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Seek ye First!

Overview

I learned something in Africa. You know, I spent a lot of time there. If you're new here, you have no idea. I had a flat in the city of Nairobi. And that's where all my clothing and everything, I stored it there, so I could fly over to Nairobi with just a small sack in my hand.

And when I got there, everything was there. Everything that I needed was there. I had it in my flat. And I owned a vehicle. I bought an SUV. So I could arrive there, get a couple of hours of ease, jump in my car, drive northward, cross at Kisumu, over into Uganda and show up and preach that very night. So I got to know the Kenyans.

I got to know their language. I learned their language. I learned the language. I was able to communicate with those people. And in so doing, I also started to learn some of their culture. I learned some of their sayings. And I love this one. Roll that video for me. Can you now? Listen to this. This is a saying in Kenya, in all of East Africa. He who hunts the elephant shall never lack for firewood.

He who hunts the elephant shall never lack for firewood. You know how they always say, the elephant in the room? We finally have an elephant in the room. Watch this crazy guy. He wants to eat the acacia branches up in the top, but his trunk is too short. So he says, come down. Now here I am driving. Can you roll it again? This is so much fun. Watch. They play with trees like they're toys. Can you imagine?

That guy's fighting those roots that are in the ground. But he knows. Push. Come on, buddy. He pulls. He pushes. Timber! Now he can eat the branches. They literally eat the branches of the acacia tree. So here I am driving in my Pajero, my vehicle. And all of a sudden I see my pathway is blocked. I'm not on a road.

I'm out in the middle of nowhere. You would call it the jungle. And I'm having to drive around all these big trees. And as I'm driving, there's more and more and more. And it's all these trees. They're all dead. And they're just laying everywhere. And, ha, I'm in elephant territory. You know where you are. There's elephants nearby. And don't get them rankled. They'll chase you.

I've had them, when they get upset with you, their big ears come up like this. And they put those tusks out. And they're charging you. I know how fast a car will going backwards. I know how fast you can get a car going backwards. I'm telling you. You say, what's that got to do with us here today? He who hunts the elephant will never lack for firewood.

The Kenyan, when he goes hunting for elephant, why would he do so? Because they eat it. They eat it. It's a big meal. It's kind of like the Mandarin. So if you're going to go hunting for the elephant, don't spend your time looking for firewood. It's all around you. Stay focused on the hunt. Stay focused on the purpose. Stay focused on the mission. Even if you're hunting gazelle or some other form of deer. Stay focused on the hunt of the animal. You're in elephant territory. The wood is there. Are you ready? Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and all these things will be added unto you.

That's Kenyan thought. You have to move from Canadian, English, but you have to move into their way of life. And when you teach them, you say, of course you know he who hunts the elephant doesn't have to worry about firewood. And they're saying, indio, indio. That means yes, yes, of course. You say, well, as a Christian, you don't worry about what you'll eat. You don't worry about what you'll wear. Don't you become consumed with the financial horrific condition of this country. We're going to go in more debt this year because that's going to make us all rich and famous. It's a lie from the pit of hell. We are in the fight of our life. Your life is not going to get better.

But don't you focus on that and get lost in that. Stay focused on what you need to do because God is going to supply you with your firewood. And when you get focused on all these other things, you're going to miss the real point of Christianity. Seek first the Lord, His kingdom, His principles, and He will add to you everything that you need. Now this needs to work its way out, not just in words. Not just in words. Somebody would say, okay, I know all that. I know all that. I seek you for the kingdom of God. The challenge is when we get lost with the words. Somebody wants to tell you what it says in the NIV. Somebody wants to tell you in the new English version.

Another version, another version. And we're playing with words like that. Forget about the words and get into what the message is of that verse. What is that verse saying to me? Lock in on it and begin to live it. If you just know it up here, you're lost. You get it in your, I say this, James, you need to get it in your knower so that you know, that you know, that you know. This is the way, walk ye in it. It's not enough to know the chorus and to quote the verse. It's understanding in your spiritual man. Therefore, Hebrews chapter 12, verse 1. Therefore, we also, since we are surrounded by such a great crowd of witnesses, let's lay aside every weight.

Forget about your stocks. If I sell the house that I own down the street right now, I lose $200,000. Hello? Hello? Who cares? It's money. You must be a rich man. No, I'm still in debt. If it goes much, if the value of my house goes much lower, I'll be what they call it, underwater. Who cares? The bank wants my house. Honey, grab the grandfather clock and let them have the rest.

Lay aside every weight, every concern. Let God deal with this prime minister and the sin which so easily ensnares us. Get rid of it and let's run with endurance. He's saying you need to act like an athlete. Athletes can't run without even a fanny pack around their waist. Athletes can't run with a bottle of water in their hand. When they devise a car for a race, it doesn't have all kinds of wings. Have you ever noticed that race cars don't have rear view mirrors? Don't worry about what's behind you. Keep your eye on the focus. But there's a car coming up behind me. He's going to pass me.

Forget about him. Put your foot to the metal and keep on going. Your car is built sleek so that it glides through the wind. And you'll see these athletes, they look like they're almost like poorly clad. The idea is they're laying aside every weight that would hold them back. Let's lay it all aside. Let's run with endurance. The race that is set before us. Looking unto Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was awaiting him, endured the cross, the shame of naked. He was totally naked on the cross. God bless the people who do pictures of Jesus on the cross. He was not wearing a cute little apron.

He despised that shame. And then he sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Colossians chapter 3, 1, 2. If then you were raised with Christ, that means you had to die. Right? In Christ we all died. I've told you again and again all little stories about we were in him. My father was in the Navy on the East Coast. And somehow or other in his genes, I was in him. He came back alive. I had the opportunity of surviving. I was in him.

When Jesus went to the cross, I was in him. All my sin was laid upon him. But when Jesus Christ arose from the dead, I was also in him. I was in him on the cross. I was in him when he was in the grave. And when he arose again from the dead, I was in him. And I'm declared now justified, justified, never sinned. And whom he justified, he's now glorifying. If you were raised with Christ, then seek those things which are above where Christ is. Keep your eyes on the objective. Keep your eyes on the future. Keep your eyes on future glory.

Keep your eyes on the promises of God that are yea and in him they find their amen. Sitting at the right hand of God. Listen to this. Set your mind on things above, not on the things of earth. Seek the elephant and leave the firewood to God. It means let spiritual principles guide your life. Love and forgiveness and honesty and service. Let these things shape your daily life. Leave the finances and leave the concerns. Don't become obsessed with any of these things. You're hurt? Give it up, honey.

You're disappointed? Forget it. That man said something that made me upset. Get over it and forgive. For if you do not forgive, your heavenly father has trouble forgiving you. He's going to treat you as you treat others. We're supposed to avoid seeking the approval of other people. Because you see, that's very earthy. How do I look? How do I look? You've seen them. I've seen them all my life.

You turn to the right and somebody jumps in front of you. You turn this way. They're there now. Did you see me? Did you see me? Who are you? I'm a politician. Vote for me. How's my hair? Elbows up, everybody. Elbows up. He sought my approval.

He missed out there. The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found that treasure, he hid it again. And in joy, he went and he sold everything that he had. And he bought the field that he hid the treasure in. The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls. He finds a precious pearl. Best pearl he's ever seen. He walks away, sold everything that he had. And he bought it. We don't need explanation for that, do we? Get rid of it all.

Get rid of it all so that you get the prize. You get the prize. My God will supply all your needs according to his glorious riches that are in Christ Jesus. God is able to make all grace abound to you so that in all things, at all times, you'll have all you need. You will abound in every good work. That's 2 Corinthians 9. Psalm 37. Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart. I won't name him, but there was a preacher. He and I worked together in India. We were preaching huge, huge masses of people. So we roomed together.

I'll never forget, he wanted to talk about his future. Not mine, his future. And he said, David, I have an ambition. This is a preacher. And some of you used to attend his church. He said, someday I'm going to be famous. I'm going to be as famous as Morris Cerullo. I have every sermon he ever preached. I'm studying how he did it. He's getting money. Morris Cerullo just died a few years ago. It's worth $80 million or I don't know.

Incredible. And this fellow's objective. He was obsessed. Just absolutely obsessed. But I also noticed he spent a lot of time looking in the mirror. He was a handsome fellow. I was losing my hair. He was combing his. That man ceased to be my friend. I didn't want to be around him. In case this was a virus that he had. I don't want to be rich.

I don't want to be famous. I want to be faithful. Well done thou good and faithful. Well done. Good. That means righteous. Walking with integrity. No God. Like fame. Fortune. No sense of pride in things that are going to be meaningless. Trust in the Lord with all your heart.

Don't lean on your own understanding. But in all your ways. That's a tough one honey. I'm telling you. In all your well. Well I'm almost there. There was a man yesterday. I went by his table. Everybody wanted to talk. He said I want you to know something. Now you had to be there to hear my sermon. So he said.

I've got one leg over the side of the boat. He said. I'm almost there. I said. Does that make you feel good that you're almost? How are you dealing with that cancer? Well I'm almost doing well. They said you're going to amputate your leg. Yeah but I still have the other one. I'm okay. It's not good enough to be almost. Well done thou good.

And faithful. Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Don't lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him. And he will be your GPS. He will guide you. Did you come to this house today hungry? You will be fed. That's a trick statement. Cast all your anxiety on him. Are you anxious? The word says be anxious for nothing.

Cast all your anxiety on him. First Peter 5 7. Because he cares. I told so many people yesterday. Don't even know their names. I said I care about you. I believe that those words are love words. And I don't have to know somebody's name. To say I care about you. The Jewish man. Don't ask me for his name. Put a gun to my head. I'll just say fire it. I don't know his name. I didn't have to know his name. But I received something from him which was not. I'm going to build you up David. I'm going to make you feel good. He was telling me.

I feel so much better hearing that message today. I'm a Jew but I love what you said today. You made the difference in my life. And I said do you know why I did that sir? I said I care about you. When we tell people we care. It's like writing them a check that's not going to bounce. Don't be consumed with what I need. I want. I deserve. I'm entitled. Forget all of that stuff. And say you matter to me. You need to tell people. Don't go to the end of the line. You're a prince with God. Do you know that God doesn't have a message?

Who's next? You're already being sir. You're not next. His hands are on you now. He's taking care of you in the now. My friend Georgie. Georgie and I were teenagers and we started hanging out together. I was living as a boarder at his sister's house. His sister said you need to meet my Georgie. Georgie had no interest in church. It's a story. I took him to a big auditorium in downtown Hamilton.

Because I heard about a drama called Hell's Bells. No. Heaven's Gates. Hell's Flames. Georgie and I were sitting up in the balcony. And there was this Indian fellow. A real one. Feathers. Leather. His name was Chief Thumb. He was an incredible communicator. And after this incredible drama where two of my friends were supposed to go to hell.

If you haven't seen the drama, this won't make sense. But two of my friends were tossed off of the stage. And they were supposed to land on a couple of mattresses. And they missed the mattress. Two guys had to be taken to the hospital with broken bones. And when they were thrown into hell, they had to scream. They came through wonderfully. Georgie's sitting beside me. I'll never forget reaching over. And with my fist hitting on top of his fist. His fist was clenched. I said, Georgie, if you want to go up to the front, I'll go with you.

He turned and he said, I'm ready. I said, let's go. When I landed out in Vancouver, pastoring a church out there. I got a call from Hamilton saying, your friend Georgie is being buried tomorrow. I went in my pulpit on that Sunday morning. Half hour after I got that message. And I'm weeping. I said, forgive me. I said, my buddy Georgie that I led to the Lord so many years ago. He was in my wedding. I was in his. We were most inseparable.

I hired him and became the caretaker of our huge church, Peoples in Hamilton. I said, Georgie's being buried tomorrow and I can't even get there. I said, I can't even get a flight now. At the end of the service, my sound man came down from that balcony. 2,500 seat auditorium. You should have seen the journey to get down to where I was. He said, do you have a toothbrush in your office? And I went, why? I thought, I could have been a Benny Hinn. Down they go. I said, what? Why do I need a toothbrush?

He said, that's all you need to get on an Air Canada flight. We got one hour. Get ready. Let's go. He worked for Air Canada. We raced to the airport. I dashed onto the plane with a toothbrush. And when I arrived at the church, I walked through the door. His wife, Bev, said, you made it. How did you ever do it? I said, it doesn't matter. She turned and she said to the pastor, he's preaching.

The pastor got bumped off. There wasn't room for me. They'd made all arrangements. You know, at the end of a service, when there's an internment following, that there's the hearse and then there's all these black limousines and the family packs and all of these.
And this guy came up to me and he said, you preached today. I said, yeah. He said, I don't have you on my list. I said, that's okay. He said, well, you should be riding with. I said, no, that's okay. I didn't know how I was going to get there. And he said, do you mind riding in the hearse?

I said, my buddy Georgie's in that hearse. Let's go. So I took my final ride with my buddy Georgie. But Georgie had a story that nobody in that church ever knew except me. The church was running into difficulty not long after I got there. Financially, we were having a hard time. And so I announced to the church, get ready in one month's time, I'm going to ask you to give an offering larger than you've ever given before because we've got to salvage this mess. I inherited a mess. Let's do it. Georgie came to me a few days after the Sunday that we had the offering. He said, Dave, Sunday morning, he said, I was there with all of the other guys. We had 15 Sunday school buses picking up kids all over the city.

He said, when I got there, he said, I had in my pocket a $10 bill. That's all I had. He said, we couldn't go grocery shopping because all I had was a 10. And he said, we didn't have breakfast that morning. He said, one of the guys said to me, George, you take that aisle. We need you for the offering. So he said, as I'm walking along and as I'm passing the plate along to the people, he said, I got a frog stuck in my throat. What am I going to do with that 10? Oh, we have. Our cupboards are bare. He said, we got finished. And he said, we all met out in the lobby.

And all the offering plates were piled up. And like an army, they would move into a room to count the money. And he said, as the door was closing, he said, I put my foot in the door. They couldn't close it. What are you doing, Georgie? He said, I thought I'd throw in another 10. He said, at the end of the service, he said, people are milling around, milling around. He said, you were gone. Everybody's gone. And he said, there's my wife, Bev, saying, come on, George. You got to get out of here. I'm coming, dear.

No, come on, let's go. The kids are starving. Let's get out of here. He said, I had no money. He said, all of a sudden, he said, Gord Schultz is at the door. George, I'm glad I found you. My wife said, go and find George and Bev. Let's take them and their family. Let's go out and let's have dinner. So he said, he took us to this big buffet thing. He said, I said to the kids, eat enough for a week. He said, I was overwhelmed with the generosity of Gord Schultz.

He said, it wasn't all over. He said, when we pulled in at our house, Brian, from the backseat, shouted, Dad, what's that on the porch? I don't know. Brian jumps out of the car, ruts up on the porch. He yells back, it's all groceries. Boxes and bags of groceries on the front porch. So George says, I'm wise to you. You organize it. I said, I don't know what you're talking. Yeah, come on, Dave. I don't, come on, come on. Let's be honest.

I said, I haven't any idea what you're talking about. George burst into tears. He said, had to be an angel. I'm not saying everybody should give their last 10, nothing, nothing, nothing of the kind. But George's principles and his sense of destiny and the prompting of, trust in the Lord with all your heart. And he did that day. I don't advocate it. I don't advocate it. Never, never, never. That was a George thing. And only George should have done it. I don't advocate it at all.
But God spoke to him, and he followed through, and God honored him. We were building a brand-new church in London, and I was saying to the people, if you can pitch in and help us, it would be great because, well, the PAOC head office forbid me even to build. I got a call and said, you can't build. We've looked at your finances. No, no, we're refusing you. And I said, sorry, Brother Yates, I'm pouring footings today. You can't do that. I said, the machines are running. We're on the go. I'm a rebel from the beginning. It was incredible. But we needed money pretty bad.

And I had a phone call, and this lady said, can you come and see me? I went to an apartment that was up over a store, and it was very tattered looking. The whole thing was kind of like, you know. And I was going up the stairs. The walls hadn't been painted. This place was old. And I rapped on the door at the top, and the widow lady opened the door. Pastor, come on in. I'm not overstating this. She led me into the kitchen. It was an old chrome table. Do you remember those?

The top was very hard. It was some kind of, I don't know. And chairs to match. Old, old, old. I'm not making this up. There was this cord hanging from the ceiling with a bulb and a string. Turn on the light. That was the kitchen. Scant furniture that I could see in the living room. And she pulled out an envelope full of cash. Pastor, I've been saving this for a long time, but I don't have a lot of needs. I was keeping it just in case. Just in case what? I don't know. Just in case. Pastor, I want to make an investment in the things of God. Will you accept this money? I had a hard time taking it, but I'd already learned a lesson. Be humble, but don't become obsessed with your humility. I'm humble. True humility would say, sister, why don't you keep that money? Because maybe there is a crisis coming. You're robbing that person of a blessing. If somebody wants to bless you, let them bless you.

Just let them bless you. Accept it with tears and accept it with humility. They're not trying to impress you most often. They're just saying, I appreciate you. Or, I feel prompted. I need to help you. I was preaching in the outdoors at the foot of Mount Kenya. And I preached there for a couple of days. I won't bore you with all of the stuff that happened. It was exciting. It was thrilling. And at times it was humorous.

Besides preaching or whatever, we attracted the crowd. We attracted the villagers from all around. We hung up a big, ugly bed sheet on some branches. And we had a little generator and a long cord off in the distance. So you wouldn't be troubled with the generator. And we had a film that we rented for 10 shillings from a nearby video or whatever you call it, store. I don't know if it was video. It wasn't a real thing. I don't know. It must have been a video cassette. And the only video that they had available for us was called The Pilgrim's Progress. It was a film done in about 1940s. It was pathetic. Like the graininess of the picture. Like the whole thing. And there wasn't any sound because these people speak Swahili. Well, there's no sense in having sound. And so I'd never seen this film. And I've never read The Pilgrim's Progress. Forgive me if I'm a bad person. I've never read it. I don't know anything about it. It's supposed to have a Christian something to it. But this person in here, his name is Pilgrim.And he stumbled over a rock and fell to the ground. And the crowd went into hysterics. They loved tragedy. They loved it. They don't know who this guy is. But he's a white guy. And he fell. I hope he's bleeding.
Like it was incredible. But then it goes on. Whoever made this film. It goes on to the crucifixion. And these soldiers are beating Jesus. These people. I'm not making. They picked up rocks. And they're pelting. They're pelting the screen. Stop that. Stop. They're trying to stop the soldier. Because they don't know cinema. They don't know this. They've never seen a video.
And they're trying to kill the soldiers with rocks. Talk about funny. The following morning, a messenger came to a mud hut where I'd spent the night. With a lot of bugs. And a message came. Simon Ngugi. That's his last name. Ngugi. Simon Ngugi wants to see you at his house. When I arrived at his house in this car. He's standing there. Anticipating that we would come.

He didn't know what time we were going to get there. But he was going to wait for it. Literally, he's standing out there like the king is coming. You know. And one little boy has got this stock in his hand. It's a sugar cane stock. And another little person over here. A youngster standing there. And holding on to a chicken. And Harold says to me, the missionary. You're about to be blessed. I said, how so? He said, you're going to have your very own chicken. And a sugar cane. Anybody see what a sugar cane is like? You break off a piece. And you just chew it and chew it. And your saliva starts to break things down. And it's sugar. And you'll eat this thing forever. It's an all-day sucker. This will go for a year. And so there's Simon Ngugi standing there with his wife. And his little tribe.

Every one of his children. There had to be eight or ten kids. And here's this bedraggled wife standing there. I thought, so sorry for her. And Harold says, the man spoke in Swahili to us. And Harold says, he's so thrilled with what you've done for his churches. He pastored seven churches. He was barefoot. The offerings to that little church. Would be eggs. Eggs. That's how they paid the pastor. With eggs from their chickens. He said, he wants you to have the chicken. And he wants you to have the sugar cane. I said, tell him thank you very much. I said, what am I going to do with a live chicken? He said, we'll eat it. I said, no, no, no. I said, chicken comes in a store in a nice wrapper. The chicken that I eat doesn't have a beak. And it doesn't have weird legs. He said, David, David, David. And the little boy walks up.

And he holds me the chicken. I said, Harold, tell the kid thanks but no thanks. He said, take it. Take it, David, please. Take it. This is their way of saying, I love you. I appreciate you. And this is the only way I can think to thank you. Don't rob Simon and Googie. Of a blessing. Is that a sweet story? Well, I'm done. The storyteller. Now, there's somebody came into the auditorium just a few moments ago. The majority of you didn't see her. You sent me that little message saying, and Adam's dad. I already knew some of that because he talked to me.

Adam's daddy talked to me. God is disturbing that man's peace. God's working on your father-in-law. Ladies and gentlemen, Ron and Lily's youngest daughter. It's so good to see you this morning. I'm surprised you're alive and awake. What you've been through the last few days. Lauren Freeman. I got my short-term memory back. Would you pray with me? Heavenly Father. I thank you for this beautiful woman. And I thank you, Lord God, that you did something very special for the Quinns. Before Ron went on to be reunited with Lily and to see the face of the one who died for him. Ron got to hold little Charlie. A brand new baby. I thank you for that, Lord. I thank you for that little piece of grace. And thank you for this precious lady who wants to show this congregation her love and her appreciation.
So, Lord, we're going to accept her generous gift. Amen.