Faith Aflame: 360 Degrees

John the Baptist: A Called Leader

Opening Prayer

Introduction

In his book, *Ordering Your Private World*, Gordon MacDonald cites the book *A Casket of Cameos*, by F. W. Boreham. In that book Boreham reflected on the faith of Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom. Boreham wrote about a dream Tom had. "He dreamed that he was back again, and that little Eva was reading to him from the Bible as of old. He could hear her voice: 'When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; for I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, Thy Savior.'" The dream and its powerful message put Tom's heart at rest. Soon after, however, Tom was beaten severely by a sadistic master, Simon Legree. Boreham continues, "A little later, poor Tom was writhing under the cruel lash of his new owner. 'But,' says Mrs. Stowe, 'the blows fell only upon the outer man, and not, as before, on the heart.'" (pages 57-58)

- What is the difference between the inner person and the outer person?

- How does one go about strengthening the inner person?

MacDonald continues, "It is this quality—the quality of an inner-directed person—for which we seek when we compare driven persons and called persons. Driven people often project a bravado of confidence as they forge ahead with their achievement-oriented life plan. But often, at the moment when it is least expected, adversities and obstructions conspire, and there can be personal collapse. Called people, on the other had, possess strength from within, a quality of perseverance and power that are impervious to the blows from without." (page 58)

- Where does this inner strength come from?
  - Titus 3:5
  - Philippians 1:6
  - 1 Peter 1:5

- What does it mean to be called?
  - 2 Thessalonians 2:13-15
  - John 15:15
  - 2 Peter 1:3

One of the people MacDonald identifies as possessing this God given strength from within is John the Baptist.

Read **John 3:27-30**.

What are some characteristics of leaders who are called?

A Stewardship Prayer

"We Give Thee But Thine Own"

1. We give Thee but Thine own, Whate'er the gift may be; All that we have is Thine alone, A trust, O Lord, from Thee.

2. May we Thy bounties thus As stewards true receive And gladly, as Thou blessest us, To Thee our first-fruits give!

6. And we believe Thy Word, Though dim our faith may be: Whate'er for Thine we do, O Lord, We do it unto Thee.

--William W. How, 1823-1897. Vs: 1, 2, and 6

Called leaders understand that they are stewards not owners.

One of the first things a person who is called realizes is that he/she is a steward of what God gives. John says, "*A man can receive only what is given him from heaven*."

In verse 26 John's disciples report to him that the crowds who had gathered to hear John were now going to Jesus. A driven leader would have had great difficulty with that, John did not. John knew that the crowds were never his to begin with. "The task of a steward," says MacDonald, "is simply to properly manage something on behalf of the owner until the owner comes to take it back....John's view of stewardship presents us with an important contemporary principle. For his crowds may be our careers, our assets, our natural and spiritual gifts, our health. So—and think before answering!—are these things owned, or merely managed in the name of the One who gave them?" (pages 61-62)

- Do you see yourself as *primarily* an owner or as a steward (manager) when it comes to the things MacDonald mentioned above?

- What difference does it make whether you see yourself as an owner or as a steward?

Called leaders know who they are.

There is a great deal of identity confusion in our world today. MacDonald writes, "(Driven people) can have an increasing inability to separate role from person. What they *do* is indistinguishable from who they *are*. That is why people who have wielded great power and enjoyed positions of privilege find it very difficult to give them up, and will often fight to the death to retain what they've had. It is why retirement is difficult for more than a few men and women." (page 62)

- What in John 3:27-30 indicates that John the Baptist understood his identity?

- What makes this identity issue so hard for people today?

- What is your identity? (Who are you in Christ?)

Called leaders know why they are here.

A magazine carried the story of a young man described as the "biggest box office star of his generation." He has fame and fortune. Yet he is confused about life. In the article he is quoted as saying, "Sometimes I feel I'm living a meaningless life and I get frightened...What is life about? I don't know."

Unfortunately, he is not alone in his confusion. There are many in every age bracket who feel the same way this young actor feels. John the Baptist was not confused about His purpose.

- What was John the Baptist's purpose in life?

- According to John 3 what is the result of knowing your purpose in life?

- What is your purpose? (What has God given you to do?)

Closing Prayer

Adoration...
Confession...
Thanksgiving...
Supplication....

Praise...
Remember...
Ask...
Yield...

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