

"Where are you?" 8 Questions: The State of the Union January 13, 2008 - Skip MacMillan

Purpose – to glorify God and enjoy Him forever

Vision – to love God and people according to the Scriptures

Mission – to accomplish this through Worship, Evangelism, Community, and Discipleship

Purpose is to get us rightly focused, and to challenge and encourage us to focus our lives on these priorities.

Ask yourself, "Where am I?" Am I in the same place as twelve months ago?

We want you to be challenged out of apathy, laziness, and distance between you and God, stagnation

We want you to be encouraged; see what God has done, and is doing, and that He is moving in your life.

1. Do you feel more spiritually mature and closer to the LORD than a year ago?

God and You, must be the #1 question. Why?

He is the One worthy of all worship, time, praise, attention and glory.

"There is but one only, living and true God, who is infinitely in being and perfection, a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts or passions, immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, most wise, most holy, most free, most absolute; working all things according to the counsel of His own immutable and most righteous will, for His own glory; most loving, gracious, merciful, long suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity and transgressions and sins; the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him; and withal, most just, and terrible in His judgments, hating all sin, and who will by no means clear the guilty" -Westminster Confession of Faith 2.1

We must know who He is.

Christianity is all about God

He is truth, He has the answers, He is hope, He is our security, He is our forgiveness, He is the one who gets you through another day, He is the provider of dreams and life itself; therefore He is first. He is the one mover of men, conforming and transforming our lives into His likeness

Conformed: Romans 8:29; Transformed: 2 Corinthians 3:17-18

Inward conformity to Christ (heart and soul) not simply outward behavioral conformity.

Gradual change into the likeness of Christ--we will one day have the likeness of Christ, this is our "glorious destiny" -Robertson.

We must understand what He has done (His acts) in history and for you personally.

*"Spiritually mature, closer to the Lord: I don't know about the mature part, but I definitely feel that I have grown closer to the Lord this past year. My prayer life is more consistent, and my time spent in reading/studying Scripture has increased quite a bit. This has led, not surprisingly, to personal growth as I come to know God more through His word. I have been a believer for over 33 years, but have always struggled with believing that Christ died for **me** and loves **me**. I had no problem with Him doing this for others; it was just Him doing this for me that I had a hard time accepting. Over the past month, during my time of devotions and in worship, it gradually dawned on me that I was being ridiculous. Either I accept Scripture as the inerrant word of God, or I don't. It is very clear that He loves me enough to die for me, and I can do nothing to deserve it; it is grace and grace alone. It is finally sinking in. I can't tell you how wonderful that is!"*

Scripture, "Has your Scripture reading (contemplating and understanding) increased, stayed the same or decreased?" Why is this important?

"For it is certainly the case that the Word of God, read or preached, has the power to enter the innermost crevices of a person's being, to shine light in unwanted places, to explode the myths and

deceits by which fallen life sustains itself, and to bring that person face to face with the eternal God. It is this Biblical Word which God uses to bring repentance, to excite faith, to give new life, to sustain that life once given, to correct, nurture, and guide the Church" (and you) -David Wells.

Here is what you would miss out on:

- Understanding the greatness of God - Deuteronomy 4:32-40; 1 Timothy 1:17
- Forgiveness and freedom found through Jesus Christ - Colossians 1:19-20 and Galatians 5:1
- That God is with you and fights for you - Exodus 14:13-14

You won't know this if you're not reading the Scriptures.

There is something so powerful when God speaks to you through Scripture; it speaks to you heart and mind.

Prayer: "Has your prayer life increased, stayed the same or decreased?"

9:30 Sunday Prayer Time, Small Groups, Prayer and Fasting time

"Something else that has been good is the prayer and fasting days. That has made me take that discipline more seriously (not that I have gone the entire day without food--I am not there yet), and recently when I wanted to pray about something specific, I decided to delay breakfast (not an easy thing for me). Because we had already had two fasting/prayer days, it didn't seem so scary or overwhelming, more of a routine thing. I am actually looking forward to the next one."

2. Have you felt challenged to grow in your relationship with Christ?

It is OK not to know everything; the truth is no one does - we are all learning.

Not OK to let things slip and be neglectful.

Move into the awkward, unknown, the difficult, God is calling you in.

Take one day at a time; over time you begin to connect the dots, people, places and issues.

3. Is your marriage stronger than a year ago? (By stronger I mean good conversations, honesty, confession, laughing, praying, time together, etc.)

2nd Most important part of your life, more than your job, career, parents, even your children.

God and His Church is our example: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her . . ." (Ephesians 5:1).

Opportunity to be known, loved, forgiven, transparent, vulnerable and to be an example and testimony to God.

Every time we deal with this issue something happens. Why? Because it is so important to so many areas: you, your spouse, children, church, work, community and as a witness for God.

I'm sure even without knowing specifics that you and I need more attention, effort, and focused time given to our marriages.

Good conversations = the two of you without distractions (kids, TV, Laptop); needs to be regular habit. Saying what you're thinking, feeling, dreams, concerns and the good feelings you have toward each other.

"Mine and my wife's conversation, in the past year, has grown to include more and more spiritual things. We've grown together as we struggled to grow in our faith by studying the Word and its implications to our doctrinal views."

Time together

"We've been better about carving out date nights and times to read together, talk, share thoughts. And we're learning more and more to give grace to each other!"

4. Is your relationship with your children stronger than a year ago? (By stronger I mean better connected, scheduled times together, talking, goofing off, praying, discipling, etc.)

"Yes. I am dreading the day when he's a teenager and he realizes I'm not that cool."

They are the future. Set them up to know God, to have real and genuine hope, strength and purpose.

How?

Fun - A new skateboard, golfing, kayaking, websites, exploring.

Discipling – revealing Christ to them via teaching them how to pray and why pray, caring for other people less fortunate, reading and thinking about what the Bible says, develop a respect and love for God, live sacrificially, generously and humbly.

Time – a regular time to be together (I know I'm really listening when I'm asking questions).

"Our kids are young-4 yrs and 15 months, yet I am realizing how important it is to establish one on one 'dates' with my older child. Even though I'm a stay at home mom and with her every day, she longs for our 'girls day' we try to have monthly, just us."

"I think it could be better if I could stop being so busy and spend more time playing games with them and just chatting. The morning is a mad rush but at least I am not yelling at them like I was. There just isn't enough time with them!"

5. Do you feel closer to the body of Eternal than a year ago?

Moving beyond false barriers:

"We have only been at Eternal since July. Honestly, it was a big change for us. We came from a PCA church previously (and) we were used to a more traditional style of worship, but it's been a (good) challenge to realize the settings, style, dress, is not what makes a church body home."

Expectations:

"I feel much closer to a core group of people, but I still feel surfacy with a lot of people in our body. I don't know if it is because of a lack of opportunity to know each other, or what. But, on the other hand, I feel much closer with the leadership, people on the worship team, the guys in my small group, and some families I have bonded with! I feel the unity of Christ with these people!!!"

You commit to build some relationships yourself, say hello, invite over for lunch, get some coffee. Be creative: Trans-Siberian Orchestra, Karaoke Night, boating, golfing, etc.

Limitations, a person can only have so many relationships; immediate family, extended, Eternal, friends from the past, and neighbors.

Eternal: We need to create opportunities for us to get to know each other.

We need to continue teaching and encouraging each other about community, loving our neighbor.

We have some work to do in this area and we need your ideas and help.

6. Do you feel better connected to the surrounding community than a year ago?

"Eternal has given me opportunities to serve the community...through "Taste of the Town," Sweet-Treats outings, and meetings downtown. There are so many opportunities to get connected to the community through our church. I wish I could partake in more of them!"

7. How would you write a current job description for being a member at Eternal?

"I think to be a member at eternal you should engage the body in relationship. You should be open to how God can use you and the gifts He has given you to encourage and challenge the body to

become more and more of what God has for it. . . I think membership, as in any relationship, will be what you put into it. You can be a member and not be connected and not have relationships within Eternal, but I think that says more about what you have done to build them than what Eternal as a body has done. I think if you are open then there are plenty of people and opportunities for relationship.

8. If you are not more spiritually mature than a year ago, what do you think Eternal and you can do to change that in 2008? Give us your thoughts.

"Mostly what challenges me to grow is that I do not just want to be 'making it through' my days. I want to be someone who has seen Jesus, and who wants to go tell other people. I want to be someone who encourages rather than complains all the time. I want my children to look back on their childhood and think how happy it was, and for my husband to be loved and encouraged. I cannot do any of this without reading Scripture and praying all the time and singing. I do not think I am there yet, but I will 'press on' ".

Conclusion:

Carry these question with you throughout the year.

You have one run at this life

"Change" means you do things differently.

The state of the union is that the glass ceiling is breaking up, God is unearthing and dealing with issues that would prevent future growth, He is at work, we are in the beginning stages of His work. He is calling us to grow together as a church, challenging apathy, status quo, calling us to live not in comfort or convenience but with Him and for Him; He is calling us to worship, evangelism, community and discipleship; He is calling us to be generous, sacrificial, and to take seriously our God and our lives.