

- 1 **Do Something Beautiful for God**
"Using What You've Got"
- 2 **We're talking about stewardship this month and our theme is "Something Beautiful for God." Last week we talked about consecration to God. Consecration simply means,**
 - "dedication to a sacred purpose".
 - True stewardship of our life begins with an awareness that our life and all that have is a gift from God.
- 3 **Last week we talked about how once we have that settled, other things begin to fall into place.**
 - For one, our giving falls into place.
- 4 **In churches with this consecration focus, Godly giving is not first of all about "paying the bills" or "supporting the budget", it's about giving to God out of a consecrated life. We might call this spiritually focused stewardship.**
- 5 **So why does spiritually focused stewardship work better than fund-raising methods? To quote Herb Miller,**
 - The goal of secular fund-raising: dollars for a worthy cause.
 - The goal of Christian stewardship: faithful management of all that God gives so that God can use our gifts to transform us spiritually and to extend Christ's transforming love to others.
- 6 **True Christian stewardship is treasure management that helps us escape the trap of selfishness by keeping ourselves spiritually focused on God.**
- 7 **So last week was about consecration and giving.**
 - But whole life consecration is about far more than giving.
 - Holistic stewardship is about your life's influence. Did you know that Jesus says you have influence?
- 8 ***"Let your light shine, so that others will see the good that you do and will praise your Father in heaven."* Matthew 5:16 (CEV)**
- 9 **Jesus says I don't want you to waste your influence.**
 - You don't buy a lamp and then hide it.
 - You don't get a lightbulb and then never use it. He said, If I've given you influence. I want you to let your light shine.
 - This theme echos throughout God's Word. The Lord commanded the Hebrews.
- 10 ***"You are to influence them; do not let them influence you!"* Jeremiah 15:19 (NLT)**
- 11 **Sadly a lot of Christians have reversed this verse.**
 - We are far more influenced by the world – how we think, dress, act, sleep, talk, tell jokes, etc. than we influence the world. Right?
- 12 **God says, "I don't want you to be a thermometer, which just reflects the heat of the culture.**
 - I want you to be a thermostat that controls the heat of the culture.
 - So the question is, "how do we live an influential life." As our stewardship theme says, "Do something beautiful for God."
 - So today let's look at the stewardship of influence - how you can become a more influential person. The Bible says you do three things.
- 13 **Checkpoint 1.**

I MUST RECOGNIZE MY INFLUENCE.

- 14 **The truth is everybody has influence.**
- You are far more influential than you realize. You just don't think about it. You're not usually aware of your influence.
 - You say, "Who do I influence?" Everybody you come in contact with.
 - You influence people all around you all the time.
 - Anybody you come in contact with on a daily basis throughout the day you have a potential to influence. Positive or negative. The issue is not "are you an influence?"
 - The issue is what kind of an influence are you? You're an influence for good or for bad, for right or for wrong, for Christ or not for Christ. What influence are you? The Bible says be intentional about your influence.
 - Paul put it like this to the church at Galatia.
- 15 ***"Make a careful exploration of who you are and the work you have been given, and then sink yourself into that."***
Galatians 6:4a (Msg)
- 16 **Know who you are and know what you're doing and then do it the best that you can. Be a good influence.**
- The Lord has always been about developing influence. Think about Moses ...
- 17 ***"Then the Lord said to Moses, 'What is that in your hand?' 'A staff,' he replied. God said, 'Throw it on the ground.'"***
Exodus 4:2 (NIV)
- 18 **Why did God ask Moses, "What's in your hand?"**
- God already knew – why did he ask?
 - When God asks a question it's not for His benefit. It's for ours.
 - He asks Moses "What is in your hand?" because of what the staff represented.
 - Remember how God says, "Throw it on the ground." It became a snake, then it became a staff again.
- 19 **Why in the world did God do that? Just to show off?**
- No. You see, that staff represented everything Moses was.
 - The "staff" represents his identity, his income as a shepherd, and his influence.
 - God says, "Moses, if you will give Me your staff - your influence, your identity and your income, I will empower it. I'll make it come alive.
 - He lays it down and it becomes something of power. Think about it - from that point on that staff was the same staff Moses uses for all the miracles.
 - It became "the rod of God." All of a sudden what had been simple and plain – a crazy little stick – becomes something God is using for miracles.
 - So checkpoint 1 – identify my influence.
- 20 **Checkpoint 2.**
I MUST EXERCISE MY INFLUENCE. (5 WAYS)
- 21 **Here are five ways you and I can be intentional about our influence. Here they are - from simple to difficult. Exercise influence by ...**
- 22 **1. BY SMILING AT PEOPLE**
- 23 **We influence people by smiling at people.**
- When you smile what happens? They smile back.
 - When they smile back that means you just influenced them.
- 24 ***"A cheerful look brings joy to the heart."*** Proverbs 15:30 (NIV)
- 25 **2. BY SYMPATHIZING WITH PEOPLE**

26 ***"God comforts us ... so when others have trouble, we can comfort them with the same comfort God gives us."***
2 Cor. 1:4 (NCV)

27 **God has comforted you and it's not just for your sake. He comforts us so we can comfort other people.**

- I care about people that care about me. I care about what they think, what their ideas are.
- Their caring makes me want to listen to them.
- If you're like me there's a lot of people you care about but you might not let them know.
- Sympathizing is doing something about it. Not just caring but writing a note or having a word or going by and seeing them.
- We can all exercise our influence by sympathizing with others and expressing it in concrete ways.

28 **3. BY SERVING PEOPLE**

29 ***"Even though I am free of the expectations of everyone, I have voluntarily become a servant to any and all in order to reach a wide range of people."***
1 Corinthians 9:19 (Msg)

30 **Paul says, "I serve other people so I can influence them.**

- I serve them so I can tell them about God and teach them to do good." He said, I serve in order to influence.
- That's why Jesus said, *"If you want to be great, learn to be the servant of all."*
 - If you serve a few people, you're going to have a little influence.
 - If you serve no one, you're going to have no influence in life.
 - If you serve a lot of people, you're going to have great influence in life.
- It's all dependent upon how many people you serve and how well you serve.

31 **4. BY SPEAKING UP**

32 ***"Let the redeemed of the Lord say so!"*** Psalm 107:2 (KJV)

33 **If you claim to be a Christian don't hide it.**

- Don't try to be some kind of secret agent Christian, a lady Clairol Christian: nobody knows for sure, does she or doesn't she?
- Don't hide your faith. *"Let the redeemed of the Lord say so."*
- It takes courage to be an influencer. So here's my question: what do you need to speak up about?
- What about that person who lives next door to you who needs your loving witness? You've got to care enough to share. Do you have the courage to be a person of influence?

34 **Edmund Burke once said, "The only thing necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing."**

- "I don't want to offend anybody."
- Well, sometimes God puts you right in the middle of a problem at work, home, school, wherever just so you'll speak up about it. So He'll have a voice – Yours!
- King Solomon proclaimed in Proverbs.

35 ***"Speak up for people who cannot speak for themselves. Protect the rights of all who are helpless. Speak for them and... protect the rights of the poor and needy."*** Proverbs 31:8-9 (TEV)

36 **5. BY SACRIFICING**

- 37 ***"Christ was sinless, yet he offered himself as an eternal and spiritual sacrifice to God. That's why his blood is much more powerful and makes our consciences clear. Now we can serve the living God and no longer do things that lead to death."* Heb. 9:14 (CEV)**
- 38 **Here's the spiritual principle: Great sacrifice equals great influence.**
- 39 ***"My life is being poured out as part of the sacrifice and service I offer to God for your faith. Yet, I am filled with joy."* Philippians 2:17 (GW)**
- 40 **Probably, the second greatest and most influential person in human history would probably be the Apostle Paul.**
- He carried the message of God's sacrifice through Jesus' love to the entire known world of that day.
 - It was a joyful sacrifice because he saw the impact that it was making. He had an influence that changed everything.
 - Again, we see in Paul's life: If you want great influence you've got to make great sacrifices.
 - Here's the tough part for us. That means if you're going to have a great influence, you can't just live a comfortable life. And this is not just for missionaries like Paul.
 - For most of us those sacrifices are going to be part of our everyday life.
 - It is the small sacrifices of being unselfish in everyday life that make the greatest impact on this world.
- 41 ***"Don't forget to do good things for others and to share what you have with them. These are the kinds of sacrifices that please God."* Hebrews 13:16 (GW)**
- 42 **When you get up in the morning say, "God, I want You to use me today to influence every person I come in contact with for good and for God."**
- Be intentional.
 - First, recognize your influence.
 - Second, exercise your influence by doing these five ways we just talked about. Smiling, sympathizing, serving, speaking up and sacrificing.
 - And then, not only recognize and exercise your influence ...
- 43 **III. I MUST MAXIMIZE MY INFLUENCE.**
- 44 ***"Make the most of every opportunity for doing good in these evil days."* Ephesians 5:16 (NLT)**
- 45 **"Isn't maximizing influence kind of egotistical?" No, it's not. You should want to expand your influence because you're not doing it for your benefit; you're doing it for Jesus' sake.**
- That's why He leaves you here on earth.
 - Once you're saved why doesn't He take you immediately to heaven? You're here to be an influence for God's glory ... not your own.
 - God needs you to be an influential person for good.
 - You say, "I don't have any influence." Use what you've got! Start using what you've got.
 - You say, "I'm just an ordinary person." That's what Moses said with that staff. "I'm a shepherd on the backside of the desert."
 - How could God use me?
- 46 **One day you are going to stand before God. That's an appointment you're not going to be late for.**
- One day you're going to stand before God.

- It is my job as your friend and as your pastor to prepare you for that day.
- One day when you stand before God, God is first going to say, "What did you do with My Son, Jesus Christ? Did you accept Him into your heart as Lord and Savior?" I hope you know the answer to that one.

47 **Then He's going to say, "What did you do with what I gave you?" That's the question of stewardship. Talent, time, money, relationships, opportunities, intelligence, your social network.**

- Did you just use it on yourself? Or did you try to influence for good and for God?
- Here's the reason you're still around. Philippians 1:21 Paul says "*For me, living means opportunities for Christ, and dying-, that's better yet.*" When I die I win. I'm going to heaven. The perfect place.
- So evidently the only reason I'm here is opportunities for Christ. Remember when it comes to influence it's not about you. And it's not about me. It's about Him.
- So let's end today with a prayer.

48 **Would you pray this prayer in your heart? Father, I realize that everything I have is a gift from You. I haven't thought of myself as an influential person but I can see that You want me to influence others – for good and for God. Help me to be more intentional about influencing. To smile, to sympathize, to serve, to speak up, and even to sacrifice when necessary. That may be a sacrifice of time or money or privacy or something. But help me to exercise and maximize the influence You have given me so that I can make some kind of difference in this world. Thank You for sacrificing Your life for me, Jesus. In Your name I pray. Amen.**

49 **(Notes: The outline for this sermon taken from "The Stewardship of Influence" by Rick Warren.)**