

GOALS FOR OUR GENERATION

1. Goals regarding spiritual growth, the legacy we leave to the next generation:
 - A. Psalm 138:2 is the legacy that the Lord left to us in doctrine.
 - B. Commandments to grow in grace and knowledge, Ephesians 4:11-16; 2 Peter 3:18.
 - C. Ephesians 5:18, commanded to be filled with the Holy Spirit so that the purpose of God can be achieved in time in our lives.
 - D. Will of God is to glorify Christ in all things that we do and to attain the mind of Christ in all things:
 - 1) Prayer, Matthew 6, actual worship and praise.
 - 2) Giving, on a grace basis, not what is convenient but what is necessary to get the job done, 2 Corinthians 8-9.
 - 3) Communion, Acts 2:42, 1 Corinthians 11:23-31.
 - 4) Fellowship, Acts 2:42.
 - 5) Doctrine, Acts 2:42, the epistles, 1 Timothy 3:16; 2:15; Hebrews 4:12.
 - E. Spiritual growth means attitude changes towards legalism, evil, ritualistic living, apathy, religion, and personal self-interest.
 - 1) Setting aside anger, bitterness, jealousy, so that doctrine can change your personality for the Lord.
 - 2) Setting aside personal interest so that you will carry your own burden.
 - F. When there is a lack of any of the above then a church may exist but it does Not expand in understanding, truth, and occupation with Christ.
 - 1) Legalistic like the Galatians.
 - 2) Ritualistic and lascivious like the Corinthians.

- 3) Emotional like the Corinthians.
 - 4) Dry and theological like the seven churches of Asia of Revelation, “lost their first love”.
2. Goals regarding the use of spiritual commitment and growth in the area of expanding buildings, building new church facilities.
- A. Local church is the pillar and ground for truth, 1 Timothy 3:16.
- 1) This means that the teaching of truth is to come from the local church, as the source of all doctrine.
 - 2) God has given spiritual gifts to make sure this is accomplished, 1 Corinthians 12.
 - 3) As the believer grows spiritually his gift enables him to accept responsibilities, fulfill needs, and serve other believers.
 - 4) All gifts are important before the Lord and each has a contribution to make. Some make it with a hammer and nail, others through teaching, but there has to be some type of activity on the part of all believers to make a church progress. Prayer and giving are other areas of activity.
 - 5) The local church is a team of believers all headed in the same direction. When we pull together there is progress; when we fight or do nothing then we go nowhere and frustration sets in.
 - 6) James 4:1-6 points out that if we are selfish with our details of life and money then there will only be fights, quarrels in the church and no one advances.

3. Books of Ezra and Nehemiah

- A. Ezra 1-6, return of the Jews from Babylon under Cyrus; restoration of the temple and worship of God at Jerusalem.
- B. Ezra 7-10, return of Ezra, the scribe, from Babylon to Jerusalem and his entry upon his official duties there.
- C. Captivity 605-536 BC.

538 BC Cyrus permits Jews to return to Babylon.

536 BC 49,897 return from Babylon to Jerusalem.

536 BC altar built.

535 BC temple begun, but stopped.

535-520 BC economic and political struggle

520 BC ministry of Haggai

520-515 BC ministry of Zechariah.

515 BC Temple completed

458 BC Ezra returns

445 BC Nehemiah rebuilds walls of Jerusalem

D. There are major points to consider.

- 1) Decree of Cyrus 1:1-11, leadership stirred.
- 2) People numbered, 2:1-70, people, congregation told.
- 3) Construction of temple, 3:1-13, work began.
- 4) Opposition, 4:1-24, opposition.
- 5) Construction renewed, 5:1-6:12, work resumed.
- 6) Temple completed, 6:13-22, work completed.
- 7) Return of Ezra, 7:1-8:36, Ezra.
- 9) Revival of people, 9:1-10:44, doctrinal revival, growth, blessing.

E. Considerations for a new building and upkeep of present facilities.

- 1) Original church was founded upon religious freedom and the right to pursue the gospel.
- 2) Generations before us have held onto this foundation and built up people in the faith for over 170 years.
- 3) Now it is our turn to continue promoting doctrine in our generation.
- 4) To promote doctrine also means to apply it in a visible means such as outreach to the poor, aiding widows and orphans, helping one another, and keeping up our property so it retains its value.

- 5) They gave it to us, someone paid for it in the past, now it is our turn to pay for the next generation to have a place to meet and study God's Word in a comfortable building, and to give the Pastor and wife a place to live.
- 6) Keeping up the Temple in the Old Testament.
 1. In the Old Testament God was exact on what He expected the people to do with the temple upkeep.
 2. We are not under Law but we can glean some principles from their activities.
 3. Church buildings are not the temple, clearly, for the body of the believer is the temple of the Holy Spirit in the Church age, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20.

4. Principles from Ezra:

- A. Leadership is stirred and recognizes the needs of a congregation spiritually and materially. Ezra 1:1, Cyrus was a believer.
- B. The people bore the responsibility of building the temple and then supporting it with gifts and offerings, Ezra 1:3-4.
 - 1) It is the responsibility of all believers that attend that local church to aid the ministry in some way.
 - 2) Only a few may be able to handle a hammer, but all can pray and give offerings to make sure the work is completed.
- C. God has to stir up the people to work or it will never be completed. Doctrinal teaching plants the seeds in the souls of believers so that the Holy Spirit will convict the people of the need to work, Ezra 1:5. Result is that giving occurs when God convicts and people respond, Ezra 1:6. Notice that all the people were working, many were giving to support those who were.
- D. Ezra 2:6-9, note that the people gave according to their ability, some gave more than others for they had more. Under grace giving our giving supports the salaries, lights, heat, tapes, tracts, and publications, plus benevolences, outreach material.

5.

- 1) Grace giving principles:
 - a) Giving is a mental attitude of grace and inner happiness rather than the amount donated, 2 Corinthians 8:2.
 - b) Giving must be an expression of free will apart from human coercion, emotional revolt or legalistic pressure, verse 3.
 - c) Giving is a privilege associated with grace, verse 4.
 - d) Giving is a soul activity, the amount is not emphasized, verse 5.
 - e) Giving is an extension of the daily function of GAP, verse 7.
 - f) Giving depends upon grace orientation, and grace orientation Depends upon doctrine, verse 9.
 - g) Money given in the Lord's work must be properly administered, verse 19.
 - h) Rebound and the filling of the Holy Spirit stimulates giving with proper motivation, 2 Corinthians 9:2.
 - i) Giving should never be associated with embarrassment or pressure, 9:4.
 - j) Grace giving guarantees blessing. Believer gives self first and then money, 9:6.
 - k) Giving is a motivation from doctrine, verse 7.
 - l) In grace giving God provides the motivation, and the money, 9:8. God makes sure the believer prospers so he can give.
 - m) Grace giving experiences grace multiplication rather than grace addition, verse 10. Money given is multiplied by the Lord.
 - n) Emotional giving is not grace giving because emotional giving is not rapport giving. Grace giving is divine good based on doctrinal motivation rather than human good based on emotional motivation, verse 13.

- o) The believer that is enslaved to his money and details of life will not participate in grace giving, Ecclesiastes 5:10-6:2; 1 Timothy 6:6-12, 17-19.
- p) Money abused can create lust, emotional revolt of the soul, Acts 5:1-10; James 4:15-5:6. Selfishness—spending money on self alone creates lust.

PRINCIPLES OF GOD MULTIPLYING MONEY: 2 Corinthians 9:10 ff.

1. God adds or supplies money for your survival, for the needs of your life.
2. There will be times when you may have excess money which you will give under proper spiritual conditions (filling of the Holy Spirit).
3. When you give under those conditions then the money is multiplied. Money given in carnality is not multiplied, rather, it is not blessed by God.
4. God does multiply money that is kept from the offering selfishly for some non-need of life, pleasure, luxury.
5. When money is given under grace principles then it is divine good and God multiplies it as others are sparked to give in the same manner. Further multiplication is grace virtue and increased capacity for life, Proverbs 11:24-25; 2 Corinthians 9:11.
6. On the materialistic side of life we have the addition of money to our lives through working, inheritance, gifts and it is multiplied through divine good, grace virtue and capacity for life.
7. Verse 11, “generosity of mind,” those who receive this money are thankful to God. We all have deficiencies and God provides others with abundance so they can fill our deficiencies.
 - A. When someone else gives an offering, or money to someone with a need, then they thank God for it and glorify Him.
 - B. Others have needs in prayer so we pray for a missionary and the missionary’s needs are met in some way.

8. Therefore, grace giving starts a chain reaction that glorifies God. Grace in giving multiplies in supplying the deficiencies of other believers and producing thanksgiving, which is a grace exercise.
9. Verses 13-15 recognition of grace authority. Giving is a test when you give to something you do not like. Corinthians, as Gentiles, were giving for the comfort of Jews in Jerusalem.

PRINCIPLE: Grace giving demands grace authority, and grace authority is found in the gospel.

PRINCIPLE: Grace giving is not emotional giving, not guilt giving, not having to be made remorseful to give. It is giving because of your appreciation of Jesus Christ in your life, plus the desire to see His work continue in the local church.

10. Ezra 3:1, the people united behind the project in order to start it. Unity of the local church congregation to accomplish its goal. There will be those who are unwilling to help, unwilling to be optimistic, but the work will be completed anyway.
11. The altar where the offerings and sacrifices were to be offered was built first. The place where the teaching of doctrine is should be first considered. Church first, then other buildings. 3:2.
12. Doctrinal instruction motivates the faith-rest life so that the people will begin and continue their work in spite of opposition, 3:3-6. There was celebration of the buildings and freedom.
13. 3:7, they hired professional people to accomplish their work and paid them. The Levites over 20 years of age oversaw the work of the temple.
3:8, Levites were the bosses and oversaw the work.
14. 3:10-13, the groundbreaking and laying of the foundation was celebrated recognizing God's grace.
15. 4:1, there will be opposition to any project done by believers due to angelic conflict stirring in the area. They want to help or obligate you to their funds but the Jews refused the help of unbelievers, verse 3.
 - A. Verses 4-5, they were discouraged by counselors hired to frustrate the leadership. Cost overruns, union problems, unavailable materials,

economic problems, political problems, all the obstacles that will stop the work of the Lord.

16. 4:7-8, the workers followed the orders and laws of the land, and the governments they were under in obtaining materials. You do not break building codes safety codes, cut corners, or other things to cut costs. This does not honor the Lord.
 - A. Verses 8-9, spiritual leadership oversaw the construction. Pastor and deacons.
 - C. Verses 9-24, Government agencies and state agencies began to get into the act and send letters to national government to stop the work on the buildings for some reason. Work was stopped 14 years through legal actions, sent in the national guard to stop it.
17. 5:1, spiritual revival by visiting communicators prompted the people to continue the work of the Lord in spite of the opposition. Leadership ordered their men back to work in spite of the outstanding orders from the king of Persia, and the state government.
 - A. 5:3 ff, investigated by the opposition.
 - B. 5:5, they had the power to stop them but God was honoring their positive response to doctrine so He overrode the opposition.
 - C. 5:6-17, they send a letter to the government to see what they want done about it.
18. 6:1, Government is now under new leadership, King Dairus, and he gives a complete victory to the Jews. The enemies even end up paying for the temple from their own pockets.
19. 6:14-15, the Jews completed the task they had set out to do 14 years before through the grace of God. God has to intervene in history and set up a positive volition test for the people through teaching of Haggai and Zechariah, have them prove their positive volition. Then God removed all barriers to building the temple.

PRINCIPLE: Complete what you start.

20. 6:16-22, the building is to be dedicated with great joy in special services of prayer, Bible study, communion, thanksgiving to the Lord upon its completion.

21. Ezra 7:6-10, God brought a man into the land to teach Bible doctrine and administer the rituals of the Law to the people.

A. Under the reign of Artaxerxes, king of Persia, there was much blessing for the Jews. Read 7:23-24 to see.