HOLINESS (SUNDAY EVENING OF JANUARY 24TH, 2016)

"Holy" means "set apart." Walking in holiness is a daily walk with God in His presence rather than in worldliness. For a lot of people, their time at church service once or twice per week is their only holy time. For the rest of us Christians, we strive to walk in holiness daily.

The world's version of things looks a lot different than God's version. Prosperity, for example, means a lot more than winning the lottery. The world and its prosperity will perish, but God and His goodness will not.

The world accuses Christians of being elitist ("holier than thou") or crazy, but they do not perceive the truth. The realm we live in is more real than this world. Do not settle for occassional holiness, thinking that it is good enough to go to church or to just believe in God. (Scripture says that even the demons believe in God and tremble. In fact, they have spoken to Him and have seen Him face to face, which is more than most people can boast.) Where in our lives can we walk in holiness more consistently?

At the end of the day, it is the responsibility of the individual to choose right or wrong, to choose to rise or to fall; although, it is our responsibility to set good examples and not be stumbling blocks to others. This is one reason it is so important to consistently walk in holiness, whether in work life, home life, etc.

We must choose to either settle or advance. Unlike most people believe, it can be an advantage to start form nothing and work to build something. For example, people do not begin martial arts already knowing how to fight. They have to learn and work for their knowledge and skill sets. The same is true when learning to play a musical instrument. Nobody picks up a guitar for the first time already able to play scales and songs. It takes time, work, and knowledge. That experience has much value, and people who inherit, say, companies without the experience of having built it up often struggle or even fail to keep it going. So let us advance in holiness. As scripture says, be holy, for He is holy.

LANDSCAPING (SUNDAY EVENING OF JANUARY 31ST, 2016)

Starting a landscaping business might just require a shovel; however, as time goes on and the business continues to grow, other tools begin to come in handy (e.g. a post-hole digger, a wheelbarrow, a rake, and so on). A lot of churches starting out consist of one man (the pastor) and a shovel (one tool) doing all the work as people gather around to watch. (Some churches do not even have a shovel, usually leading to failure.) As the church grows, the amount and variety of tools increase, but the pastor still does all the work as the congregation watches. A more successful church has multiple people wielding multiple tools. Instead of just the pastor getting exhausted doing all the work (not necessarily being very proficient with every tool/gifting, but having at least some ability with each one), various people utilize their various talents and giftings to be more efficient and successful. Some people are built better for certain kinds of work or have strengths for certain kinds of tools, though they can stretch themselves over time to improve in different areas. Sometimes, it is time to pick up another tool, learn how to use it, and contribute in other ways (especially when there is a particular need). Also, these tools themselves can improve (e.g. instead of a shovel, a backhoe or a tractor; instead of a wheelbarrow, a dump truck). Giftings and abilities can also evolve and improve to something more efficient. In other words, our revelation and experience increase to use our giftings more and better; however, we should not lose our ability to utilize the basics. We should still know how to use a shovel for the times when a shovel is still the best tool.

One trapping that church leaders often fall into is perfectionism, which prevents them from truly delegating positions or tasks. They cannot let go of control (likely a result of being burned in the past), so their ministry cannot work as effectively because other people cannot step into their roles. They have to be willing to train and disciple people, then willing to risk trusting them to take over in an area.

How do we measure a church's success? One possible answer is recurrent victories. Consistently experiencing victories leads to overall advancement in our walks.

We need to truly know the Word and understand the Word. One advantage here is knowing the difference between confidence and cockiness; otherwise, we underestimate the enemy. Scripture does not say that no weapon can come against you. It says that no weapon forged against you shall prosper. Scripture does not say that the devil cannot come against you. It says to resist the devil, and he will flee from you.