

26. A God-centered life

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Our young children can not think much further than playing, eating and sleeping. But for our teenagers, we know that their lives are centered around boys for girls and girls for boys, friends, cars and sports. Somewhere way down their priorities, there are house chores, parents, oh yeah, something like school. Those of you who are married and have young children at home, your priorities are completely different than what you had before you got married. Then the people like me and my wife who have no children at home, now that our faces are cleared from zits, but our minds are blurred, we too have different priorities. As the born-again believers of the Lord Jesus Christ, we must learn to think others, not just ourselves.

But some people choose not to think other than themselves no matter how old they are. In their mindsets, everything should evolve around them only. I am sure that you can quickly count a few of them in your fingers.

That is how the Israelites started their lives in Egypt for four hundred years under the cruel taskmasters' whips. One day, there was a man who once was a fugitive from a Pharaoh of Egypt came back and told them that God of Israel is going to take them out of their slavery and out of Egypt to the Promised Land where milk and honey flow.

After the ten horrible plaques that just about demolished the entire nation of Egypt, they were set free from the bondage and headed out to the Promised Land. Miracles after miracles of God, He protected them and provided for them for the first year. Yet, they turned away from Him and worshiped a dumb worthless idol. Because of His mercy and compassion for them, God didn't destroy the entire two million people in the wilderness.

After this incident, for a short time, they've learned to put God in the center of their lives. When they did that, all of sudden, they witnessed God's presence not only in the midst of their camp, but also in the lives.

A. HOW TO ARRANGE THE FURNITURE WITHIN THE TABERNACLE

Exodus 40:1-15 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 2 "On the first day of the first month you shall set up the tabernacle of the tent of meeting. 3 You shall put in it the ark of the Testimony, and partition off the ark with the veil. 4 You shall bring in the table and arrange the things that are to be set in order on it; and you shall bring in the lampstand and light its lamps. 5 You shall also set the altar of gold for the incense before the ark of the Testimony, and put up the screen for the door of the tabernacle. 6 Then you shall set the altar of the burnt offering before the door of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting. 7 And you shall set the laver between the tabernacle of meeting and the altar, and put water in it. 8 You shall set up the court all around, and hang up the screen at the court gate. 9 And you shall take the anointing oil, and anoint the tabernacle and all that is in it; and you shall hallow it and all its utensils, and it shall be holy. 10 You shall anoint the altar of the burnt offering and all its utensils, and consecrate the altar. The altar shall be most holy. 11 And you shall anoint the laver and its base, and consecrate it. 12 Then you shall bring Aaron and his sons to the door of the tabernacle of meeting and wash them

with water. 13 You shall put the holy garments on Aaron, and anoint him and consecrate him, that he may minister to Me as priest. 14 And you shall bring his sons and clothe them with tunics. 15 You shall anoint them, as you anointed their father, that they may minister to Me as priests; for their anointing shall surely be an everlasting priesthood throughout their generations.”

Israel had arrived at Mount Sinai three months after their exodus from Egypt, and it was now the first day of the second year of their journey. So nine months transpired from the giving of the Ten Commandments to the dedicating of the finished tabernacle. Nearly three months of that time, Moses had been with God on the mountain. We see then that the construction of the tabernacle took about six months.

It is an interesting thing to see how the believers in the Lord grow as time goes by. But some Christians never grow much beyond their initial salvation by God. Some who have been Christians for 10 years have only the maturity of a one-year-old Christian. They simply repeat their first year over and over again. But then some others grow leaps and bounds in Him because of their obedience and faith.

Christian maturity has nothing to do with the amount of Bible knowledge a person can possess. Rather it has everything to do with faith in God and complete obedience to Him in spite of the situation he or she is in.

As I taught you guys before, God instructs Moses to set up the Ark of Covenant first inside of the Holy of Holies, then moving outward. God always starts everything from the inside toward outside. To God, our characters are more important than our comforts or looks.

B. DOING WHAT GOD SAYS

Exodus 40:16-33 Thus Moses did; according to all that the Lord had commanded him, so he did. 17 And it came to pass in the first month of the second year, on the first day of the month, that the tabernacle was raised up. 18 So Moses raised up the tabernacle, fastened its sockets, set up its boards, put in its bars, and raised up its pillars. 19 And he spread out the tent over the tabernacle and put the covering of the tent on top of it, as the Lord had commanded Moses. 20 He took the Testimony and put it into the ark, inserted the poles through the rings of the ark, and put the mercy seat on top of the ark. 21 And he brought the ark into the tabernacle, hung up the veil of the covering, and partitioned off the ark of the Testimony, as the Lord had commanded Moses. 22 He put the table in the tabernacle of meeting, on the north side of the tabernacle, outside the veil; 23 and he set the bread in order upon it before the Lord, as the Lord had commanded Moses. 24 He put the lampstand in the tabernacle of meeting, across from the table, on the south side of the tabernacle; 25 and he lit the lamps before the Lord, as the Lord had commanded Moses. 26 He put the gold altar in the tabernacle of meeting in front of the veil; 27 and he burned sweet incense on it, as the Lord had commanded Moses. 28 He hung up the screen at the door of the tabernacle. 29 And he put the altar of burnt offering before the door of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting, and offered upon it the burnt offering and the grain offering, as the Lord had commanded Moses. 30 He set the laver between the tabernacle of meeting and the altar, and put water there for washing; 31 and Moses, Aaron, and his sons would wash their hands and their feet with water from it. 32 Whenever they went into the tabernacle of meeting, and when they came near the altar, they washed, as the Lord had commanded Moses. 33 And he raised

up the court all around the tabernacle and the altar, and hung up the screen of the court gate. So Moses finished the work.

This chapter summarizes the dedication of the priests, which was already described in Exodus 28-29, as well as the dedication of the building and its contents. Moses personally saw to it that every piece of furniture and every utensil was anointed and placed where it ought to be. God could not and would not dwell in the tabernacle unless everything was done according to the pattern He showed Moses on the mount.

Too many sincere people have tried to do God's work their own way and then have asked God to bless it. But ministry doesn't work that way. First we find out what God wants us to do, and we do it to glorify Him. If we obey His will and seek to honor His name, then He will come and bless the work with His powerful presence.

According to the Book of Hebrews, this tabernacle was a copy of the heavenly one: *Hebrews 8:4-5 For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law; 5 who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, "See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain."*

Since Moses was instructed to build and arrange everything according to pattern, it isn't surprising that we see elements of this tabernacle arrangement in the Bible's descriptions of heaven.

- In Revelation 4:1-6, the Ark of the Covenant – representing the throne of God, the lampstand, and the laver all correspond to a heavenly reality.
- In Revelation 8:2-4, the altar of incense in heaven is mentioned.
- In Isaiah 6:1-7, the tabernacle structure is implied by the mention of the temple, and the brazen altar is described.
- In Hebrews 9:23-24, it tells us that at some point in time, after the resurrection, Jesus entered the heavenly reality represented on earth by the tabernacle, and appeared in the presence of God to offer a perfect atonement for our sins. Therefore, every time before this event, when the High Priest made atonement in the earthly tabernacle, it was "play acting" – and looking forward to – the perfect atonement the Son of God would offer.

C. THE GLORY OF THE LORD IN THE MIDST OF THEM

Exodus 40:34-38 Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. 35 And Moses was not able to enter the tabernacle of meeting, because the cloud rested above it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. 36 Whenever the cloud was taken up from above the tabernacle, the children of Israel would go onward in all their journeys. 37 But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not journey till the day that it was taken up. 38 For the cloud of the Lord was above the tabernacle by day, and fire was over it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys.

The climax of the dedication service was the revelation of the glory of God in the fire on the altar and the cloud in the tent. No matter how expensive the tabernacle was, without the presence of God it was just another tent.

Oh, how we need to have our God to be the center of our focus! When we put our God in the center of our lives and focus on Him first before anything else, everything will start to fall into places as they should.

Matthew 6:33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

No matter how fancy a church building might be, without the presence of God, it is nothing more than a fancy building. There are many churches in America which chose to remove the presence of God from their assemblies for the sake of denominational traditions or their social club mentalities or many other reasons. Jesus talked about this kind of church in the Book of Revelation and what He will do.

Revelation 3:16 So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.

This not only applies to the church in general, but also individually. It doesn't matter how much a person has in his possession, if he doesn't have God in his life, he has nothing. It doesn't matter how religious and faithful he or she is in ministry, if that believer of Jesus Christ does not have God in the center of his or her life, the ministry and faith is not productive and bring no glory to the Lord.

This concludes our studies in the Book of Exodus. It opened in the gloom of the slave brick-yards of Egypt, and it closed in the glorious presence of the Lord in the tabernacle. It was His presence that led them through the wilderness.

God wants to deliver you from the gloom of the slavery of sin, addiction, hopelessness and bondage. Then He wants to bring you into the glory of His presence and into the very center of His will where He can lead and guide you, so that you may have a victorious living that is filled with joy, hope and love of God. What a wonderful and glorious book Exodus is!

D. APPLICATIONS

1) **It doesn't matter how much a person has in his possession, if he doesn't have God in his life, he has nothing.**

2) **It doesn't matter how religious and faithful he or she is in his ministry, if that believer of Jesus Christ does not have God in the center of his life, his ministry and faith is not productive and bring no glory to the Lord.**

3) **It doesn't matter how much Bible knowledge a person can have, if that person does not have God in the center of his life, that person is not spiritually mature.**

Spiritual maturity only comes from faith in God and obedience to His Word in spite of the situation he or she is in.