

“Take Mark...he is profitable...for the ministry.”

Today we have a fabulous surprise for you! In contemplating my absence from the pulpit, I really prayed that God would give me wisdom and guidance about who should stand before you to deliver the truth in the Spirit's power this coming Sunday, March 28. The premier selection that came to my mind was Mark Bishop. The problem would be getting him to come, seeing how he now pastors a fast growing church in northern Arkansas. I started to say, I cannot believe it! But I should rather say, it is just like our Lord to make this possible. He is here today! Mark Bishop is the oldest son of my long, life-time friend, Dr. John Bishop. Mark is, as I have surveyed the situation from an unbiased viewpoint, the finest pulpiter in his age bracket in America. All brackets aside, he is one of the finest Christians and preachers I know anywhere, and I have heard many from south to north, east to west. I have known Mark since he was in his mother's arms when I would travel to speak for his dad at the Triple "S" Christian Ranch in Rose Bud, Arkansas. I saw him grow physically and spiritually. Although he was a great basketball player for Pensacola Christian College, he really shined in his spiritual activity. When He surrendered to preach, we gave God praise. He is in high demand for speaking engagements. He has spoken in great youth conferences, revivals, and Bible conferences across the land. Mark is only twenty-eight years of age, yet he has the depth to speak to the hearts of the most seasoned Christian in our congregation and the clarity to reach the most immature. I am thankful that our young people will have an opportunity to hear a fearless young Elijah, who will illustrate that you can be "cool" without sacrificing character; relevant without substituting compromise for conviction; up-to-date without being "out-of-touch" with God. Mark is a great combination of holiness with happiness! I know you will love him. He is married to a wonderful wife named Kim and they have one beautiful two-year old.

Mark's full name is John Mark Bishop. He is named after one of the great Bible characters who for awhile caused some concern in Paul's life, but came back to God in full power! Like many youth today we sometimes give up hope too soon. Paul was able to say just before he died, "*Take Mark...for he is profitable to me for the ministry*" (II Timothy 4:11). The word *profitable* means "yielding profit, gain, or benefit." I believe Mark Bishop will be yielding profit spiritually for the next generation. Let's cheer him and his tribe on to greater heights. How we desperately need to find youth going in the right direction and then applaud them when we discover their inward dedication! Today I would ask you to take Mark into your hearts, receive him and let him be a catalyst to spur you on to prayer for our youth. Allow him to be profitable for ministry in Christchurch today. As I think about Mark, his generation, his father's and my generation, a few thoughts come to mind.

1. Give God the best years of your life.

Don't wait until you are old and throw God your leftovers. Give Him the best years of your life! "*Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them*" (Ecclesiastes 12:1).

2. Pass the truth you have lived to others.

"*Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things*" (Galatians 6:6). "*And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also*" (II Timothy 2:2).

An old man who was planting oak trees was asked by his old friend why he would plant trees of which he would not be able to enjoy the shade. He smiled and said he was planting the trees for the future generations who would enjoy the shade. God give us vision to live, do and teach right knowing the benefit, although it may not be witnessed by us, may indeed bless those who come after.

I have always enjoyed this poem that so perfectly expresses the principle of passing on the great truths you have learned!

The Bridge Builder

An old man, going on a lone highway,
 Came at the evening, cold and gray,
 To chasm, vast and deep and wide,
 Through which was flowing a sullen tide.
 The old man crossed in the twilight dim;
 The sullen stream had no fears for him;
 But he turned when safe on the other side
 And built a bridge to span the tide.

"Old man," said a fellow pilgrim near,
 "You are wasting strength with building here;
 Your journey will end with the ending day;
 You never again must pass this way;
 You have crossed the chasm, deep and wide ~
 Why build you the bridge at the eventide?"

The builder lifted his old gray head:
 "Good friend, in the path I have come," he said,
 "There followeth after me today
 A youth whose feet must pass this way.
 This chasm that has been naught to me
 To that fair-haired youth may a pit-fall be,
 He, too, must cross in the twilight dim;
 Good friend, I am building the bridge for him."

-Will Allen Dromgoole-

3. Live with eternity in view.

We are at any given moment just a step away from facing eternity. David told his friend Jonathan, "...but truly as the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, there is but a step between me and death" (I Samuel 20:3).

Decisions, actions, and deeds should be weighed in light of eternity. Has what you or I done today profit for eternity? Examine your life today and ask God to help you live with eternal values in mind.

- Pastor Pope -

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