

## Things I Have Learned and Am Still Learning

Text: Philippians 3:1-14

We are blessed to have Dr. Steve Pettit, president of Bob Jones University and his team with us today. It is only natural, therefore to reflect on a book that I read in my youth, which was formative for me, "Things I Have Learned." The author, Dr. Bob Jones, Sr. was the founder of Bob Jones University located in Greenville, South Carolina. The book came out of chapel talks given to the students of the university. I read the book so often that many of his sayings are with me to this day. Here is a sampling:

- Every successful person I have ever met had come at some time in his life under the dominating power of some great truth.
- Simplicity is truth's most becoming garb.
- If you will give God your heart, He will comb the kinks out of your head.
- People tell you that love is blind. Love isn't blind. Love just doesn't always tell what it sees.
- It's always right to do right. It is always wrong to do wrong.
- It is never right to do wrong in order to get a chance to do right.
- Do right though the stars fall.
- The door to the room of success swings on the hinges of opposition.
- The prettiest flower that ever grew in God's garden of appreciation is the flower of gratitude. And when the flower of gratitude dies on the altar of a man's heart, that man is well nigh hopeless.

These are just a few of Dr. Jones' words of wisdom clothed in homespun eloquence.

A few years after I read Dr. Bob Jones' book, I came across a book by Charles Jones. He was a fine Christian businessman who constantly said, "Life is tremendous," thus he earned the nickname, "Tremendous Jones." From the book, "Life Is Tremendous," Charles Jones said, "I have stopped saying, I have learned, because I am still learning, therefore I say, I am learning."

Paul said in Philippians 3:12, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." Two years after Paul said those words in Philippians, he said (just before his execution) in II Timothy 4:7, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." This great old apostle was learning until he died!

I am not putting myself in the illustrious company of Bob Jones, Sr., Charles Jones and definitely not in the company of the apostle Paul. With your patience, I would like to use Paul's expression in II Corinthians 11:1: "Would to God ye could bear with me a little in my folly: and indeed bear with me," as I share with you things I have learned and am still learning.

1. NOTHING CAN SUBSTITUTE FOR INTIMACY WITH CHRIST.

Philippians 3:10: "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death." It is from this vantage point that all lasting ministry must flow.

II Corinthians 3:6: "Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." Knowledge without intimacy with Christ can become lethal. Mark 12:30: "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment."

## 2. BE BEST FRIENDS WITH YOUR SPOUSE.

Ephesians 5:25: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." Colossians 3:19: "Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them." Proverbs 5:18: "Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth." Ecclesiastes 9:9: "Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity, which he hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity: for that is thy portion in this life, and in thy labour which thou takest under the sun." Ecclesiastes 4:9-10: "Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth, for he hath not another to help him up."

The greatest thing you can do for your kids is to love their mother. Jesus said in John 13:35: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." One of the strongest testimonies of the Christian faith is when it is on display between a Christian man and his wife.

## 3. DO NOT WASTE YOUR YOUTH.

I Timothy 4:12: "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." Lamentations 3:27: "It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth." I Corinthians 7:32: "But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord." John 8:29: "And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him."

D. L. Moody heard an old stately Christian man say shortly before he passed, "It is yet to be seen what God can do with a man totally, wholly surrendered to God." Upon hearing these words, Moody determined, "By the grace of God I'll be that man." It is estimated that Moody was responsible for at least 2 million people coming to Christ, not counting a myriad people already saved that he encouraged for the mission field and pastoral ministry. And yet, when it came time for Moody to die, he ended up saying the same words he heard from the old saint, "It is yet to be seen what God can do with a man totally, wholly surrendered to God." Let us give God the best years of our life!

#### 4. THE ALLOCATION OF TIME GOD HAS ASSIGNED FOR US ON EARTH IS AS MUCH TIME THAT IS NEEDED TO DO EXACTLY WHAT HE WANTS YOU TO DO.

John 11:9: "Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world." John 9:4: "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work." Matthew 6:33, 34: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

When the Lord Jesus has first place in your life, you can come to the end of every day and life itself knowing you did what God had assigned for you to do. What peace!

#### 5. NEVER TURN BACK.

Luke 9:62: "And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

"The essential thing 'in heaven and earth' is...that there should be a long obedience in the same direction; ...and has always resulted in the long run, something which has made life worth living." Strange as it may seem, this quote came from Friedrich Nietzsche, a man who departed from the deep devout faith of his German parents. Nietzsche was reared in a Christian home and observed first hand, the long obedience of true Christians. Later, although he denied that same faith in his adult years, he made this remarkable, true statement, perhaps with angst. If I may take the liberty to make a slight modification, I believe what God desires from us is a long obedience in the same, right direction. Hebrews 10:38: "Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him."

-Pastor Pope-