

Saying No To Good Things ...

Hampton, VA -- Why would anybody say no to good things? Sounds crazy doesn't it? Yet I think it is imperative to say no to good things so that we can say yes to the best things. I know many of you have heard this statement but I wonder if we have really thought much about this idea. Better yet have we ever sought to actively implement this idea?

When it comes to missions, churches are notorious for trying to say yes to everything that comes along. Many are afraid to say no for fear they are being disobedient to God. Take for example the church that came last week to attend a seminar on missions advocacy. During the seminar we had taken great pains to stress the idea that a church cannot do it all when it comes to missions. We shared the idea that each church needs to focus their money and strategy efforts in areas where they are strongest in order to be effective in their outreach.

This was a very different concept to them. The feedback we received from the pastor of that church was that they felt they needed to do a lot of stuff in many different areas of ministry. They felt the Bible taught that God wants us to do it all. This echoes the sentiments of most churches I deal with. The result of this philosophy is that many churches ping from place to place, project to project and never see lasting results.

This is not what Jesus did. Jesus was focused in His efforts. Look for example at the story of the Syrophenian woman. Don't worry I didn't know this story was called this until I looked it up. This story is in Mark 7:24f and Matthew 15. Anyway, there was a woman whose daughter was demon possessed. She came to Jesus asking Him to heal her daughter of this demon.

Jesus response was not what one would expect. A basic paraphrase of His response is that Jesus said "it is not proper to give what is Holy to dogs". He stated that He was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. She was not of the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Wow what a statement. To some it may appear cruel.

You see He still loved her, and Jesus did go ahead and heal her daughter. The thing to notice is that He had a plan to carry out and He had a strategy. He stayed true to that strategy by focusing His efforts on Israel. My personal opinion is that He desired to stay focused on His task because He knew that down the road it would result in what was best for all. Jesus was willing to say no to a good thing so that he could concentrate on that which is best. He did send the demon out but He then returned to His focus.

Many churches could learn a good lesson by looking at what Jesus did. Not too long ago a young man called me asking if he could come to LBC to share about his ministry. He was not a member of LBC and had never been to our church. Additionally his Para church organization had nothing to do with our strategy for missions here at LBC. After a discussion I shared that we would not let him come to share about his ministry. He wanted to share so that he could gain money from our church and its people. He was quite taken back when I refused to let him come. Most churches would be willing to let him come and share the ministry. In his frustration he stated, " you mean you are not open to hearing about this great ministry?" Of

course the term "not open" was meant to make me feel guilty and therefore give in to his request.

At that moment God reminded me of the awesome work He is doing among our people in the Missions Daystar ministry, in Chad, Morocco, and in the Middle East. Also with our missionaries all around the world and here at home. My response to this young man was, "I guess I am not open to you coming. To do so would mean we would dilute our ministry that God has given us here at LBC. So I will say no to a good thing in order to do the best things that God has called us to do".

Christian we must not fall prey to the idea that it is best to do a lot of missions work. That is a lie of satan meant to build our ego. Doing a lot can keep us from doing the best job in those ministries that God brings our way. My prayer for LBC is that we can understand and stand firm in the principle that focus and quality are better than quantity.

LBC has a vital, growing, and cutting edge missions ministry. We are actively following God's leading toward some awesome missions opportunities. When a Para church group or an individual desires to partner with us and their ministry is not in the strategy which He is calling us to, then we need to have the courage to say no to the good ministry to be able to say yes to the best ministry for us.