Sins of the Tongue (cursing, dirty jokes, harshness, gossip, lying)

3. Sins of the Flesh (adultery, fornication, incest, homosexuality)

4. Secret sins

5. Sinful Actions

6. Sins of Omission (Things we know we should have done)

(James 4:17) "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

Caution! Do not write these sins down in your notebook. This is between you and God.

D. Prayer of Intercession

Here is where you pray for others and their needs. Perhaps this list will help. Pray for the following people – by name.

Here is where you begin to use your notebook.

Write each request down and date it. When this prayer is answered, mark it off and add the date the prayer was answered. This is a real faith-builder.

1. A relative
2. A Christian friend
3. An unsaved friend
4. A Christian leader
5. A political leader
6. A missionary
7. Anyone else the Holy Spirit places on your heart.

E. Prayer of Petition

Now you are in a position for God to hear and answer prayers for your personally.

God has invited you to ask him for anything and everything you need. Read (Philippians 4:19).

1. Write each request down and date it.
2. Be very specific.

3. When God answers these specific request -- cross them off and date it.

4. Don't be bashful or hesitate to ask for personal things.

Let's stop right here for today. How many of you will Make a commitment today to begin January 1, 2009 and give God thirty minutes every day, seven days a week, 365 days out of every year.

Today's commitment is for the next 30 days, beginning January 1, 2009.

How many are with me?

I would like to close by reading a couple of my favorite promises that are related to what we've been talking about today.

(Psalm 34:6-10)

6 I cried out to the LORD in my suffering, and he heard me. He set me free from all my fears. 7 For the angel of the LORD guards all who fear him, and he rescues them. 8 Taste and see that the LORD is good. Oh, the joys of those who trust in him! 9 Let the LORD's people show him reverence, for those who honor him will have all they need. 10 Even strong young lions sometimes go hungry, but those who trust in the LORD will never lack any good thing.

(Psalm 34:17-18)

17 The LORD hears his people when they call to him for help. He rescues them from all their troubles. 18 The LORD is close to the brokenhearted; he rescues those who are crushed in spirit.

(Psalm 112)

1 Praise the LORD! Happy are those who fear the LORD. Yes, happy are those who delight in doing what he commands.

2 Their children will be successful everywhere; an entire generation of godly people will be blessed.

3 They themselves will be wealthy, and their good deeds will never be forgotten.

4 When darkness overtakes the godly, light will come bursting in. They are generous, compassionate, and righteous.

5 All goes well for those who are generous, who lend freely and conduct their business fairly.

6 Such people will not be overcome by evil circumstances. Those who are righteous will be long remembered.

7 They do not fear bad news; they confidently trust the LORD to care for them.

8 They are confident and fearless and can face their foes triumphantly.

9 They give generously to those in need. Their good deeds will never be forgotten. They will have influence and honor.

10 The wicked will be infuriated when they see this. They will grind their teeth in anger; they will slink away, their hopes thwarted.

This message was preached by Pastor Gene Keith on December 28, 2009 in the Countryside Baptist Church of Gainesville, Florida. You may correspond with Gene by calling (352) 332-1493 or by Email @ gk122532@bellsouth.net. You may also visit our church website: cbcgainesville.net and get a PDF copy of this message.
