

168 hours to glorify God

Some of the things I learned this year – Nigel Barham – September 2007

Prayer, Obedience...

About a year ago a friend and I asked ourselves, “What does the church today need to do more than anything else?” Our conclusion: obey God. We agreed that “obey” is not a fun word, but how could it be better to do anything but what *God* thinks we should do? He knows best.

Specifically, I believe we need to obey God by praying. Prayer is communion and relationship with God, and prayer makes things happen; nothing seems to happen without prayer. Unlike the word “obey,” “prayer” is a positive word in most of our minds. We all think it is a good idea. But do we actually pray? If I added up the minutes I prayed each day, how much would it amount to? I believe that prayerlessness leads to wasted life. Do we believe in prayer enough to do it? What a challenge for someone like me for whom the habit and practice of prayer so easily fades away. Constant recommitment is a must.

...Discipline...

I learned two more things about prayer and obedience this year. One is that **obedience is closely linked with another not-so-fun word: “discipline.”** I think if discipline was a subject, I would get a “needs improvement” on my report card. Martin Lloyd-Jones believed that discipline was the greatest spiritual trait. I see why: discipline is to “just do it” and to just do it consistently. Jesus said in John 14:23 that those who love Him do so by obeying Him. Especially when life is super-busy, this takes discipline. Discipline is needed to spend daily time with God, to pray, to redeem our time, to obey those widows-and-orphans verses that don’t tend to make our ‘to do’ lists; and to simply walk in step with the Spirit.

...and VISION

But perhaps the greatest thing I learned *this* year is the need for vision. **Vision is seeing the big picture. It is knowing where we, together, are headed; and working hard to get there.** It is knowing how to spend our time so that what we do has a united purpose and contributes to something bigger. Vision is knowing what that bigger thing is.

Great vision is not an ingredient you and I need in our lives. No, *every moment* of our lives needs to be surrendered to the vision of God. *That’s* when things happen. Suddenly, what God has to work with turns into the 168 hours per week He has given to each of us. Even our sleep glorifies Him.

Biblical vision means knowing God’s heart. It means launching out into the deep of what God cares about. Biblical vision always extends far beyond that which pertains directly to ourselves. It means remembering that God loves the whole world. It means not settling for just serving those around us, but going out and looking for the most forgotten people. It means grieving over what God grieves over: Darfur, the dalits of India, the sex slavery industry of Thailand, the AIDS victim of Botswana: *people everywhere.*

Biblical vision also means rejoicing over what God rejoices over: millions coming to Christ in Africa, the praying church in Korea, the persecuted but growing church of China, the fact that more both Muslims and Jews are coming to Christ than ever before.

Six of the ten billion who have ever lived are alive today, and half of them are under the age of 25. The spiritual war rages stronger than ever – with more response *and* more opposition to the Gospel than ever before. More has happened in fulfillment of the Great Commission in the last 100 years than in the previous 1,000 years. This is where you and I find ourselves. God is at work, and His plan *will* happen. The question is, “Am I part of it?”

None of us can reach the whole world. But when our vision is big enough to see and care about *more* of the world God loves; we will be on the right track to knowing where *we* fit in it all – how God wants to use *us.*

A prayer. Father, help us to prayerfully obey you. Give us discipline. Help us to remember the forgotten and unreached people in our communities and around the world. May all of our lives—our workweeks, our evenings, our weekends—be surrendered to loving you by loving people. Expand our vision. In Jesus’ name. Amen.