

01/15/12

Core Strength Part #2 – Planning and Praying for Faith West

- suppose I told you that 18 months from now you were going to receive a tremendous windfall?...
- perhaps you were going to receive a large inheritance...
- or maybe someone is going to give you a lottery ticket (cuz I know you'd never but one) and it is going to turn out to be the big winner...
 - if I was able to tell you that now, what do you think the next 18 months would all be about for you?...
- two answers that come to mind are...the next year and a half would be all about thankfulness...and preparation...
 - thankfulness at the marvelous [and in many ways] unexpected blessing of God...and preparation to be sure you stewarded that blessing properly...you made the very most of what God was going to entrust to you...
- well guess what my friends, it is highly likely that 18 months from now, unless Jesus chooses to return for His people first, our church family is going to open the doors on an incredible gift from God...the facilities and ministries known as Faith West...
- this morning we want to focus on everything that is involved in getting ready...
- with that in mind, let me invite you to open your Bible to Matthew chapter 25...page 21 of the back section of the Bible under the chair in front of you...
- last Sunday we kicked off our new theme of Building Core Strength...
 - and I mentioned that there are a lot of verses in the Word of God that we could use that emphasizes our theme – but one of the ones that really resonated with me was - **Psalm 138:3 - On the day I called, You answered me; You made me bold with strength in my soul.**
 - that's it—core strength...
- we also encouraged you last week to read through this handout which contains our planning initiatives for 2012...and I hope you did that and if you need another copy or you weren't here last week---copies are available at the welcome center...
- but one of the reasons I asked you to do that is because the introduction to this document explains the three primary ways this theme of Building Core Strength is going to emphasized this year:
 - 1. Shoring up foundational areas in our walk with Christ and our church ministries that comprise the basis of godliness and effective community service.**
 - 2. Planning and praying for the construction of Faith West and the successful launch of a cluster of new ministries in West Lafayette.**
 - 3. Preparing for the next round of ministry dreaming as we embark on a new strategic planning process in 2013.**
- those ideas are so important that I'm doing something I've never done before...taking three Sundays to break down and provide biblical background for each of those ideas...
 - because there's never been a time when it was more important for every person attending our church to understand why we're here, and where we're going, and how everyone on the team fits...
 - so last week...- **Core Strength Part #1 - Shoring Up Our Foundation**
 - this morning – **Core Strength Part #2 – Planning and Praying for Faith West...**
- the bottom line is – we're at least on a trajectory of breaking ground on this project this summer – and opening the facility and launching all the associated ministries 18 months from right now...

- so what do the next 18 months need to include?...thankfulness and preparation...
- thankfully God's Word is sufficient, so we have plenty of direction to guide us in this endeavor...let's read selected portions of Matthew 25 and then talk about,
 - I. The Preparation of Core Strength**
 - II. The Investment of Core Strength**
 - III. The Motivation of Core Strength**
- one more quick comment before I read – If you know your Bible well, you know that this is a rather controversial section of Scripture because it alludes to the return of Christ...
 - there are many different views out there about the sequence of the end-time events...
 - we are pre-trib and pre-millennial here – that means we believe Christ is going to return for His church, then there will be a 7 year period of tribulation on the earth as described in the book of Revelation, then Christ will usher in the millennial kingdom in fulfillment of all the OT promises and prophecies not yet fulfilled to His people...
 - however, there are many good men and women who see those issues differently even among our church membership...
 - but, and this is the big point – there are clear, simple, powerful theme in these verses regardless of what specific end-time events you believe are being spoken of here...
 - my goal is to help us benefit from those important themes this am...**read Matthew 25:1-40**
- now, here's what we hope to accomplish with the rest of our time...
 - **To let the key themes of Matthew 25:1-40...**
 - 1. Help us be best prepared to pray intelligently about the ministry opportunities associated with Faith West.**
 - 2. Guide us to consider participating in specific ministries at Faith West and to receive the training necessary now to be best prepared to serve as soon as the facility opens.**
 - 3. Help us be prepared to vote on the final authorization of Faith West on the evening of January 29.**

I. The Preparation of Core Strength

- I realize that if you're not used to studying the Bible, this parable of the wise and foolish virgins may not make a whole lot of sense to you...
- please keep in mind that when we interpret God's Word, we seek to understand it in its original context...
- and in Bible times, weddings were often rather protracted affairs...and part of that had to do with communication...it's not like the groom could send a text and say – I'm 5 minutes away from the church-house...
- so there were three phases in a marriage...the engagement period that was generally arranged by the fathers...
 - and then the betrothal...where there was actually a wedding ceremony...but the couple still did not live together because often the young man had to establish a trade or prepare their home...
 - then at the end of the betrothal there was generally a large feast that often began in the evening and involved the entire village, sometimes lasting as long as a week
 - what triggered that event was the groom and his groomsmen coming to the bride's home where she and her attendants would be waiting....and then together they would parade through the town with lanterns, or better translated torches doused in oil, announcing the beginning of the wedding feast...

- Jesus often told stories like this to illustrate important spiritual truths...and this one is all about the importance of preparation...of being sure you're ready when the Lord returns...
- now you might say – why would the Lord emphasize this at the latter part of His earthly ministry...
- it's because of a very sobering theme that runs throughout the New Testament...and that is that there will always be a mixture in the church of people who generally know the Lord, and people who don't...
 - that's why Jesus told the parable of the tares and the wheat...they grow up together and there is no way to separate them until the harvest...
 - it's why Jesus made shocking statements like the one in **Matthew 7:22-23** - **Many will say to Me on that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?" And then I will declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from me, you who practice lawlessness."**
 - this is why Paul would later say -- **2 Corinthians 13:5** - **Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test?**
 - that's what's happening in this passage of Scripture...the ten virgins looked identical on the outside...in fact they all even had torches...
 - but five of them were not prepared...they were not the real thing...
 - they did not have a genuine relationship with Christ...even though they had been around teaching from God's Word....they had participated in all sorts of activities and events...they had never personalized the gospel for themselves...
- so what are the take-aways for us from a story like this?...
 - A. Be sure of your faith while you have the opportunity to do so.**
 - **Matthew 25:13** - **Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour.**
 - you would not want to be like one of the foolish virgins who had been around the church, or around Christian people of biblical truth, but never had personally repented and believed the gospel....
 - but it doesn't stop there...
 - B. Look for ways to help those around you/us genuinely come to Christ while the opportunity exists.**
 - you hear a story like this and you first ask – am I prepared?...and then if you can answer that properly, you start immediately wondering about those the Lord has placed around you...
 - it's just like the apostle Paul would say of his Jewish brethren -- **Romans 9:2-3** - **that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh,**
 - that is the heart cry of a genuine believer who would not want anyone within his sphere of influence end up being unprepared like one of these foolish virgins...
- and so the upshot is...
 - C. Be on the alert.**
 - **Matthew 25:13** - **Be on the alert**
 - for ourselves and those the Lord has placed around us...

- now let's just tie that back to what we emphasized last week...
 - we were talking about how God was stretching us...He's sovereignly allowed all of this residential development to be occurring within a half mile of our church...much of it high density development...
 - we have an unprecedented opportunity to serve our new neighbors and be prepared to welcome them as they would visit or church or participate in one of our ministries...
 - but that's invariably going to reveal weaknesses...either in our individual lives or in our corporate ministries together...
 - and the question is—are we going to let the stretch help us identify aspects of our core strength that need to be shored up?...are we going to embrace the stretch...to welcome it?...
- well, some people went home and took that admonition to heart...
 - they evaluated the genuineness of their own faith...and then maybe they said – you know I'm going to be more purposeful in my study of Scripture because if the Lord is going to bring new people our way – I want to know my Bible better so I can be in a position to win and disciple those who come...
 - that is a person who is like a wise virgin – who wants to be well-prepared and be in the best position to help others achieve the same condition...
 - others went home and said – you know, I don't wake up on a Sunday morning and pray for those the Lord might be bringing to church for the first time, and help my family to come to God's house expecting an opportunity to be a blessing to someone else who may be hurting or even not yet part of the family of God...
 - but I am going to work on helping myself and my family be spiritually alert to opportunities on Sunday and every day – that's how core strength is developed...wise people are willing to do everything they can to be best prepared...
- now let's bring in the next part of this passage...the parable of the talents...how can that help us?...by emphasizing...

II. The Investment of Core Strength

- here's three different servants whose master has gone away for a period of time and entrusts each one of them with a different amount of money...different levels of resources...well, would it be safe to say as you look around the room at the gifts and abilities that...
 - A. God has chosen to unusually bless us.**
 - and it completely defies human explanation...like God's work so frequently does...
 - **Matthew 25:14-15 - For *it is* just like a man *about* to go on a journey, who called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them. To one he gave five talents...**
 - there's absolutely no explanation given for what He chooses to entrust to whom...
 - but the point is clear...
 - B. Faithful stewards risk and reinvest what God has entrusted to them.**
 - please don't miss the overall logic of this passage...
- if you're prepared to meet Christ and you are concerned about helping others be in that position as well, you will be like one of these two faithful servants...
- **Matthew 25:16 - Immediately the one who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and gained five more talents.**
- that simple verse encapsulates so much of what is involved in faithfully serving God...

- he did it immediately...there was urgency to it...too many Christians want to sit around and talk about it some more...
 - there's a time for talking, and a time for action – wise is the person (literally) who knows the difference...
 - he also traded what was given – literally “put it out in the marketplace”---which involves reasonable risk...you cannot live in a way that is consistent with the point of this passage without factoring that idea into your heart...
 - the safest, most conservative, risk-free plan is not always the will of God...in fact I would say it seldom is...just ask the guy who received one talent in this story how that approach worked for him...
- now, we have enough on the table to turn our attention to Faith West...
 - what's this project all about...
 - in our five year strategic ministry plan, we decided as a church family back in 2008 that one of our keystone initiatives would be to purchase a piece of property as near the Purdue campus as we could and build a biblical counseling and student ministry center...
- so we've been working on that for some time together...we've actually had three different pieces of land under contract...all of them on Northwestern...
 - two small lots right across from Mackey Arena – the city really viewed that like us trying to put 10 pounds of potatoes in a 5 pound sack...
 - then we moved up the road to Smittys and executed a purchase agreement at that site...
 - but they have had ongoing environmental problems that prevented them from fulfilling the contract
 - so then we started looking at the old Family Inn site...
 - and our leadership team will tell you that at the beginning, I was not in favor of this site because it was very expensive...even though the price had come down to less than half of the amount of liens against the land before the economy went sour...
 - but two primarily ideas changed my thinking...
 - one, when one of our deacons asked if this property was large enough that we could begin offering worship services on Sunday there...
 - two, when our team came up with an approach that makes the project financially self-sustaining...meaning the worship services and other church-related ministries are essentially funded by other activities on the site...
 - so last fall our church family voted to purchase the land which we've done...
 - then in November our church family made commitments to our three year Spreading the Word Capital Campaign of over 3.3 million dollars...that coupled with cash that is being invested from our various ministries for equity and equipment brings the total amount of cash investment on our part to over 4 million dollars...
 - that was very impressive to our bank and the local officials who are willing to provide support for a tax exempt bond issue on the debt service at Faith West...
 - that's almost unheard of in this economy...but the reason that piece is so important is because it gives us access to interest rates that are projected to be 1.82% after cash stabilization based on today economic conditions...
 - a commercial loan for a non-profit organization at an interest rate like that is a minor miracle...
 - and the beauty of it is, even a very conservative approach to the leases from the student housing and other ministry activities during the week easily drive the debt

service...meaning the worship services and other church ministries can be conducted at little or no cost to us...

- so Faith West is a 10 million dollar project with our church family investing 40% equity on the front end...
- and of course we've been talking about all of this in these many congregational input and informational meetings all fall – I hope you've been taking the time to attend them...our 50 pastors, deacons, and interns have been studying all of this for months now—and just recently passed a unanimous recommendation to proceed with Faith West...
- now, let's walk through the facility...
 - and let's talk about how you can pray, and how you can plan to participate...
 - and please keep in mind what we've studied...the preparation of core strength, and the investment of core strength...
- when we decided to purchase this site, one of our first steps was to get together with the neighbors and ask them that since we were dealing with a larger piece of property, what ministries we might be able to start that would be a blessing to them...
- we also held brainstorming sessions with our college students and our church family...that's how all of this came to be...
- one of the first prayer requests is for our relationship with our neighbors...
- right now they are strongly in favor of this...the walking trail around the perimeter and the playground in the back were amenities they requested...just like our community park behind the community center...
- understand that one of the previous developments that was actually approved for this site was a 60 million dollar development – speaking of trying to put 10 pounds in a 5 pound sack...so our neighbors appreciate the way we are developing this in a way that is proportional to the size of the lot...
- we also have a information/input night with them this Thursday – please be praying (are you making a prayer list)
- also please be praying for our work with our elected officials, their professional staffs, the attorneys and architects and engineers...
- please begin praying for our relationships with the contractors and workers – and for their safety...
- one of the action steps is that during the period of construction, we will have regular work days to be sure that the jobsite and grounds are kept neat and orderly---that might be a specific way you can serve...
- You'll also notice that we created an outlot that says future retail – we don't have a firm plan for that right now and that possible sale or lease is not baked into our financial model...
- now let's go inside the building...the south corner is devoted to childcare...so we'll have a pre-school during the week...for several reasons...
 - it serves the community – that's one of the ministries our neighbors requested...
 - it provides an opportunity to serve single moms (who are trying to get a degree at Purdue)
 - it allows us to reach out to the families of international students (who may want to put their child in an American pre-school to learn English and American culture)
 - because we have to have space like that if we are going to offer worship services on Sundays
 - because it generates income...
 - take-aways?...please pray for each of those possible ministry target groups...

- consider classes or mentoring opportunities you might participate in with each target group...for example, the wife of an international student who wants to learn conversation English, or who wants to learn about American cooking, how to bake a pie, our holidays, shopping...simple friendship...
- if we move to the northeast corner – those are areas that are especially designed for our Purdue Bible Fellowship...
- they will finally have a place for their Friday night Bible studies...
- they'll have a comfortable place to hang out during the week...
- take-aways...thanking the Lord for His marvelous provision...we have dreamed and prayed about this for years...let's be sure to thank the Lord...
- the center of the north section is where we anticipate a significant amount of actual ministry occurring...
- the rooms at the edge are designed for both counseling and also group meetings...
- they will have soundproof moveable partitions so we can use them for individual and group counseling...and student can also use them for group meetings for the projects they are doing...
- the lounge area will have comfortable seating, WiFi, and a place for folks to hang out and have solid conversations...
- the northwest corner will be leased to a family who owns and operates a number of local restaurants...
- we are designing a bakery/coffee/sandwich type restaurant themed around the ideas of libraries and learning...
- that concept will actually flow into the student lounge area so the two will open up to one another...
- the take aways there are to thank the Lord for providing the space for offering biblical counseling services (there are also some more private offices in the center of the building]
- but we are also going to need more persons who would like to be trained to do biblical counseling in this facility, or to lead small group Bible studies for college students and neighbors [they can be led by people of all ages]
- the multi-purpose gym will be used for community recreation...just like we're finding at our community center, you can't have enough community basketball and volleyball leagues...it's a great way to get to know our neighbors...
- this is also where we'll have worship services on Sundays...
- the fitness center was something else requested by the neighbors...and we have found that too to be an incredible way to get to know those the Lord has placed around you...
- take-aways...prayer...volunteering to help with the organization of one of the leagues...
- there's so much more that could be said – but hopefully your heart and mind are beginning to think about all the ways we could accomplish our God-given mission in that space – it really is quite amazing...
- of course – that's only the first floor...
- then there's 3 floors of student ministry housing...that would be drug, alcohol, and tobacco free for students willing to sign a code of conduct to follow God's Word in the choices they make...

- the reasons for that...
 - tell the story of Bethany at Ball State
 - think also of the discipling opportunities that could afford with international students...
 - then of course there's the financial aspect...student ministry housing is a great asset for our ministry now, and certainly in the long-range plan of our church...
 - we are creating an asset than will have tremendous value to future generations...
- more questions? – input/information meeting tonight at 6...
- the actual wording of the ballot... ***I am thankful to the Lord for the marvelous opportunity to construct Faith West to begin a new cluster of ministries in West Lafayette. I agree with the unanimous recommendation from our pastors and deacons and I vote in favor of proceeding with the proposal as presented. I acknowledge and understand that Faith West is projected to cost approximately 10 million dollars with an anticipated 6 million dollar debt service with Chase Bank. I also vote to authorize a 5% financial contingency if the income is available and necessary for the completion of the project. Additionally, I vote to authorize the pastors and deacons and/or their designees to execute all documents and take all actions necessary or pertaining to the financing, construction and operation of the Faith West project.***
- now, let's go back to Matthew 25 and wrap all of this together...

III. The Motivation of Core Strength

- it's all right there at the end of chapter 25, isn't it?...
- sure all of this is going to stretch the fire out of us in all sorts of ways...
- but verse 40 says it all...
- **Matthew 25:40** - The King will answer and say to them, "Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, *even the least of them*, you did it to Me."