

Make the Most of Summer

Here are a few ways to make this season count for now and eternity



by Marvin R. Knight

Harvest time is year round, according to Jesus. The three signs of harvest time are: 1) darkness, 2) distress, and 3) difficulty. The great need is for laborers who minister biblically and faithfully under the divine thrust and compulsion of God (Cf. *Matt. 9:36-38*). The divine directive by Christ is to "beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers in His harvest" (v.38). Pretenders are many, but laborers are few. The fields are full; the wheat is ripe; the opportunities are plenteous; but where are the workers? Where are the teachers, the administrators, and the encouragers? While pleading with the Lord of the Harvest, let us not forget to say, "Here am I Lord, Send me!" (Cf. *Is. 6:8*).

Summertime is a great time to spend planned, purposeful, and extended quality time with our kids; and we ought to make the most of this time with them. However, on the other end of the planning calendar, summertime is one of the most difficult seasons for the church. Let's face it! While kids are out of school and vacation times are planned, many times, we give little or no thought of the work of God's church or the ongoing commission to reach people with the Gospel or to care for those within her ranks.

Let me ask you—are you allowed to postpone your mortgage note, your car payment, your electric bill, or lawn maintenance during the summer months? Perhaps you can already see where this is going. During the summer, there are still important needs that remain when you are away. The sheep still need feeding, our missionaries still need support, electricity is still needed. Facilities must be maintained and the staff and their families still need the necessities of life. What is the issue here?

"The renowned British educator, Edward Thring, said, 'The mighty leisure hours with their occupations are all powerful...the mighty question of leisure hours ought to be the most important question of all, since it affects our character most...'" (Andrew Murray, *The Believer's Daily Renewal*, p.84)

Andrew Murray echoed this sentiment when he said, "The vacation becomes a test of character, the proof of whether one could say with Job, 'I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food.'" (Murray, p.85)

What can we do about this? Why do we need to deal with this? How can we honor God as individuals and as a body of believers this summer?

Seek to be a soul winner this summer.

- Proverbs 11:30b: "...he who is wise wins souls."

Notice Solomon didn't say, "If you win souls, you will be wise." No, he says, "If you're wise, you will win souls." In other words, soul winning, or lack thereof, is a reflection of how wise or unwise you are about matters of life and eternity.

The story is told of George Whitefield, who made it his duty that whenever he stayed at someone's house, he would personally

talk to every member of that household about their souls. However, when he stopped at a certain Colonel's house—who was all that a man should be except a Christian—he was so pleased with the hospitality that he received—so charmed with the general character of the good Colonel and his wife and daughters—that he did not speak to them about their souls—something he would have done had they been less amicable characters.

He stopped with them for a week, and during the last night, the Spirit of God visited him so that he could not sleep.

"These people," he said, "have been very kind to me, and I have not been faithful to them; I MUST DO IT BEFORE I GO; I MUST TELL THEM THAT WHATEVER GOOD THING THEY HAVE, IF THEY DO NOT BELIEVE IN JESUS, THEY ARE LOST." He arose and prayed.

After praying, he still felt contention in his spirit. His old nature said, "I cannot do it," but the Holy Spirit seemed to say, "Leave them not without warning." At last he thought of a device, and prayed that God would accept it; he wrote upon a diamond-shaped pane of glass in the window with his ring these words:

"One thing thou lackest."

He could not bring himself to speak to them, but he went his way with many prayers for their conversion.

He had no sooner gone than the good woman of the house, who was a great admirer of him, said, "I will go up to his room: I want to look at the very place where the man of God has been." She went up and noticed on the windowpane those words, "One thing thou lackest." It struck her with conviction in a moment! "Ah!" she said, "I thought he did not care much about us, for I know he always pleaded with those with whom he stopped, and when I found that he did not do so with us, I thought we offended him: but I see how it was; he was too tender of mind to speak to us."

She called her daughters. "Look there, girls! See what Mr. Whitefield has written on the window!" "One thing thou lackest." "Call up your father." And the father came up and read it as well, "One thing thou lackest." And around the bed on which the man of God slept, they knelt down and sought God for the one thing they lacked. Before they left the room they had found that one thing, and the whole household rejoiced in Jesus! (C.H. Spurgeon, *An Earnest Man*, pp.7-8)

The lesson of the story is clear: if you cannot teach or preach in one way, do it in another way! But make sure that you do what you can while you can, lest the blood of your friends and family members be on your own hands (Read Ezek.33:1-9).

Live, speak, and teach by some means or another so that at the end of the day, you can be assured that you have been faithful to God and to the souls of men.

Determine to be a good steward this summer.

Paul said to the Corinthian believers, "*Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also. On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come*" (1 Cor.16:1-2).

A discussion of the collection is an essential part of the Christian faith. The Apostle, having just concluded his great affirmation of the resurrection (1 Cor.15), places the discussion of the believer's giving right alongside it, as if to say, "this is just as important in a practical way."

The historical situation is well documented. The Jewish saints in Jerusalem were enduring a time of deprivation due to persecution and famine. Paul's Gentile converts were to collect a relief offering for them. The Corinthians asked, "How do we do it?"

Paul does not appeal to the Corinthians on the basis of emotion or play with their consciences by describing the terrible plight of the starving. The Christian life is not built on impulse, but on disciplined principle. In the area of giving, God calls for order, not impulse; principle not passivity.

Paul lays three truths before us here:

- 1. Our giving must be by the principle of planned regularity.**
"On the first day of the week..."

That's Sunday. As a part of the worship of the risen Christ, among other things that are to be consecrated on that day, our gifts are included as well. Here we discover the call for the formation of "holy habits." We have habits in every other

area of life: personal hygiene, work, and the payment of bills. We live by habit. God wants us to live by "holy habits." He desires that we plan with commitment, purpose, and determination to give to Him regularly. Order, not impulse, is the call of this text. We are not to wait for some special occasion or need to move us; God calls us to operate by the principle of planned regularity.

2. Our giving must be by the principle of personal responsibility.

"...each one of you is to put aside and save..."

There are to be no exceptions when it is time for the collection. Paul is speaking to everyone, individually — 'each one of you.' "It is easy to hand the responsibility to support the work of ministry to others. However, God is very specific and emphatic that the support of the ministry and the collection is the responsibility of every member.

3. Our giving must be by the principle of proportionate return.

"...each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper..." or as the KJV puts it, *"as God hath prospered him."*

This means that every believer is to give proportionately or corresponding to God's activity of financial blessing in your life. Throughout the Scripture, men are called to give, never less than, but sometimes more than, the tithe. Proportionate giving shows God's wisdom and fairness. Everyone cannot give the same amount, but all may give a proportion. What this does is let God determine how much we give. When we give, following God's principles, there is always sufficiency for what you need and for what God needs to do in the church (2 Cor.9:6-8). God can and will bless His people when they give by principled regularity, with personal responsibility, and a proportionate return!

This summer, don't slack in your giving. Before you leave town, leave your gift. Moreover, if you don't have to be away on Sunday, don't. Many people need your encouragement here. If you must be gone, make sure that you worship with some Bible-believing saints wherever you'll be!

Report for duty as a faithful servant this summer.

Jesus said, *"If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him"* (John 12:26).

Here Jesus sets before us *an evidence* of true faith and *an encouragement* for real hope. If we profess to belong to Christ, we will follow Him and serve Him—as a soldier follows his general, a sheep follows its shepherd, and a student follows his teacher. This is one of the marks that you belong to Jesus: you serve and follow Jesus (Rev.14:4-5). What is the encouragement? He will be with us in sweet intimacy and the Father will honor us. Honor from men is like the morning dew or a summer cloud, promising much but paying little. However, the honor that God gives is like Him: it never dies, fades, or tarnishes. It is spiritual, eternal, and able to furnish our souls with all that we need. The question this text poses to us about our summer plans is: do we desire to be comfortable or conformable? If all we are looking for is to live comfortable lives, then we will protect our plans and desires, save our lives and never be planted by God and bear much fruit. But if we yield ourselves to God's plans, He will plant us and we will never be alone or unfruitful.

Don't abandon your post this summer. There is a war still going on and a ministry that still needs your life. Rest is needed, but we will have an eternity for that, but until the Lord returns or calls us home—let us be found faithful.

This summer, be a soul winner, be a good steward, and be a faithful servant.

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