

Kingdom News

Yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever... (Matt. 6:13)

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Dispensations of Life

As We Know Better ... We're Obligated to Do Better

There are a number of ways to measure life. By years... by tears... by heartache... by happiness ... or by dispensations.... We can measure our life by the number of accomplishments we amass. Or by the amount of devastation in our wake.

One of the ways the Lord measures our lives, is by *dispensations*. For the sake of this discussion “dispensations” are the periods, or windows, of time in which God’s interactions with us change. These dispensations can be construed as stages of maturation. They can also be said to result from the fact that God increases our knowledge of Him (either through some revelation of Himself or through a directive [spoken or implied]; simultaneously increasing His expectation of us). A striking peculiarity of the various dispensations is that, they are reminiscent of being in school. A syllabus (or directive) is given; then we are tested. The test is always, invariably the same. We are expected to comply and align with His (expressed or implied) directive(s) or exposure. And we are given plenty of opportunity to do so. In some dispensations we’re given more opportunity or time than in others. But sufficient opportunity/time is always given. The beginning/end of each dispensation can be calculated differently, depending on the various schools of

Dispensations ...

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The Leadership Corner *Leadership Living, Inc.*

Collaborating with Adversaries

Have you ever had to work closely with people who hated you? No doubt you’ve been in this situation at least once in your life. And as you continue along life’s path, you will surely face it again. So tell me, is it easy to work together with a person that has no respect for you, discounts your contributions, or has a general dislike for you? Usually the answer to this question would be “NO!”

Many people find it difficult to interact with individuals that behave negatively towards them (myself included). However, as leaders that represent God, when we are faced with situations like this we have to find a way to maintain our leadership position when these events arise. God is not glorified when we succumb to circumstances that dishonor Him. On the contrary, when God places us in these types of situations He stands ready to use us to be beacons of light to show godly leadership. As an illustration of this principle, I will share one of my stories.

Recently I was working on a high profile audit. I was the interdepartmental team lead for this project. Periodically throughout the process I had to update the CEO and the Executive Vice Presidents (EVP) on the team’s progress. At one point I submitted a report to the EVPs for their review. After some discussion between the EVPs and the CEO; the project was taken away from me

based on negative comments, one of the EVPs, about the way I had handled it.

To say I was hurt and angry would have been an understatement. Still, I had to remain professional and humble so that God would be glorified. About a week or so later, there were attempts to progress the project without contribution or input from me. Now, mind you, this project is a central part of my organization's responsibilities. As you could imagine, one day my phone rang. It was the CEO calling to request that I again take my rightful place as the team lead for the project because no progress had been made otherwise.

Now, you probably already know that this call caused my temperature to rise considerably. Basically, I'd been publicly embarrassed, openly humiliated, accused of being incompetent, and finally I was privately asked to resume my duties without so much as an attempt at an apology. Sniff ... do you smell smoke? Oh, that would be due to bits of leftover ashes from the silent fire I was breathing during the whole ordeal.

To make a long story short, the Lord reminded me that He caused this entire incident to occur. At no time had the situation gotten out of control (at least not from God's perspective). So, I resumed my position on the team, finalized the project, and had it submitted to the governmental entity on time and according to federal regulations. And, I continued to work closely with the particular EVP that slandered my name as if nothing had happened. I won't lie and say it was easy to do; but I will tell you that it was worth it. Why? God was glorified by the effective leadership I displayed; and it was a growth opportunity for me. So tell me, would it be worth it to you to allow God to be glorified the next time you face a similar situation?

☐ *LL* ☐

Leadership Living, Inc.
Joyce M. White, MSW – CEO
For additional information you may contact us at leadershiplivinginc@yahoo.com

thought on the subject. In my estimation there are "major" dispensations of time and there are "minor" dispensations. Major dispensations are punctuated with events that are far-reaching. Minor (or subset) dispensations are punctuated with events that affected smaller groups, families or peoples.

From the creation of man until our disobedience (i.e., the eating of the forbidden fruit; from the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil) was catalogued as the *Dispensation of Innocence*. During this dispensation Adam had open access to God. He received instruction, as it were, directly from God. Imagine that, God dealt directly with him. For this dispensation the directives were "expressed," as opposed to "implied."

The syllabus included (Gen. 2:15; 16-17; 19, etc. KJV paraphrased):

- Dress and maintain the Garden of Eden.
- Don't eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.
- Name the animals.
- Etc.

The test (Gen. 3:1-5 KJV paraphrased):

- Did God say you couldn't eat of every tree of the garden?
- Never mind that, you won't die if you eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.
- God knows that if you eat of the tree, your eyes will be opened.

After this series of events we (mankind) had changed. Our knowledge and our understanding were different. We had now become exposed to things, concepts, ideas, etc. that had previously been foreign to our experience. We were no longer *innocent*.

That being the case, God could no longer deal with us as He had done before. There was a shift in our proximity to Him. Our levels of intimacy with Him had changed. We had made choices that affected our relationship with Him. We had experienced a different level of maturation, if we could call it that. We had been introduced to the knowledge of good and evil. Along with it came a certain level of responsibility, punctuated by a degree of alienation. Knowledge and responsibility have a direct and parallel relationship. As knowledge increases, responsibility increases proportionally. This is familiar to many of us; especially those who have children. You'll recall that as your child grew and matured, your expectation of

that child, likely, changed in direct proportion to your understanding of their increased levels of maturity and/or knowledge.

The next major dispensation, a period of time approximately from the eating of the forbidden fruit until the flood in Noah’s day (Gen 3:6 to Gen. 9:1) was considered the *Dispensation of Conscience*.

The syllabus included (Gen. 3:11; 16, 18, etc. KJV paraphrased):

- Since you elected not to live by my directives, you will live by your own. Now that you are able to differentiate between good and evil, choose wisely.
- Whereas I was your Governor; Adam was placed governmentally over Eve.
- Whereas I had given trees bearing fruit; you’ll have to work for your supper.

The tests (Gen. 4:1-10; Gen. 6:5-7):

- The offerings of Cain and Abel, to God. One offering was accepted and the other was unacceptable.
- How Cain handled the fact that his offering was unacceptable.
- How man interacted with mankind.
- Essentially man was given the opportunity to make right or wrong choices throughout their lives.

There was no formal law during this dispensation. Man was obliged to make choices based on right and wrong, as revealed in the conscience. We simply lived by what

our hearts or conscience affirmed or disproved. The outcome of that dispensation is written in Gen. 6:5, 11-12 (KJV by reference). The hearts of men were continually irreverent and disobedient. This assessment preceded the flood of Noah’s day, and the coming of the next dispensation; as well as the dispensations that followed.

There are many schools of thought around the interactions of the various dispensations and the lengths of each period; etc. Even so, there is some agreement that there are presumed to be a total of seven dispensations from beginning to the end of time.

- Creation – Dispensation of Innocence
- Creation – Dispensation of Conscience
- Noah’s Days – Dispensation of Human Government
- Abraham’s Days – Dispensation of Promise
- Moses’ Days – Dispensation of Law
- Christ (1st Advent) – Dispensation of Grace
- Christ (2nd Advent) – Dispensation of the Millennial Reign

The concept of dispensations didn’t stop with the last book of the traditional Bible. If we look, I’m sure that we can see marked dispensations in our own lives. For me, these dispensations were punctuated with increased revelation of God: Who He is; what are His expectations of me; and His plan of salvation. For others, these dispensations may be characterized by heartfelt inquiries and curiosities about “Why am I here?” or “What is the meaning of life?” or “Is God real?” or “Was Jesus Christ really more than just a good man?” And any variation of these or other such questions.

In my own life, I can recall a few of my major dispensations. From my birth to salvation (when I accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord), for me that would have been the dispensation of *ignorance*. I didn’t know anything about God, I had learned a few things but there was no personal ownership of knowledge. I accepted and recited what I was taught. I respected what I learned, but I still didn’t know anything. I recall another period or dispensation: from the time just after I became a Christian until “the lights really came on for me.” That would have been the dispensation of *rebellion*. During this dispensation, I pretty much did whatever I wanted to do. I was aware that I should have been more committed to my relationship with God; instead I relied heavily on His

Words of Wisdom from One of My Mentors

Charles G. Finney (1792 -1875)



In God’s moral government, there will need to be a steady, perpetual, and eternal monument upon which the nature, the demerit, the history and the results of sin shall be recorded.



Excerpt from *The Oberlin Evangelist* (Sept. 14, 1842)
 Sermon – God Under Obligation to Do Right (ref. Gen. 18:25)

www.charlesgfinney.com/1842OE/420914_god_obligation.htm For authenticity verification compare to original at www.GospelTruth.net Copyright© 1999, 2000

grace. I knew better. I was presumptuous and disrespectful; I made use of a great deal of the grace of God. You might say I pretty nearly exhausted His grace, if that's possible. During this period, God was extremely kind and gracious to me, indeed. But that was it; there was no additional revelation. Concerning the deep and wonderful things of God, "the lights were off;" I'm talking gross darkness; as is characteristic of rebellion.

Upon entering my dispensation of *rebellion*, I had received sufficient enough revelation of God to invoke a sense of obligation on my part. But I did not submit or comply. Don't get me wrong, I was sure that one day I would comply; it just happened not to be "that" day. There were too many other things competing for my attention, or should I say "captivating my attention." Shamefully, enough, this was a very ...very ... very ... long dispensation. Of the many truths of God manifested during that dispensation, the one that stands out most, for me, is "where sin did abound, grace did much more abound." (Rom. 5:20b KJV paraphrased)

At the end of that dispensation, my experiences had proved a great many things to me. As this paradigm took shape, I really began to know that God was real and that He had real expectations of me on a personal level. When I began to recognize this truth, I had to make a decision about it. What was I going to do, with this new truth? Once apprehended, I could not ever "un"-know it. There was no way for me to return to the blissfulness of ignorance.

Wait a minute ... why are we talking about dispensations anyway? Good question, glad you asked.

Sometimes we pass through our lives and stop to notice that our relationship with God has changed, somewhat. Perhaps it would seem as if He is not as responsive as He had been. Perhaps you are waiting (a very long time) for an answer, from Him. It would be easy to simply agree to sit and wait God's time; as if to hold Him accountable for the delayed response. I'd like, from my experience, to offer a suggestion. Perhaps, you're no longer in the "Garden of Eden" where everything was handed to you. Perhaps you were accustomed to being called to dinner, after the table was set. You've appreciated the increased knowledge and revelation you've experienced, but God just doesn't seem to be moving as quickly these days.

As our knowledge of God, and our exposure to His truths increases; His expectations of us also increases (although in this case, not as proportionally so). We are expected to

walk and talk and carry ourselves in a more spiritually mature way. We are obliged to make full use of the increased knowledge and wisdom afforded to us. The reason we must know this is because absent recognition of this principle, we misjudge God's behavior and interactions with us; thereby placing increased stress on the relationship.

With God, there is never a "something for nothing" transaction with God. When He gives something, He expects something. Righteousness requires this of Him. Ask an investor in the stock market; how long they wait for a return on their investment; before they withdraw? As a parent, how much "wise" investment is made in a child who refuses to grow up and take responsibility for their own life? Ask a CEO or Board of Directors, where is the "line drawn in the sand" for a newly acquired entity that does not return its value? This principle is as true for us as it is for God. Well actually, it truer for Him; but you get the point. When He extends grace, a right response on our part would be gratitude and appreciation. When He reveals truth, a right response on our part would be to align, comply and/or obey.

Let's be sure that we are growing and maturing in knowledge and our responsibility to our relationship with God, as we pass through our dispensations of life.

Mild Reference: The Seven Dispensations – Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth by Dr. C. I. Scofield <http://www.biblelife.org/dispensations.htm> as of 12/1/07



A Journey to Intimacy

Getting to Know Him... Getting to Know Me

The Journey Continues

Of late, I have been meditating on the abundant graces that I have received from God this year. Of my goals for this year, the most important of them have been fulfilled. My whole life has changed as a result of the realization of these goals; preparing me for greater things in 2008.

And with that has come a wondering ... a yearning ... a feeling of responsibility ... to do more ... to give more.

I have been the recipient of so many great things personally, spiritually, professionally, socially, etc. I know that these graces were not given to me, for my personal consumption. In my mind, it is not possible that such blessings are meant to benefit only one person. I am not aware of any good thing in the Bible that God did, for only one person. All of God's graces are meant to bless and benefit as many people as can wisely be advanced by them.

I know that I must sow into the lives of others. As with all things that God gives, I welcome the responsibility. The challenge is that I do not know what the looks like, exactly. Going into 2008, I am asking the Lord's direction on what that means for me ... and for you.

Happy Year End and a Prosperous New Year!!!

See you in 2008.



Bite-Sized Wisdom



Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory forever and ever.

1 Timothy 1:17

SUMMARY

From each of life's dispensations,
we have an opportunity to further
secure our league with God.

Contrary to popular belief we can put
our pride aside and collaborate with our
adversaries.

Grace, bets grace.

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