



The Tap Root

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The Foundation of Your Future

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In the last newsletter, I shared our dreams for you as a Christian leader: Dreams that you would be increasingly grounded, effective and fulfilled as you fulfill your calling over the span of your life.

Now should you be fortunate enough to be granted a long life, fulfilling your calling will include at least two glorious things: First, it will mean that you will **finish really well**; that you will be deeply grateful and satisfied with how you've honored your most important priorities over the span of your career, including how you've treated those around you. Second, you will likely savor at least a small celebration with some of your closest colleagues and family, where they will affirm you, likely poke fun with you, and rejoice with you, to honor your contribution and the rich impact you've had on their lives. And that celebration will be a mere foretaste of **the celebration on the other side**, where I believe the kind of joy and affirmation and delight we will experience as we are welcomed by Jesus, and ushered into the heart of heaven, will simply take our breath away. That is striking and inspiring to think about, don't you think? I think those wonderful visions and images are ones we would do well to reflect on, to awaken our hearts to what we long for on

Compelling Quotes

"People with high standards and a strong willingness to learn become measurably stronger and more able leaders at age fifty than they had been at age forty." John Kotter

"Since the end of each thing is its good, a thing is best disposed when it is fittingly ordered to its end." Thomas Aquinas

"Give careful thought to your ways." Haggai, 1:5, 7

"I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice. He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock." Jesus, Luke 6:47-48

the deepest levels, and to raise a really important question. That question is: If those images do represent the heart of my deepest dreams, how do I get there? What realities do I need to embrace, and what do I need to honor in order to have the best chance at these remarkable celebrations on this side and the next? (A fabulous question, I must say!)

Deeper Truths to Consider

Before we look at the core things to honor in setting our lives up for a great finish (and a great beginning!), I think we need to look at some elusive truths I catch glimpses of in moments of deeper reflection. I believe these truths are vital to weave into how we look at our lives, if we are to finish well. First, it appears that life is complex enough that we have to ***honor multiple things*** if we are to finish well. Apparently there is a ratio of a certain number of things, (which we'll touch on later) that ebbs and flows in light of our circumstances, that have to be honored if we are to finish well. While it is tempting, we can't just focus on one thing, like working, if we are to finish well. If we do that, our key relationships, like with God and family, suffer significantly, and then the people that we care most about either won't be at the celebration, or if they are there, they will likely be longing for a "do over", where work didn't trump family all the time. That is a sobering thought, isn't it? Secondly, if we are to finish well, it appears we have to be ***very intentional about setting up our schedules***, in some ways annoyingly so, to honor the most important things more and more of the time. In other words, the brutal reality is that our schedules don't automatically or easily arrange themselves for us to be increasingly grounded, effective and fulfilled. Now in some ways the above truly are really obvious, yet at the same time, given how hard it is to live our lives by these truths, these truths can be really slippery.

So, while it is difficult to honor multiple things and get in charge of our schedules, it is certainly possible to get better at it over time. We do have the capacity to choose, and we can grow, if we persevere and are committed to ***learning over time*** how to get better at setting our lives up well. Let's consider four basic categories that we might build our lives on to be in the best place to enjoy a great finish.

Four Life Categories to Build On

Contribution

This first category is a fairly obvious one. If we are to have much to celebrate about, we need to have done some good things! This means that we have become really good at our most important tasks, and have consistently done the things in our vocations that make the greatest difference. These are the kinds of things that truly help good visions become realities, that bless others in powerful ways, and that bear fruit that will last. In short, we need to reflect on what matters the most, and make sure we're ***increasingly investing in those things***. People who rigorously reflect on what matters the most, and then shape their schedules in light of that, are much more likely to bear greater fruit.

Core Relationships

This is also fairly clear. Growing and deepening our relationships with God, our families, core friends, and to some extent our colleagues, is crucial to living well. Our relationship with God is foundational, absolutely critical to living well, as He is the primary source of all joy, wisdom, purity, love, courage... and an authentic, deepening relationship with Him is the best route to a meaningful life. Making time to go deeper with Him, to receive more from Him, has to be honored if we expect to finish well. Of course, our other core relationships, like with family are vital to honor, because they are what matters so much at the end of the day, and bring such a rich satisfaction and fulfillment and happiness when they are honored well. We need to honor relationships well to live well.

Growth

Consistently pursuing growth in all the major areas of life is vital if we are to fulfill our callings. According to experts like Harvard Business School professor John Kotter, the author of "Leading Change," most people tend to stop pursuing growth intellectually by their late twenties. I would venture the same is true emotionally as well. That raises the troubling question, "How can we expect to successfully handle greater responsibilities, or bear more fruit, if we stay at the same level of intellectual sophistication and maturity (emotionally and spiritually) we had in our late twenties?" Thinking about that a little bit perhaps helps explain why so many organizations struggle as they do. Intentionally pursuing growth through things like reading, time with the Lord, coaching, training, and spiritual disciplines is critical if we are to finish well and bear richer, more glorious fruit over the span of our careers.

Renewal

At the heart of renewal are things like rest, play, sleep, exercise, the Sabbath, retreats, vacations, and fun times with family and good friends. When these things are regularly honored, ***our hearts feel so much lighter***. We experience the peace and joy and happiness of the Lord in greater ways, and know on deeper levels that we are not responsible for eternal outcomes; those are in the Lord's hands. From places like those we can give all we have to give while we ***labor with Him***, without taking more responsibility than is ours to take. Making room for times like these are crucial if our hearts are going to stay fresh over the long term, if we are going to model fullness in compelling ways, and if we are going to finish well with our lives and key relationships in a great place.

Building Your House

A few months ago I spent a good chunk of devotional time in Luke 6 where Jesus talks about building on the rock vs. the sand. It hit me how brutal it must have been at that time to dig all the way down to rock for an entire house. (Can you imagine doing that? Digging a hole for a tree is hard enough!) It must have been exhausting work which

required a great deal of sweat, time, sore muscles and perseverance to accomplish. As I think of parallels to building the foundation of your future, I think of the level of perseverance and commitment and effort necessary to build all four walls of your foundation down deep...to get really good at finding ways to contribute well, **and make time** for core relationships, growth and renewal. (This is truly hard to do, and we'll look further at scheduling, setting limits and other topics to master in order to "live on the rock.") Yet, if we are able to persevere in our faithful efforts **to grow** in managing our lives, and we do dig each of those walls down deep, we will be able to withstand the storms of life when they come, and finish standing strong, ready to give thanks and celebrate with God and others, as we look back on the glory of a life lived well. Talk to you next month!