

Remember To Do This... by Jeff Strite

Mark 6:7-6:13

OPEN: I read the true story of a newly married flight engineer with the Air Force who had planned a weekend getaway with his new bride. But on Friday, his squadron called and told him he was to leave the next afternoon for an eight-day mission.

His wife was obviously disappointed.

"Don't you get weekends of like normal people?" she asked.

He gently explained that as a member of the US Air force he was on call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

She looked longingly into his eyes and said "But, honey, couldn't you just explain to them that we had plans?"

(Reader's Digest 9/95 p. 51)

APPLY: This is Memorial Day weekend.

It's a day where we remember the dedication and sacrifice of our Armed Forces. They are people who understand they can't just explain they have plans. They are serious people doing a serious job, protecting our nation and its people. And they are on call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. They understand that they are to remember to do their jobs... no matter what the cost

The Bible says that we are the army of God. Soldiers of Christ. And we also are called to be serious people doing a serious job... on call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Our text this morning describes something Jesus did during the first year of His ministry. Shortly after selecting His disciples and sending them out to preach for Him. And He sent them out on a very serious mission. We read the very specific instructions on how they were to carry out their mission. Jesus told them:

1. Be single minded about your mission. Don't get distracted with extra baggage.
2. Don't waste time on people who will reject your message.
3. Help people that are hurting.
4. AND preach one central message.

If you were to just casually read this passage you'd get the impression these instructions ONLY applied to these 12 men ... AND ONLY for this specific mission.

But that's not true.

This story shows up 3 times in the Gospels (Matthew 10, Luke 9, and here in Mark 6) and the instructions are faithfully and meticulously written down. It's been my observation that God does NOT waste ink on things that are not important to us.

These 12 men were being trained by Jesus to be His first witnesses. They were being trained in

the skills they'd need to witness to people as they bring folks to Christ. And the message they preached is essentially the same message we preach.

So we need to pay close attention to the Instructions these men received because these are essentially the same Marching Orders we have received.

1st – Jesus wanted them to be single minded about their mission. He did not want them getting distracted by the things of this world. He didn't want them carrying a lot of extra baggage into the field.

The 12 are told: "Take nothing for the journey except a staff— no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. Wear sandals but not an extra tunic." Mark 6:8-9

Pack light (He tells them).

In Luke 22:35 Jesus reminded them of their first preaching excursion, and then He asked them,

“When I sent you without purse, bag or sandals, did you lack anything?’
‘Nothing,’ they answered.”

You see, this was an object lesson for the disciples.

They needed to know that if they did what Jesus asked He would supply their needs

That's what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount:

“So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” Matthew 6:31-33

In short, in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus is telling us that we shouldn't get distracted by the extra baggage of life. We should travel light and obey Jesus... and then God will supply all our needs. Too often, though, people get more worried about their things than they do about their Lord.

ILLUS: Years ago I served in a congregation about 40 minutes North of Fort Wayne, Indiana. I was new to the ministry and idealistic about the things that should be done for Christ and I heard that one of the Pro-life groups in Fort Wayne was planning to gather at an abortion clinic there and try to counsel young girls not to have abortions.

I thought that was a great idea!

And so I went to the Board meeting that month and I presented the idea that our church should get involved in this effort.

The response was less than enthusiastic. One of the Board Members was upset that I even suggested such a thing. They said: “We can't do that. If we did, someone might get upset with

us and come burn down our building.”

Now, had someone said “Jeff, that’s nice, but that’s way over in Ft. Wayne, and we think we should focus our ministry in this area”

I’d have said “ok.”

I’d have been disappointed, but I’d have understood.

But that was not the argument I encountered.

This Board wasn’t arguing that the church shouldn’t be involved in that particular ministry.

And they weren’t arguing that we were too far away from Ft. Wayne to be involved.

They were arguing that their building was too important to jeopardize for any reason.

Now I’ll be honest with you...

Any church that is so attached to their building...

Any church who’s building is too important for them to risk in serving God

Any church that cares more about their building than honoring Jesus

DESERVES TO HAVE THEIR BUILDING BURNT DOWN!

They don’t deserve a building.

I could picture Jesus asking them ‘When I sent you without purse, bag or sandals, did you lack anything?’

And THIS church responding “YES... we lacked faith you could take care of our building.”

So 1st - Jesus said ... Pack light and I’ll supply your needs.

Don’t get bogged down with extra luggage.

Just trust me and obey what I ask... and I’ll take care of you

2ndly – Jesus said: don’t waste your time on people who don’t want to listen to you.

One of the most frustrating things about being a Christian is realizing there are people who don’t want to hear about my Jesus.

ILLUS: I went to visit with some relatives some time back and they complained that all I ever talked about was my family and Jesus.

Well... I DO have a family

And I AM a preacher.

So, what’s the problem?

The problem was that they didn’t want to hear about it.

And they especially didn’t want to hear about Jesus.

Jesus told His disciples: “...if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave, as a testimony against them.” Mark 6:11

Don't worry about it (Jesus is saying).

Don't waste your time on these folks! All you're going to do is end up arguing with folks. That's what Paul warned Timothy about. He wrote:

"Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful.

Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will." II Timothy 2:23-26

ILLUS: (Pause)

How many of you like to fish?

Tell me, if you've been out in a boat, and lowered the anchor and spent an hour or two just sitting there and not getting a nibble...what do you do? Why, you'd weigh anchor and move to someplace else wouldn't you?

You'd realize you can't argue those fish onto your line. You can talk and talk and talk, and those fish aren't going to take what you're offering. But there would be a pretty good possibility that there are hungry fish somewhere else on that lake that are going to want what you've got.

All you gotta do is find them.

Jesus called us to be fishers of men. So when you go out talking about Jesus you can expect people to act like fish once in a while.

So, 1st – don't let the extra baggage of this world slow you down.

2nd – don't waste your time on folks that don't want to hear you.

And point # 3 – Care for people.

In Matthew 10:8 (which is a parallel passage to this one) Jesus told His disciples to: "Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons."

Now you and I have NOT been given the miraculous abilities Jesus gave His disciples. None of us have the ability to heal the sick or raise the dead or drive out demons... but these guys did.

What I find interesting here is that Jesus didn't just send these guys out to preach. Jesus gave them explicit instructions to go and help people who were hurting.

But, that doesn't make any sense!

I mean – it's the message that counts isn't it?

If the disciples had simply healed of their diseases they'd still go to hell wouldn't they?

BUT the message wasn't the only thing they were to do.
One of the primary tasks Jesus has these men do is help people.
WHY?

Well, there's an old saying:
"People don't care how much you know... until they know how much you care."

You see: Good Doctrine is a Good Thing... but it's NOT everything.
It IS important for a church to teach good doctrine, but the Pharisees taught good doctrine...
it's just that they weren't really into helping anybody. If Jesus had given the Pharisees the
ability to heal, or cast out demons, or raise the dead, they'd have used it to set up a TV
ministry and rake in millions of dollars. That's because the Pharisees weren't into religion
because they could use it to help people... they were into religion for themselves. They were in
it for what they could get out of it.

A church that ONLY preaches good doctrine but doesn't do anything for the poor and the
hurting is preaching a lop-sided message. When a church ignores the needy... they become an
"ingrown" church.
And that got me to thinking...

ILLUS: Have you ever had an ingrown toenail?
Painful isn't it.
The nail is still there and it's kind of doing what God designed it to do but because it's not
healthy. It's infected and it hurts.

And a church that ignores the poor and needy has become an "ingrown" church.
It's not healthy. It's infected and painful. That church is still "kind of" doing what it was
designed to do... but it's not doing everything it should. And so it's a painful thing and it hurts
Jesus.

(PAUSE)
So, 1st Jesus tells us to pack light and obey Him.
2nd He tells us not to waste our time trying to argue people into the Kingdom.
3rd He orders us to care for the hurting and needy.

And Lastly – Jesus gives us our message:
Repent!!!
Mark 6:12 tells us "They went out and preached that people should repent."

That's it?
That's all they preached?

Pretty much.

You know, many church folks have gotten into the habit of telling people:
“You’re pretty nice folks. You haven’t done anything nasty and terrible in your lives. And we want you in our congregation because you’re the kind of folks we want in our church.”
And they go after the Doctors and the Lawyers and the wealthy and the well-connected because that’s the kind of people they want in their building.
They don’t talk about repentance, because that might upset people.
It might turn them off.

But I’ve got news for you:

If you don’t want to repent... Jesus doesn’t want you! (repeat that)

If you’re not willing to admit that you’ve sinned and you need to change then you’re going to go to hell. You can be as nice a person as you can manage to be, and do all kinds of good works, but if you think you’re going to get into heaven by your own self-righteousness... you’re in for a rude awakening.

That’s NOT how it works.

The Bible is very clear: “All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.”

Does that mean I have sinned and fallen short of God’s glory?

Does that mean that you have sinned?

Does that mean your neighbors, and your friends, and your relatives have all sinned?

Yep – that’s what it means.

And so our message is: Repent.

It’s not pretty, and it’s not appealing. But we need to understand – it’s the ONLY message that will rescue folks from hell.

it’s the ONLY message that will protect us from the wrath of God.

it’s the ONLY message that will bring people to salvation.

ILLUS: I recently read about a segment of our society that are classified as being the NONES. The "nones" are the fastest-growing "religious group" of our day. According to recent studies:

- One in five Americans identify themselves as having no religious affiliation.
- And 3 in 10 college age students are "nones."

(<http://www.christianpost.com/news/megachurch-pastor-christians-thinking-in-secular-way-contribute-to-fast-rise-of-the-nones-120101/>)

They’re the “nones” because, basically...

These folks are having NONE of church.

They’re having NONE of Jesus.

They’re having NONE of Biblical morality.

Homosexuality's ok. Living together's ok. Living for yourself's ok.
Religiously these are the NONES.
They're having none of God's rules and authority in their lives.

And there's a bunch of people in the religious world wringing their hands over this.
But I'm not.
History tells us this has happened before.

ILLUS: I'm going to give you a history quiz: What happened in America in 1620?
Back in 1620, the pilgrims landed on the shores of America and they founded a civilization that was dedicated to God. They prayed and worshipped all the time and they did their best to live as servants of God. They were a people that you and I would have been proud to know and would have enjoyed being around.

But about 100 years later the nation went from being a land filled with people who wanted to worship God to a land filled with immorality and impurity. America became a nation filled with "nones"! Getting drunk, and living like you wanted to was the rule of the day, and there were more people living together than those who were married.

America had become a land of "nones". They had become a people who were having NONE of God's rules and authority in their lives.

Then, in the 1730s and 1740s something happened to change all that.
It was called the "Great Awakening" because it awakened our nation out of its immorality and selfishness. Preachers went about preaching one central message. And do you know what that message was?
REPENT.
Change your life or you're going to go to hell!
That was the message they preached.

Their message was so powerful that people wept in church, filled with sorrow for their sin. There was one famous sermon of the day called "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." And they say that the audience was so overwhelmed with grief that they wept openly and gripped the pews in front of them until their knuckles turned white.
And the preachers of the Great Awakening carried their message to the pulpits, fields and city squares of the colonies and turned their world upside down.

Now that was in the 1730s and 1740s.
Another history quiz: What happened in 1776?
That's right. The American Revolution. Our country's founders who created a new nation dedicated to freedom... men who wrote the powerful Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of our United States... were men who were shaped by the preaching of the Great

Awakening.

Preachers who unashamedly preached Christ's message of repentance shaped the minds of the men who wrote: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

I even read that Benjamin Franklin (a man not known for his strong morals) went to one of these sermons and came away deeply moved.

If it hadn't been for these preachers preaching the message of REPENTANCE America wouldn't have become the powerful nation it has become.

And that's why I'm not wringing my hands over the NONES.

As long as there are churches like this one who make no apology for standing for God's morality. Churches like ours who call for men and women to repent and turn to God. And preachers who preach about sin and shame and the need to come to Christ for forgiveness and hope...

People will change.

Souls will be saved.

And our nation will awaken out of its moral sleep.

But we MUST always remember that this battle will not be won by part time soldiers. God calls us to be dedicated to Him 24 hours a day/ 7 days a week/ 365 days a year. And that will be our plan for battle.

But you can't stand for God, until you belong to God.

INVITATION.