

## I. The Importance of Finishing Well

Timothy takes over and becomes the man who carries on with Paul once he is gone. We looked at 2 Timothy 4:21, the great verse where he tells Timothy to do his diligence to come before winter.

*2 Timothy 4:21*

*Do thy diligence to come before winter.*

I showed you in the Bible and also in life, looking at the end of a person's life, what they say and what they do is truly the defining time of who we really are. Our ultimate defining moment is God establishing His great truth through the Bible by recording for us the last things that men say in the Bible and how important they really are. Not only that, but the last thing that God says about them. In life and in history, it is so true. I gave you some great examples, not only out of the Bible, but some great examples out of history and life. It is very clear from God's standpoint that what really defines us is not how we run the race, but how we finish the race.

I showed you how that life on planet earth will be basically like the four seasons of our life here. Romans 1:20 tells us that the invisible things of the Lord are clearly seen and understood by the things that God made.

*Romans 1:20*

*For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:*

If you want a perception of life on planet earth for you and for me, it simply falls into the same four seasons that this earth goes through every 365 days. You have the springtime when everything is fresh and new. You have the summertime when things are really moving along. You have the fall time when it starts to get a little cooler and the leaves start to turn. Then, of course, you have the winter when the snow comes, the wind blows cold, and not much can be done. I showed you how that we need to see and understand that the springtime, the summertime, and the fall of our life is the time to get some things done for God, because when winter gets here, you cannot do it anymore.

## II. Life's Seasons and Forming Good Habits

I gave you, if you remember, five areas to look at and to consider. I told you that the older we get, we ought to take the real issues of life more seriously. We ought to look at what really matters. We ought to be able to separate the things that we put so much energy into that really do not matter from what we have learned through the Word of God and through life's experiences. The importance of starting with our children in the springtime of their lives is helping them form good habits.

In a couple of weeks, we will be taking all of our kids to camp. One of my goals, and I am going to be the speaker in the evening, and Herb Kuntz is going to be the speaker in the morning, will be to start this very process to try to get them to see the importance of forming good habits now in the early part of their life. This is where the battle for your kids is going to be won or lost. Not necessarily at camp, but where they learn to make the right choices and the right decisions now. I know some of you parents who have been working with me, and we have been working together on this, I know that you are working on that with your kids. We want to help you help them. We want to support you in everything that you are trying to do with your kids.

The theme this year at camp is going to be "Dare to be a Daniel" out of the book of Daniel. If you would go upstairs to the Timothy room, they have got the whole room decorated with Daniel themes of what Daniel went through to already prepare the kids for what they can expect that week. I would say hands down, Daniel is probably the best example in the Bible for our young kids, for anybody really, but certainly for our kids. It is in the springtime of his life. He is probably maybe 14, 15, or 16. His whole nation is carried by Babylon captive down to a strange land. This starts the captivity of the nation of Israel for some 400 years until the Lord shows up at the first coming of Christ. They are under bondage. Daniel is just a young guy who there is no record of his parents. Maybe they were killed. They certainly were separated. Now he is torn out of the very environment of his family, his mom and his dad, and whatever he knew. Now he is thrust into the most godless, wicked situation in the history of human man: Babylon. He faces every issue that your child is facing today. The Bible says that Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the king's meat.

*Daniel 1:8*

*But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.*

### III. Life's Simplicity: Opportunities and Choices

Boy, that is the key. For me, I have to make everything as easy and non-complicated as I can, not only in life, but also in the Bible. My IQ is somewhat limited, and I have to break things down to an easy, lowest common denominator. I mentioned a couple of weeks ago that in the seven classes that God has, there is a math class. God is a mathematician. In math, the way to get to an answer of something, especially if you are dividing it among itself, is to get it down to the lowest common denominator. That is what you do with the Bible. You take the Bible, a principle, you take a verse, you take something here, and then you keep dividing it through the Word of God until you get it down to the lowest common denominator; there you will find the principle.

I am telling you, when you look at life, the Christian life, life for a child of God is not complicated. We are told that it is. Everything that we read, we are told that it is. Many times we believe that it is, but that is simply not true if you are saved. Life for a child of God, good or bad, will revolve around just two areas of life. These two are absolutely vital, not only for you and for

me, but certainly for your children. For a child of God, everything will revolve around just these two areas.

The first area that all life revolves around will be the chances, the opportunities that God will give us. God saved us, every one of us, for a reason. The reason why God gave you as parents children is so you can train those children to get them ready, that when God wants to open up the opportunities to them, they can recognize them. The second area of life that we all have to deal with is the choices that we make concerning the opportunities that God gives us. Simply two things: the opportunities that we get and the choices we make in respect to those opportunities.

We see Paul understood this great concept when he writes in Colossians 4:3 that God had opened up a door of utterance.

*Colossians 4:3*

*Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds:*

Doors in the Bible will always represent opportunities that God gives us. When we are faced with a decision or a choice, God will give us the opportunity, and we have to look at it and decide now, "Yes, I am going to pursue it," or "No, I am not." You find this not only true of Christians, but it is true of churches. In the Bible, in Revelation, you have two churches: you have a church that is the church of the closed door. They had no opportunities with God they would take. Then you have the church of the open door, and they took every opportunity God gave them. Some of God's people are the same way. Some are open to the opportunities of God, some are closed to the opportunities of God. But I am telling you right now, life on planet earth simply revolves around those two basic areas: the chances that God will give each of us after we are saved, and then our decision to do it or not do it.

## IV. Five Key Lessons for Life

A while back in my life, it has been 10, 15 years maybe, I got thinking about all the things that I have learned from the Lord, the things that He has taught me. I started a list of what I have learned in life over the years that He had taught me. It was important to me. I did not ever want to forget what I have learned in life, but more important, I wanted to remember what I learned about life. I guess I keep adding to it, but back then, I think I came down with about 40 things. As you remember, or God shows you something else, you add to it. Some were general things that are just the things of life. Some were personal things that you learn as you go through things. But out of that 40, today I have picked five that I want to give our kids at camp. I want to give them to you also because they will work for you just like they will work for them. I am going to build these five things around Daniel's life and what he faced, just like your kids are facing today in the world system that they are up against. Make no mistake about it. There is absolutely no difference between what Daniel faced in his day and what your kids are facing in their day. You need to understand that because they are in the springtime of their life right now. I want to help them be a Christian that is always open to the opportunities of God, not closed like so many of God's people are today. These five will be good, as I said, for every one of us. These are the five

key areas that I want to carry into camp, and I want you to understand what I am going to do. Five key areas that I have learned in my 73-year journey through this life. I want to talk about that today.

- 1.) Life is about Choices
- 2.) We Are Who We Associate With
- 3.) Change Your Thinking
- 4.) You Only Get Out What You Put In
- 5.) Learn From Your Mistakes

## V. The Parent's Role and Future Investment

These are the five key areas that I have learned over the years, because if anybody made the mistakes of life, I have. Now I want to pass them on to your kids at camp. I have got to be honest with you folks, and I love you very much. We have worked hard. We planned hard. Jared and I and Danny sat down last week and talked about what we want to do and where we want to go. We are going to have a meeting Friday night, and it is going to be a thing where I want you all to know. But you need to understand the real success of camp will not be what we do at camp. It will not be my preaching at night or Herb's preaching in the morning. It will not be the magnitude of the young men and women we have being counselors. But the real success of camp will not be what we do at camp, but rather what you do when your child gets back from camp. As in most cases, you will have a changed child. Now all we need is changed parents.

We could have the best youth program, and we have got a great one. I know the best youth workers in the world, and I think we do. But nothing takes the place of you, the parent. Keeping your child involved in all that Jared and his crew do with your children, or the Timothy class with Danny and Jamie and all the crew there. We, the church, are here to support you, not to do your job for you. Please do not think sending your child to camp will take care of it all, and now they are spiritual and everything is okay. Listen, as good as camp will be, here is another thing I have learned. The moment on Thursday morning when we say amen and they get in your car to go home with you, at that exact second, the devil will start to try to undo everything we did and take it from them. You, the parent, mom and dad, you are the first line of defense. We need to work together to see and to ensure we lose not one more child to the world.

I have had parents come in, talk to me and said, "Hey, my kid is not doing this or doing that right." I put some of my good people with them. It does not take very long to find out that the only problem the kid has is mom and dad. They gravitate to what we do with them in the Bible. But mom and dad are too busy doing their own thing outside the Bible. Then they scratch their head and wonder why you lose your kid. Somebody says, "Well, what do you have for parents like that?" "Do not have any kid, just raise puppies." Because the world does not need one more child going to the world. It does not need one more girl or one more kid getting into drugs. It does not need one more girl or one more young man becoming alcoholic. It does not need

anybody else going back to the world when in the springtime of their life, it does not have to be that way. It goes without saying this church, me as your pastor, and the men and women who stand by my side and work with me will always be 100% committed to you and helping your family, you, your kids, in any way possible. But it takes 100% commitment on your part to get your kids part of the program.

I will just close throwing in number six.

## ➤ 6.) Don't Delay Change

Next Sunday morning, every parent needs to be here. Jared will set the course for your kids after camp. We have sat down and we have talked about it. We have laid it out. It may be their youth department, but I am the pastor of this church, and I set the course by which I want every class moving toward the same goal. Brother, he has got it. When Zach and Jenny were in our youth group, they laid a great foundation. They took our kids to a level that got them really into the Bible. I will never be able to thank them enough for what they did. They laid a great foundation. For 10 years, they labored and worked with our kids. Now we take them to the next level. You need to be here next week to see and understand what we have got for them.

This year's camp is at a level that we have never been before. I have been in camp for many, many years. You have got to be brain dead spiritually not to see the hand of God on this church in an incredible way. The things that He is doing in people's lives. The things that are happening, the people that are coming in, getting involved. The openings that God gives us and the opportunities are overwhelming. Right now, everything is focused on one week. I look at the fact that our singles that are going, 80% of them, because we have been shut down for three years with COVID, and we tried to do something here. But we have got some things done, but it is not the way it needs to be. We had no control over that. But the thing that I look at is with you young singles going, probably 75 to 80% of you have never been to one of my camps before. The operational intensity is going to be unlike anything you have ever experienced in your life. We are going to talk about this Friday night. I can guarantee you, you will grow in four or five days what it would take you a year to get to, just puttering around and doing what you are doing. Because of the concentrated intensity of it. So I see it not only as an incredible opportunity for the kids, but you guys too. You are going to come out of there smarter, quicker, faster, and slicker than when you went in.

This is really the first year in all my years of camping, and my first camp was in 1972, where it has actually gone international. We have two young people coming over from England. I guess they never got the word what a terrible church we are. They are traveling all this way just to be part of what they follow because they want to be a part of it. What an opportunity. What an opportunity not only for them to be there and to see what we do, but for you young singles to take them under your wing, to load them down with everything and then send them back to England with a fire to do something for God. That is New Testament missions right there. This year we have got kids and family coming from all over the country that are part of our lifeline. Is it Utah? Oregon. That is close to Utah. Spelled the same. We have got them everywhere. God is doing some incredible things. Then our own kids. Right now in our church, everything is in place

to give your kids everything they need to dare to be a Daniel. All I need to complete the process is you, the parent.

Most of your kids will come back changed. Please do not allow them to come back in the same old stupid, dumb world that we had to clean them up from when they came to camp. Change your thought process. Change who you are. See your kids as God's heritage. Let our young singles work with them. Let me work with you. Realize that it comes down to the investment that not only your kid made. How do I justify to your kids to get them to make an investment when one of them will look at me and say, "Well, my mom and dad do not make any investments?" How do you deal with that? Now I know how to deal with that, but come on. It takes all of us. Two weeks out. Next week Jared is going to lay out the plan that he has that is going to put it all into perspective for you. Then the following week Herb will be preaching that Sunday morning, and that night we hit the ground running. You pray for us. Pray for our kids. Pray for the moms and dads. Folks, there have to be some changes. I do not want to go back to camp next year and have to re-cover the same ground again with your kids. I do not want them to slip back into the mediocrity of the Christian life and do nothing and then have to get them fired up all over again. We need to keep it going, and next year they become the leaders to help the new kids that come in. But it is all of us. I have done everything I know how to get my people ready. I have worked with my young singles inside out. Jared worked with his people. They are fired up and ready to go. The only thing I need is mom and dad to be on board and be behind it. When we come back with your changed kid, they are changed parents. I will help you do that if that is what you need from me. Because this church is 100% committed that we lose not one more child to the world.

I cannot speak for any other churches, and I would not presume to. I think this is a pretty good church here. I think God is doing some tremendous things more than any of us deserve. It is because of the book. But I will tell you this. In this particular church, there is absolutely not one viable reason for anybody who is a member of this church to ever make a bad choice in life. Because you have everything here you need. You have people that love you. You have a pastor that loves you and cares for you, preaches you principles. There is no reason for any of you to ever make another bad choice in life, other than you want to. It is just that simple. You have got everything you need right here. Because this church cares about you. This church has been here now for 22 years. I preach the same messages the same way, the same style as I did when we started 20 years ago, when I started preaching back in the 70s. I have not changed a thing. You change. Your kids need you. If there was ever a day and age in the world that we live in where kids need mom and dad that make the investment in the things of the Word of God in their lives, it is today. You sit here this morning and you have everything you need. I look across this sea of faces of these young men and young ladies that work with me and the Alpha Bravo teams and the high school and Timothy. I look at the young kids that they work with. I see them out here teaching them the Bible. I see them going and doing things with them. I come in early in the morning and they are down there. I have to leave after church and they are working with them upstairs someplace. They care about your kids because that is what a church is supposed to do.