Be A Diligent Student, but Don’t Neglect Your Priorities!

Colossians 3:22-25

9/1/06

INTRODUCTION:

Bill Gates' SPEECH TO MT. WHITNEY HIGH SCHOOL in Visalia, California.
To anyone with kids of any age, or anyone who has ever been a kid, here's some advice Bill Gates recently dished out at a high school speech about 11 things they did not and will not learn in school. He talks about how feel-good, politically correct teachings created a whole generation of kids with no concept of reality and how this concept set them up for failure in the real world.

Rule 1: Life is not fair - get used to it

Rule 2: The world won't care about your self-esteem. The world will expect you to accomplish something BEFORE you feel good about yourself.

Rule 3: You will NOT make $40,000 a year right out of high school. You won't! be a vice-president with a car phone until you earn both.

Rule 4: If you think your teacher is tough, wait till you get a boss.

Rule 5: Flipping burgers is not beneath your dignity. Your grandparents had a different word for burger flipping-they called it opportunity.

Rule 6: If you mess up, it's not your parents' fault, so don't whine about your mistakes, learn from them.

Rule 7: Before you were born, your parents weren't as boring as they are now. They got that way from paying your bills, cleaning your clothes and listening to you talk about how cool you are. So before you save the rain forest from the parasites of your parents' generation, try delousing the closet in your own room.

Rule 8: Your school may have done away with winners and losers, but life has not. In some schools, they have abolished failing grades and they'll give you as many times as you want to get the right answer. This doesn't bear the slightest resemblance to ANYTHING in real life.

Rule 9: Life is not divided into semesters. You don't get summers off and very few employers are interested in helping you find yourself. Do that on your own time.

Rule 10: Television is NOT real life. In real life people actually have to leave the coffee shop and go to jobs.

Rule 11: Be nice to nerds. Chances are you'll end up working for one.

The Lazy Person (In Proverbs)

1. The Lazy person caters to his own flesh & pampers himself with an overabundance of rest & sleep (Laziness is a manifestation of pure selfishness)

Proverbs 26:14
As the door turneth upon his hinges, so doth the slothful upon his bed.
Proverbs 6:9
How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?

2. The Lazy person misses opportunities in life for advancement & success

Proverbs 12:24
The hand of the diligent shall bear rule: but the slothful shall be under tribute.
Proverbs 19:15
Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep; and an idle soul shall suffer hunger.

3. The Lazy person wastes his own goods & property

Proverbs 12:27
The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting: but the substance of a diligent man is precious.
Proverbs 18:9
He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster.
Eccles. 10:18
By much slothfulness the building decayeth; and through idleness of the hands the house droppeth through.

4. The Lazy person clutters his path making his life uneasy & uncomfortable

Proverbs 15:19
The way of the slothful man is as an hedge of thorns: but the way of the righteous is made plain.
See: Proverbs 24:30-34

5. The Lazy person will not spend the effort to meet even his own needs

Proverbs 19:24
A slothful man hideth his hand in his bosom, and will not so much as bring it to his mouth again.

6. The Lazy person makes excuses that prevent him from accomplishing anything good

Proverbs 26:13
The slothful man saith, There is a lion in the way; a lion is in the streets.
Proverbs 20:4
The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing.
Proverbs 26:16
The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason.

7. The Lazy person refuses to take lessons from the work ethic of others (especially taught by the little ant)

Proverbs 6:6
Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise:

8. The Lazy person cannot be counted upon to get a job done faithfully

Proverbs 10:26 As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to them that send him.

The tragedy of a wasted life vs the blessedness of a faithful life.

John Greenleaf Whittier wrote the well-known lines, "For all sad words of tongue or pen, the saddest are these: *It might have been!*" (MacArthur, p. 96)

Several truths about work:

1. Work was established by God before the fall of Adam, but it was complicated after (Gen. 2:15; 3:17-19)

2. Work is God's appointed way for man to make a living and provide for his needs (Prov. 6:6-11, 10:4, 13:4, 11; I Th. 4:11; II Th. 3:6-12)

3. Work is basically a service we perform for others. Every worker is a servant.

Life is about serving others and meeting needs.

Through our jobs, we not only earn a livelihood and provide for ourselves and our families; but we also serve humanity through providing some needed product or service.

Secret to starting a successful business: find out a need and meet it.

I. Be a submissive student (v. 22a)

"Your masters according to the flesh" = i.e. your physical or human master. Your earthly master, in contrast to your spiritual and heavenly master Jesus Christ (Mt. 6:24; 23:8-10)

To obey means to listen carefully to what you are told and to do exactly what you are told. Follow the instructions of your employer.

"In all things" - every job and expectation of our boss is to be cheerfully fulfilled.

The only exception to "obeying in all things" is if your employer's will conflicts with God's (EX: If your boss asked you to lie, cheat, steal, produce an evil object, neglect church due to overtime, etc., you must obey a Higher Authority).

"If a Christian servant had a believing master, that servant was not to take advantage of his master because they were brothers in the Lord" (Wiersbe, p. 131).

II. Be a sincere student (v. 22b)

"Eyeservice" = to serve so as to satisfy the eyes of your employer.

Who is an "eyeservant?"

1. He is a hypocritical worker

   He works only when the boss is around; when the boss is looking

2. He is a deceitful worker

   His work is extremely pleasing. Not true quality on the non-visible details of the job.

   What's on top looks best; what's underneath is haphazardly done.

3. He is a slothful worker

   He is lazy (a form of selfishness); does not work diligently or with energy, except when the boss is present.

A "man pleaser" is characterized by two features:

1) He wears a mask on his face (perhaps even unconsciously).

   In an attempt to cover up for his poor workmanship, in an attempt to please his boss, he wears a false smile, says flattering works, and does special favors so as to be the employer's "pet."

2) He puts a limit on his work.

   He will perspire only so much; he will exert only so much energy; he will move only so many muscles; he will work only so hard as to "get by," so as to please his boss (forgetting that he should work so as to please God).

An eternal condemnation is upon those who "loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (Jn. 12:43).

Work as a "God pleaser" not a man pleaser!

No boss pleaser is a God pleaser, but every God pleaser is a boss pleaser.

The best, most honest, most diligent, most conscientious worker anyone could hire should be a genuine born-again Christian! Why? Because he

has a higher authority to please (God) and a higher standard to reach! (God's standard of quality)

"In singleness of heart" = to have an undivided purpose or motive. To be sincere (not hypocritical) in your heart, working with the single motive of pleasing God.

"Fearing God" = to shudder (tremble - Eph. 6:6) at the thought of displeasing Him; to work with the knowledge that you are being watched by God and will be judged by Him.

A fear of God is the key to a successful life (Phil. 2:12; Acts 10:35; I Pet. 1:17; Ps. 25:12)

Why should a worker fear God?

1) He is your always present overseer (to watch your job)

2) He is your supply of needed wisdom (to do the job) Prov. 1:7; 9:10

3) He is your job security (to keep the job)

4) He is your pay roll (to reward your job)

III. Be a spiritual student (v. 23)

"Whatsoever ye do" - any and every task or responsibility that you are given [Everything from sweeping floors to constructing skyscrapers; from digging ditches to building bridges; from washing dishes to managing restaurants; from manufacturing desks to sitting at them as a secretary, etc.]

Everyone -- whether printer or plumber, teacher or electrician, computer programmer or copier repairman, milkman or mailman . . . Do your job heartily!

"Do it" = work energetically, diligently

"Heartily" - lit. out of the soul. Don't just go through the motions mechanically; but do your job from the depths of your soul!

The reference to the "soul" supports the fact that God does not intend for there to be a distinction between the secular and spiritual for the Christian. Everything we do is spiritual! Why? Because everything is to be done from the soul unto God!

"As to the Lord" = work as if God was your boss; for indeed He is. NOTE: The reference to the LORD (kurios) is in contrast to your master (v. 22 - kurios). By serving your master, you are serving the Master. By serving a boss, you are serving the Boss!

When a worker understands that he ultimately works to please God, he will not only do what he is instructed to do and expected to do, but he will go the extra mile and do more!

EX: Joseph's faithfulness to Potiphor (Gen. 39:1ff).

IV. Be a serious student (v. 24-25)

3 motivations to serious (conscientious) workmanship:

1. The Reward (v. 24a)

"Knowing" = refers to a knowledge you have had in the past (beginning with salvation) and still do have in the present

"Of the Lord" = from the Lord

"Ye shall receive" - future tense; you will positively receive it!

"Inheritance" = this promise of a future inheritance was all the more special to a servant, "inasmuch as slaves could not be inheritors of an earthly possession" (Abbott, cited by Reinecker, p. 583).

Who gains the inheritance? - "All those who are sanctified" (made holy by God)

Acts 20:32 - "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified."

2. The Lord (v. 24b)

"Ye serve the Lord Christ" - by serving others, you actually serve Christ.

All work is a service of some kind.

> Why should a Christian workman do his best? Because of who He represents -- Christ. Our testimony is at stake!

3. The Judgment (v. 25)

"Doeth wrong" - to act unrighteously (on the job)

> Whereas this verse emphasizes the negative recompense, Eph. 6:8 emphasizes the positive recompense ("Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free")

Many workers do wrong on the job by:

--being lazy, slothful
--being careless
--being selfish
--being irresponsible
--being unproductive
--being dishonest
--cheating -- lying -- stealing

"Shall receive" - will carry off; will bear for one's self

> God knows our works. One day their value will be revealed and rewarded (SEE: I Cor. 3:10-15; II Cor. 5:10).
>
> A story is told of a man who was given a sum of money to build a house. The man, for selfish purposes, bought the cheapest materials and did an inferior job in building the house. After he completed the job, he was told that what he had built was now his own, as a gift from the man who employed him. He was rewarded according to what he deserved.

"There is no respect of persons" - there is no partiality; lit. no "receiving of the face" of a person; no favoritism; no biased judgment. When God judges, He will not reward based on external appearance nor play favorites (like man often does).

While one's "image" may mean a lot today, in Judgment day, God will see through the veneer and will judge irrespective to race, wealth, social rank, or popularity, "success" etc. God will not be duped, bought off, buttered up, etc.

Your lowly job or humble profession now will not mean little reward in heaven.

Some of the most highly rewarded people in Heaven will be those who had the lowest of jobs while on earth, but were the most faithful, honest, hard-working etc.

Mt. 25:23 - "His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord."

Have your priorities in order!

See Matthew 6:33

This is a conditional promise.

"Seek ye first" -

"Seek" -to zealously look after or earnestly live for (in contrast to what the Gentiles "seek" [v. 32], we are to seek something else).

"First" - a word showing priority. Ahead of seeking for what to eat, drink, or wear (v. 31), we are to prioritize God's kingdom. We are to view the eternal as more important than the temporal (v. 19-20), the priorities of God over the priorities of the Gentiles (i.e. the world).

"The kingdom of God" = seek to live for those things which will advance or benefit the cause of Christ

We advance God's kingdom by 3 ways:

1) Concern yourself with witnessing to the lost (I Cor. 15:3; Jn. 1:41)

2) Concern yourself with assembling with God's people (I Cor. 16:1-2; Heb. 10:24-25)

3) Concern yourself with giving to God's work (Prov. 3:9)

When your own financial interests come ahead of God and the needs of His work, the result is frustration and loss (Haggai 1:2-9)

"And His righteousness" - Seek to live up to true, Biblilcal righteousness; seek to be right as God counts rightness, not as the world does.

You can seek His righteousness by:

1) Concerning yourself with knowing His standards of righteousness / Make Bible reading your priority (Job 23:12; Ps. 119:72, 97; Mt. 4:4)

"A Bible which is falling apart usually belongs to someone who isn't" (C. H. Spurgeon)

2) Concerning yourself with obeying His standards of righteousness / Internal purity (being clean on the inside) must come first in our lives (Mt. 23:26 - *"Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cub and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also."*)

The cause of worry is seeking the things of this world. The cure for worry is to seek the things of God!

One who is pre-occupied with God's interests will have his physical needs met.

If you take care of God's business, He will take care of yours!

Live for that which you can take into heaven with you. John 6:27 - *"Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed."*

"All these things (food, water, and clothing) will be added unto you" -

Note: This promise does not apply to everyone! If it did, no one would ever die of starvation. Rather, this promise is for God's children, for those who have God as their "Father: (v. 26) through faith in Christ.

God feeds His kids - Ps. 37:25 - *"I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seek the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."*

Worry about tomorrow's troubles leads to failure in solving today's (v. 34)

"Each day has enough trouble of its own"

Too many times people live in the past, worry about the future, and neglect the present!

Most of what people worry about never materializes. Worry is Satan's way of enslaving us, of taking our eyes off of the provider and focusing ont he provision; it is His way of manipulating people through fear. But *"God has not given us the Spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind"* (II Tim. 1:7).

Our minds and bodies were not made to handle worry. We're supposed to channel it right to our Heavenly Father (*"Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you"*) Cp. Phil. 4:6-7

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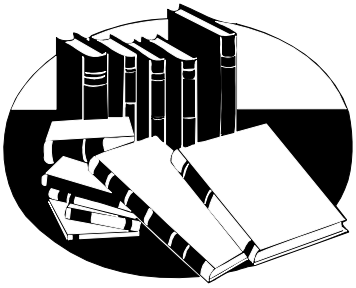

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