

Pointers for Progress in 2017: 4 Things I Constantly Work On

“Meditate on these things; give yourself to them, that your progress may be known to everyone” (1 Tim. 4:15).

My greatest motivation in life is to live in such a way as to stand before God one day and hear Him say, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.” This is truly what keeps my conscience clear and unfeigned. I fall short sometimes, but I have learned to forgive myself and just keep on going. If your heart is pure, you can do the same.

As I’ve looked back and reflected often on my life in Christ, I realize that four things have been constant:

1. I have asked God for a heart that is quick to repent and quick to forgive. I work on that. Always. Sometimes I’ll ask myself, “Is there any one person in my life whom I could not face on the streets and extend a hug or a warm handshake? Is there anyone I would avoid by crossing the street opposite of where he was walking so I wouldn’t have to meet/greet him? Is there anyone with whom I could not stand to walk into a room and greet and engage in conversation?

If there is, then I may have unforgiveness or resentment in my heart toward someone. Make it right, because that thing will make you sick in body one day, and it will hinder your prayers.

2. Loving my wife. This is work. Every day—because she is so different than I am. Her needs are varied, and her temperament is so often contrary to mine. But we’ve grown together, and we understand each other so much better than when we first started. We know what each other will say and do beforehand in

almost any situation. Love has done that. As a man, I believe I am to love my wife first before she responds with submission and honor. Many men give their wives very little love to submit to and honor. This takes work. This takes an intimate knowledge of Christ's love.

3. Knowing God. This one should probably have been listed first, as it is the root of all the rest. I have learned much about my Father and about my Lord. I have learned some of His ways. One constant is that He is love and He is full of mercy. He does not see things as we often do. I have to stay open, meek and teachable to learn of Him. Remember, the Lord dwells with the lowly and humble and contrite heart.

I used to be a hard preacher. I'm still strong and endeavor to preach the uncompromising Word of God, but when I think of how patient, merciful and kind He has been toward me, I want to extend the same to others. I want to know God better. I want to know how He thinks and what makes Him tick. I want to know more of His tender heart for people, what pleases Him and what grieves Him. I want to learn to love as He does. I work on that continually, looking for Him in others, looking for Him in situations, listening to His heart and being taught from His Word and of His Spirit.

4. Staying full of the Spirit. This is a challenge in today's busy and hectic world. Keeping a song in your heart helps a lot. Hum, whistle and make a joyful noise unto the Lord. Pray and sing in other tongues much. This will launch you into a greater Spirit-filled life and help keep your spirit light as a feather. Life's burdens and stress don't stick to a full man. Cultivate praise and thanksgiving in your life, and you will find a new leisure in God that ministers great rest to your spirit. My little book on Prayer (*Prayer: The Language of the Spirit*), which is a favorite of many people, will encourage you in this regard.

I hope these things are a blessing to you. {eo}