

Jeremiah 35

Read Jeremiah 35:1-10: This is one of my favorite chapters in the bible. It is an example of people who honored their father's request. God uses the honorable Rechabites in contrast to the disinterested and ungodly people of Judah. This is really about being purposeful in our lifestyle, as opposed to letting your job or finances dictate your involvement in Kingdom business. We should not knowingly commit ourselves to things that will ultimately compete with God's place in our lives. Our own pursuits can enslave us.

Jonadab (the son of Rechab) impressed upon his sons the importance of being **a sojourner** in this world. They were not to be tied down by their mortgage or their job. They were also careful not to pick up any vices. A sojourner is *a stranger*, living away from home. His circumstances are temporary. It is like my weekly trips to the Bay area and Los Angeles. I will not be buying a home there. I will not be attending City Council meetings or any clubs there. I am there for a brief purpose, and I need to remain focused and not split time with non-essentials. This concept of purposeful living is the ideal way to live for serious Christians.

We are all just passing through, on our way to heaven. Abram was called a sojourner. He is our faith example. He moved around a lot, as God directed him.

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. (Hebrews 11:8-10)

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them. (Hebrews 11:13-16)

This chapter is dedicated to providing an example of how to live in this world. Part of being faithful requires that we keep *a light touch* on outside obligations and things that can own us.

The Bible compares us to *soldiers*, who have to put their mission above everyday affairs. You don't see soldiers going to the mall to buy new clothes when there is an invasion threatening our country. Everything else in life takes a back seat to the mission. We have an overriding purpose for being here. Not being available for when the Holy Spirit calls is

a non-starter...but all too common. Unfortunately it is a prevalent situation. I enjoy my job, but I have begun to pray that God would bless my side business if he wants me to be more available for ministry activities.

No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier. And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. (2 Timothy 2:4-5)

I see myself as having gotten into too many work hours to participate in some church activities. Being in major debt can sideline us from being sponsors of missions. I fall into that category too.

The Rechabites were taught not to drink alcohol, not to be obligated to a farm, and not to own a home. God is not saying that there is anything wrong with having a glass of wine...or owning a home...or being a farmer. It is more about positioning ourselves for the Kingdom.

I stopped drinking years ago. I discovered that I can easily have no alcohol; but once I start, I do not always exercise moderation. In fact, I set all kinds of rules for myself to prevent going too far too many times. I finally realized that this was a vice that I needed to build my fence far away. Alcohol can be a form of self-medication. It can help me feel happy when I am not that happy. Unfortunately, it is also a gateway to bad behavior for me. I found myself involved in all kinds of crazy and regrettable things that I would never have otherwise done. God does not want to forget our promises.

Farming is a God-ordained first career path. It is good, but it has its drawbacks. Like anything else in agriculture, the romanticized view of the experience falls far short of the reality. Agriculture frequently includes endless hours and endless problems. My mom swore that she would never marry a farmer, because he would be an absentee spouse during the busy seasons. Instead, she married a cattleman, who are also extremely busy people...except they have no off season. Agriculture also involves big debt and becoming a slave to a risky enterprise. We cannot give God our time and talents if we are always behind; and chasing the tyranny of the urgent. The Rechabites stayed off of that treadmill.

Being a homeowner is a good thing, unless the mortgage keeps you from being available to move as God directs. Suddenly you can become a slave to your mortgage; and sidelined for Kingdom activities.

Life in the Spirit is not legalism, but I do need a little legalism in my own life. I recognize genetic weaknesses and tendencies. I have tried reason, personal boundaries and other methods to control alcohol. In every way, I have lost every battle in that arena. My only choice is to step away from the influence altogether. Alcohol is not righteous or unrighteous. I know that for me, it is synonymous for sin.

I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. (Romans 14:14)

Read Jeremiah 35:11-19: God uses the Rechabites to as a standard of comparison to the men of Judah. God wants faithful men, who will keep their eye on the ball and hold their ground. God shares that much value is gained when you obey godly parents.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise: "that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth." (Ephesians 6:1-3)