

MAINTENANCE

ROSS SMITH

My attention was captured by the scripture in 1 Timothy 4, and the implications and enhancements it offers our spiritual progress.

1 Timothy 4:15 PRACTICE (practice is required to produce ability ... comments mine) and CULTIVATE (cultivation is required to produce fruit ... comments mine) and MEDITATE (meditation is required to produce ministry) upon these duties; throw yourself wholly into them [as your ministry], so that your progress may be evident to everybody.

“Everybody” is all embracing, it is not just friends, or Christians we know, but “EVERYBODY” should be able to see our progress. But progress is not possible without maintenance, for all activity has a cost associated, either repair or enhancement, and as Disciples there is an opportunity for us to continue to develop our relationship by the maintenance of principles we have been privileged to learn.

So often we are prompted by the spirit, or spoken to by God’s word, and for a time we are faithful in implementing the direction, but for inexplicable reason, we sometimes neglect those areas that Father has addressed in our lives. That’s when “MAINTENANCE” is required, we need to regularly look back over our progress, or our study, or our hectic lifestyle, and carry out some repair work so that we don’t fall back in any way.

Nehemiah found this when the wall of the city was breached and neglected, and it then became an onerous task because of the accumulated detritus. The bible says in Nehemiah 4:10, “And [the leaders of] Judah said, the strength of the burden bearers is weakening, and there is much rubbish; we are not able to work on the wall.”

If we defer our own spiritual maintenance then there is the potential for other “rubbish” to take up valuable space, to the detriment of both ourselves and the body of Christ.

This principle was further enhanced by:-

Nehemiah 10:39B We will not forsake or neglect the house of our God.

This verse is speaking of the maintenance of the Temple in Nehemiah’s time, but I see it as having relevance to us.

Firstly, it is comforting to see the progress on the refurbishing of the church hall, because we have been entrusted with these facilities and have a responsibility to the Lord. It also shows that we care about the things of the Lord, even though these are just material matters and will perish with time, but carry a much greater significance in our attitude towards Father and His providence.

Secondly, and more importantly, the Bible says, “your body is the Temple of the Holy Spirit”. (1 Corinthians 6:19) Consequently, Nehemiah 10:30 is applicable to our life.

This is not in the bathing, feeding, clothing, resting, “beauty parlouring” that this refers, but to the sanctuary of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Whilst also the outer man is just “material matter” and will perish, we need to use our body for His glory, and evidence our care in the way we live. More than that, we need to engage in continual refurbishing of our spiritual body because of the wear and tear created by our participation in daily life. This neglect is generally unintentional but totally unacceptable. And it also requires that we make every effort to maintain our health by whatever means it requires, as sometimes sickness is due to our neglect.

Proverbs 18:9 He who is loose and slack in his work is brother to him who is a destroyer and he who does not use his endeavours to heal himself is brother to him who commits suicide.

**PRACTICE IS
REQUIRED TO
PRODUCE
ABILITY**

**CULTIVATION
IS REQUIRED
TO PRODUCE
FRUIT**

**MEDITATION
IS REQUIRED
TO PRODUCE
MINISTRY**

That is why the comments applicable to first Timothy 4:15 come sharply into focus, and in table form they look like this:-

- Practice is required to produce ability
- Cultivation is required to produces fruit
- MEDITATION IS REQUIRED TO PRODUCE MINISTRY

Now we have to realise that “MINISTRY” is not just preaching, teaching, leading, bible study, and all those things that the church has long regarded as ministry, but to everything that we are called to do. This involves “MAINTENANCE” both of our own lives and in the lives of this we are called to minister to. Our temporal homes require regular maintenance, and likewise our spiritual temples require attention. We are called upon to “build up the body of Christ”.

A classic example of this is found in Nehemiah, for there was an ordinance in those days that each family were allocated a period in the year when they were responsible to bring the wood for the altar. It was not just a task but a celebration. Josephus mentions 'the festival of wood-offering' on the fourteenth day of the fifth month, when all the people were accustomed to bring wood for the altar. This was their ministry and their maintenance of the fuel supply for the altar. (Beyond Today)

Nehemiah 10:34 We also cast lots-- the priests, the Levites, AND THE PEOPLE--for the wood offering, (Josephus calls it the – “Festival of wood offering .. comments mine) to bring it into the house of our God, according to our fathers' houses, at

appointed times year by year, to burn upon the altar of the Lord our God, as it is written in the Law.

To avoid the neglect that so often attends the “Temple of the Holy Spirit” in the form of daily refurbishment, and provisioning, it is convenient to explore how to avoid “neglect”.

Firstly, and appropriately, in the previous verse in 1 Timothy 4, verse 14, we are reminded, “Do not NEGLECT the gift which is in you”. In Hebrews 2:3 we are cautioned “How shall we escape [appropriate retribution] if we NEGLECT and refuse to pay attention to such a great salvation”. In Hebrews 2:13 and 16 we are adjured not to NEGLECT hospitality, kindness and good”, some good pointers.

So I need a plan that will assist me to engage in this continual and progressive work of refurbishment, so that the “Temple of the Holy Spirit” will be kept in good order, just as those in Nehemiah’s time were cognisant of that need, and never be guilty of NEGLECT.

By combining the instruction of 1 Timothy 4 and Nehemiah 10 we have a clue, and I suggest it may be something like this.

When we read God’s Word each day, it is supposed to be like “A fire and a Hammer”, (Jeremiah 23:29), or like a scalpel (Hebrews 4:12) and so there is always some important message that we need to identify in our reading, EVERY DAY. It often won’t be material for a sermon or a study, but will certainly be encouragement or correction, and often it will be direction, but will always be important, and can be carried in our heart and mind all day.

Whatever it is, we need to both mentally and physically (in our journal) record that verse, or part thereof, and then “MEDITATE” all day long on that scripture, for in doing so we accomplish three things.

- We get to hide God’s Word in our heart
- We get to produce MINISTRY
- We “maintain” our lives in accordance with God’s Word

Why do I suggest that we meditate on it all day, well the Psalmist knew it was good for him, so he set a very good example, and it is so important that it features right at the start of his encouragement in Psalm 1:2, he meditates “day and night”.

Secondly with God’s Word resonating in our mind it saves us from “sinning against Him” (Psalm 119:11) And so this brings us right back to where we started, that we need to, in my words, “Maintain the Temple”

Psalm 51:10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, and RENEW a right, persevering, and steadfast spirit within me.

The refurbishment of the physical temple ensured its longevity, and the refurbishment of our spiritual temple will provide eternal longevity. The result of a PERSEVERING AND STEADFAST SPIRIT.

