

Rest in God or Work for His Glory?

How do you start a church? Most folks have no idea. It's not that different from starting anything else - you need to make your plans. How will you connect with people? What is the church going to do? What resources will it take - financial and human? Where are those coming from? How will we react to current circumstances? Ask people who have started businesses and they'll tell you that the list keeps going on and on.

This is where I am right now. After years of work on my list, somehow it's not any shorter. I find us needing to address our financial situation - how do we stand given the current economy; where can I find more partners to step in for those who are unable to continue to give; what do we spend money on and is there enough; etc.? We need to look at how people are hearing about us. How can we invite them in to experience the church? How are we sharing our vision for the church? What opportunities are we seeing to share the gospel?

It seems like so much to do. And the reality is that I don't have the answers. I don't know everything we need to do, never mind *how* to do it. I find my mind constantly returning to questions that

bother me and picking at them. What if we ...? Would it work to ...? Where can I find the answer to ...?

God has raised up folks who are committed to Free Grace and seeing it established here, but I'm the one who has all week to work at it, right? I'm the one that has those hundreds of pages of resources telling me what to do. I'm the leader and so I'm supposed to have the answers.

So I struggle. I struggle to find the answers. I struggle to know what to do and not seem clueless. Then the guilt comes and I struggle because I know that it isn't my work, but God's. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus says, "Therefore do not be anxious...your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you" (Matthew 6:31-33).

It does not depend on me! God is doing this. I know it, yet it is hard to accept. I struggle to resist the ever-present list while not avoiding the hard work God has for me. I imagine I am not alone in this. As you pray to rest on God while doing the work he has called you to, please remember to pray for us at Free Grace.

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b PRAISES AND PRAYER REQUESTS

☞ God continues to provide financially even in the midst of the current economy. Pray for us to trust him for our finances even as we seek additional partners.

☞ Pray for wisdom as we seek new ways to introduce people to Free Grace.

☞ Pray for those we have spoken with regarding Free Grace and the gospel. Pray that the Spirit would be at work drawing them to God and his church.

☞ Pray for us as we adjust to Linda picking up her responsibilities for the church.

☞ We have seen many signs of God's hand at work since Linda stopped working her St. Louis job. Pray that God would continue to move quickly to provide the rest of Ken & Linda's support.

☞ Pray for our home group. Pray that God would embolden each member to speak with others about the gospel and Free Grace.



image by Mary R. Vogt

Heart or Behavior?

Which is harder to change: The human heart or human behavior? Jeremiah 17:9 tells us that, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? " If I can neither trust nor understand my own heart, how will I ever find a way to change it?

Yet Paul's words in Romans 7:15-19 resonate with all believers as he fails to harmonize his behavior with his already-changed heart. His painful words seem to indicate that behavior is much more difficult to change than the heart. In fact, he confesses that he is literally unable to do what is right.

We counselors often talk about getting beyond simply offering practical help to our clients. We want to affect change where it counts...at the heart level. Change the heart and behavior will follow. That's great, but what do we do with Paul's words?

In my counseling practice, I have my own little mantra that I often remind both my clients and myself: God never does nothing. I remind myself, and my fellow counselors, that this is true whether we plumb the depths of our clients' hearts or merely scratch the surface of their issues. God can, and does, accomplish great things with clients we see only one time. The same can be said for clients we see for years. True also for our daily lives.

It's sometimes hard to believe that God is doing anything positive at all in our lives, or through our lives. But God doesn't waste a minute here or an hour there; he doesn't take eight hours a night to sleep. We do those things. Romans 8:28 says, "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good..." With God all means all!

So which is harder to change, the human heart or human behavior? I don't know, and I'm not sure it matters. I know this: God never does nothing, and the Bible tells us that what he does do in and through our lives results in only good.

Ken

Where do we go from here?

Home Groups

We currently have one home group meeting for worship in prayer, song, and Bible study. We are praying for additional groups to begin with new people and in new areas. Once we have several groups, we can look at bringing them together to worship.

Relationships

We continue to deepen our relationships with each other. We've had the joy of celebrating a first birthday and have another child's first birthday coming soon. One of our families, Achoui Akeuei and her children, cooked us a Sudanese meal and shared some of the songs they use to worship God. We've recently been able to connect her family with a 5th-grade class in South Carolina that is learning about ministry.

Community

We have been involved with the Root Cellar, a local ministry being started to reach out to the downtown area. We are excited that their new director has recently been able to move here. Much is beginning to happen to bring the hope of Christ to the people of downtown Lewiston.

Gospel living

We have been studying the Sermon on the Mount to hear Christ's teaching on what it means to live out the gospel. We are praying for God to transform us so that we are truly salt and light in our community, proclaiming Christ crucified. Our desire is to see God use our relationships with friends, neighbors, and family to teach them about himself. We are seeking places to invite them into contact with Free Grace so that they might see and hear more about this thing called free grace (and Free Grace).

Finances

Our finances (both Free Grace generally and Ken and Linda's specifically) have survived relatively intact given the current economy. Unfortunately some of our partners find themselves unable to give what they had thought God was leading them to give. We are praying for God to bring new partners to replace those and to even improve our ability to minister in the community. We are also praying that we would trust in God for his provision instead of seeking our own.

GIVING

make checks out to:
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electronic or credit card gifts*

FOR KEN & LINDA make checks out to:
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*Please make sure to include
on the check that it is for
Ken & Linda Morris*