

## The Main Thing

It has often been said that *the main thing is to keep the main thing as the main thing!* So, as Christians, what is 'the main thing' that we're to keep as 'the main thing'? The phrase 'the main thing' doesn't occur in the Bible; but the words '*one thing*' occur no fewer than 17 times! So, let me direct you to four of those references.

First, the 'main thing' is to be ...

### **Be Captivated by Jesus, Psalm 27.4**

*One thing I ask of the LORD, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple.*

- For David, the one thing that mattered to him more than anything else in life was to dwell in God's presence forever, so that he could look continually on the sheer magnificence of his God, and make *him* his greatest priority.
- So for us, the main thing is to *desire to be in the presence of Jesus* more than anything else, so that we can *appreciate the sheer beauty of Jesus* more than anything else - and so come to *treasure Jesus* above everything else.

Secondly, the 'main thing' is to be ...

### **Be committed to keeping the Company of Jesus, Mark 1.21**

*"One thing you lack,"* Jesus said to the rich young ruler, *"Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."*

- Having become captivated by Jesus, the next aspect of 'the main thing' is to be committed to keeping his company - committed to following him, as one of his disciples.
- The man in this story was keen to inherit eternal life. Normally, we can only inherit something by being a part of the benefactor's family. And this, in essence, is what Jesus was telling the young man: "If you want to inherit eternal life, you must commit yourself to following me - because I'm where it's to be had."
- Eternal life isn't just about an infinite quantity of life, beyond the grave. Jesus defined eternal life as *knowing him in the here and now*, along with his Father God (John 17.3); and we can only get to know Jesus by following him - by us committing ourselves to keep his company.
- For this rich young ruler, one thing was getting in the way of him doing that - his very great wealth.

- So, if he was to experience eternal life, he would have to give it all up - by giving it all away. That command was specific to him, of course. It's not a command that Jesus gives to everyone.
- But I wonder if there's anything getting in the way of *us* truly following Jesus, of keeping good company with him. Sometimes our pride gets between us and him; or our stubbornness, the feeling that we always know what's best, or the desire to get our own way - or it might be bitterness, resentment, or an unforgiving spirit. Whatever it is, we need to give it up - throw it away - in order to 'do the main thing', keep close company with Jesus.

Thirdly, the 'main thing' is to be ...

### **Be committed to Learning from Jesus,**

#### **Luke 10.42.**

In the famous story of Jesus visiting the home of Mary and Martha, we read that *Mary ... sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"* "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, *"you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better and it will not be taken away from her."*

- Humbly sitting at the feet of Jesus, listening to what he has to say to us, is the main thing we must do - the 'one and only thing that's needed'. It's more important than trying to serve Jesus, however well intentioned our efforts might be. Sitting, listening to Jesus, must take precedence over our service for Jesus. It's a matter of simple priorities.
- Giving quality time to Jesus is more important than being overly busy for Jesus. He wants our company more than our energy, our attentiveness more than our activities.
- For, how can we know *how* Jesus wants us to serve him, unless we first sit at his feet to learn from him? We can all too easily *assume* we know what Jesus wants from us, without checking with him first. And when that happens, we end up being *eccentric* Christians - off-centred, pulled away from the one thing that really matters to *Jesus* - *distracted*, just as Martha was. And when we become eccentric, we become *worried and upset about many things* that don't really matter much to Jesus.

Fourthly, the 'main thing' is to be ...

- **Committed to the Future, Phil 3.13** rather than chained to the past. In **Phil 3.10-15**, Paul declares, *I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his*

*sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it; but one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. All of us who are mature should take such a view of things.*

- It's a mark of maturity to be committed to the future rather than chained to the past. There are times when we need to forget what's behind us, forget what *has* been in order to focus on what's *yet* to be. We sometimes need to draw a line under what *has* happened in the past in our lives in order to lay hold of the good things God still has in store for us.
- We can, and should, thank God for aspects of our past. But we mustn't live in the past, dwell in the past, or cling to the past. We need to let go of the past in order to take hold of the future. For us Christians, the best is always in front of us, not behind us. So, we mustn't allow the past to act as a ball and chain around our ankle, holding us back from laying hold of God's future for us.

## Church Meeting Update

### Financial update

- At our recent Church Members' Meeting, we shared news that we had applied for a **Home Mission grant** of £3,000 for the current year. We were therefore delighted to be able to announce to the Church ten days later that our application had been successful!
- We agreed at the Church Members' Meeting to apply for a grant of £5,000 for 2010.
- Please continue to pray for our financial situation. We have set a 'realistic' target of **£420 a week** for our offerings this year, in line with the level of giving towards the end of last year. But this would leave us with a considerable shortfall over the year. So, it would be good if we well exceeded this figure; our 2007 level of giving was £461 per week.

### American Youth Interims

- Unfortunately, Travis and Hannah Shelburne have been refused visas to come and join us here in the UK. New immigration legislation means that they now require the support of a Register Sponsoring Agency for any future visa applications.
- It was proposed and agreed at the Church Members' Meeting we explore the possibility of *Gateshead International Ministries* becoming the RSA for all

Americans Interims working in the UK, through Chuck McComb's American Interim Pastors Ministries organisation, as GIM is already a Registered Charity.

- If this proved to be impractical, DRBC would act as the RSA for DRBC Interims only. It was reported that the Shelburne's are still keen to work in DRBC for a full 12 months.
- Please pray that this might be possible and that wisdom would be given to those involved in exploring the possibility of GIM becoming an RSA.

### Small Group programme

- The practical arrangements were outlined for this term's programme of Small Groups. We will be looking at our Lord's letters to the seven churches of Revelation 2-3 under the overall theme *Hear what the Spirit has to say to the Churches*. Study outlines are now available.
- We will be running one group on Monday evenings (7.30pm at the Wilson's home), one group on Wednesday evenings (7.30pm at Chris Thompson's home), and one group at the Church around Wednesday lunchtimes (12 noon – 2.00pm).
- It would be good if as many people as possible joined in these groups to explore what it means to be a Spirit-led Church – so, please sign up for them!

### Outreach events

- The Pastor outlined some of the special events that had taken place during 2008 and invited suggestions for 2009. A number of ideas were mentioned and remitted to the deacons for further consideration.

### BMS project

We launched this year's BMS World Mission project at a midweek meeting towards the end of last month. We will be raising funds to buy seed for farmers in Bangladesh whose crops were destroyed by the terrible floods of 2008. Please see Wanda Stockdale for further details about this project. Our target is to raise £250 by the end of July.

**Sympathy:** we extend our deepest sympathy to Ray Ward, and to his son Chris and daughter-in-law Juliet, following the delivery of their stillborn child, Isaac, last month. Please remember the family in your prayers over the coming weeks and months.

David Hunt