

Chapter 39

Summing It Up

Jesus was willing to leave a very posh place and come to live homeless and poor. He left me a fantastic example of how to do the work He has prepared for me. His methods work. His servant-leadership still amazes me every time in every detail. His main thing was that He loved people and He wasn't afraid to spend time and energy showing it. He focused on His purpose, and made daily decisions based on that purpose. He understood the need for much prayer and made aloneness with the Father a priority.

Driving back eleven hours from a district meeting in South Dakota, Jonathan Buttram, a staff sLi student, picked my brain at length until finally he asked, "So what's the bottom line? What is most important?" I was not prepared with a quick answer. There is no quick answer. After having had some time to mull over the question, I believe there are some basic principles we have talked about over and over in these pages.

Our job is the one Jesus gave us. Our job description should look like His. He was never willing to leave people where they found Him; He always desired them to move higher. He did not settle for partial solutions. He was into relief of hunger for food or thirst for water, but incorporated the solution of a much greater need.

Let us not be satisfied with minimal ministry. Let us look for ways to lead people to abundant living both here and for the hereafter. I have watched many clients go through the motions, wanting to change their lives on their own. My job was to offer them real change through Jesus. Discipling includes giving the truth that will both empower and protect them.

My own focus in working with clients who had experienced the life-change of salvation was to focus on those areas that seemed to be the most neglected. I believe in the years of working at the mission, I have observed two behaviors that show up repeatedly in those who succeed in living their newfound life. If somehow we can teach them the necessity for both gratitude and personal honesty as life patterns, we have given them a huge advantage to flourishing in their earth-life. I have grieved often for those who missed these two foundational practices and had to wander in the desert more years.

What's the bottom line to being able to stay the course of Rescue Mission work? I know I can only succeed when I know absolutely that God is the One in charge, not me. It is the temptation of the ages. I do not take credit when good things happen, so I do not shoulder the world when the results are not as I wished. I can go to work every day knowing the truth that "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" Romans 8:1.

When I have invested time in a person who slips back into his or her old lifestyle, I remind myself it was never "my time" anyway. Since I belong to God, my time belongs to Him, and God is not finished with the person yet. I was privileged to be mentored for many years by Maurice Vanderberg, Executive

Director of City Union Mission for 37 years, and son-in-law of the founder. He taught me much, but his one indelible statement that I repeated each time a client went AWOL was and still is,

“The last chapter’s not written yet” - Maurice Vanderberg

And so it is with this book. The last chapter is not written yet. Take the ideas presented here and build on them in the ministry God gives you, staying grateful for His calling you and giving you an opportunity to be His representative to people He cares about deeply.

“I thank Christ Jesus our Lord,
who has given me strength,
that He considered me trustworthy,
appointing me to His service.”

1 Timothy 1:12(NIV)