

For Me, Passing on Godly Life Principles is a Cherished Gift

One of the things I enjoy is pouring into the lives of others. Call it mentoring, coaching or serving, it gives me a lot of pleasure. Plus, it gives me a feeling of giving back when so many helped me along the way.

Six months ago, I started a class for 14 men who live in my area. I titled it, "Moving to the Next Level." We met once a month for 6 months, and Tuesday was the final gathering. I shared with them materials that have helped me and spoke from my own experience. Some told me they learned a lot from the classes. So I decided to share a few concepts here, hoping it will add value to your life.

My actual goal wasn't for them to learn "a lot." My goal was to share how incremental changes can become huge if done the right way at the right time. I know from personal experience and observing life for more than six decades that most people find themselves in ruts and make very few positive life changes until it's almost too late. It's like the old joke where the old man says, "If I had known I was going to live this long, I would have taken better care of my body."

My newsletter often deals with weighty issues. Other times I share what's going on in my life. Reading this will hopefully help you and give you a glimpse into my perspective on life.

Here is the "Cliff Notes" version of our six sessions:

- **Setting goals.** I told the men the single biggest thing they can do to move forward is to learn to set goals. I encouraged them to set three goals for the next six months that they would not have set themselves had I not

encouraged them to do so. Most of the men achieved the goals and, for the ones who didn't, it was a good wake-up call to realize they need to work harder to make it happen. One man said he set a goal only to have it lead into something more substantial. I told them their goals should be specific and measurable.

- **Managing time.** Interestingly, I got more positive feedback on my advice to "Focus on Five" things they must do every day. I picked this concept up from a mentor of mine! I follow this advice myself. Try it. Do I do it perfectly? Of course not. When I don't accomplish one of the five, it shows me that I'm procrastinating. I also told them to plan out their entire week on Sunday, including what they do before work, after work and on weekends. Some of the men found this very helpful. One professional in the class told me he planned his workday but never thought about planning how to spend his personal time. By following a plan, he discovered he had more time at home to do the things that meant a lot to him.
- **Improving finances.** I told the group that most of us have a "governor" on our ability to earn, much like a governor on a school bus that will let it go only so fast. Our governor is that it's difficult to make more than 10 percent more than your father did, factoring in inflation. That realization alone is an eye-opener. I also said don't just budget for expenses; budget for income. For example, if you aspire to live at a certain level, budget what you NEED to be making over the next five years so you can work to earn that much! This may not work for everyone, but most can change jobs, come up with creative ideas to earn, or just learn to be more valuable where they work, which results in increased income. I also discussed principles of giving to the Lord and how I've learned as a businessman to build an organization, even though I wasn't educated in business.
- **A better marriage.** When I mentioned to my wife of 43

years I was teaching on marriage, she joked, "I hope you don't tell them we have a perfect marriage!" I said I wouldn't, but I will tell them I have a perfect wife! I've learned the adage, "happy wife, happy life." Besides sharing a few common-sense suggestions, we focused on principles in Ephesians 5:22-33 and 1 Peter 3 that demonstrate biblical qualities in marriage. I encouraged the men to talk it over with their wives and to see how they can develop the character taught in the Scriptures.

- **Better health.** In most classes, I trimmed the lesson to one concept that could help to improve their lives. For health and fitness, that concept is to drink enough water and get enough sleep. Without enough water or sleep, no amount of exercise or vitamins will compensate. I also encouraged them to begin taking care of themselves physically before their first heart attack or developing diabetes. To show them an old guy can stay in shape, I challenged them to beat me in pullups and pushups! (Because I'd been practicing, I won.)
- **More faith.** I shared concepts about faith that I had written about where you do everything by faith. Without faith, it is impossible to please God. The truly handicapped man is not someone who cannot use his limbs, but someone who doesn't know how to use faith to move mountains. I also talked about how I've developed the discipline of a daily quiet time to study the Bible and journal. As we wrapped up our final class, I reminded the men that it profits them nothing to gain the whole world and lose their own soul (see Matthew 16:26). I played the video of TobyMac that reminds us of this more than any song I know. Interestingly, some of the men said they were familiar with the song and enjoyed the music, but had never let the lyrics sink in. Here is the link for you to enjoy.

These points remind me of a plaque on the wall of my childhood

home that read, "Only one life, 'twill soon be past, only what's done for Christ will last!"

Others have taught better mentoring sessions than me. But this was my attempt to encourage this group of men to focus on making incremental improvements in the important things in life. Did you learn anything? Do you agree with my list? If so, leave comments below and share this with others.