

Read Through the Bible

Week 5, February 1st - 6th

Readings: Exodus 25 – 40; Matthew 21 – 24:22

Reflections and Questions for Thought

By Noel Fletcher

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I laughed when Pr. Dan asked me if I would like to participate in this project. I said, “Sure. It will be interesting to see where the Holy Spirit leads you in assigning my part.”

I was dazed when I realized how time had slipped away and I was behind schedule with getting this done. To everything there is a time and purpose.

When I first started reading Exodus 25-27, I was overwhelmed by the minutia of details for the Tabernacle, the Ark, the Table, and the Lamp stand. After that came the details for the garments.

At first, I wasn't sure what was the point of so many details. Then the Holy Spirit gradually brought me some clarity. Coincidentally (not really!), the messages in both parts of my assignment parallel my personal life these past few weeks. God has a plan. He knows just how things should be. He expects us to be obedient and surrender to His will and His plan, not to design our own plan for how things should be.

Another point I noticed in God's “specifications” is that he wants only our best. There are frequent references to skilled craftsmen, skillfully woven, fine linen, gemstones, and of course, GOLD in everything from the buildings to the garments. God wants only our very best in all that we do, at home, at work, at play, in life! Through research I learned that the colors He requires are those of royalty.

Later on in Exodus 35 and 36, all of the needed supplies are given willingly, not out of obligation, or duty, or as payment, or with expectation, but willingly! As everyone gave willingly from what they had, they had more than enough to build all that God had commanded them. Hmm, sounds like a recent fundraiser for wells at AELC. Another wonderful detail I noticed is that each person gave as they were able, according to the skills bestowed upon them by God. No one was expected to do everything.

When the people focused on the task at hand, building the temple and all that went with it according to God's plan, they did not stray from His plan and completed the task. Because they were faithful, God blessed them and was with them.

The part of Matthew's gospel that I read started in Chapter 21 with Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on a donkey – pretty humble mode of transportation for the Messiah. This theme of humility continues as Jesus heals the blind and the lame in the temple (21:14). It is the children who are recognizing Jesus as the Messiah (21:15-16).

Next, it is the tax collectors and prostitutes that are going to heaven (21:31-32) because they believe. Next, the rejected stone becomes the corner stone (21:42).

This theme of humility continues on through the wedding parable. The gift of heaven is offered to everyone. Those who are too full of themselves are blinded by their own pride. Those with nothing to lose can see clearly what God is offering to them and choose God.

It all culminates in 23:12 “For whoever exalts himself will be humbled and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.”

As I write this, the Holy Spirit humbly convicts me in my own life these past few weeks. Years of pride at work are bringing me to a painfully humble place. I never took God to work. I figured I had that covered. After all, I had gone to college and gotten a degree. And I had all that

valuable work experience and skill, right? God could help me with my home life, my marriage, my children, my church life.

Well, I missed all the subtle warning signs and now I am at a crucible point in my career. Had I taken God to work years ago, things would probably be very different from how they are today. By taking the credit for my success instead of giving the credit to God, I became prideful and eventually began to lose my effectiveness at doing my job. My pride made me blind to what God wanted me to be doing at work. I am learning that it is vital that I learn to submit to the authority of God and my employer--be an obedient servant to God and an obedient employee, and willingly give my very best, as if working for God (all the points made in Exodus). Doing all of these with a humble spirit is vital to being successful. I must do them willingly to the best of my abilities, as God has blessed me. How I handle this current work situation will truly be a test of my faithfulness and willingness to surrender to God's will and His plan for me. It will also be a sign for my co-workers, my children, my family and friends. I pray that I can reflect God in all that I do.

On my desk at work is one of the mini posters from the Lead Like Jesus seminar that was held at AELC a year or so ago. By no coincidence the mini poster on my table read, "SHINE – I am called not to success but to obedience as a witness to others and as an active agent of God's plan for His kingdom." Guess I'm a slow learner!

Having God in every facet of my life is more than a dove on the rear bumper of my car, a calendar on the wall at the office, or a cross on a chain around my neck. It is every day heart-to-heart conversations, pleas, thanks, tears, smiles, pain, joy and sharing EVERY moment with God!

Christ's humble servant,
Noel Fletcher