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Your End of Summer Action Plan

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Matthew 6:25-34

August 27th, 2006

Matthew 6:25 *"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? 26 Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? 27 Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? 28 "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. 29 Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. 30 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? 31 So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. 34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."*

When Andea Seu's husband died, she was hired for her first paying job in 20 years, managing the café of a seminary. She felt anxious and insecure until her mother said "Look at it this way, your goal is to make a decent sandwich."

Why was that so helpful? Why did it free her of paralysis and fear and give her productive energy? Because it replaced her anxiety with a concrete goal. She could work with her goal (make a decent sandwich) and mentally work backwards to list the steps toward its accomplishment.

If you're like me, you had at least a few goals for this (almost past) summer. Turn to your neighbor and tell them one thing you hoped to accomplish this summer... Can you believe it's the last Sunday of August? And I look at my list of summer "to-do's", and all the fall commitments looming just past next weekend, and I feel paralyzed.

- We're going to be breaking ground next month!
- We're launching the 40 Days of Community next month!
- We're set to begin the search for our next youth minister.

My summer to-do list included lots of things. My overarching goals were to relax a bit more, spend time with my family, and get closer to Jesus. Some of them were hit and miss (just open my garage door for proof), but summer's not over. Here are some action points you and I can take as we think about wrapping up summer and moving into a successful fall:

Your first step is the biggest: **First, trust in Jesus to protect your life.** Let the matter be settled. Put your trust in Jesus. When you trust Him, you trust that God will see you though anything, according to His Word. Listen to God's Words in Ezekiel 32:37-41: "37 *I will surely gather my people from all the lands where I banish them in my furious anger and great wrath; I will bring them back to this place and let them live in safety. 38 They will be my people, and I will be their God. 39*

*I will give them singleness of heart and **action**, so that they will always fear me for their own good and the good of their children after them. 40 I will make an everlasting covenant with them: I will never stop doing good to them, and I will inspire them to fear me, so that they will never turn away from me. 41 I will rejoice in doing them good and will assuredly plant them in this land with all my heart and soul."*

Let the matter be settled: God has gathered *you* as a part of His people. When you trust Jesus, It's done. Over. Caput. So relax! Even with a struggling Michigan economy, and increased airport security, and this summer's escalated fighting in the Middle East, God is still in control. Let God be in control of you. How long are you going to fight it? When I was 20 is when I gave up. I realized I could fight against Jesus being in control till I was 65 (a long time away, back then!), but He would never stop loving me and still welcome me when I was 65. So I gave up. The writer of Hebrews 13:5 reminds us: "*God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."* There is a HUGE freedom in that. You are freed to be creative. Freed to be who God created you to be. And, free to attend to the next required action. Trust in Jesus to protect your life.

Second, de-clutter your life. David Allen in his book "Getting Things Done" proposes that 80% of everything in every drawer in your house never gets used. You know every new paper you throw on the pile on your desk renders the paper directly beneath it exponentially less likely to be dealt with. So you start another pile in another area of the house for "urgent-urgent things" to distinguish them from "urgent things" languishing in the first pile.

All these are like invisible post-it notes stuck all over you that eventually blind you and distract you. Because we don't act on any of it, it becomes mental clutter that robs you of the peace of Christ. When you are spiritually alive, you have access to everything God's Spirit is doing. (1 Cor. 2:16 "*We have the mind of Christ.*") It is a moral issue. Everything under the sun is a moral issue, if you truly believe the universe is owned by God. That's why Christianity is so practical! Jesus came to show us God cares about every aspect of your life, and gives you spiritual resources, if you can unbury them. So we must de-clutter our lives.

Third, replace your anxiety with a concrete goal. Jesus says "*Don't worry.*" Worry comes from too much mental traffic jam of inappropriately managed commitments. "Your mind will keep working on anything that's still in an undecided state." (David Allen) Get things off your mind by getting them done, and see the creativity it releases. Peter writes the Christ-followers 1 Peter 1:13 "*Prepare your minds for **action**; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.*"

Christian spirituality comes from focusing on Jesus. And look what Jesus chose to focus on—getting things done: doing things for lost, lonely, and hurting people. James the brother of Jesus wrote 2:15 "*Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. 16 If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? 17 In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.*"

Put your faith into action. Take 10 seconds to identify what's bugging you. Then and make front end decisions: Do it, Delegate it, or Defer it. Allen says "No one ever did a project. All they did was an action. A project is an outcome made up of a series of actions.

Fourth, get specific. Act! What's bugging you most? Name it, act on it, and be done with it! Is it bugging you that you haven't read your Bible in about 6 years? Either live with the gnawing discomfort, or take the next action. Maybe it's "Where's my Bible? Honey, do we own a Bible?" Maybe the problem is knowing where to begin: Old Testament or New. Make a stab at it, mark the page, and put it on your night stand so you don't have to decide on it when you wake up.

Remember why you're doing what you're doing. Many people have forgotten why they're doing what they're doing. Remember the old bumper sticker "God said it. I believe it. That settles it!" You

could actually cut out the middle line and just say “God said it. That settles it!” It doesn’t really matter what I believe. Jesus said “*Seek ye first the Kingdom of God.*” You know when Jesus said this, there were no churches. He was talking to everyone, not just the 12 disciples.

I love this church because so many people here realize we’re ALL called by Jesus to “seek first the Kingdom of God,” to minister in the name of Jesus in ALL kinds of places: classrooms, kitchens, nurseries, laboratories, restaurants, manufacturing plants, banks, construction sites, and sales calls, just to name a few.

We’re ALL called to work toward the building of Jesus’ Kingdom—a kingdom with no boundaries, that can exist in every country in the world. 95% of your part of the Kingdom work takes place away from this campus. At the same time, God has called us to gather together in Jesus’ name to encourage one another. God wants to build His Kingdom at the church, but he also wants to build it at the bank, at the school, at the hospital, on the field, and in your home.

How to you and I “*seek first His Kingdom*” in those places? By practicing it here and living it out right there. Talking about Jesus, introducing people to Him, inviting people to receive Jesus, and helping meet their needs in Jesus’ name. See? Jesus didn’t call everybody away to some spiritual retreat. He called them to advance God’s Kingdom by bringing God’s Spirit to bear in every decision and every situation!

How does your present action plan fit into that view? Have your specific goal that fits with your life as a disciple. Since before Leigh and I moved to Dexter, we’ve had an idea we didn’t act on that’s bugged me ever since: We’ve wanted to have the church and neighborhood over for a potluck in our back yard that spills out into that beautiful field behind our house. We’ve wanted to have the visitors and the new members over and long time meet folks they’ve never met who have been worshipping with them for years now.

The huge project goal is “hosting a summer potluck at our house.” The life-goal is the advancement of the Kingdom of God. The sticking point is step one: What’s the next action? Stand up in front of the church and invite them—so here goes... If you’re in town for Labor Day weekend, please come by the parsonage between 4 and 7pm next Sunday. Bring your own meat and a dish to pass. We’ll have beverages. (Actually this is step 2. Step one was “Check with Leigh to book the date!” ☺ Leigh and I both hope to see you next Sunday between 4 and 7. We’ll have games for the kids and a great time.

I conclude this message (and this summer) by asking: What’s bugging you? Chances are, it’s your next action step. Before summer is over, put your trust in God and get goin’! Amen!