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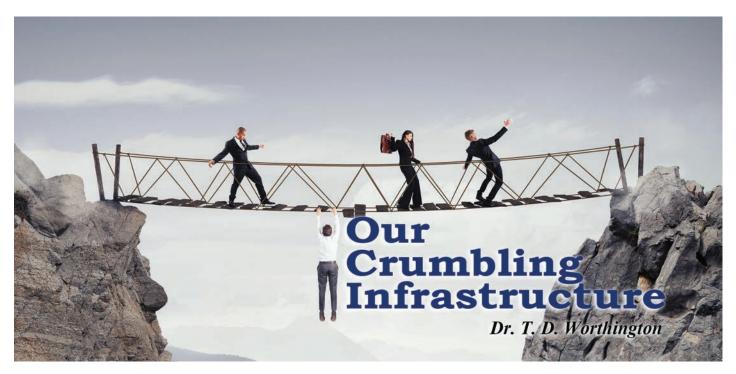
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When we read the words of *Mark* 13:1-8 we are reminded that these words speak to several events. First, the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple were actual historical events that would occur in 70AD. We also know that it speaks of the coming tribulation period, however I think it also speaks to us.

We constantly hear about how infrastructure America's is crumbling. Many of our great bridges are becoming dangerous to cross, our water systems are a health hazard, and many public buildings are crumbling. Most agree that something needs to be done. How many potholes are too many? How many unsafe railroads can we tolerate? As a citizen, this concerns me, but as a child of God, it is the Christian Infrastructure that concerns me most. The great structures are crumbling.

When I was a young pastor, I had a lot of mentors. These were men I admired; they set an example for me to follow. I don't see a lot of great Christian leaders emerging on the scene. Men like John Rice, Jerry Falwell, Lee Roberson, and about a dozen others who, although imperfect, still influenced my life. I don't see that caliber of men on the horizon. The great structures have fallen. Who is going to set the example for the young pastors of tomorrow?

I am not saying there are not any good preachers. Honestly, I hear a lot of good sermons. I just don't see many good examples of faithful men in the ministry. I hear a lot of good Christian singers, but few of their lives, few of their families, few of their marriages, serve as a good example. Many sermons are deeply theological, but they are shallow in relevance. Preaching needs to minister; it needs to touch lives. If you exclude the sermons on getting healed, getting rich, feeling good about yourself, or future events, there is just not much left in the modern pulpit. Much of this has been caused by the lack of great examples for the young pastor to follow. The great structures have fallen! Either they

see no heroes who are setting the example as hard-working servants of the Lord, or they don't want to see them because they prefer to be lazy ministry executives rather than true servants.

Our churches are crumbling in part because we are not feeding or nurturing, the sheep as we were commanded. I have often informed my church that they can easily find a man who is a better preacher, a greater theologian, or a more eloquent orator than I am, but I challenge them to find someone who will love them more than I do. Yes, they can find a man who can sing better, who can shout louder, and pronounce all the begets and begottens in the book of Numbers better than I, but will he love them enough to agonize over how to better minister to them week after week?

The great structures are falling. But it is not just churches. Bible colleges, seminaries, and in some cases whole denominations are crumbing. However, it is not just

failing institutions and buildings that concern me, but it is the fallout that it causes. Crumbling churches often bear at least partial blame for crumbling lives. I usually have several conversations each week with people whose basic infrastructure is falling apart. It may be their marriage, but we don't hear a lot of messages about marriage, nor do we see many good examples of marriage in our Christian leaders. It may be their children are in rebellion, but we don't hear a lot of messages about rearing children, nor do we see many good examples of obedient children in the families of our Christian leaders. It may be their finances that are crumbling, but we don't hear a lot of messages about finances, nor do we see many good examples of good money management in our Christian leaders. It might even be about a crumbling career, but we don't hear a lot of messages about being a good, dependable, hard-working employee, nor do we see many good examples of dedicated servanthood in our Christian leaders.

Our Christian homes are crumbling, and our individual testimonies are in shambles. Many Christians and many Christian families are busy keeping the stacked stones in place or trying to put them back together after they've fallen, but we often do not get a lot of help from the church. Our personal and family infrastructures are crumbling, and the very organization that was placed here on this earth to help is crumbling itself.

I know, I have a lot of antiquated ideas about church, and I also realize that a lot of Christians don't faithfully come to church in the

first place. Therefore, even if your pastor does preach messages that would minister to you, even if he does lead a life as a good example, many Christians likely won't be at church to hear it or see it anyway.

So, how do we handle this? What do you do when the great buildings of your life fall, when not one stone is left upon another, and all has been thrown down? I think that's the question Jesus is answering in Mark 13. It's a question we all come to at some point.

Jesus names the circumstances of what's happening, (the building will be destroyed), but then gives His disciples some interesting advice. He says when these things happen, you need to take heed to yourself.

Now, when my life and world are falling apart, the natural response is to try to control it or look for someone to blame. Jesus, however, tells me to focus on managing myself. This would be true for ministry leaders needing to rebuild the church, and individuals trying to rebuild what might be crumbling in their own lives.

"Take heed lest any man deceive you." When your world crumbles, one thing you will probably find plenty of is advice. Jesus says, be careful that you don't blindly follow the crowd, and don't let others think for you or tell you how you should behave. Jesus is asking us to be discerning about the voices we listen to both within and outside of ourselves. Not all voices are worthy of your life or being followed. He's telling us to watch for imposters who, "... come in my name" when they really haven't.

Many denominational leaders today are following the voices of the WOKE agenda, and they are seeing their ministries crumble. Many pastors and Christian musicians are heeding the examples of secular teachings and music. And sadly, many individuals are seeing the stones of their own lives torn apart because they gave heed to the world's philosophy.

Sometimes the voice that leads us astray is our own voice of fear, anger, shame, guilt, grief, or some other emotion. If your world, or an important part of your world has crumbled, is there any chance you





are being led astray by someone who says they have a message from the Lord? This does not mean we ignore wise counsel, but Jesus is reminding us, that if we are Spirit filled and have the mind of Christ, we must learn to trust ourselves.

When things fall apart, it's easy to become reactionary. It's tempting to believe that we must come up with a big new plan; that we must find a new and novel solution. But, let me remind you that your work after the temple falls is going to be largely the same as it was before it fell. Sometimes when the structure crumbles we want a completely fresh start. Let me warn you. Don't live too far out, or invest too much, or make too many promises, into a future you do not have yet.

When the structure crumbles in your life, it is not painless. Jesus says, "these are the beginnings of sorrows." It's the pain of opening to something new. It is a creative pain. Something is being birthed. I can't tell you what is being birthed, or when it will arrive, but that is the promise behind our Lord's message. It's what Jesus was getting at when he said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." (John 2:19).

So, has something fallen apart in your life? I am not talking about a structure you got mad and purposely blew up, I am speaking of an unexpected crumbling of something that you thought would stand. I am sorry if we as a ministry, or if I as a pastor, failed you in some way. Perhaps we could have helped you hold it together, if not, perhaps we could have prepared you better for the fall. But still, might I suggest that through Christ, the crumbling in your life might be a beginning and not an ending? Maybe the great stones are not the rubble of our past, but the raw material for our future.

Maybe when everything has been torn apart, there is only one thing left to do: build it back. Perhaps even as we enter this New Year, could it be that something in your life has crumbled? Perhaps you are just trying to make sense of life and move forward when who or what you previously counted on is no longer there? How do you keep yourself together when it looks and feels like everything is being lost? What do you do when your life and world are falling apart? I know what those times are like. I've been there, too. I suspect at one time or another we've all come to moments when we asked ourselves, what do I do now?

So, my message is two-fold. First, we must strive to keep the important structures in our life in good repair. Any little crack or crumble should be quickly mended. You must do this in your marriage, in your friendships, and in your personal testimony. Working together, we must also protect the integrity of our church. Little compromises and soft choices can cause the entire structure to fail. In both cases, we are to take heed to ourselves, to make sure we are not a part of the problem; perhaps we are contributing to the fall.

Secondly, if something good, something that should be honoring to God, has already crumbled in our lives, we must build it back. There are relationships that can be built back. There are some Christian institutions that have crumbled, yet still have enough life left in them that they can be built back, if enough people are willing to try.

I would not want to lead my family over a crumbling bridge, nor would I wish to take them to a crumbling church. I would not want to lead my children into a crumbling building, yet it is equally dangerous to rear them in a crumbling marriage. So, I must continue to work hard to protect our Christian infrastructure.



Dr. Worthington has been in the ministry nearly fifty years and serves as President of Pathway Ministries and Christian Bible College.











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Both Albert Einstein and Steve Jobs were incredibly brilliant and successful men. Their impact on the world in their respective fields will be remembered forever. Beyond being brilliant and successful, they share something else in common...

Albert Einstein was known for his mad scientist hair. It turns out that Einstein didn't think combing his hair was worth the time because he had many more important things to do. So, he just chose not to do it.

Similarly, Steve Jobs was known for wearing the same outfit every day - blue jeans with a black turtleneck. The reason that Jobs did this was to reduce decision fatigue - the mental energy that is spent on making even



small decisions. By wearing the same thing every day, he had more mental capacity and perhaps more actual time to devote to other, more important things.

Albert Einstein and Steve Jobs both understood one fundamental truth: Sometimes we must cut some things out of our lives to make space for other, more important things. This is a truth that Jesus would agree with wholeheartedly. This is also a truth that is more important for us in our current cultural moment than perhaps any other point in the history of the world. It is not only our schedules that are full, but our budgets are full as well. Many of the things that we fill our schedules with cost money. Sometimes a lot of money.

Adding to our anxiety over the past few weeks, we had to add holiday gatherings, work parties, and year-end deadlines to our already busy schedules. Life gets so full so quickly. Amid these busy schedules, the expenses, and

the stuff that fills our lives, many people would have to acknowledge that their lives are not giving them the results they seek.

The New Year is a great time to take an inventory of our life, our schedule, and our budget. Perhaps we need to ask the Lord where we might need to create some space. Could it be that there are some things we need to say no to so we can say yes to Him?

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

Matthew 6:33

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Resolutions and Distractions

Some people are big on New Year's Resolutions. Others, not so much. Many of us are self-aware enough to know we've made them in the past and have not stuck to them, so there may not be a point to making new ones again.

Resolutions are not a bad thing. They can be made at any time, and many would argue that the only bad thing is waiting until a certain day or future date to start making a change. After all, if a change needs to be made, why not start immediately?

The Christian walk is no different. When a change needs to be made, there is no need to wait. Have you offended someone? Don't put off seeking forgiveness. Do you need to improve your prayer life and spend more time talking to the Lord? Go ahead and plan out an extra few minutes of time tonight to do just that. Need to spend more time reading His Word? Just do it! Need to start tithing? Start at the next church service you attend.

There are so many times we make things more complicated than they need to be. There are people that like to plan. They will spend more time looking for reminder apps on their phone, special calendars, and other planning organizers in preparation to "free up time" or "schedule time" to pray or study God's Word than they actually spend praying and studying.

No, planning is not a bad thing either. In fact, planning is how most of us stay organized enough to keep our finances on track, make time for family functions, keep our businesses running, etc. However, so much work shouldn't go into planning that we neglect to complete the very things we are planning for.

Just as was stated on the previous page, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matthew 6:33)

Put God first. Just do it. Start right now. There's no need to spend three days looking for the perfect Bible app to do that. Sure, you might find the perfect study tools later on that really help, but don't wait for that. All of that planning could just be a distraction from the enemy to slow down your momentum. And scheduling out time for the Lord is awesome, but we all know how quickly distractions can take over and that precious time we thought we had has passed before we know it.



"What do you want to be when you grow up?" is often asked to young children. Common answers were firemen, policemen, or other heroes. Many children would sometimes say "a mommy or a daddy." Strangely enough, it a question that should be asked to many adults.

When a beautiful lady came into my life years ago, I thought to myself, "I want to be like her." She was and still is the most gracious person I have ever met. When she walked through the doors of the academy, I had no idea how she would affect my life. She had been homeschooling her children and wanted to send them to the academy. We hired her as our preschool teacher, but she played many roles for the fourteen years she worked with us.

I will call her Mrs. James. The more I learned about Mrs. James the more I began to admire her. She had fibromyalgia. If you know anything about this disease, it can

be debilitating. Mrs. James was the kind of person that spread sunshine everywhere she went. Her glow was obviously not only on the outside but it came straight from her heart. It was not an act because it was consistent and real. Her family would testify of her love and grace, even in the home. Mrs. James had a hard life. She grew up in foster homes and had a tough time. She was in an abusive environment, but we would never have known any of this from her behavior.

Every morning, she had a pleasant greeting for everyone, and she loved those children. Mrs. James could discipline the children with love and grace, yet they knew to behave. As time passed, it became painful for the children to give her hugs, but she never turned them away. The older children noticed her countenance, too. Many times I had students ask me, "Why is Mrs. James always happy?" I said she has Jesus in her heart. It was a wonderful time to witness.

Mrs. James was very observant. If she noticed someone having a hard day, she immediately became her encourager. I would find a Bible verse that addressed exactly what I needed on my desk. Her very presence was an encouragement.

As we became closer, I began to be able to read her better. She could be smiling all over, but on her bad days, I could see it in her eyes. Others may not have noticed, but that was my cue that she needed encouragement, too. I always tried to be an encourager, but I never achieved as she did. Our teachers always had different chores to do. As time progressed, certain staff members picked up her chores. She protested, but I knew she was grateful. She eventually went to parttime until her body would not let her work at the academy any longer. One of the amazing things about Mrs. James was when she retired, she had banked fifty sick days. I am certain she had more than that, but that is the highest we could bank. She spread life everywhere she went. She is still spreading life through counseling those in need.

I thought, "Why aren't more people like Mrs. James?" I realize we all have different temperaments and personalities, and her methods of dealing with children would not always work with teenagers. Meekness and gentleness fruits of the spirit, so all Christians possess them, but we don't always manifest them. So yes, we are all different, but should we not bring life everywhere we go. **Deuteronomy** 30:15-16, 19 teaches that we must choose. God is telling us to follow His commandments. If we do not, we are choosing death. It is a choice we all have to make. We can only be blessed if we follow God.

We did a study in our devotions at school on the eagle and the buzzard. It was not my idea, but when something is good it bears repeating. I asked the students what animals remind you of life (positivity) and what animals remind you of death (negativity). You can imagine the list we came up with. We discussed why the animals on the list caused that reaction in us. The two we narrowed it down to were the eagle and the buzzard. In our comparison, the eagle looks for life and the buzzard searches for death.

An eagle only looks for things that are alive as he hopes to find a fresh fish or a small bird for his meal. In comparison, we often see the buzzard or vulture circling overhead when something is dying waiting for his meal. We discussed fully the qualities that bring life and the qualities that bring gloom to a room.

What was the point? I often tell my students without introspection we cannot grow. Do we as Christians bring life to others or death? Do we look for the worst in others or the best? Do we base our decisions on what is best for others or for ourselves? Do we spread bad news or good news more quickly? Are we an encourager or a discourager? I could continue, but I think we get the point.

Most of us are somewhere in the middle, but we do know some people who make you feel tired to be around. As good as Mrs. James is, she is not perfect. I am still working on myself and sometimes I feel that I go backwards instead of forwards. But Mrs. James was not looking at a person to be her role model. She was looking to Christ. She had not arrived either, but she was on the right course, and she is still trying to encourage people. She chose who she wanted to be when she grew up. She wanted to be like Christ.

It is a choice we make in life. As it says many places in the Scripture, we have to choose our reactions and our decisions in life. We must decide who we will follow. If we are His, our testimony should shout it to the mountain tops. *I John 2:6* states, He that saith he abideth in Him ought Himself to walk, even as He walked. If we are Christians, we should genuinely act like it.

So who do I want to be like when I grow up? Yes, I am still trying to grow up. I have grown over the years, but I still have so far to go. I want to be like Jesus. Make me like you, Lord. Please make me like you.

Shouldn't that be our goals during the New Year and for all the years to come. Won't you let Him live through you? Don't you want to be like Jesus?

Prayers For a Happy and Blessed New Year!



Dr. Worthington has five children and twelve grandchildren. She serves as Principal of Pathway Christian Academy in Goldsboro.



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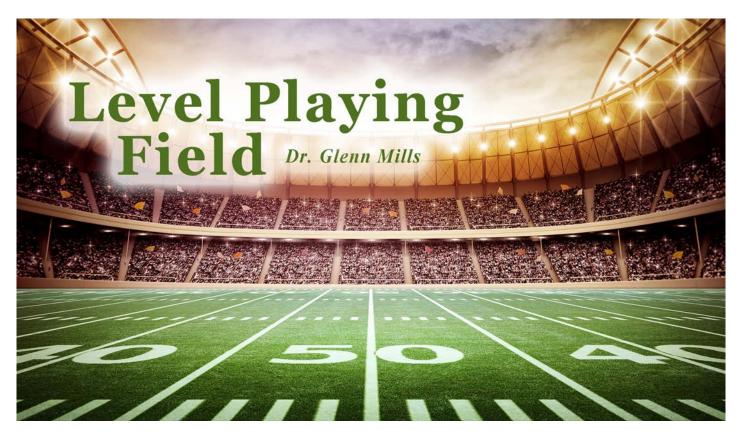
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"That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."

John 17:21

I am sure most of us can remember as a small child being called an ugly name by another child. You may have said what a lot of children said in reply, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me." Those words could have been heard almost daily out on the playground. The sad thing is that eventually most of us found out those words just are not true. Why? Because words and names can hurt, and most times they hurt so severely, we are still affected by them on into our adulthood.

God created by words. God said something and it was. When He said, "Let there be light;" there was light. When God created man, He gave him creative power by the words he spoke. The Bible says, God brought all the animals before Adam to see what he would name them (Genesis 2:19). Words and names give identity to people, places, and things. As children, we learn about the world around us by words and names. I love seeing my grandchildren identifying different animals and making the sounds those animals would make. The fact is, we live in a world that is completely identified by words and names.

Many times, people have received honor they did not deserve simply because of their last name. At the same time, others have been denied the honor they deserved due to their last name. Over the years, I have experienced this sad truth by seeing children of prestigious people receive benefits others did not receive, simply because of their name. History has been plagued with such thinking and behavior. It was because of this type of thinking that slavery was accepted in our country, the deplorable treatment of the American Indians was allowed, and the Holocaust happened, to name a few.

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

While many know these words to be a part of the Declaration of Independence, some do not apply or practice them. Sadly for many, the phrase, "all men" referred to only men of position and power. Regrettably, there are Christians who consider themselves superior to sinners who don't know Christ, just because they are called Christians. This shows they have religion and not a relationship with God. But thanks be to God Almighty, Who established a level playing field. The Bible says that ALL our righteous acts are as filthy rags in the sight

of God (Isaiah 64:6). It also warns that no man think of himself more highly than he should, lest pride bring him destruction (Romans 12:3). Even when the Bible mentions the relationship between masters and servants, it was to be a relationship of respect and honor towards each other (Colossians 3:22, 4:1). Satan uses words and names to build pride and selfishness. God uses words and names to build humility and selflessness.

Regardless of what our parents named us, or what the world calls us, we have all been given a name by God, "Child of God." What greater name can we receive than to be called a child of the Most High God? It is a name and position we truly did not deserve but were given by grace. With that name we have all the resources of Heaven when we need them. We have power over Satan and favor with men. We have the peace of God comforting us, the joy of God filling us, the Spirit of God leading us, teaching us, and strengthening us. But mostly, we have the love of God caring for us.

Jesus, our brother, shares everything with us (Romans 8:17). If we call Jesus "Lord," then we can truly call God

"our Father." We are His children. It does not matter who your earthly parents are, nor who the world says you are. We are children of God. The only name greater is that of Jesus. Stop allowing Satan or the world to name you. Realize who you are, and Whose you are. You belong to God. You are His special child. All He has is ours, and all we have is His. All through the day, repeat this phrase, "I am God's child and He is my Father."

When you truly accept that name and those words to describe you, then both boldness and humility will flood your mind and heart, and God can do great things with you and through you.

"... and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it."

Revelation 2:17



Dr. Glenn Mills is a long time supporter of GoMix Christian Radio and a full-time Evangelist with Glenn Mills Ministries. More information is available at www.glennmillsministries.com





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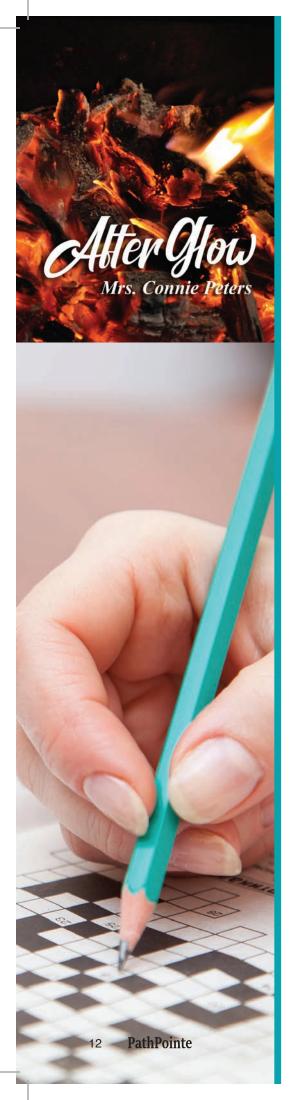


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Finding Balance

One aspect of growing older that has always appealed to me was the prospect of extra time to fellowship with God, enjoy God's creation, and catch up on my reading. Now that I am reaching an age that allows me to cut back on some of my responsibilities, I am finding that I really have to be deliberate in using my time in ways that will accentuate my spiritual growth. I don't always find the right balance.

A big temptation for me comes because I love to solve puzzles, and in so doing, strengthen and maintain my mental ability. I fight the daily battle between being still while learning more of my Saviour and solving a variety of seemingly unsolvable puzzles. I know that in itself there is nothing sinful about filling in squares with the numbers 1-9 exactly once in each row, column, and 3x3 grid, and I find it mentally stimulating. But I also realize that I could spend hours on that and similar endeavors. Surely, I reason, I am much more useful to God with optimum mental capacity. Why am I so much more easily distracted from fervent prayer than from conquering a conundrum? So, as you can see, the battle for balance is a difficult one for me. However, recently my computer refused to load the puzzles that I liked. Assuming that was a result of divine intervention, I did some serious soul searching.

An internet search for tips on time management states the obvious: Stop wasting time and get to work. Not only did I find no effective answers, but I also wasted time searching. Since then, I have successfully limited some of my puzzle time. I don't know that I will ever totally withdraw, but I have been able to control the time I spend to some extent by spending time with my Creator first and setting time limits on my mental stimulation.

Whether it is social media, TV programs, movies, sports, or some other interest, I suppose we all deal with some form of distraction that takes more of our time than we should spend. Redeeming the time involves finding that elusive balance. Perhaps this is a good time to try to balance the time we spend

on good things and the time we invest in better things.

Ponder that.

Mrs. Connie Peters has two children and resides in Princeton, NC. She serves as an instructor at Pathway Christian Academy in Goldsboro.



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