

**NBC Devotional
January 5, 2022**

“This is God's Property. Leave It Better Than You Found It.”

I love New Year's Day to instill new habits and to load the operating system for the new year, with upgrades, and get ready to hit the ground running for the first day of work.

The passage I would like to share is 1 John 3.

"What we know is that when Christ is openly revealed, we'll see him—and in seeing him, become like him." (1 John 3:3 from the Message)

There is a cause and effect here. Fix our eyes and minds on Christ. The more we see Christ, the more we become like Him. We become like Jesus when we are filled by Him. If we struggle with Christlikeness, we need to look at Him more, to see Him.

One of my life verses is 1 John 3:16 (from the Message).

"This is how we've come to understand and experience love: Christ sacrificed his life for us. This is why we ought to live sacrificially for our fellow believers, and not just be out for ourselves. If you see some brother or sister in need and have the means to do something about it but turn a cold shoulder and do nothing, what happens to God's love? It disappears. And you made it disappear."

Growing up I spent a lot of time at a church cabin in Pekin, Illinois, at Manville campground. It was a rustic cabin taken care of by volunteers. One year as a kid, I remember seeing a handwritten sign pinned on the cabin door when we arrived that said: "This is God's property – leave it BETTER than you found it." Someone had walked in to that cabin, saw the cabin in disrepair and disorder, was not happy, had enough of that, and decided that others had left it worse off than when they had found it. The sign writer had seen that cabin as God's property that should always be taken care of.

I think this truth is seen here in 1 John 3. It is like each one of us needs to have a sign on our forehead saying: "This is God's property, leave it better than you found it." This has guided me with people and in my realm of responsibility. When I am in a restaurant and the service is not good, I am reminded that they have a sign on their forehead saying, "This is God's property, leave it better than you found it." God put that sign there.

This is a principle that I have had with people, with projects, and can be applied to organizations. My job is to leave people better than I find them, not to get what I want out of them. All projects, people, and organizations need to be left better than when we find them.

Thinking about the NBC team, we each have a job set up for us to contribute. Here are some guiding practices that we will be discussing this year.

1. In your area of responsibility, how can you measure your contribution this year? Am I leaving my area of responsibility better than I found it? Am I moving it in the right direction? How can I measure that contribution?

After you have determined a metric to see if your area of service is improving...consider...

2. What skill do I need to improve so that my contribution can improve? What practice can be improved to help the outcome?

How can NBC help you to improve that skill? The people you serve are God's property. Your area of responsibility has been given to you as God's property.

Here are some examples: Just like musicians listen to other people's music, musicians also need to listen to themselves play, to improve their skill. Pastors need to listen to other pastors preach. Pastors need to listen to their own selves preach. It is still painful for me to listen to myself preach. This practice of listening to myself is how I can improve and get better. To improve a skill, we need an improvement plan, even if it is as simple as listening to one's self.

Can you imagine athletes not listening to game tape to improve? The players themselves sometimes don't understand what happened in a game until they go back and watch the video.

This month... this year... this career... if we can identify a skill that needs improvement, and then think how we can leave it better than we found it... Measure it and figure out what we can do to improve it.

This is a personal value of mine - invest in people to get better. Our team is amazing, and I thank God for who we have. This is something to get us thinking in this new calendar year and we will be talking more on this. Looking back, we want to be able to say I have improved and made a bigger difference in people's lives. "This is God's property, leave it better than you found it!"

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