

“Yield to God”
By General Pastor Peter F. Paine
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We all need to examine our walk with God. I hope to give you some tools, today. Sometimes we investigate why we do what we do. Each of us will, at some point, come to a place in our spiritual journey where we aren't sure whether to take a step forward, or just retreat. Sometimes we feel that our best just isn't good enough. There are times when we just want to give up, and say, “Well, at least I tried.”

Daniel 3:1-30 Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold...

These three young men had read their Bible. They had religion, but they also had a relationship with God. Nebuchadnezzar gave them another chance. These three weren't just anybody; they were important men in the kingdom. At the same time, though, Nebuchadnezzar was angry (Daniel 3:13). They answered him in verse 16, and they showed respect to him; they weren't ignorant of his position, but they made it clear that they served God. I understand that once, during a concert, somebody called Elvis Presley “The King,” and Elvis stopped the music and said, “There is no King but Jesus.” Now, I don't know much about what Elvis believed, but he at least knew who the real King is. That's what these men were saying to Nebuchadnezzar. They said, “We are not careful to answer thee...” We are not contemplating what to do now. We decided a long time ago where we stood.

When I first got saved, my father didn't like this church. He used to come out to visit, and on Sunday mornings, Debbie and I would get up and get dressed and go to church. He would wait for us. When I went full time in the ministry, my father asked me why I didn't get into an honorable profession, like robbing banks, or going to Las Vegas and becoming a professional gambler. Something where you could hold your head up, he said. After many years, he was visiting, and we got up one Sunday morning, and he was in the kitchen, wearing a suit and tie. “Where're you going, Dad?” I asked him; “To church,” he said. When I came out of my office at the church, all the way at the other end of the hall, Vince Eggleston was the only person talking to my dad. The ushers must have been having a meeting, because none of them were in the hall. Now, some of you never knew Vince, and you might think that what I'm about to say is mean, but Vince is my brother, and I love him. Vince Eggleston was strange. Something wasn't wired right with him; you never knew what was going to come out of his mouth. I have to confess, for a moment, I was a little embarrassed; couldn't there be someone sharper or more polished, representing this ministry to my dad? After church (I brought the message that day), I asked my dad what he thought of service. He said, “Well, the preacher was a little rough, and a little long-winded, but, I think this is the kind of church I would want to attend.” I was pretty surprised, “Why is that, Dad?” “Well, you know that guy, Vince?” “Yeah.” “He's nuts, you know.” “In a good way.” “Yeah, well, I figure a church that makes somebody like that welcome is that kind of church I would want to go to.”

Stop apologizing for not having a building. Yes, we meet at the Vista Inn in Gurnee. We don't have building in this area. You know, there was a man in this church

that was talking to someone else, and the other guy said that T. D. Jakes was his pastor. So he said, “Well, you know who your pastor is, but does he know who his parishioner is? My bishop knows my first name!” In the movie, “My Big Fat Greek Wedding” a Greek woman falls in love with a Jewish man. She realizes that her family’s customs are very different from his family’s. At the end of the movie, though, she tells him, “They’re my family and I love them.” Stop apologizing; quit worrying about what people will think.

Matthew 25:40 ...Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these...

Life is preparation for eternity.

Psalms 103:1-6 Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits...

God’s been good to us. The world has things to offer, but they are temporary. In my childhood, my father had an interesting habit. When we would sit down to dinner, my father would make reference to something positive, to prime the well for the conversation; to get us talking about positive things. Sometimes we need to do that in our own lives, to remind ourselves of what God has done for us, and keep us thinking about positive things. That way, when the devil attacks, we are all full of the goodness of God. “He did this for me, and He did this for me, who is the devil to tell me...”

John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Who did He do that for? the world. Yes, but let’s make it more personal: He did it for me. Do you remember the story of Abraham and Isaac (Genesis 22)? It didn’t make sense to Abraham at the time, but God said to do it, so he was going to do it. In the end, God told Abraham, “Now I know that you will not withhold anything from me” (Genesis 22:12). God’s got His protective hand on us. When ministry makes sense, get centered; when ministry doesn’t make sense, what do you do then? become an atheist? give up? Just trust God.

I’ve made lots of mistakes. There’s a scripture that says, if meat offend my brother, I will eat no meat (1 Corinthians 8:13). Before I got saved, I was a big fan of Beach Boys style music. After I got saved, I quit listening to that, but then I found a group that sang Christian lyrics to Beach Boys style music. I was giving another brother a ride to the airport one time, and he asked me to turn off the music. I asked him, “Didn’t you hear the lyrics?” and he said, “I can’t even hear the lyrics.” I said, “But the lyrics are really good, listen.” He said, “This is the kind of music I used to get stoned to. This takes me to a place where I don’t want to go.” I turned the music off. I understood then that if the music drew me closer to God, then that was good, but if it drew him farther away from God, then I shouldn’t listen to it around him.

You need to get balance between your religion and your relationship with God. Your relationship with God matters, but so does your religion. Your religion has to do with culture and upbringing and dress code. If you look at the ladies who were singing this morning, they all have skirts that go past their knees, none of them are showing

cleavage. Oh, pastor, you shouldn't be talking about things like that in church! If not here, then where can we talk about things like this? Now, the Bible says to dress modestly; could these ladies be dressed less modestly and still be right with God? Yes, they could, but the church has guidelines.

If you are ever unsure of what is the right thing to do, imagine that you are asking your very best Christian friend; what would they tell you to do? Better yet, ask Jesus. How can I pray for my enemies? Jesus might say, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." I'll have been married to Debbie for 35 years next week. There have been many, many times during those years that I have apologized, even though I knew that I was right and she was wrong, but I was ready for some peace. No, I'm kidding, I mean that, for the sake of the relationship, I apologized. Sometimes, the next day, I found out that she really was right, but I would have never gotten to that place if I hadn't apologized. Yield to God. Go to your relationship; that's your compass.

Proverbs 16:3 Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established.

Have you ever done something that you really didn't want to do, simply because it was the right thing to do? In a spiritual relationship, you'll make the right decision, even when it's tough.

Acts 9:1-43 ...Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me...

Saul was persecuting Christians because he thought that they had embraced a false Messiah. Jesus sent Ananias to him, and that day, Saul's religion and relationship with God were both forever changed. Religion is important because it gives us borders. We need some borders. Now, some of these are not Heaven and Hell issues.

When you forgive, don't bring it back up later. I do that sometimes, and I don't know where I got it; my parents never did it, but, sometimes Debbie and I will get into an argument, and I'll say, "But remember last year...?" as if that mattered. The Hatfield's and McCoy's have been feuding for so long that they don't even know what they're feuding about.

Acts 10 ... God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean...

Here we have Jews and Gentiles together, and God showing Peter that there are Old Testament Laws that don't apply anymore. We are all of one Lord, one faith and one baptism (Ephesians 4:5).

James 1:2-4 ...divers temptations...

Sometimes things that look like they're bad are there to strengthen us. I should point out that the word "perfect" in this sense means, "complete." We're not talking about not having flaws any more, just about being whole.

There was one occasion where we had a church board meeting, at it was clear that we were ten thousand dollars short of meeting our financial obligations for that month,

and we didn't have any idea where to get the money. We prayed about it. The next day, I got a call from a man who told me that he had been raised in church, but hadn't attended in a long time. He knew he was supposed to pay tithes, so he had been putting money into a special bank account just to pay his tithes. He asked me if it would be all right if he sent us a check to cover his tithes for the last several years. I said, "Sure." When the check arrived, it was ten thousand dollars. When we are struggling financially, God meets our needs.

James 1:4 But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

Life is a process. We learn lessons in time. Sometimes we learn lessons by being wrong, and sometimes we learn lessons by being right. Sometimes we just need to let God bless us.

Psalms 100 Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands...

Praise the Lord unconditionally. Support each other. When the Lord lays it on your heart to do something, then do it. God uses different people. Your actions should be motivated by unconditional love.

James 1:27 Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.