

THE MAIN THING

By Don Krider

A few years ago my daughter Donna read a German proverb to me - an amazing thing. The proverb simply stated this: "**The main thing is that the main thing remain the main thing.**" After I left her office, I said, "There is a sermon in that; there is a real message." We need to keep our spiritual ears and our spiritual eyes open so God will speak to us. God will reveal Himself through many directions and many ways.

At first that proverb sounds a little strange, but the Holy Spirit began to deal with me about that. He said the reason that Christians fail and become lukewarm is that the main thing is no longer the main thing. In our lives many times we have let the main thing become something else. We have taken on other things and they have become the main thing to us. We have to make a living; that becomes the main thing. We have to witness; that becomes the main thing. We have gotten so busy and all of those things have always seemed right. They are right when they are in the right perspective, but the main thing must remain the main thing.

In Matt 6:33 Jesus said that the main thing was "to seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness first." That was the main thing and then all these other things would be added unto them. Paul said in Phil 3:13-14: "**Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.**" The main thing is reaching forward, pressing toward the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. The Holy Spirit took me to Rev. 2:1-7. This account is about one of the greatest churches that ever existed upon the face of the earth. They sent out missionaries, started new works, did great things. They had a tremendous work going but they lost the main thing.

Rev. 2:1-7 "Unto the angel of the church at Ephesus write; These things sayeth He that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; I know thy works and thy labour..."

That sounds good. God knows that I am busy. God knows that I am really sold out because I am working. "***...and thy patience...***" Yeah, that's me. I put up with a lot of stuff. That's good quality there. ***...and how thou canst not bear them which are evil...***" That's great; good recommendation there. If you are going to apply for a youth ministry or you are going to apply for some kind of job, these are the kind of recommendations you would like to have. The man has some quality; he has patience, doesn't blow his top all the time and he can't stand evil around him. ***...and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles and are not, and hast found them liars.***" Well, I got my doctrine straight; that is a point for me. ***And hast borne, and hast patience...***" There are some pretty good qualities here; this ought to recommend us for heaven. ***...and for my name's sake hast laboured...***" For who? For **His name's sake!** Every thing we are doing is in the name of the Lord, isn't it! I am putting up with you, in the name of the Lord. Surely that will get me into Heaven. Sister so-and-so is having patience with her husband; that will surely get her in.

The Lord is listing some things in which there is nothing wrong with this church. We have need of patience. We need to forebear with one another. We need to be longsuffering. ***...for my name's sake has labored***

and hast not fainted." The Word of God tells us to not faint; not to grow weary in well doing for in due season, if we faint not, we shall reap (Gal 6:9). So these are good qualities. There is not a thing wrong with this list. It's good to have your doctrine right. It's good to know who labors among you. It's good to know whether a man is telling the truth or a lie. It's good to know these things; it's good to do these things. He's not saying they are bad things.

"Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee..." M-m-m-m. The main thing is no longer the main thing. The main thing is that the main thing remains the main thing. Now they had gotten off into good things, not the main thing. In I Cor 13:1-3 Paul said that though he could speak with the tongues of men and angels, understand all mysteries, have all faith to remove mountains but had not charity, he was nothing. If I don't have the main thing, all of these other things will not profit me. ***"Even though I feed the hungry and give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."***

I believe that Donna was led of the Holy Spirit to read that to me, because immediately it began to work in my spirit. God woke me up preaching this message. He began to speak it into my heart. What is it going to profit us if we have left the main thing? What is it going to profit us if we have labored all our life, we worked all our life, and we have done all these things and we have done it in the name of the Lord. Look at Rev.2:4:

"Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee because thou hast left thy first love."

You see, the Lord is more impressed with your loving Him than your serving Him. He is more impressed with your desire to fellowship with Him than He is with all the work you do for Him. I do not want to stand in that day before the Lord, having done all that I have done and having been all the places I have been, and preached all the sermons I have preached, and have the Lord say, "I have somewhat against you."

God is looking for some people who have seen the importance of letting the main thing be the main thing. This is where they got off track wasn't it; this is where they missed the point. When you testify about a job and about God bringing money in to you, that is scriptural. When you seek the Kingdom of God first, that job or money is going to be there. Anything God raises up, God will finance. Anything God starts, God will take care of. I fell flat on my face with some things that I started because God wasn't in it. I tried real hard to sustain them because they were a good work, but it wasn't what God called me to do. The sooner they failed, the better off I was.

God is saying, "Look you have done all of these things and yet you have never, ever truly allowed what I wanted in your life." The main thing is that the main thing remain the main thing. I want you to get that in your mind. **What is the main thing? It's loving Jesus.** The main thing isn't my ministry, the main thing isn't the works I do, the main thing isn't the places I go, the main thing isn't the offering I give. Why do I do it? It can all be good works, it can all be a wonderful work, but if it is not from the main thing, which is the love for Jesus, then I have just done a good work. I am convinced that the Church needs to come to grips with this fact.

When we come back and begin to restore that first love and seek His face, what happens? Reconciliation and restoration. 2 Chron. 7:14 says, ***"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble***

themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

I am called by His name and there have been times when I have had to humble myself, turn from my wicked way, and seek His face, because the way I was going was good work, but it wasn't inspired because I loved Jesus. Being busy is not as important as being in love. If you want to prosper in the Lord Jesus Christ, get the main thing in the right place. You won't have to worry about anything any more and you won't have to worry about producing when you are in love. You are going to do things because you are inspired by the love of God to do those things.

So here in 2 Chron. 7:14 He begins to tell them that there needs to be a humbleness, a seeking of His face, a turning from their wicked ways. He said,..."*then will I hear from Heaven, I will forgive their sin and I will heal their land.*" There is a reconciliation when I am not looking for reconciliation; when I am looking to love Jesus regardless of whether I get reconciled or not; when I am not putting any terms on loving Jesus. "Now Lord, I am going to love you if...; I love you because you are going to do this for me; I love you because you are doing that for me." The Lord said, "No, No! I want you to love **ME** for **WHO I AM** and then I will do the works through you."

Jesus loved the Father. In Psalm 17:15 it tells us that He beheld His face always before Him. And Jesus said in John 14:10, "*I don't do these works of myself, but my Father, He doeth them.*" Why? Because He was in love with His Father. I am saying, friends, that we need to come to grips with reality and quit trying to build something. **We need to get into a love affair with Jesus.**

I believe the Lord's return is at hand. He is looking for somebody who loves Him. If I love Him I will be busy, but the busyness that I will be taking care of is because He has inspired me to do it. It won't be because I want Him to approve me; it will be because I am in love with Him. He's coming for a bride without spot, blemish or wrinkle who has made herself ready. He's looking for a bride who is working and doing whatever God wants, only because it pleases Him.

The church at Ephesus was a busy place. They were checking all the apostles out, they were developing patience, they couldn't stand liars. That seems like a good church to be a part of, but it really is not. Give me a church that loves Jesus. If they are messed up they will get straightened up; but a man who tries to keep his doctrine straight all the time, doesn't have time to love Jesus. If he's always sitting around judging everybody to see whether they are telling the truth or not, he doesn't have time to love Jesus.

A brother asked me if I loved everybody. I said, "I sure do." He said, "You have to be careful, somebody may take advantage of you." So what! If I love Jesus it's going to show to somebody else; but if I am going to take care of my doctrine, I have to check out everyone because I want to be sure that we don't let anybody among us who is messed up in their doctrine.

I looked at the guys that Jesus ran around with; in fact, they were not even learned men, yet Jesus found something in them. He found a seed that He could make to be a love seed, that would be a love relationship. Peter could have joined the liar's club. This very man who would deny Him would become one of His greatest preachers and would, according to the word that historians write, desire to be crucified upside down because he had failed the Lord and felt unworthy.

I hear people all the time bragging on how worthy they are; how they earned this and how they deserved that and how they have this coming. Then I remind myself that if I ever got what I had coming I would not be preaching this sermon. It was love that redeemed me, it was love that beckoned me, it was love that called me, it was love that ministered to me. The main thing is that we are sure that the main thing remains the main thing. Paul had a focus and a vision to press onward. What was his vision? It was the mark of the prize of the high calling. Never did he say, "I have apprehended already." No! He said, "I must apprehend what I have been apprehended for. I must comprehend it. I have not yet apprehended." You see, when you love Jesus, you get a focus.

He could have said, "I would like you to understand this great ministry I have. You know, I am a world traveler. I have been to Rome, I have been to Ephesus, I have been to Corinth and I have been all of these places. Therefore listen to what I am telling you." No, he never said that. He was in love with Jesus and he would continually say, ***"It is no longer I that liveth, but Christ liveth in me; and the life that I now live in the flesh I live it by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me"*** (Gal 2:20). Why? Because the main thing remained the main thing. His works were not important; his writings to him were not that important. He was pouring his heart out to a people to show them the love of God who had chosen him. The main thing is that we love Jesus.

The Bible says that in the presence of the Lord is the fullness of joy not in the presence of a lot of work. I get tired sometimes doing work and then I have to stop and ask myself what I am doing this for. I wear myself down to nothing and then blame God. Man, I am serving the Lord, you know. I believe when you are motivated by the love of God, no matter how tired you get, you rest. There is a joy in doing it. There is no complaining, no murmuring; you are ready to do again whatever the Lord asks you to do. The main thing is that the main thing remains the main thing. As far as I can see, the main thing is love. The Amp. Bible says they had lost their love for Jesus.

You can still be a church and not have any real love in it. You can get all the doctrines straight. You can get all your missionary outreaches straight. You can get all the things right. But I would rather be among a bunch of people who just love one another. They may be as messed up as they can be messed up, but if they love Jesus, He will straighten them out. He will take the kinks out. He will show them where the crooked places are. Thank God for Jesus; He never leaves you hanging out anywhere. He doesn't give you the Word and say, "That's it - do the best you can with it." He always gives you the remedy. He always gives you the final line. "Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee because thou hast left thy first love." Jesus has to be our first love.

Somebody said, "Well, you know what happens is, Christ first and then my wife." I said, "Now, wait a minute...." That is what is happening. We start splitting our love up but it doesn't work that way. The Word of God says, ***"Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it"*** (Eph 5:25).

When you leave your first love, the next thing you are going to start noticing is that you become religious. You keep going on doing good stuff, only you start judging people because they are not doing it as much as you are. "If they love God they would be here. Praise God, wherever they are, I hope they are having a good time." You aren't going to get

this in front of the television set watching Mickey Mouse Club. You aren't going to get this watching Saturday Night at the Movies. That is why we need to love the Lord and come together, not to hear about what some great man's exploits are, but to learn of Jesus. That's when Paul finally boiled it down. He said, **"I want to know him. I want to know Him in all that He is"** (Phil 3:8-10).

Can you remember when you first fell in love with your husband or wife? Marriages could be saved if we could remember the first time; if we could remember the beginning of it. I think what happens is the fact that we get too educated. We get too smart and we can't remember as David could. David said, **"He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings"** (Psalm 40:2).

That is why David could cry out, **"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit"** (Psalm 51:10-12). He was simply saying, "I remember where God brought me from and I exalted myself. I got in trouble, I fell and now I am abased. I am humbling myself before God and I am throwing myself before the Lord because I remember it was by His love that He drew me. It was by His love that He saved me. It was by His love that He made me the king."

When we trip and fall down, and begin to understand that we are not moving in the love of God like we once did, then remember what He brought us from, remember what He brought us with, we would cry out like David. I don't know about you but He drew me with cords of love. He didn't tell me how rotten I was. Do you know what He told me? He told me how much He loved me, and then He didn't have to call me a sinner because I knew right away that I was. I never felt love like that. Whenever I am tempted to think about resting, stopping, quitting, and waiting until Jesus comes, I remember the pit from whence He drew me. I remember that first love. I can still remember the first time I failed God. He can't, but I can. But do you know what I remember about that; it was His love that picked me up. You don't think it was the Father's anger that drew the prodigal son back, do you. The son remembered his father's house, he remembered the servants, he remembered the good days when the love of the father was there with him.

Here is what we need to do. First step: **Rev 2:5 "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen..."** You need a memory, don't you? I am not talking about remembering sin and all that stuff, but remembering His love, His kindness, and His mercy. This is what we have fallen away from. Sometimes we move too far out in the works realm and we leave the love of God somewhere else. **"Remember, therefore, from whence thou are fallen..."**

And then the second step is, **"... repent."** Don't cover it up; don't act like it hasn't happened. When you are no longer deeply in love with Jesus, you need to remember how much He loves you. God sent His Son to die for us while we were yet dead in our trespasses and sins, and Jesus willingly laid down his life for us. That makes me want to repent. The main thing is that the main thing remain the main thing. It's going to stick in your mind. He said, **"Remember where you have fallen from and repent."** And then he gives a little

warning: "**Repent and do the first works...**" Do your first works! What is the work of God? It's to believe on Him whom the Father has sent. Get back into that simplicity of faith, get back into that place where you are doing things because it's the right thing - because the Lord loves you and you love Jesus.

When you first went out witnessing after you got saved, you didn't go out to talk about a church, did you. I don't know about you, but I just got all bubbly inside and I would want to tell them about Jesus. I would knock on doors and say, "Do you know Jesus?" Donna and I would go down to the street corners and ask people, "Do you know Jesus?" Folks would get saved. I would just pick out a church in that area, an Assembly of God, and send them to one, because I knew that if they really got the real thing, if they got the love seed in their heart, you could not keep them from finding a church to go to.

Unfortunately in America we have become that kind of people that must keep everything holy and sanctified according to our standards. Everything has to operate on my standard. But you know if you really love Jesus, you will hate sin. You begin to do things by faith and you live in that realm of believing. You won't worry about what everybody else is doing.

I don't know about you but I'm getting married, and I am going to be the best looking bride in the country. Do you know why I know that? Because I am going to look just like Him. I am going to marry Him because I love Him. He is going to marry me because He loves me. Do you think I want to miss that wedding? Forget it! If there is a spot, blemish, or a wrinkle on me, I want to get rid of it. If I don't ever do anything else except open and shut the door in the house of God because I love God, I'm going to be right up there with Him. Hallelujah!

We need to get serious about this and quit substituting something for the main thing. The main thing is loving Jesus. So he said, "Remember from which thou art fallen and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly..." Oh mercy! That sounds like a sudden thing, doesn't it. I believe there are a lot of Christians who deceive themselves, thinking that it's not really important that they serve God because they love Him. "I'll pick when I serve God. I'll choose when I do this. I'll choose when I am going to work." And God said, "One day, I will come quickly." Then all that you have chosen will be ashes. This is heavy-duty stuff!

We can't serve God when and where we want to. We must serve God when He wants us to, where He wants us to, and how He wants us to. Moses kept trying to tell them, "**Thou shalt serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, with all of thy soul, and all thy strength**" (Deut. 6:5;10:12; 11:13). Are we really serving God with all of hearts, with all of your minds, and all of our strength?

The Lord is not looking for a people who have their program perfect, or even have their Bible scriptures all compiled in the right order. He's looking for a people who love Him. If you love the Lord, you will read the Bible. If you love the Lord, you will pray. If you love the Lord you will do things, but they won't be things you are doing just to prove that you love the

Lord.

In Matt chap.4 we have the greatest example of a man in love with God. His name is Jesus. He is tempted by Satan after forty days of fasting and prayer. Satan says to Him, "***If thou be the Son of God*** ...Do a good work, prove it, show off a little, you will impress me and I will believe." Jesus would not do it. He said, "***Man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.***" He was saying: "Those words are my meat; those words are my drink. It's not doing something to prove that I am a minister. It's not doing something to prove that I can do it."

How many Christians are trying to impress God by what they are doing? There were times when I tried to impress God, but now I want to serve the Lord because I love Him. I believe that God is going to restore the miracles to the church and He will use a people in whom the main thing is remaining the main thing. That is going to be the important part of their life. If Jesus came today we could have worked thirty years and not have one thing when we stand before God.

When we serve God it should be because we love Him, no other reason, no other motive. Read the 3rd and 13th chapters of I Corinthians. I read an article where one man asked another, "Why do you praise the Lord?" The other man said, "Because He is the Lord." I don't praise Him so He can give me a ten-dollar bill. My finances are all taken care of if I get the right perspective and am in this just to love the Lord. God help us not to get caught up in all of these religious works, even though they are good works. Help us to spend the time with the Lord to see what the motive of our heart is.

God is going to build a church and none of us have to help Him. Psalm 127:1 says: "***Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it:..***" God must build the church. What is He going to build it out of? Love. It's going to be the cement that sticks us together. It's going to be the unbreakable bond of the love of God.

In these last days there are going to be many who are going to tell us that we have to do one, two, three, four, five, six, seven things and then God will accept us. I say, "No, all I ever needed to do was repent." It wasn't hard for me to repent when I remembered what a mess I was when He found me.

Man's sin brought a great fall of man but thank God there was a great Redeemer. Every one of us could say, "We have all sinned and come short of the glory of God." It was His love that drew me and it's His love that sustains me.

I had a young man in my home one day, and I slipped my arm around him and told him I loved him. He told my daughter that evening, "Your Dad told me he loved me. That made me feel so good!" I thought, "That's what we need to do. Not analyze one another, not criticize one another, not judge one another, but love one another." That love would do what it did to you - it would draw them. The love of God will draw men through the power of the

Holy Spirit.

Do you want to be like the church at Ephesus, to be known for your great works - be known for how pure you have kept your doctrine. Those were honorable things that they did, but they eventually just became works of habit, not works of love. If you are trying to win souls because you are trying to receive a great mark from God, forget it. When we are motivated by the love of God, that is when it is going to work. So the main thing is this: that the main thing remains the main thing. This is what we need.

Father, in the wonderful name of Jesus, what a wonderful Saviour. Lord, help us to be that people in whom this becomes a motto in our lives - that the main thing in our life is Jesus. Not just as a spiritual figure but God, as the very point of our affection - that which we focus upon and reach for daily - the mark of the prize. I believe that if there is any mark, dear God, that has ever been given, it is the mark of the Lord's love, of God's love to man. To feel your love and your warmth in our hearts, and your forgiveness is enough. God, even without the good works, without all the benefits that you have loaded us with, just to love You is enough.

Lord, may we be sure that as far as we understand our doctrine to be right, that we will not be deceived by those who are liars. God, we will have patience with long suffering with one another. Lord help us to be sure that the motive of our hearts is that we love You with all of our heart; and that we will love the individual whom we must correct, one to whom we must speak. We must love them, Father. Amen!