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“FOUR THINGS YOU CAN’T DO WITHOUT”

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Often we have people tell us that such and such a thing is a “must.” We just must have it. It is something, which we cannot do without.

Now my first reaction is to ask “Who are they, to tell me what I must have?” “How do they know what I can’t do without?” Maybe they are just trying to sell me something. Or perhaps they are “conning” me or manipulating me to be a building block in one of their schemes.

And it would be wise to ask a few questions. There are a lot of unscrupulous characters out there. Some are even preying on the religious community. There have been enough religious “scams”, uncovered in the past few years, to make us all ask a few questions when someone tells us that there is something we cannot do without.

And yet this morning, I am going to stand up here and tell you that there are four “musts”, vitally necessary for you to have a fulfilling life. There are four things, which you cannot do without!

And if you ask me, “Who says so?” I’ll answer “God says so!” In God’s Word, I find four things that our loving Creator God says that we cannot do without.

Let me point them out to you this morning, with the prayer that you will listen to your God and make sure that you make these things a “must” in you life.

I. The first is found in Proverbs 29:18. “Without A VISION, the people perish...”

God says that, if you do not have a vision, you are dead, sunk, going nowhere, a “goner.” Just what did He mean by a vision?

Is it only something that special people have, where they get a glimpse at the future? No! Some men had such special visions for special times. But God uses the term much more broadly.

A “vision” is an idea of where you are going, what you are here to accomplish. I call it a “dream,” a purpose, a goal.’

It is something to give yourself to and sacrifice for. It is what gives us direction, vitality, and energy. The dream brings you alive!

Without it, we perish. Show me someone without a dream. They are only existing, putting in time, a consumer. No, the Bible says, "She who lives for pleasure (only to please oneself) is dead while she lives."

Having a vision, a dream, a purpose, is a must. You cannot do without it, God says.

Once America had a dream. We wanted to give all men freedom to reach their highest potential under God. Our forefathers risked their wealth, their lives, and their sacred honor for this dream. And they wrestled from this wild land one of the greatest societies on earth...a land of plenty...a land of opportunity...a land of liberty.

But I wonder if we have lost the vision. I am concerned that the desire for security has dimmed the vision. Groups are more concerned about their rights and special interests than in the dream. Personal greed has replaced the vision.

And, as a result, we see a land of slavery. Americans are enslaved to debt, to drugs, to fear, to disease, to confusion, to corruption. We have been clipping coupons on one investment of our forefathers, and we fear that the dividends are running out.

Have we lost the vision? Has America no great dream that pulls us together and gives us something to live for, and work for, and sacrifice for, and die for?

A college survey asked graduating seniors what they wanted out of life. The majority said that they wanted a job with the shortest hours, the highest pay, the least responsibility, and the most vacation time.

I'd say they got everything in college, except a vision or a purpose for living. And sooner or later they will find that they really don't have anything to live for. Without a vision the people perish.

A friend of mine is a college professor. He tells that, quite often, a student will come to him and say that he is dropping out of school. Why? he asks. "I just have to 'find myself,'" they say. So they drop out and bum around and try this and that to "find" themselves.

Listen, he tells them, you can't find yourself, until you lose yourself in something that is more important than yourself. Jesus said: "He who finds his life will lose it. But he who loses his life for my sake will find it."

It's only as we lose ourselves in a dream, that is more important than we are, that we are going to find our own purpose and value in the scheme of things.

Do you have a vision, a dream? You cannot do without one. Just make sure it a worthy one. Make sure that it is an ultimately satisfying one.

A college professor probed the depths of one of the senior's dreams.

"What do you hope to do after you graduate?"

"I'm going to set out my shingle and practice law."

Good, and what then?

"I guess I'll develop my practice and raise my family."

Great, and what then?

"I guess I'll build up my nest-egg and retire."

Fine, and what then?

"Well, I guess I'll die."

And what then?

Yes, and what then? If our dreams stop there, are they worthy dreams? Not in my book!

And that's where Jesus Christ has the only game in town. He alone can share His dream of reaching men for God and laying up treasures above, where they can be enjoyed beyond the grave. And He will share His dream with any and all. "Lose your life for my sake and you will find life."

I believe that the people of McGregor Baptist Church, for the most part, have caught the vision of reaching our community for Jesus Christ and have dedicated themselves to that dream, whatever it takes. We invite you to "join the dream" and share God's vision with us.

But lose yourself in something bigger than yourself. That's a must. It's something you can't do without. "Without a vision the people perish."

II. The second thing God says we can't do without is found in Hebrews 11:6  
"Without FAITH, it is impossible to please Him."

In other words, if we can do anything that does not require us to trust God, in order to accomplish it, then that accomplishment brings no pleasure to God. If we can pull something off in our own ability (without any risk, without any adventure of clinging to God for help) then that thing doesn't impress God, nor bring any pleasure to Him.

That's exactly what God says! If we can puddle around in the shallow waters of mediocrity, where we feel secure and we know that "we can handle things on our own, thank you", then God isn't even impressed. But, when we launch out into the deep, over our heads, clinging to God all the way for our support, then God is delighted. In fact Hebrews Chapter 11 is a review of people, who did just this thing and with whom God was well pleased.

Read the Chapter for yourself.

Abraham left home to go to a place God had selected, and he didn't even know where he was going and he pleased God. Vs. 8.

Moses chose to wander with the people of God rather than to enjoy the security of the Egyptian palace. And he pleased God. Vs. 25.

Joshua attacked a heavily walled city with only foot soldiers. And he pleased God. Vs. 30.

Could our names be added to the list of those who boldly attempted things beyond their means and abilities, simply because they trusted God? I hope so! That is a must, because without that kind of faith, it is impossible to please God.

I don't know about you, but since Jesus gave His life for me, I want to please Him. And if it takes the risk of living by faith to do so, then I'm willing to take the risks.

I often wonder if God is pleased with us collectively, as church. Are the things, which we attempt, able to be done, even if there were no God to bail us out? Do we pull-off things that could be done on our own, and then do we say God helped us?

People in the world think so. They see us as a religious "club", which operates with group dynamics, organizational skills, fund-raising techniques, public relations work, etc...just like any other organization could work. And maybe they are right. Maybe a lot of churches do this.

I hope not! I hope we can dare to do things that could not possibly come about without the help of almighty God.

Tell me, just what would change in the life of our church, if God pulled out tomorrow? What would change in your personal life, if God suddenly left you to your own devices?

If there was business as usual, then are we really operating on faith? That might be a pretty good test to find out how much you do that really pleases Him...Because, "without the risk that requires faith, we cannot please God."

Now I know people who turn to God, when there is no other place to turn. And they say "I don't know how I could have made it without God." And that is beautiful. But is a kind of "passive" acceptance.

God is even more pleased, when we "actively" choose to set out to do the things, which requires the risk of faith. God help us to be bold in the Lord and venture out of the harbor of security and into the deep waters of opportunity with God!

Notice the churches which God has been greatly pleased to use. They have invariably ventured beyond their obvious resources and have boldly moved forward in the adventure of faith. Whether He will continue to greatly use us will depend on that same willingness to walk by faith. Because "without faith it is impossible to please Him."

III. The third "must" is found in James 2:20. "Faith Without WORKS is dead."

The Bible never sees faith primarily as a function of the mind. It always speaks of faith as an action. Until we are willing to do something, there is no evidence that we even have faith.

God will not even come to our aid, until we make the first move. Someone has said that “Faith in action puts God in motion.” He comes to our side, after we make the first move.

That’s one of the great things about giving the invitation at the end of our services. When we take that first step of faith, willing to confess to the world that we are trusting Christ as our Saviour, the Lord sees our faith in action and steps to our side. I make no apology for giving you an opportunity to act on your faith. I’m doing you a favor, because “faith without work is dead.”

Many people talk about having faith. A large percentage of the population claims to have faith, but it never shows up in actions. They don’t go to church and worship and learn, they don’t tithe their money to help others hear, they don’t try to win anyone in the world to Christ, they rarely if ever pray. And yet they claim to “believe the Bible from cover to cover.” God says “Show me! Show me!” (Read vs. 14-19)

People (or churches) that do nothing about their faith are fooling themselves. Their faith is dead.

- IV. There is a fourth “must”...one more thing that God says we cannot do without. It is found in John 15:5 and is a direct quote of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ: “Without ME, you can do nothing.”

Let’s face it, Christianity is not a system of thought, like “positive thinking.” Thinking positively is fine, as far as it can go. But it cannot go any farther than you can psyche yourself up.

Christianity is not a movement, like some great crusade, although it has led to great awakenings and missionary movements. These are not what it is all about.

Christianity is not an institution like a church or a denomination. The institutional church is often a good place to meet Jesus, but many of us spent long periods of our lives in one, without ever coming to know Jesus Christ in a personal way.

Christianity is not a lifestyle nor is it a pattern of morality that you follow. Any true Christian should have a very moral lifestyle, but that’s not the essence. It was a lot of morally impeccable men that had Jesus crucified.

Christianity is a relationship with a Person, the risen and living Son of God, Jesus Christ. Without Him you cannot become a Christian. Without Him you do not have the motivation to live the Christian life. Without Him, you do not have the power to keep the high standards of the Christian life. Jesus said: “Without ME, you can do nothing.”

The person of Jesus Christ in our lives is a must. We cannot make it without Him. He is like the vine and we are like the branches. From Him must come the strength and energy to produce anything meaningful and lasting (fruit) with our lives.

Let's not fool ourselves:

Without His gift, you cannot have forgiveness with God. Jesus said "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6)

We cannot just come to God as we are. We are stained with sin. A holy God cannot receive an unholy man. In fact, God is righteously angry at our sinful ways. Only Jesus, the sinless Son of God, could offer to die in our place and build a bridge to God for us. Without Him, we cannot come to God.

We sing a song "Just As I Am, I come." No, that's not what it says. We can't come just as we are, except for the fact that Jesus' blood was shed to pay the penalty of our sin. It is only through Him, we can dare to come to God. He is a "must" for eternal salvation. Without Him you cannot be right with God. Come to Him today and let Him present you to His Father.

Without His WORD, you cannot have direction for life. Jesus said: "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will and it shall be done." (John 15:7)

We are living in a world of confusion. There are so many voices and so many directions being given. And yet we see people all round us lost, and with lives in turmoil.

But Jesus' words have survived the centuries. And those who have followed His Words have had a direction. You can too, my friend.

Without His SPIRIT, living in us, you cannot have guidance for each day. Jesus promised: "When...the Spirit...is come, He will guide you." (John 16:13)

Oh, how wonderful it is not to have to make all your own judgment calls, nor to have to live by your wits, not to roll the dice and say "Eeny, meeny, miny, moe."

Jesus' invisible personality, His Holy Spirit, will guide us. The one, who alone knows the future, can communicate to the listening heart and give directions.

I have experienced guidance. I have friends in their 90's, who could write books about His guidance and who have lived long enough to prove that the guidance was right. But without His Spirit, lots of luck!

Without His POWER, you cannot manage beyond your own resources. But He has promised that "all power will be given unto you, after the Holy Ghost has come upon you." (Acts 1:8)

Most people are problem-conscious. With Christ, we can be power-conscious. His early followers were accused of turning the world upside down. And He is said to be “the same yesterday, today, and forever.” So can we be men of power. Church, we need Him so desperately to do the work He has entrusted to us. Let us pray, listen, and follow, and lean on Him for strength. For, without Him, we are left to our own devices.

Without His RETURN, we cannot have hope. The older I get, the more I realize that this world has no lasting hope. It may not be “going to hell in a hand basket,” but we are certainly polluting it, dividing it, and headed for the day when all of man’s achievements will melt in a fervent heat of nuclear war or worse. And it looks like those days may be getting very close.

Meanwhile, He tells us to “occupy until I come.” He wants us to reach every life we can for Him, while there is time. And some day He will return to put down evil once and for all and to create a new heaven and a new earth, wherein there is righteousness...where men will study war no more...where there is lasting happiness.

And I believe He can return and do all of this. He alone stands out in history as a winner over man’s worst enemy, death. This same Jesus, who arose victor over death, will come again to rule over a new world order. And that gives me hope! In fact, without His return, I see no other lasting hope.

Oh, without Jesus, life is nothing. We cannot do without Him. He is a “must.”

Do you have Him, my friend? Open your life to Him today. Open the door of your life to Him right now. Put your faith into action and walk this isle to show us all that you have an active living faith. Join us in seeing His vision of reaching others, and let us bring pleasure to Him by boldly attempting great things for Him, without fear or reserve!

## SERMOM NOTES

### “FOUR THINGS YOU CAN’T DO WITHOUT”

Intro: Who says? God!

- I. “Without a VISION the people perish.” Prov. 29:18  
(a dream, a purpose, a goal)
  
- II. “Without FAITH, it is impossible to please Him.”  
Heb. 11:6
  - A. If it doesn’t involve the risk of faith, God is not even impressed.
  - B. How much could we continue doing, if God pulled out?
  
- III. “Faith Without WORKS is dead.” James 2:20
  - A. Faith is an ACTION.
  - B. God says “Show me.”
  
- IV. “Without ME you can do nothing” John 15:5
  - A. Christianity is a relationship with a person.
  - B. Without Him, nothing will fly.

Conclusion:

These are “musts!”