

Good services today!

Many blessings.

Part 11: Build Your Dream

Live the Life You've Always Wanted!

Texts:

James 4:14 (NKJV) - "For what is your life?"

Jeremiah 24:6-7 (NKJV) - "For I will set My eyes on them for good, and I will bring them back to this land; I will build them and not pull them down, and I will plant them and not pluck them up. [7] Then I will give them a heart to know Me, that I am the Lord; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God, for they shall return to Me with their whole heart."

Daniel 11:32 (NKJV) - "The people who **know** their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits."

Acts 17:23 (NKJV) - "For as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you."

While waiting for his missionary companions to join him at the Parthenon in Athens, Greece, Apostle Paul saw people worshipping a god they didn't know. Yet, Daniel declares that we must **know** God to be strong and do great exploits. Evidently, it would have been impossible for worshippers in Athens to experience the supernatural if they did not **know** God.

“Pray It!”

Once You Know, He Will Always Show!

- A. To build a dream, certain steps must be taken for your passion to become a reality.
1. Dreams don't just happen. They are only manifested through application and effort. The problem is that not all application or effort is productive.
 2. It has been said that 'practice makes perfect.' Not so. There can be no perfection unless the practice is perfect. If you continue making the same mistake over and over, the mistake will become habitual. This is why all pro athletes have a coach.
 3. How can you motivate God to show up and work in your life? If you know certain facts about Him, He is sure to respond. Once you 'know,' He will always show.....up, that is!
 4. I want to help you mobilize God's supernatural power to achieve your dream. But you don't have to do it alone; He will help you.
- B. One of life's most important lessons is to 'know' the mind of God.
1. Understanding His mind is much more effective than seeking His hands. If we know His mind, we can understand His ways—which are far superior to His acts. Moses knew the ways of God, while the people only knew His acts. There is a vast difference between the two.
 2. Knowing His ways will help you align your decisions and actions so that the outcome can be predicted with absolute certainty. While this course of action might not prevent difficulties from occurring, you'll know in advance the outcome:
 - a. **Romans 8:28 (NKJV)** - “And we know that *all* things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”

3. Because God is faithful, He never acts one way today and another tomorrow. He is predictable in that He always acts according to His ways and His Word.

C. Even more importantly, those who only know about God's hands rarely develop a relationship with Him. To learn His ways requires intimacy.

1. If you're unfamiliar with His ways, you'll live from event to event—or more accurately, from crisis to crisis.
2. Those who only know His hands do not regularly call upon God. They only exercise this privilege when they're in trouble or in need of something only God can provide.
3. By failing to live according to the divine knowledge of God's ways, they must always rely on divine intervention. It's alright to occasionally depend upon or pray for divine intervention, but if this regularly happens, it could indicate you're doing something wrong or you're ignorant of His ways.
4. To daily involve God and enjoy His divine assistance, you must know Him!

D. God is motivated by purpose. Since all of His acts involve purpose, He asks us to do the same.

1. To understand why things happen as they do, the 'why' question is very necessary. If you have no idea why something was designed in a certain way, you will inevitably fail to attain its maximum benefit.
2. As you know, I love telling Cajun jokes, because that is my heritage. But this one isn't a joke; it really happened.

When oil was discovered near Melville, Louisiana, some Cajuns who had been poor all of their lives suddenly had more money than they could handle. One of them attended a church where I regularly ministered. With his new-found wealth, he decided to buy himself a luxury car with every option available. As country folk love to do after purchasing a new car, he began to proudly show it to his friends and relatives.

Pulling up in the driveway of a good friend who also attended his church, he blew the horn and waited for everyone to come and admire his new automobile. His friend was so amazed, he said, "Sha, I never seen a car like this one before this close. Can I sit in it?"

"Of course," he said proudly and allowed his friend to slide under the steering wheel. Noticing that the steering wheel was a little high, the friend adjusted the lever to more comfortably fit his grip. But when he did, the owner of the new car almost lost his religion. He began to shout, "You done broke the steering wheel of my brand new car!"

Everyone laughed as the friend explained the adjustments on luxury cars. The owner had seen the lever, but didn't know its purpose. As a result, he discovered another of the benefits he had paid for.

3. This is also why many believers faithfully give, yet struggle financially. They haven't understood how Heaven's economy operates.
4. While God is sovereign and can do anything, we must understand that He 'limits' His sovereignty to match His spoken Word. Once God speaks about a matter, He releases every other option that could affect that situation.
5. For example, if God declares that He will do a certain thing, He will surrender the option of doing anything that would oppose what He just said. If He says it's going to rain 40 days and nights, it won't happen for 39 or 41 days; rain will fall for 40 days! If He said that Judah would be in captivity 70 years and then return to their homeland, it won't happen in 69 or 71 years. If He told Abraham he would have a son, He no longer has the option of causing Sarah to remain barren or to have a daughter.
6. This is why God chooses His words carefully and doesn't have a constant flow of words. We may prefer to hear Him speak more often, but because of His obligation to perform every spoken word, He speaks only what we need to hear.
7. Once He has spoken, He then 'limits' Himself to do exactly what He said. When God declared—and even swore by an oath that He would bless

Abraham (Hebrews 6:13-15 NKJV), He had no other option than to bless him.

a. **Hebrews 6:13-15 (NKJV)** - "For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, [14] saying, "Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you." [15] And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise."

8. All Abraham had to do was to be patient, pray for God's purposes to be fulfilled in his life, and then wait for the answer.

E. Isn't it amazing that of all Jesus' mighty works, the disciples only asked to be taught one thing—to pray!

1. Imagine this: they didn't ask to be taught how to heal blind eyes or to walk on water. They didn't ask about multiplying fish and bread or to raise one from the dead who had been buried for four days.
2. They watched Him perform a multitude of miraculous acts, but they never asked to be taught about any of them. They only wanted Him to teach about prayer. While they had watched Him pray on many occasions, notice that they never joined Him. **After** He was finished, they requested to know more about this prayer thing.

a. **Luke 11:1 (NKJV)** - "Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples."

3. If we were to announce a class on how to perform miracles, our church would be packed. But the sad truth is, the meetings with the smallest attendance are the prayer meetings.
4. This is not to make you feel guilty, so let me explain my thinking.

F. Jesus' prayers were extraordinary!

1. May I suggest one reason for Christ's prayers being impressive is that they were so opposite of the Pharisees' and Sadducees' prayers, who were supposedly the authorities about God.
2. Another reason for wanting to pray like Jesus was, unlike the religious leaders, things happened when He prayed. It got crazy! What mattered most to the Pharisees was to gain the admiration of men and to appear pious and holy.
3. But the Sadducees went so far as to reject the supernatural. They refused to believe in miracles or resurrection from the dead. Like the Deists, they believed that God created the world, programmed it to function properly, and then stepped back into eternity and dismissed Himself from anything else that happened on earth.
4. Their only purpose for prayer was to appear pious. Had God suddenly answered the prayer of a Sadducee, I'm sure they would have been totally shocked!
5. The model prayer of the religious institutions of that day actually contributed to the failure of their prayers. Rather than inspiring people to talk to God, they created a terrible misunderstanding of how and why you should pray. Their methods simply didn't work!
6. But when Jesus prayed, you knew something was about to break loose!

G. The writer of Hebrews very plainly states two things that **must** happen before we can successfully approach God in prayer.

- 1 First, we must believe that He **is**, and second, that He **rewards** those who diligently seek Him:
 - a. **Hebrews 11:6 (NKJV)**- "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him."
2. Believing that He **is** may be more direct and to the point than we realize. There's not a believer alive who at some point hasn't doubted their

- relationship with God. Who among us hasn't questioned why prayer for a serious illness brings healing for some, but others die. And why does He answer the prayers of some, but not others?
3. Richard Dawkins, Lawrence Strauss and the late Christopher Hitchens have all scoffed at the idea that God even exists. They've even gone a step farther to heap scorn upon the God we serve by calling Him petty, cruel, egotistical and self-serving. But, is our God really like that? If you don't know who He is, you could be influenced by their ridicule.
 4. But I feel that this verse has an even deeper meaning. As believers, we must be confident that He not only exists, but that He **is!** That implies that He exists as a certain **Something** or **Someone**. Believing in God is a start, but to **know** Him, you must forsake the idea of who you **think** He is and come to believe in who **He** has declared Himself to be.
 5. Let me explain. Hebrews 11:6 says, "Without faith it is impossible to please God." That could mean that He has established a very high standard of faith. To meet His very difficult criteria, you may have to stand on tiptoes to measure up.
 6. Michelangelo's famous painting on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in Rome depicts this same concept of a man reaching, yet not quite connecting with God. But that is not the meaning of this verse!

H. I agree with the Westminster Creed established in 1646 which begins like this:

"I believe man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever."

1. Since we were made in His image and likeness, we were intended to bring Him glory. What greater joy could His children bring than for them to be happy and fulfilled!
2. God could never be pleased for the children He loves so much to live beneath the privileges He designed for their enjoyment.
3. Since everything in God's Kingdom is accessed by faith, "without faith it is impossible to please God" could only mean that failing to walk in faith

causes us to miss all He has provided for our enjoyment. And that displeases Him. How could it make God happy to see His children struggling?

4. I remember Pastor Lonnie Treadway saying that as a child, he thought his parents were very poor. Because they were in the ministry, the common practice was for the pastor to receive an offering for the guest speaker. He became so worried that he would be a burden to them, he refused to eat at restaurants and asked them to buy clothes or toys for the other children, but not for him. Finally, his dad asked, "Son, what is wrong? Why aren't you letting me do anything for you?"

Lonnie replied, "I know that you are poor and struggling, so I don't want to be a burden to you."

Of course, his dad quickly explained that they had plenty of money and were doing quite well, and how grieved he was that his son wouldn't allow his dad to do good things for him. The father's explanation also became an unforgettable lesson of how God is displeased when we fail to accept the blessings He desires to give His children.

I. Why is it so important to understand God's ways?

1. What we believe about God determines what we will receive from Him. So who do you believe Him to be?
2. Last week I was in India with Benny Matthews and Hrovje from Germany, my sons in ministry. After the conference, 87 students graduated from a Bible School of almost 300 students preparing to plant hundreds of new churches. Amazingly, this is happening in parts of India where Christians are receiving the worst persecution ever witnessed.

The location for our meeting was next to a game reserve that's a natural habitat for protecting some of the last Bengal tigers. I had to laugh again about what happened in that area about two years ago.

A man was delivering milk on a small motorbike to a village bordering the reserve. Since his milk route took him through the game reserve on a narrow dirt road, suddenly a tiger and her cub stepped in front of him. With no space to turn around, in a flash he weighed his options. With the motorbike between him and the tiger, he quickly climbed a tree with the tiger hot on his heels. After ascending as far as he could go, he began to pray for help. Just as the tiger was about to sink his teeth into the delivery man, his mobile phone rang—which was a miracle in itself with such poor coverage in that area. When the tiger heard the ringing phone, it immediately stopped, jumped off the tree and took its cub into the jungle.

Of course, you must know that the Indian people worship 330,000,000 gods to appreciate what happened next. When he arrived home, he called his family and friends and built a small shrine. Placing the mobile phone inside the shrine, they began to worship his mobile phone. Because it had saved him, it became his god. So you see, it's not enough to believe in God, you must also believe who He says He is.

3. Our God is not a mobile phone. He is a real Person who loves us and rewards those who diligently seek Him!
4. My point is, we have no right to decide who we **believe** Him to be. We must accept God for who He **says** He is.

J. This is what God has declared about Himself:

1. God says of Himself that He is good.
 - a. **Psalm 31:19 (NKJV)** - "Oh, how great is Your goodness, Which You have laid up for those who fear You, Which You have prepared for those who trust in You In the presence of the sons of men!"
2. God says that He is love.
 - a. **1 John 4:8 (NKJV)** - "God is love."
3. God says He is righteous, or fair.

- a. **Psalm 7:17 (NKJV)** - "I will praise the LORD according to His righteousness, And will sing praise to the name of the LORD Most High."
 - 4. God says that He will never forsake us.
 - a. **Hebrews 13:5 (NKJV)** - "For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."
 - 5. God says that **all** things are working together for our good.
 - a. **Romans 8:28 (NKJV)** - "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose."
 - 6. God says that we can do all things through Christ.
 - a. **Philippians 4:13 (NKJV)** - "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."
 - 7. God says that He has plans to bless, to give us hope and a future.
 - a. **Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)** - "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."
- K. We must not only believe that He is, but that He rewards those who diligently seek Him.
- 1. Definition of 'diligent': constant in effort to accomplish something; attentive and persistent in doing anything; a diligent student.
 - 2. If God tells us something, we can believe it exists. It's okay to accept what He has said, even before it has been **visibly** manifested!
 - 3. Illustration: As a pet owner, you go to the back yard to feed your puppy; but you can't see it anywhere. In other words, the pup is not physically revealed. But you have no doubt that the dog is real. You wouldn't think of saying, "Well, there's no puppy here, so I guess he doesn't exist. I might as well be real and tell it like it is. I do not have a puppy." That would be foolish!

Instead, you notice a hole at the bottom of the fence and say, "Looks like my puppy has gotten out of the yard again!" So, what do you do next? You begin calling its name until your pet manifests. "Here, puppy, puppy! Here, puppy!" If he still can't be seen, you know he has temporarily left the yard. This is how to call "things that are not seen as though they were." You just continue calling until the puppy appears.

L. Life Application Points:

1. Do you pray only in times of crisis or need?
 - a. If so, that's a clue that you've been seeking for His hands, but not His ways.
 - b. Begin building a daily prayer life *today*, based on intimacy rather than need.
2. Have you built any temples for 'cell phone gods' that should be destroyed?
 - a. By that I mean, do you have a correct image of who God is? If not, change your beliefs about Him.
3. Do you believe He will answer ***your*** prayers?
 - a. I can say for sure--"He most certainly will!"