THE IMPORTANCE OF DILIGENCE

INTRODUCTION

Isn't it wonderful how you can count on Jesus? He is faithful. But don't just use that word; think about what that means. Not only does He come through when you need Him, not only does He never grow tired or weary, not only does He always keep His word, but He thinks of all the details involved in caring for you.

His love is way more than a feeling. It's a commitment to pay attention, to be thorough, to not let things fall through cracks. He never says, "Oops. Sorry I forgot." He never says, "Oh sorry, I didn't think about that." He never says, "Sorry. I ran out of time."

COMMENTARY: THE IMPORTANCE OF DILIGENCE

Love like Jesus' love is diligent. Let's define diligence this way:

Thinking thoroughly and acting conscientiously concerning all details of a responsibility.

Diligence is what creates dependability. He is Dependable. That's the Lord. So if love is dependable and being dependable calls for diligence, guess what we need to work on if we want to be like Jesus. We've got to practice being diligent. That's character.

People need to be able to count on you. If we accept a responsibility and people are counting on us, that means we need to think of everything that particular responsibility involves. But just thinking of everything isn't enough, because even if we know what we need to do we can still decide, "I don't feel like doing it." That's what it means to act conscientiously. If you know that a responsibility involves five steps, you need to do them all. You can't leave people hanging. You can't say, "I did four. Four out of five isn't bad."

What if your car was that way? Four out of five times when you turn the steering wheel to the left, your car turns left. But the other time it turns right. Would you want to drive that car? Of course not. It's not dependable.

Diligent people do their best to think of everything they need to do to fulfill a responsibility and then do them. Even when they are tired. Even when something else comes up. Even when they've had to do the same thing over and over again, and they're tired of it. Even when nobody notices and says thanks. Only then are they dependable. Only then are they learning to be the kind of people who can be Christlike.

Yesterday we talked about courage being perhaps the most important trait of love. But how can we leave out diligence? In fact, over the next many days as we look at ten more traits, we will find it hard not to see each trait as indispensable if we want to live, love and serve like Jesus.

Remember... Just as light is made up of a spectrum of colors, love is made up of a spectrum of traits. They are all crucial. Are you ready to keep going now that you see what lies ahead? I hope so. In fact, you can practice diligence by making a decision right now if you haven't done so already, "I will not miss a day. I will complete this series of devotionals from beginning to end, even if I'm tempted to skip one or two when my days get busy. Even if it means staying up late or getting up a little early and missing some sleep.

REFLECTION:

Let's take a few moments to reflect on diligence with this treasured passage about the Lord.

> **Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies ? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. (Luke 12:6-7)**

Not a single sparrow is forgotten, not a single hair is unnumbered. That's hyper-diligence for sure. The Lord does not want us to become neurotic about minutia. But we could all stand to pursue diligence with more focus and energy. Right?

This wonderful passage about God's tender diligence became the inspiration for the classic song "His Eye is on the Sparrow." Listen to the testimony of lyricist Civilla Martin about the day the song came to her.

> *Early in the spring of 1905, my husband and I were sojourning in Elmira, New York. We contracted a deep friendship for a couple by the name of Mr. and Mrs. Doolittle—true saints of God. Mrs. Doolittle had been bedridden for nigh twenty years. Her husband was an incurable cripple who had to propel himself to and from his business in a wheel chair. Despite their afflictions, they lived happy Christian lives, bringing inspiration and comfort to all who knew them. One day while we were visiting with the Doolittle's, my husband commented on their bright hopefulness and asked them for the secret of it. Mrs. Doolittle's reply was simple: "His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me." The beauty of this simple expression of boundless faith gripped our hearts and fired the imagination. The hymn "His Eye Is on the Sparrow" was the outcome of that experience."*

Do you see how when people know you are watching over them and your responsibilities carefully, thinking about all the small details, you bring peace and joy into people's lives?

Ask yourself these questions:

- **Who is the most diligent person you know?**
- **What will be the hardest thing for you in order to be more diligent?**
- **Where will be a good place for you to start? Making notes to yourself so you don't forget to do things you need to do? Asking somebody to help you think about details more carefully? Caring more about being thorough?**

Pray the following prayer along with me.

PRAYER:

Dear Lord, you never drop the ball. You pay attention to every detail about my life. When You make a promise, it's on the forefront of Your mind... all the time. You're always anticipating what might be helpful. There are so many ways You are the epitome of diligence. I see how helpful and dependable You are, and how much it means to people, including me. So I want to be more like You in this area. Show me where to start, which means I suppose, show me where I fall short. Help me take some very specific new steps toward being more diligent, for Your glory and the sake of others. Amen.