

God, Abraham, and Long Range Planning, #2

Genesis 15:13-15

Introduction:

- A. Properly understood and managed, time is easily one of our best friends. Poorly appreciated and mismanaged, it becomes a formidable enemy. Peter Drucker, among others, has made it quite plain that the issue of time is at the very base of one's effectiveness as a leader and manager. In his book, *The Effective Executive*, he is careful to remind us that time is inelastic - it can't be stretched; irreplaceable - it can't be reclaimed; and indispensable - things cannot be done without it (*Leadership*, Fall 1981, Volume II, Number 4, page 101),
- B. Planning is an essential ingredient of time management.
- C. "He who fails to plan, plans to fail."
- D. "What made you put off your wedding for two days?"
"I figured out that my silver wedding anniversary would come out on a Saturday and I always play golf on Saturday" (*3,500 Good Jokes for Speakers* by Gerald F. Lieberman, page 361).
- E. Principles.
 - 1. God is often late according to human standard time, but always on time according to God's sovereign time.
 - 2. God will supply all our needs on time (GST).
 - a. Materially.
 - b. Spiritually.
 - c. God will give us leaders when we need them.
 - d. Motivation. Philippians 2:12,13
 - 3. In planning, God's will is the most important consideration. James 4:13-15
- F. Notice God, Abraham, and long-range planning.
 - 1. God called Abram and promised to bless him. Genesis 12:1-7
 - 2. Abram questioned God's promise. Genesis 15:1-3
 - 3. God renewed his promise. Genesis 15:4,5
 - 4. Abram believed it. Genesis 15:6
 - 5. God reminded Abram of His promise. Genesis 15:7
 - 6. Abram asked for proof. Genesis 15:8
 - 7. God gave a demonstration, time flow chart, and a covenant. Genesis 15:9-21
 - 8. Since it was evident that God was going to be late, Abram and Sarai decided to help God. Genesis 16
 - 9. God renewed His covenant with Abram, changed names, and gave Abraham his part of the covenant. Genesis 17:1-14
 - a. Abraham fell on his face and listened to God. Genesis 17:3
 - b. Abraham fell on his face and laughed at God. Genesis 17:15-17
 - 10. Abraham again suggested that it be done his way, on his time instead of God's way in God's time. Genesis 17:18

11. God assured Abraham that He knew what He was doing. Genesis 17:19-22
12. Abraham obeyed God, kept his part of the covenant. Genesis 17:23-27
13. Sarah had to work through her doubts. Genesis 18:1-15
14. God kept His promise. Genesis 21:1-7
15. There were painful consequences resulting from Abraham and Sarah taking over God's business, trying to force GST into HST. Genesis 21:8-21
16. Abraham was tested again and made better grades this time. Genesis 22:1-14
17. God renewed His promises through the Angel of the Lord. Genesis 22:15-18
18. GST works better than HST.
 - a. God only talked with Abram about short-range plans. Genesis 15:13,16
 - i. 400 years.
 - ii. Four generations.
 - b. He was actually looking ahead at least 2,000 years and 4,000 years. Galatians 3:7-9,16-19
 - c. Abraham's doubting, dogged faith is our example because he was willing to eventually work with God's time. Hebrews 11:8-10,17-19

Conclusion:

- A. GST is better than HST.
- B. Gary Thomas writes in *Christianity Today*:

Thinking about eternity helps us retrieve [perspective]. I'm reminded of this every year when I figure my taxes. During the year, I rejoice at the paychecks and extra income, and sometimes I flinch when I write out the tithe and offering. I do my best to be a joyful giver, but I confess it is not always easy, especially when there are other perceived needs and wants.

At the end of the year, however, all of that changes. As I'm figuring my tax liability, I wince at every source of income and rejoice with every tithe and offering check -- more income means more tax, but every offering and tithe means less tax. Everything is turned upside down, or perhaps, more appropriately, right-side up.

I suspect judgment day will be like that (*Leadership*, Spring 1995, Vol. XVI, No. 2, page 48).
- C. Dr. J.B. Gambrell relates a most interesting incident from General Stonewall Jackson's famous valley campaign. It was necessary for the general to get his army across a river one night, so he gave orders to the engineers to make a way for the artillery and wagons to go over. He also called his wagon-master, who was a blacksmith, to headquarters and gave him instructions to get the wagon train across the river as fast as possible.

The engineers went to work in their usual expert manner to devise a bridge. The blacksmith, knowing only that something was to be done in the most practical way, gather a force and with logs and rocks and fence rails improvised a bridge. Between midnight and day he awakened General Jackson and said, "General, we have got all the wagons and artillery across." The astonished general asked, "Where are the engineers?" The blacksmith replied, "They're over there in a tent still drawing pictures and planning a bridge" (*Why Not Just Be Christians?* by Vance Havner, page 66).
- D. Abraham obeyed God. James 2:21-24