

He Seeks You
Part 2

Introduction:

(ILL) In his book, Giving It All Away David Green illustrates the goal of life for believers:

Some people act like life is an oversized game of Monopoly, where the way to win is to accumulate as many properties as you can, either by purchasing outright or by clever trading with your opponents. Then you keep adding houses and hotels, extracting rent from the others, until you eventually drive them into bankruptcy. You sit back, rub your hands together, and start counting your stacks of cash.

No, life is more like Uno or Crazy Eights, where the point is to run out of cards first. You want to deploy every card you have, knowing that each card left in your hand at the end counts against you.

Last week we began this two-part message—He Seeks You!

1. Paul to the Corinthians—“I seek not yours, but you.”
2. This is true—this God—He wants us—our hearts and surrender
3. Last week we answered the question, “What does it mean for God to have me?”
 - a. He is the primary object of my thoughts
 - b. He is the standard of my actions
 - c. He is the motive of my efforts
 - d. He is the model for my well-being
 - e. He is the measure of my surrender (I give it all)

Today I want to build on that last one:

Marks of a Life that measures its surrender by Christ!

I. Those who measure their surrender by Christ consider the needs of others before themselves.

Example of Jesus as described by Paul:

"You know the generous grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty he could make you rich." 2 Corinthians 8:9 NLT

- A. Christ had means that were sufficient for Himself (He was righteous/rich)
- B. Sacrificed them for those who did not have the means (those who were sinful/poor)
- C. Through HIS sacrifice they became persons of means (through His poverty became rich)
- D. This was generous grace giving-He put the needs of others above Himself
- E. Is that you? Is that how you surrender yourself to Him?

Churches in India Practice Radical Generosity

Churches in the northeastern Indian state of Mizoram have a beautiful phrase to express the way they give to God—"Buhfai Tham." It means "one handful of rice at a time." Here's how it works: Families in the church set aside a portion of rice at every meal for God. When they collect enough rice, they donate it to their local church. The church turns around and sells the rice to generate income.

In 1914 they used the sale of rice to raise \$1.50 (in U.S. money). But lately these Christians have been collecting \$1.5 million as they support 1,800 missionaries, in addition to local ministry. People have also started giving in more creative ways, as vegetables, firewood, and other resources flow into the church's outreach for the kingdom.

One church leader said,

There are many ways of serving the Lord. Some people do great things. Some people are great preachers. Some people contribute lots and lots of money. But when we talk about this 'Handful of Rice,' it is very humble. The service is done in the corner of the kitchen where nobody sees, but God knows and he blesses it. Another church member said, "It is not our richness or our poverty that make us serve the Lord, but our willingness. So we Mizo people say, 'As long as we have something to eat every day, we have something to give to God every day.'"

- Rice is the essential staple of the people of India
- Mizoram is the poorest state in India
- “Every time I do it I feel like I cook a meal for the Lord, too.”

(ILL) *Charlotte’s Web* (*Charlotte did everything she could to save her beloved friend, Wilbur the pig, afraid the farmer Mr. Zuckerman would turn him into bacon*). She was the first spider to write words in a web, (*Terrific, Radiant, Some Pig, Humble, etc.*) over the place where Wilbur slept. At the end of the story, Charlotte is dying in the barn when she hears the roar as Wilbur wins the prize in the county fair and his life is spared. She is satisfied knowing that all she had done, the sacrifices made, all of her efforts, had saved another. Sign of greatness is fading, dying to self, sacrificing, giving that others may live.

Is that how you give?

- Concerned about the needs of others over yourself?
- Wanting to save another even if your actions, your gifts are never seen?

II. Those who measure their surrender by Christ have a commitment to simplicity.

One of the great texts on discipleship in the Gospels is found in Luke 9

“As they were walking along, someone said to Jesus, “I will follow you wherever you go.” But Jesus replied, “Foxes have dens to live in, and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place even to lay his head.” Luke 9:57-58 NLT

- A. Hospitality was something that itinerant preachers were absolutely dependent upon in that culture
- B. Jesus is saying that to follow Him may mean that you find yourself outside the normal and acceptable boundaries of a world not oriented toward the aim of God
- C. There is no answer by this follower—almost as if Jesus is asking us to consider this text ourselves
- D. Our society is about US—the American dream—accumulation of wealth, prestige, position, power
- E. Following Jesus is not! It is a life of simplicity!

Old Testament writer Solomon understood the importance of simplicity:

Better one handful with tranquility than two handfuls with toil and chasing after the wind.” (Ecclesiastes 4:6).

Paul said the same thing in the NT:

But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it.” (1 Timothy 6:6,7)

F. What does a life of simplicity look like?

1. Doesn't require things in order to be content.
2. It intentionally focuses on time on knowing Christ, being in relationship with others, and serving others.
3. It makes financial decisions (what to buy, what to give, how to save) in light of the Kingdom of God)
4. It reveals its heart by its wallet

“Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be” (Matthew 6:21).

Misplaced Values

Helmut Thielicke in How to Believe Again. Leadership, Vol. 6, no. 2.

I once heard of a child who was raising a frightful cry because he had shoved his hand into the opening of a very expensive Chinese vase and then couldn't pull it out again. Parents and neighbors tugged with might and main on the child's arm, with the poor creature howling out loud all the while. Finally, there was nothing left to do but to break the beautiful, expensive vase. And then as the mournful heap of shards lay there, it became clear why the child had been so hopelessly stuck. His little fist grasped a paltry penny which he had spied in the bottom of the vase and which he, in his childish ignorance, would not let go.

Christ let go of the riches of this world—to pursue the will of God. He lived simply.

Do you have a commitment to simplicity?

III. Those who measure their surrender by Christ have set their priority on eternity.

Nowhere is the surrender of Christ and His commitment to eternity more apparent than in the words of the writer of Hebrews.

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne."

Hebrews 12:1-2 NLT

- A. Endured suffering and hardship because of joy set before Him
 - B. Scripture is clear that our citizenship is in heaven and that that we are foreigners and strangers here
 - C. Yet we cling to this world and its STUFF!
 - D. If we are going to measure our surrender by Christ our priority must be eternity
1. Do we steward our resources in a way that reflects a "now" focus or an "eternal" focus?
 2. Do we steward our resources in a way that reflects a "me" focus or an "others" focus?
 3. Do we steward our resources in a way that reflects an "anxious" spirit or a "trusting" spirit?

(ILL) When Loss Is Gain

*In his book of sermons *The Living Faith*, Lloyd C. Douglas tells the story of Thomas Hearne, who, "in his journey to the mouth of the Coppermine River, wrote that a few days after they had started on their expedition, a party of Indians stole most of their supplies. His comment on the apparent misfortune was: "The weight of our baggage being so much lightened, our next day's journey was more swift and pleasant."*

"Hearne was in route to something very interesting and important; and the loss of a few sides of bacon and a couple of bags of flour meant nothing more than an easing of the load. Had Hearne been holed in somewhere, in a cabin, resolved to spend his last days eking out an existence, and living on capital previously collected, the loss of some of his stores by plunder would probably have worried him almost to death."

How we respond to "losing" some of our resources for God's work depends upon whether we are on the move or waiting for our last stand.

Where is your priority?

IV. Those who measure their surrender by Christ understand the urgency of the Gospel message.

A. A sense of urgency was evidenced in the ministry of Jesus.

“As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work.” John 9:4 NIV

“My food,” said Jesus, “is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. Don’t you have a saying, ‘It’s still four months until harvest’? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.” John 4:34-35 NIV

B. That urgency led him to decline temporary comfort—he could ill afford to be comfortable when others were lost

C. Does that urgency effect the way we give?

1. There is a sense of urgency in the SMC building (youth that need Jesus who do not know why there believe what they believe)
2. There is a sense of urgency in the Northpoint initiative (shortage of laborers in the field)
3. There is a sense of urgency in the Dunkirk plant (community that needs the Gospel)
4. There is a sense of urgency in the missions projects (Dingman’s, Seiples, Martins)

The surrender of Jesus was marked by a sense of urgency! Do we share that?

Resurrection narratives signal urgency:

- Matthew 28:7—angel told the two Mary’s to “go quickly and tell his disciples.”
- Matthew 28:8—“so they went quickly.”
- Mark 16:8—the ladies “went out quickly from the tomb...”
- Luke 24:12—when Peter received the news he “arose and ran to the tomb...”
- John 20:2—when Mary Magdalene discovered the empty tomb she “ran and came to Simon Peter...”
- John 20:4—Peter and John “ran together” to the tomb

There is an URGENCY to the Gospel

- Modeled by Jesus
- Do we share that urgency in our surrender?

V. Those who measure their surrender by Christ place no limitations on their generosity

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- A. Christ could not have given more than He gave (Paul said in Philippians 2:5-11—He became obedient to death, even death on the cross)—that was the ultimate
- B. He seeks not yours—but you
- C. He seeks the surrender of you—your everything
- D. You say...I surrender? But—I hold on to this—I clutch to my security, my possessions, my well-being
- E. Cannot measure your surrender by Christ unless you have no limitations to your generosity.

When Paul wrote to the Corinthians regarding giving he had much to say. The great example of giving was summed up in these words:

"You know the generous grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty he could make you rich." 2 Corinthians 8:9 NLT

Generous Grace!

Lithuanian Christian Radiates Christ's Love in Siberia

*Nijole Sadunaite is a Lithuanian Christian who was severely persecuted for her faith under Communism. Arrested in 1974 for publishing underground reports of the persecution of Christians throughout the Soviet bloc, she was eventually exiled to Siberia. A book about her, entitled *A Radiance in the Gulag*, reveals her character: she was a "radiance." How so?*

Since Nijole's suffering became known by various Christian organizations in the West, a large number of believers knew of her plight. Consequently, Nijole received many care packages while she was in exile. Although it was against the law, the Communist guards made her pay to receive these packages. Prisoners in exile had to work, and they received a starvation wage of a meager 75 rubles per month. Their housing cost 20 rubles, and the prisoners were made to pay sometimes over 45 rubles to accept any packages sent to them. But time after time, Nijole accepted these packages, paid for them, and then re-packaged them and mailed them to Christians in other parts of the Soviet bloc whom she believed were suffering worse than she was.

The Communist guards and postal officials could not make any sense out of this. It was a kindness and a sacrifice that utterly dumbfounded them. One time, some girls who were members of the Communist youth organization questioned Nijole about her strange

behavior. Nijole replied that she wanted to help her impoverished brothers and sisters in Christ who were suffering. And the girls asked her, if we were ever put in jail, and you learned of it, would you send us your care packages? And Nijole replied, "Of course, if I knew your address."

Nijole Sadunaite displayed the gift of aroma. Christ's love in her heart made her "a radiance in the gulag." Her service, faith, and sacrificial kindness made her life a fragrant offering to God—and one that intrigued non-believers.

Are there limits to your generosity?

Conclusion:

(ILL) Back to the monopoly game—is that how you live life?

Or like UNO?—Don't get stuck with cards in your hand!

Don't get stuck at the funeral with cards in your hand!!