

If I Had My Life To Live Over Again

In a little while, I shall be speaking at yet another youth conference. I am still amazed that God is using me now more than ever in speaking to youth around our country. This summer alone (to God alone be the glory), I have spoken to young people from the mountains of northern California to the peninsula of Florida! We have seen souls saved, young men surrender to preach, young ladies surrender to God's will and thousands make the vow of purity. My heart is overwhelmed with praise for the summer of revival we have witnessed in the life of our youth! One of my prayers is that it will flow over to our adults!

I woke up this morning with a burden from our Lord to talk to everyone (especially our youth) through this "Pastor's Word", on the subject of what I would do if I had my life to live over again. After prayerful consideration, I bring these thoughts to you.

1. I would have been a better boy.

"Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth" (Ephesians 6:2,3). This is a unique commandment from God that carries the promise (as a rule) of a long life as well as the promise of a life well-lived. Although most of the philosophy of Henry David Thoreau leaves much to be desired, there is one statement he said that is very true and I suspect may have been autobiographical in nature. He said, "How sad to come to the end of one's life only to discover he never lived," I submit to you that the young person who commits his or her life to Jesus Christ and honors the parents God gave him or her would indeed come to the end of their life to discover they had a life lived more abundantly! Jesus said, *"The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly"* (John 10:10).

Now were you to ask my ninety-one year old mother if I was a good boy, she would probably say yes. The reason is because I have tried to make-up for those misbehaviors once I got right with God when I became an older teen-ager. So, hopefully Mom will forget those times I talked back and disobeyed direct commands. If I had to do it over again I would obey in the very smallest of things. Our example, the Lord Jesus said, *"...for I do always those things that please Him (the Heavenly Father)"* (John 8:29). I would have followed more carefully the oft repeated command of my dad who said, "Remember our rule: obedience to the unenforceable." This was a rule that means to do right when there is no one but God watching you, when Mom and Dad are not watching, still do the right thing! Not only would I do that command better, but if I had my life to live over again, I would have initiated doing the right thing without even being told. Dad had another rule that he lived by and taught us, "Find a need and fill it." I think about

the times when Dad was out in a mission and Mom was working. She would come home tired and then after working all day she would wash, cook and clean. If I could do it over again, I would have looked for things to do around the house to ease my parents' burdens.

I would have wasted less time, gotten to bed earlier and gotten up earlier. I would have worked much harder doing the right things in my early life. Ah yes, I would be a much better boy if I had it to do all over again!

2. I would have studied better.

I try to encourage young people to study and do their best in every subject. In doing this you increase your options of what you may do in the future. In our youth at nine, twelve and fourteen most of us don't have a clue as to what God will have us to do vocationally. What if God wants you to be an engineer? Then you had better learn your math skills. What if God wants you to be a lawyer? Then you had better learn history and don't shy away from doing book reports. What if God wants you to be a homeschooling mom? Then you had better learn all subjects and do well in home education. What if God wants you to be a preacher? Then of course it goes without saying, you had better learn your Bible. By the way, the most interesting preachers by far are those who have learned the Word of God. Learning from a wide range of subjects will keep your options open to not only do exactly what God wants you to do, but to do it well. You will have a head start. *"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed..."* (II Timothy 2:15). People who study hard are not disappointed or ashamed!

3. I would never have gotten serious with any girl until it was time to get married.

As I look back in my adolescence, the most wasted time I spent was on girls. The time invested in calling and dating was appalling! As I see the youth today with the incredibly easy access of cell phones, texting and social networking, I cannot imagine what that temptation that would be like for a young man or young lady. Keeping your distance from the dating scene would also automatically keep you pure, which is a direct command of God (I Timothy 5:22).

If I knew then what I know now, I would never have gotten serious with anyone until I met Barbara. Now if you ask me, "Pastor Pope, don't I need to date around until I know I have the right one?" Let me ask you a question, "Do you believe God has the right one for you to marry?" Well, if so, why don't you obey what it says in Proverbs 3:5 and 6, *"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."* I am going to be so bold to say: God is obligated, when you seek Him first, to direct your paths. Isn't that what Jesus was promising in Matthew 6: 33? *"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."*

4. I would have memorized more Scripture.

The Bible brings this promise: *“Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word”* (Psalm 119:9). Also it says, *“Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee”* (Psalm 119:11). This blessing is so apparent, I don’t even need to expand or comment on those two verses!

Now allow me to close with a short list of what I would not do over:

1. I have given the better part of my life to Jesus!

I did not wait until I was an older man to get serious about serving Jesus. I surrendered everything to God as a teen-ager and I don’t regret one day of living for my Lord! I did not give my Lord leftovers; I gave Him the best years of my life. I have no regrets in this!

2. I married the right girl.

In God’s destiny; I married the absolute perfect girl for me. I believe in the deepest core of my being, I did not marry someone who would be acceptable. I married the girl God chose for me. Oh yes, may I add: I have loved and appreciated His choice!

3. I have pastored the one Church God wanted me to pastor.

I have not flipped-flopped from one church to another, trying to find that “perfect” church. I have pastored only one church in life. I give God praise for the sweet people at Christchurch who have “freed me up” to do exactly what I believe God has wanted me to do in ministry.

4. I have been friends with the friends of God!

Today, shortly after I decided what I would write about, I thanked God for the influence in my life of great people of God such as Dr. and Mrs. Lee Roberson. I would challenge those of you who are reading these words to go to my Facebook page and see the video tribute of Dr. Roberson. I think you will see the importance of having the impact of older and wiser people to lead you on in life. *“He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed”* (Proverbs 13:20). *“I will get me unto the great men, and will speak unto them; for they have known the way of the LORD”* (Jeremiah 5:5).

“Thou shalt rise up before the hoary (white-haired) head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I am the LORD” (Leviticus 19:32). Here is the blessing that comes from honoring the older friends of God in your life: *“...them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed”* (1 Samuel 2:30). *“...Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me”* (Matthew 25:40).

-Pastor Pope-

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