

“In Moderation”

11/26/06

Theme: Are Our Lives Over-Stuffed? In What Areas Do We Need to Scale Back the Excess?

Mark 11:22-25 *The Message*

Jesus was matter of fact: “Embrace this “God-life. Really embrace it, and nothing will be too much for you

That’s why I urge you to pray for absolutely everything, ranging from small to large. Include everything as you “embrace this God-life” . . .

Rob French

Good morning! With a show of hands, how many of you had something to eat for dinner, Thursday, Thanksgiving Day? Okay. Now with your other hand, raise it up in the air if you had too much to eat! A little uncomfortable, isn't it, as it was that afternoon. We all seem to get lulled into the fact that the food looks so great and as we are taking more and more on our plate and going for seconds and thirds, it wasn't until later that afternoon that we realized we had had too much. Now another question. With a show of hands, one hand up, how many of you have things going on in your life that you are doing and responsible for? Now with the other hand, how many of you have too many things going on in your life that you are responsible for or accountable for or need to do? Well, that's what we are going to talk about this morning. Are Our Lives Over-Stuffed? Are there ways that we can deal with the draws on our time better.

First of all, I have to tell you how I was given this opportunity to do the message. Since this past August, some of you may have noticed that I haven't been involved with the prayer at the services here. I had pretty much taken myself out of the prayer schedule because Sandi and I were not going to be around for most of the Sundays and many of the Tuesdays for preparation with the worship team. The reason is our son, R.J., is a Sophomore at Case Western University in Cleveland and he has been playing soccer for them, Freshman year and this year. Sandi and I are now “empty nesters” and we made it a priority to go to all of his soccer games this season and support him and his teammates. There are 21 regular season games that the team plays the good news is that half of those are at home . . . the rest of the news is that home is in Cleveland, 332 miles away. Needless to say, there is some travel and time involved in chasing this team around. The 7 other teams in their conference are University of Rochester, NYU, Brandise in Boston, Emory, University of Chicago, Washington University in St. Louis and Carnegie Mellon in Pittsburgh. So, last year and this year, our travels have given us the opportunity to see these cities and these universities. Now most of these games are played on the weekends, but some are also

played during the week. Needless to say the time spent both traveling as well as before and after the game with RJ and others impacts an already busy life and even makes it a little frantic at times.

Well anyway about 4 weeks ago, I was able to make a worship team meeting and put together a new prayer schedule for the rest of this year and part of next year. The schedule had me set up to do the prayer on this Sunday. And when I gave Linda her copy of it, she said “oh, you're here the Sunday after Thanksgiving?” I said, “Yeah, I'll be able to do the prayer.” And she said “Would you like to do the message?” And I said, “Sure, what's it about?” And then she told me . . . “Are our lives over-stuffed? Do we need to be cutting back on some of the excess?” I just looked at her and she looked at me with a grin and I said, “you're asking me to talk about that?!” So frankly, I'm as interested as you are to find out what the rest of this message is about. I believe that Sandi and I have been given many gifts and talents from God as well as opportunities to share them and I think we have been blessed with active and full lives. But, let me share with you some of my thoughts and things that I've come to realize.

In the Bible scripture for today Jesus says that we should, *“Embrace this God-life, really embrace it! And nothing will be too much for you!”* I think that includes the stuff and activities we have going on in our lives. There are days when it might seem like it's just too much and some of the nights when you go to bed, you ask yourself, ‘how did I ever do that and how am I ever going to do even more tomorrow?’ It's in that same scripture that Jesus goes on to tell us *“That's why I urge you to pray for absolutely everything, ranging from small to large. Include everything as you “embrace this God-life”* and that's what we can do we can turn to God through prayer when we lay down to sleep at night and when we wake up in the morning. But what do we do during the day when we're not turning to God for prayer and we're on our own and have to make some decisions. I believe if we establish priorities, we can have a basis for making decisions as to what things we should do at any one point in time.

Now what are these priorities and how do we establish them? God should be at the center of those priorities that we set up. I went to a seminar once and the speaker gave this illustration on priorities. Now what I have here is a glass container that represents our lives. These rocks over here represent those things that we're doing with our lives, activities that we are involved with on a day-to-day basis. You can see we have some large rocks, some medium rocks and some pebbles. Often we are faced with a task of trying to get these and sometimes more into this vessel of our lives.

How do we do it? Well, you can just scoop them up and start dumping them in, but I think what you'll find is that they don't all fit and it's uncomfortable and some may spill out. Well, as some of you know, I'm an engineer and we always approach challenges like this with "of course, you can get everything in there, but let's figure out how we are going to do it." Now if we start taking the larger rocks and putting them in first and then add some of the medium sized rocks and then finally the pebbles, I think we're going to find that all things will fit and be more stable. But how do we know which rocks to put in first. That's where priorities come in. And that's where we turn to God to find out what those priorities are. To me if there is a God-priority in our life, there's plenty of room. These are the "rocks" we need to start with. In this fall season, going to those spending time with and supporting R.J., his teammates and his girlfriend, meant going to those soccer games. Now granted we took it up a notch but I believe that this was a God-oriented priority in our lives. Our family is very important to Sandi and me and we have dedicated a significant portion of our time and energy to providing a loving Christian environment for our kids to grow up in. I believe that our children are truly gifts from God and as they grow older I enjoy watching God's involvement in their lives and the lives of others. I believe the sooner we can make this decision process of assigning God-priorities more automatic in our lives, the easier they will be.

The core values for our company have an acronym of GOPI, and that stands for God, Other People and Integrity. Everyday I see the actions of the people I work with reflect these values. This shows up in the comments they make to other people they work with, or to our clients or in the reports we send out. It's there. I am truly honored to be a part of that. When I spoke with Sandi about how to address this subject and if there were any real-life situations that occurred in our lives that I could share with you and not come across as too much of a goof, she recalled a time when R.J. and Sandy were really young. We used to call them the twins because, although they are 2 ½ years apart, they were always together and little Sandy would drag R.J. all over the place and they were pretty intense. With Sandi being at home with the kids all the time, it was unbelievably draining. You talk about a full and active schedule . . . kids will do that to you. To her relief there was one day during the week that she was able to set up a lunch with one of her friends who also had kids about the same age as ours. She was really looking forward to it, she had lined someone up to watch the kids and was going to have grown-up, adult conversation for an hour and eat real food without having something thrown at her from the high chair. This was also a time when we had just started our company and we were just beginning to move forward and I also had a lunch meeting set up with a pretty successful developer to discuss doing some work with him in the future. I called her about 11:00 a.m. that morning to see how Sandi's day was going and she

mentioned that her friend had to cancel lunch because something had come up. Although she didn't say it, I could hear the disappointment in her voice and I knew how much this meant to her and I was immediately faced with making a decision. Should I cancel the lunch that I had, and maybe lose some work in the future or go to lunch with Sandi? It was at that time that I looked at priorities and truly put God and Jesus' teachings in the forefront to answer the question "what should I be doing?" And frankly, when you do that, the decision is easy! When I called to reschedule with the developer with an explanation, I learned that his values were the same as ours and there was total understanding and accord. We ended up doing a bunch of work for him later and we became closer. But more importantly in my heart I know that the God centered priority was the right decision.

So how do we change our lives over night? We don't. But I believe it's when we start turning to God to help us evaluate which things are important in life and which opportunities we should pursue and which ones we should let pass us by. It's then that the insignificant activities that fill a lot of our lives will just fall away. Not only will our level of fulfillment increase but we'll also find out that new opportunities will arise, opportunities that will give us a chance to use the gifts and talents that God has loaned to us for this brief time that we are here on earth. And that when we share our time and those talents with others, it's as good as it gets!

CLOSING

As you leave here this morning, Priority #1, pick up a rock as you leave. Priority #2, hang on to that rock and look at it as you go through your day and try to remember that when we put God's priorities first, our lives will be better.