



August 23rd, 2007

On a Personal Note . . .

Last week was the one-year anniversary of my maternal grandmother's death. When the Lord moved my family from Africa to America when I was 11 years old, my relationship with all four of my grandparents, my uncles and aunts, and my cousins were butchered by time and space. I was in college or older when my first three grandparents passed away. The last time I saw them before they died, I was in middle school. When my grandmother passed away last year, I had seen her three times since I was 11 years old. Sure, we had written letters and made phone calls, but I had so little personal interaction with her. I never got to eat her cooking, watch her sew, see her enjoy her much valued flower beds, or experience a worship service with her. 10,000 miles of ocean is quite the relationship killer. Starting in 6th grade, I never knew what it meant to get a Christmas present or a birthday present from a grandparent or any other relative for that matter. I never got to attend the funeral of any of my grandparents; something about a \$2,500 plane ticket was a bit of a hurdle. I rarely say anything when people comment to me that they live so far from their relatives. But, one of the greatest challenges in following the Lord to America was giving up our family.

I share all that not for sympathy, but because the one-year anniversary of my grandmother's passing gave cause for a moment of reflection. I hardly know my relatives, not because we don't get along, but because the Lord sent me to the other side of the world. The Lord is the reason I hardly know and knew my relatives. I can either be bitter at Him, or I can be reminded again that nothing in this life is as important as following the will of God. Even if it means leaving behind family. Even if it means leaving the familiar for the unfamiliar. Even if it means beginning a new life. Even if it means giving up a career or money or reputation. When it comes to the work of the Lord here on earth, nothing is as valuable as what He needs done. He is willing to call you to move away from family. He is willing to call you to give up your reputation. He is willing to call you to give up all that is familiar so that you can do what He needs you to do. I was reminded last week that there is nothing in this life as valuable as obeying the Lord Jesus in all that He wants me to do. I wonder what I value more than obedience to Christ? I wonder what you value more than obedience to Christ?

A word About The Word

This past Sunday I preached 1 Corinthians 11:23-32 on the topic of the Lord's Supper. The passage is just so rich and pregnant with truths and principles for the Christian's life. I'd encourage you to set aside 30 minutes, get comfortable in your favorite chair with something to drink, and follow along in

your Bible as you listen to the sermon.

Last night I preached 1 Samuel 19 about the protection of the Lord. Too many people go through life living in fear. Fear of other people, fear of the unknown, fear rooted in self doubt, fear of catastrophe, etc. The truth is that fear is simply a lack of faith in the Lord Jesus. If we really do believe Jesus is sovereign, then we have nothing and no one to fear. You don't have to live scared. I'd encourage you to set aside 30 minutes, get comfortable in your favorite chair with something to drink, and follow along in your Bible as you listen to the sermon.

Both sermons are available on cd for purchase at the sermon booth in the church lobby. You can also find them in MP3 format on our church website [here](#) or via podcast at www.itunes.com. Simply search for "Nathan Lino" in the search box of the iTunes store.

The Lord's Supper

It was such a joy celebrating the Lord's Supper this past Sunday. One of the issues we emphasized from 1 Corinthians 11:23-32 is the evangelistic emphasis of the Lord's Supper noted in vs. 26. The Lord's Supper is a call to observers of the occasion to walk with Christ in a personal relationship with Him. I am never surprised that each time we celebrate the Lord's Supper, there is a strong response during the invitation. How could there not be when according to vs. 26, the very act of the Lord's Supper is a clarion call to walk closely with the Lord Jesus.

During the second service on Sunday, the Holy Spirit convicted me about the way we celebrate the Lord's Supper. Too often, I believe, our church's celebration of the Lord's Supper is reduced to a quick ritual absent of meaning and purpose. This past week I decided that at least for the next few times we celebrate the Lord's Supper, we are going to devote the entire service to the ordinance. It will be a guided time of prayer and contemplation as we think about the issues in 1 Corinthians 11:23-32: a deep-seated gratitude toward Christ, a renewal of the individual's commitment to the unity of the church as we go about the will and the work of the Lord, a memorial service considering the death of our God on our behalf, a remembering of His testament bequeathing to us forgiveness of sins and eternal life, and a commitment to the evangelistic enterprise. A believer can hardly reflect on all of these issues in the span of 10-15 minutes at the end of a service.

The next time we celebrate the Lord's Supper, I see the service going something like this. I will pull out of the text each of these issues one by one. As I do so, we will stop and have a time of prayer, Scripture reading, and singing regarding the issue at hand. Then I will pull out the next issue and explain it very briefly, and we will have a time of prayer, Scripture reading, and singing regarding the issue at hand. The service will culminate in the distribution of the bread and the cup. Because of vs. 27, I want to make sure we do everything we can do to eat of the bread and drink of the cup in a worthy manner. I can't wait until Sunday, October 14, when we celebrate the Lord's Supper again in all three services.

Surrendering to Ministry

A couple in our church with young children has surrendered to full-time ministry. Last Friday and Saturday they and I drove to Fort Worth to visit Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. The trip was a fantastic experience for them and me.

This may surprise you, but the average age of the students at Southwestern Seminary is almost 35 years old! It is NOT the norm for the Lord to send someone from college directly to seminary. That is what Pastor Sonny and I did, but it is unusual. If the average age of a seminary student is almost 35 years old, then one can conclude that most of the time, it is God's MO to let those He will call to ministry establish a family and a home, career, and possessions for about 10 years and then call them to give it all up. Why would He do that? Humanistic thinking says it is irresponsible and illogical to give up so much after expending so much time and energy getting started in life. But, those that think biblically can understand. For someone to be useable by God in ministry, He has to know that they are willing to go anywhere, any time that He says. If one isn't willing to give up the worldly things that matter most to them (ie: a home, a car, a certain standard of living, a career), then they have not made themselves fully available to God. Every person called to ministry will face a point along the journey of ministry where they are tested by God about their willingness to give up those worldly things that matter most to people.

For most people called to ministry, they prove it to God by paying the price that must be paid to go to seminary in their early to mid-30s. It is not easy to give up a nice home, a nice car, and a well-planned career to go and live in seminary housing and eek out a living while going to graduate school full time. My test came much earlier in life when my family of five moved to America carrying everything we owned in seven suitcases. I have personally known what it is to literally carry everything I owned in a suitcase with no more worldly possessions to my name. I saw the Lord take my family from having nothing to a standard of living we never could have dreamed of. That is why today, I enjoy the luxuries the Lord has given my family, and they are not a few, but my security is certainly not in anything we own. I like our home, but we'd give it up tomorrow if God asked us to. I love my used, but new-to-me F150, but I'd give it up tomorrow if God asked me to. Over and over again, the Lord has taught me that He will always provide even when He asks me to make sacrifices that worldly thinkers see as asinine.

I remember Abraham. He loved his son, Isaac, so much, and so the Lord tested Abraham to see if Abraham would give up his own son. You think explaining to someone that God wants you to give up your house is hard. Try explaining to someone that God asked you to kill your own son! Abraham passed that test. Then Abraham loved his own life so much that the Lord decided to test Abraham to see if Abraham would be willing to give up his own life for the cause of God. The first time Abraham took the test, he lied to Abimelech to save his own life. Abraham chose his own life over obedience and failed the test. The Lord matured Abraham a little more and gave 'ol Abe the same test again and the second time Abraham passed. He proved to God he'd give up his own life if God asked him to.

If the Lord is calling you to ministry, you will have to take and pass this test just like this couple in our church. The Lord will want you to prove you are willing to give up the worldly things you value most. Based on Abraham's life, it seems that if you fail the test, He lets you take it again. But how many times you get to retake the test, I don't know. I'd encourage you to pass it the first time. The Lord really is trustworthy. Just do what He says, as illogical as it may seem, and He will take care of you.

Muslim Bible Day Update

Three weeks ago, all the children in Sunday School received a coin collector for Muslim Bible Day. Each child was challenged to raise 20 quarters to purchase one \$5 Bible for the Persian world.

Yesterday, I was pleasantly surprised and so encouraged to find out that a 4th grade girl in our church has already collected enough quarters to fill two of the coin collectors. She has already purchased two Bibles for the Persian world. I am so proud of Faith. Because of her love for the Lord Jesus and her love for the Bible, she wanted to ensure people in Persia whom she will probably never meet have access to

the Bible. Lord, please give me a heart for you and your Bible like Faith has.

I hope and pray that you are praying and planning to give a generous and sacrificial gift on Muslim Bible Day. We as a church family have a history of giving generously to the cause of providing Bibles to other people. I am expecting nothing less on September 16 when we celebrate Muslim Bible Day.