

Jentezen Franklin: Every Christian's No. 1 Responsibility

Life is busy. You may have heard that the key to managing it all is to prioritize and put first things first. It seems to be sound enough advice, but sometimes even your best attempt at doing so may still leave you wondering, "What is my No. 1 responsibility?"

The Charge

1 Kings 20:39 says, "As the king passed by, he cried to the king and said, 'Your servant went out into the midst of the battle, and a man turned aside and brought a man to me and said, "Keep this man, and if by any means he goes missing, then your life shall be given for his life, or else you shall pay a talent of silver." As your servant was busy here and there, he disappeared.'"

The No. 1 responsibility of every man is to guard "this man." In this context, the word "guard" means to hedge in with thorns. You are to hedge him in with thorns, put perimeters and boundaries around him, and make sure he does not escape. But who is this captured man and why is it so important that he be guarded?

- The Captured Man: "This man" represents your old nature, a prisoner of the ongoing war between flesh and spirit. You are to guard who you are. You are to guard your heart with all diligence. You are to keep this man, keep him from the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life by hedging him in with healthy boundaries and biblical standards.
- The Threat: Your No. 1 responsibility is to guard this

man—because he represents the flesh or carnal nature. The Spirit gives us desires that are opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting against each other so you are not free to carry out your best intentions. It's a struggle as old as time itself.

If you do not guard “this man” and he escapes, you cannot win your children, influence your spouse or have a Godly impact on anyone else. If you lose “this man,” eventually, you'll lose yourself.

The Escape

And then, the unthinkable happened. This man escaped. It was not a huge dramatic jailbreak, but a very gradual drift, a few baby steps past the boundary lines at a time. In fact, when questioned about the escapee, the soldier's only explanation was: “While your servant was busy here and there, this man disappeared” (1 Kings 20:40). Now, to be fair, this soldier was not a bad man, nor was he irresponsible or lazy. On the contrary, he was probably very responsible. He was just distracted. And that is how the enemy works in your life; a little distraction here, a couple missed Sundays at church there, and a gradual neglect of prayer and reading God's Word. Mix in a bit of over-commitment with a little dabbling in sin, and before you know it, this man has escaped. You've soon drifted far from God, far from the character and anointing you once had in Christ. And the king said to the soldier, “So shall your judgment be. You have decided it.” While the soldier's distraction sealed his fate, it is not too late for you.

4 Tips for Guarding This Man

How do you keep “this man” from escaping, or recapture him once he has escaped? It will take:

1. Discipline: You must set biblical boundaries for this man. Keep your mind, body, eyes, ears, and behavior under the authority of the Holy Spirit. Pray and fast regularly, stay in God's Word and stay in church.
2. Determination: You must get back up again, determined to take an aggressive stand against sin. It takes saying to yourself: "No, I am better than that. I may have fallen but I am getting back up."
3. Living for God in the "in between" times: Anybody can live for God during the times when God is moving mightily. But most of your life is spent in the "in between" times. Those are the times when you are working, taking care of your family, paying bills, doing everyday things. These are the times you tend to be most easily distracted, making it even more crucial to guard this man.
4. Remember the Sabbath: To guard this man, you must guard the Sabbath and keep this man in church. Don't be so busy doing life, that the Sabbath becomes just another day, a day to mow the lawn, to take the kids to soccer practice, etc. If you do not guard this man and bring your family to church, you lose this man. There is safety in Godly accountability.

Conclusion

Weakness cannot produce strength. Only strength can produce strength. You may have been busy here and there, but now is the time to wake up the mighty man, to take a stand for righteousness, and to guard "this man." The psalmist says it best: "I have set the Lord always before me; because He is at my right hand, I will not be moved" (Psalm 16:8). {eo}

Pastor Jentezen Franklin is the Senior Pastor of Free Chapel, a multi-campus church. Each week his television program *Kingdom Connection* is broadcast on major networks all over the world. A *New York Times* best-selling author, Jentezen has

*written eight books including his latest, Love Like You've
Never Been Hurt.*