

CHAPEL ADDRESS
NAZARENE BIBLE COLLEGE
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 2010

BEGIN WITH THE END IN MIND

Think about it...Destination is very important! For instance, if you want a Big Mac, you had better head for McDonald's and not Burger King. However, if the Whopper is on your stomach's radar screen, then Burger King it is. On the other hand, if waffle fries and chicken nuggets strike your fancy, then it has to be Chick-fil-a, but in that case remember never on Sunday. And, here in Colorado Springs, if it's a Josh and John's home-churned ice cream that you crave, that would not be found at Safeway. And, if you are craving an Oreo blizzard, then only Dairy Queen will do. Remember, destination is very important.

If the Streits want to head to the beach, we stay away from North and South Dakota, but if we want to see the world famous Corn Palace, then Mitchell, South Dakota, is where we have to head. We don't go to Tennessee to see the Grand Tetons, but if we want to see our grandkids, Molly, Master, and Myles, then Tennessee is our only destination. If the coliseum in Rome is in our travel plans, England will not do, and as we plan for a week of soccer in Brazil, a ticket to Hong Kong will be to no avail.

You see, destination informs the journey, or, as I have tagged my talk for this chapel, we need to Begin with the End in Mind.

For our purposes today, I am suggesting that to begin with the end in mind means to start with the clear understanding of both where you are and of where you want to wind up. It means always to be aware of destination in order to keep your steps moving in the right direction. Remember, it's McDonald's for a Big Mac and Burger King for the Whopper.

Stephen Covey, in his book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, notes that the idea of beginning with the end in mind is based on the principle that all things are really created twice. Covey says that there is a mental or first creation and a physical or second creation to all things.

Take the construction of a house, for example. You create it in your head in every detail before you ever hammer the first nail. You try to get a very clear sense of what kind of house you want. You choose where to put the living room and family room. You plan for a kitchen, for the bathrooms, the bedrooms, the sliding doors, the placement of windows etc. You work it in your mind until you get a clear image of what this house ought to look like before you begin to build it. Then the builder reduces these thoughts to a blueprint and develops construction plans. All of this is done before dirt is ever moved. If the first or mental creation is not successfully completed, then in the physical creation, you will have to make expensive changes that would significantly increase the cost of the project. There's

an old carpenter's rule that says, "Measure twice, cut once." You have to make sure that the blueprint, the first creation, is really what you want and that you've planned well. Then and only then do you translate this first creation into bricks and mortar, the second creation.

As you know, this concept is operational in many areas of our lives. Before you take a trip, you determine the destination and decide on the best route. Before we plant a garden, we plan it out in our minds, possibly even on paper. We create speeches on paper before we give them; we envision a gourmet meal in our home before we prepare it; and designers conceive the look of clothes before they even thread a needle.

And so we might ask, what happens if there is not a mental creation, or if our first creation is not by conscious design or, in other words, what happens when you arrive at Burger King to pick up your Big Mac? It will not be there! Under no circumstance is that guy at drive-up window #2 going to run next door to McDonald's to pick up their sandwich for you! That will not happen – believe me, I tried it. I wound up being stuck with something that I did not want because of my not starting with the end, and in this case, a destination in mind!

Hear me today, whether we are aware of it or not, whether we are in control of it or not, there is a first mental creation to every part of our lives...a concept, an idea, a blueprint, or a mental image that precedes and dramatically affects the second creation or how that goal plays out in the reality of our lives.

As both a Christian and an academic, I hold strongly to the idea that, through the unique Redeemed human characteristics of self awareness, imagination, and conscience, each of us is able to take charge of his or her own first creation and then to write our own blueprints or scripts as to how that creation might be realized. In other words, we have the opportunity to start with the end in mind, if we choose to do so!

So then, the question becomes, "What end or ends are we talking about here today, September 1, 2010, in chapel at Nazarene Bible College?"

In most respects, these ends today are not much different from those of any generation and maybe are well summed up in Thomas Jefferson's phrase from the Declaration of Independence: "Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

Let's talk about that –

What are some of your goals, hopes, dreams, ENDS for life? For Liberty? For the Pursuit of Happiness?

Audience responses

Any one of your responses could be the topic of conversation for another time. But today let's consider one "universal end" that each of us in this room, I suspect, subscribes to.

Matthew 6:33:

New International Version

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

New Living Translation

Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.

International Standard Version

But first be concerned about God's kingdom and his righteousness, and all of these things will be provided for you as well.

GOD'S WORD® Translation

But first, be concerned about his kingdom and what has his approval. Then all these things will be provided for you.

King James Bible

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you

The Message

Steep your life in God-reality, God-initiative, God-provisions. Don't worry about missing out. You'll find all your everyday human concerns will be met.

All of this “Seeking **FIRST** the kingdom” stuff sounds **SO** simple. And it is, **IF** we set out seeking first things first or if we begin with the end in mind.

The Scriptures are replete with reminders to us all of the Lord's willingness and desire to LEAD us to those ends:

Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. . .

Proverbs 3:5-6

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways, acknowledge Him, and He will direct your path.

Romans 8:14

Those led by the Spirit are the Sons of God.

Galatians 5:18

Those led by the Spirit are not under the law.

John 16:13

Yet the Spirit of truth does not lead people into confusion.

In other words, we dare not let our feelings, those of the human spirit, keep us from following the leading of the Holy Spirit!

Our hymns testify over and over to God's leading:

God Leads Us Along

[Public Domain]

In shady, green pastures, so rich and so sweet,
God leads His dear children along;
Where the water's cool flow bathes the weary one's feet,
God leads His dear children along.
Some through the water, some through the flood – some through the fire, but all through the blood!

He Leadeth Me

[Public Domain]

He leadeth me, O blessed thought!
O words with heav'nly comfort fraught!
Whate'er I do, where'er I be
Still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me.

Precious Lord, Take My Hand

[c.1938 Thomas Dorsey. Unichallepp Music, Inc. Rightsong Music, Publisher. CCLI #704446]

Precious Lord, take my hand,
Lead me on, let me stand,
I am tired, I am weak, I am worn;
Through the storm, through the night,
Lead me on to the light.
Take my hand, precious Lord;
Lead me home.

God Will Take Care of You

[Public Domain]

Be not dismayed whate'er betide,
God will take care of you;
beneath his wings of love abide,
God will take care of you.

All the Way My Savior Leads Me

[Public Domain]

All the way my Savior leads me;
What have I to ask beside?
Can I doubt His tender mercy,
Who through life has been my Guide?
Heav'nly peace, divinest comfort,
Here by faith in Him to dwell!
For I know, whate'er befall me,
Jesus doeth all things well;
For I know, whate'er befall me,
Jesus doeth all things well.

Each step I take, my savior goes before me
And with His loving hand, He leads the way!

Bob Benson, a popular storyteller from a generation ago, captures the importance of the relationship of beginnings and endings in our lives. Listen to his words in closing.

“Did They Hear My Vest?”

I was invited out to a college to speak the other day
You always want to do your best at a college.
They are such reservoirs of knowledge and erudition-
At least it seems they certainly should be when one considers how much learning
the freshmen bring with them and how little the seniors actually take away.
There was also the added disadvantage of being in my own hometown-
Five hundred miles is about the distance at which I begin to change into a downright
expert on any number of important topics and subjects. So I had studied
hard – and prayed earnestly – for seriously,
It is a deep challenge to speak of people of that age.
To try to add some direction to them from out where I am –
These 30-odd years from commencement.
And to try to do so in a way that will not tarnish the brightness of their optimism.
It is not a task that I take lightly.
So, I put on my best three-piece navy pinstriped suit –
Thinking maybe I would at least look like “a wise man from the east.”
And I went out to chapel and spoke.
They were courteous and they listened attentively to me.
Afterward I was talking to some students –
I wasn’t mobbed or anything like that –
My safety was never endangered.
When someone looked down at my suit and said,
“Well look at that.”
And I looked down to see what it was –
Only to see that my vest was buttoned wrong.
All the time I had been standing in front of those students,
not to mention the faculty and administration
Thinking I was looking reasonably important.
And all the time they must have been sitting there
Thinking where did they get this guy
Who doesn’t even know how to button his clothes?
But since it happened – let me try to salvage

A bit of my wounded pride and honor
By philosophizing about it a minute or two.
It is not hard to button your vest wrong,
You know –
All you have to do is put the second button in the top hole.
Or else slip the second hole over the top button.
From then on it's as easy as falling off a log.
Because the rest will follow along slick as a
Whistle –
All you have to do is start wrong –
Ending wrong will take care of itself.
And do you know how I hear the words of Christ coming to me these days?
Very simply.
I guess they would have to be for a
54-year-old man who hasn't passed buttoning yet.
But I hear Him saying to me there is just one way to button your vest right.
There will always be a button left over
Or an extra hole –
when you start wrong.
But if you begin right,
if you seek first the Kingdom and His righteousness –
the Father and I will guarantee that if you start with the end in mind,
the rest will find their rightful places.
If I could have told those college students
anything that morning –
I mean in a way that it really stayed with them
I guess it would have been about starting
with the end in mind.
Because if you want to end strong,
get the first button right!
I don't know if they heard my words that morning,
I just hope they heard my vest.

Source: Benson, Bob. "See You at the House." Nashville: Generoux, 1986, 140-141.