

Top Priority

What if we were to use everything God has given us to reach our world?



Scientists have long known that we use only a small portion of our intellectual capabilities. Consider what might happen if we used just a little bit more—or even all—of our latent mental abilities.

Civilization would be much further along than it is now. Technology, inventions, science and medicine all would be more advanced. Education would be improved. Music and art would be drastically enhanced and more enjoyable.

In fact, the quality of life we now have would make a quantum leap forward if we would just implement more—let alone all—of the mind's abilities. Just think of it.

What if ...?

The longer a person lives, the greater the possibility becomes of his being haunted by those words—What if? We begin to think, What if I would have done this or not done that? The good news is that for any follower of Jesus, What if? becomes more of a challenge than a regret.

I know of a congregation that was challenged by their pastor to do four simple things (for only a month) to consecrate themselves for the coming year. He asked them to pray every day, fast one day a week, tithe and bring one unsaved person a week to church.

That doesn't sound overly demanding. It's as if the church were being asked to act like Christians.

Nonetheless, the result was an unprecedented breakthrough in the life of this church. God's presence marked the services in an increased way. Financial breakthroughs came for ministry projects and proposed buildings. In addition, church members entered a phenomenal season of harvesting lost souls into God's kingdom.

Now, I'm not proposing a dogmatic four-step breakthrough plan. What's important is to understand what the Bible says: "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you" (James 4:8, NKJV). This church demonstrates the truth that with a little extra prayer and faith-based action on our part, God responds in a much greater way.

What if we were to use everything God has given us to reach our own part of the world with the gospel? What might happen?

Isaiah 58:10 offers an interesting answer: "If you extend your soul to the hungry and satisfy the afflicted soul, then your light shall dawn in the darkness, and your darkness shall be as the noonday."

"Extend" my soul? What could that mean?

How about stretching beyond a knee-jerk reaction to a sermon that calls us to reach others with the gospel? I have been amazed by the countless calls our office has received during the years to help churches become more outreach-oriented. Then, when help is offered, a minimal amount of effort occurs to foster what God places as top priority. It's easier to chase after the latest prophetic word than to actually reach out and work at taking Christ to others.

What if we actually stopped being obsessive-compulsive about our position in the current religious infrastructure and focused instead on changing our neighborhoods? What if we

didn't just say we are willing to do whatever it takes to reach the continuously mushrooming number of unchurched people in America but actually were to do whatever it takes?

Consider what God says about you if you truly extend your soul to reach others.

He will use you. He says: "Your light shall dawn in the darkness" (v. 10). If you will s-t-r-e-t-c-h yourself a little more, maybe even adjust your thinking and theology, you will experience the wondrous joy of making a difference where it counts.

He will meet your needs. He says: "Your darkness shall be as the noonday" (v. 10). The circumstances you face will fade away, or even disappear, if you reach beyond your own situation and bring Christ's love to others. My wife and I have practiced this truth a number of times and seen God's promises come true.

You can still rearrange some priorities in your life before this year ends so you can reach your community with the gospel more than ever before. What if you decide today to change, to make this the time in your life when you make a difference?

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