

FINISHING WELL

Ps. Waweru Njenga – 17 July 2016

The Refresh Challenge Series – Week 10

Sermon Notes



As we began the year 2016 we wanted to start the year by waiting on God to refresh us. You see, we recognized that in this new season, our victories (whether at home or in the office) will not come merely from human effort, but primarily through God's intervention. Our desire was that God would refresh us in every way—our minds, our bodies, our hearts and our calling, so that we can live with fresh energy the life He has called us to.

Many of us can agree with me that it's much easier to start strong than to finish strong! We start well but then in the process, life happens. We face external and internal challenges that make it very difficult to carry on. Many times, it is just easier to give up and let go. We lack the energy, the steam, or the stamina to keep going on. Now as we finish this Refresh journey, how do you ensure your faith fire doesn't go out? How do you ensure that you finish well - as passionate for God as you are now or even more? Let me start with a question...

How many of you have ever been lost? You didn't get your directions right? Please share with your neighbor about your experience....

That's definitely true for Evie and I. Some of our heated debates have been during those moments I am lost but obviously I can't admit it. Of course, all that has changed a bit. You see, there's another woman in my life... Who directs me via my GPS. But, even with her good work, I've still gotten lost a few times! And so, as someone who has been lost a lot, there are three things that I've discovered about all of this:

- People who are lost rarely get lost on purpose. You think it's because we're not paying attention. We do.
- You're typically lost before you know you are lost. You are never aware that you are getting lost—it dawns on you. In fact, by the time you realize you're getting lost you've probably already been lost for a while.
- You always end up where the road you're on takes you. You see whatever road and direction you travel on will determine where you end up.

You see, the direction you take will lead you to a destination. Where you intended to end up or where you desired to be is pretty much irrelevant. If you are on the wrong road, you just won't make it to your desired destination.

As obvious as that might seem when it comes to geography and maps and all, when it comes to the rest of our lives... our faith journey, financial lives, dating lives, professional lives, marriage lives, raising kids, etc.... we so easily forget that this same principle applies. There's a huge disconnect between the destination people want to ultimately reach in life and the path they've chosen to travel. There is a disconnect between where we want to be and the direction we choose to walk down in life... "I want to date this kind of person;" "I want to have this kind of marriage," "I want this kind of spiritual life," "I want to be serving like this," and so on... That knowingly or unknowingly, we choose paths in life that simply won't lead us toward our desired destination. And then, when we end up somewhere we don't want to be, we get mad at God... "What's wrong, God?" Well... what's wrong is that you chose to walk down a path that would never get you to your desired destination.

If you load up your car to go to Fort Portal. As much as you want to get there, if you live in Kampala and take Jinja Road, you will not get to Fort Portal, regardless of your intention. In every area, the direction you take, not your intentions... not your hopes, dreams, prayer, beliefs... but the direction you take ultimately

determines your destiny. To finish well we must be intentional to stay on the right course! So what must we do to stay on the right course that will lead us to where God wants us to be? To help us answer that question please turn with me to **Hebrews 12:1-3...**

Context: The Book of Hebrews does not tell us its author's name. It does not tell us where the original readers of the book lived. Many people have thought that he was Paul. The style of the book is sometimes like his style but sometimes it seems different. So we cannot be sure. The author of Hebrews says something very important to a group of Christians during a very difficult time of persecution. He was to persuade and press the believing Hebrews to stay on the right direction in the Christian faith and persevere in it, In order to finish well and not fall away. Notwithstanding all the sufferings they might meet with in so doing. READ

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, ²fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.³ Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

The Author refers to our Christian journey as a race... Not a sprint, not a dash but a marathon. One of the basic teachings of Christianity is so simple: It is not how you start that matters; it is how you finish. Not everyone in the Bible stayed on the right course and made it into the Hall of Faith. We could say that the Bible also has a Hall of Shame - men and women who ought to be in Hebrews 11 but are conspicuous by their absence. The first King of Israel, Saul, should be there, but he is not. He focused more on pleasing the people than on pleasing God. The wisest man who ever lived, Solomon, should be there, but he is not. He focused more on foreign women and their gods. Balaam was a good prophet, but he had his eyes on the money. His eyes were so out of focus and distracted that he could not see an angel in front of his face. His donkey was more focused on God than he was. They took the wrong direction that led them to the wrong destination. My one message today is this **Your direction determines your destination.**

If this is true to us, what must we do after the refresh challenge that will keep us on the right course and help us finish well? I see two things in the text that we must do moving forward...

1.Lay aside all Obstacles.

The obstacles come in two fold. Weights and Sins.....I once heard someone say, "If it's not a wing, it's a weight." In general terms, a "wing" is something that facilitates our walk of faith, while a "weight" is a hindrance to it. A weight is anything that hinders us from carrying out our calling, something non-essential to our mission, which consumes time, and energy that could be better used in advancing God's kingdom. A weight may be one thing for one believer and something else for another. It speaks of things that are innocent in and of themselves, but when they slow you down and distract you from moving to the right direction, they are weights and they must go. Remember your direction determines your destination. The list of these things could be endless, it could be anger, unforgiveness, seeking people's approval, too much sleep, social media, procrastination, watching Tv and movies etc. that do not help us grow in our relationship with God.

Next, the author encourages his readers to get rid of "sins that so easily entangle". This refers to sins which cling to, distracts, entangle and trip us as we walk on the right path. Whatever that sin is-lies, jealousy, bribery, gossip, sexual sin, greed, lust, disobedience-it must be stripped off and avoided at all costs. We all know the destructive power of sin in our lives, it will entangle you, trip you and throw you off the right tract and loose your direction. Remember the Your Direction determines your destination.

As you went through the Refresh challenge did God convict you whether there are weights or sins that are leading you away from your destiny? You don't want to just keep going and then wonder why I ended up in

such a mess. Instead, ask God to give you the wisdom and courage to “see danger and take refuge,” because, as Proverbs 27:12 says, “*The prudent see danger and take refuge, but the simple keep going and suffer for it.*”

2. Choose your Focus

This term rendered “keeping our eyes fixed” is one that has a two-fold sense. It first of all refers to looking away from something and then looking intently on something else. So we are challenged to look away from those things, which merely distract, and to look intently upon Jesus-His will and Purpose for our lives. Why is this so important?

Often times, it’s the things or people that grab or capture our attention that influence the direction of our lives. You see, when something grabs or captures your attention, there’s a sense in which you turn in that direction. And, because of that, the things that grab or capture your attention can potentially influence the direction of your entire life. Back in 2001, as I was serving in church during a missions event, a girl caught my attention. Someone I knew and liked. Turns out, she had liked me. Some weeks later we had our first date and a year after that, we were married! Boy did she capture my attention and there went the direction of my life. I’m just going along doing my thing and, “Whoa!” Life would never be the same! **Your Direction determines your destination.**

We’ve all had those kinds of defining moments where we’re just traveling along and something or someone captures or grabs our attention. As we look back, we can see just how the things that capture and grab our attention influence the direction of our life. Now, of course, what I just shared were a few good examples. But the truth is that, for each and every one of us, there have been events, opportunities, things or people that have grabbed our attention where, *in looking back*, we wished we had walked right past them. You see, for all of us, there are people we wish we would’ve never met. Relationships we wish we never had, business opportunities we wish we would have ignored, websites we wish we had stayed clear of. The reason we continued down the wrong direction is because there’s something on that path that is very powerful and emotionally engaging. That’s why we use the language... she/he “grabbed” my attention... it “captured” my attention... and so I put the left blinker on and took a left. **Your Direction determines your destination**

But *not only* do things & people *capture* or *grab* our attention. But there are those things or people we choose to give our attention to... pay attention to. There’s a big difference between what grabs our attention and what we choose to give our attention to. Grabbing our attention is about capturing our emotion. Giving our attention to is all about intentionality... a decision we make. There’s no doubt as you look back on your life that there are things you wish you had given more of your attention to. You may have wish that you had given or paid more attention to your health. You may wish, now, that you had given more attention to how you handled your finances: how you paid attention to your marriage... or spiritual life.

Fix our eyes on/looking to Jesus... We are to concentrate on Jesus-His Will and Purpose for our lives, give our attention to Him and not wander. He is our goal and Reason. An athletic metaphor, it means to keep your eyes on the ball, on the target, to persevere toward the goal of Jesus Christ. This also means allowing Christ to empower and inspire you, as He is your main trainer and equipper for your assignment. He is far greater than any mere encouragement from either outside or inside the church. We are to look to Him as our motivation, not circumstances or obstacles. What you focus on will ultimately influence the direction you take. **Remember your direction determines your destination. What’s your focus right now?**

I can’t tell you how many times I’ve heard someone share with regret how, at a certain period of time in his or her life; they simply paid no attention to their faith. “*I wish I would have paid more attention to my relationship with Jesus... but something captured/grabbed my attention and became of that, I stopped paying attention to Jesus.*” You see, whatever gets our attention in life, whether they’re grabbed or given, influences the direction of our lives as well as the lives of those around us.

You see, generally speaking, **it's the things that grab or capture my attention that are generally the most dangerous**. The things that I generally choose to give my attention to are often the things that move me closer to becoming the person I want to be. Right now whatever has captured your attention is impacting the direction of your entire life whether financially, relationally, spiritually, morally, professionally, whatever it might be. Your Direction determines your destination

Truth is, that over and over again through Scripture, God reminds us how the things we pay attention direct our lives have the potential of influencing the direction of your entire life. David shares his heart with God in Psalms 119:37, he says... *"Turn my eyes (turn my attention) away from worthless things."* .God, would you help turn my eyes away from worthless things." Why? Because if I focus on worthless things, then so often, I'll find myself moving in the direction of worthless things. Again, all of us, no matter where we're at spiritually... everyone of us can tell a story in our lives about when our attention got fixed on something we knew we should walk away from.

So, the author of Hebrews writes to us ... *"Please, I want your eyes to be fixed on things that matter-God's Kingdom Agenda. Don't let get fixated on things that are worthless because your attention influences direction and every direction has a destination."* And if you think you're so committed and so good and so slick and so smart and so careful as to avoid this, he says, you just go ahead and stare long enough at the wrong thing. And sure enough, in time, you'll see that your life begins to steer in that direction. Attention, direction, destination.

The second question is this... What do you need to begin giving or paying more attention to after Refresh? How do you ensure your faith fire doesn't go out? How do you ensure that you finish well - as passionate for God as you are now or even more? In many ways, what grabs your attention gets your affection.

For some of you, you need to give more attention to building up your faith. Maybe you need to spend time in prayer and reading His Word before you jump out of your house. May be its getting back to Serving, be a good steward of your gifts and talents to build His church. Maybe it's your finances, you need to start honoring God with your tithe (the devourer hasn't spared you), saving for your future and investing for your next generation. What about your marriage? Maybe after the first year of marriage, you began drifting along on autopilot... with each of you beginning to give more and more attention to other things. If you want a great marriage then pay attention to your marriage! Perhaps, its your Passion, it's been a long time since you've paid attention to the poor and the hurting around you. Maybe you're looking back a bit and wondering how you lost that heart for the broken people that you once had? It's not hard to do. As we live out our day-to-day lives, there are things to the left or right that grab or capture our attention that will re-route our destination. Your Direction determines your destination.

So, *what is it* or who is it that you need to pay more attention to now? Because the things you pay attention are, *in this moment*, influencing the direction of your life. And every direction has a destination. And it's your direction... not your intention, not your hopes, not your dreams that influences and determines the destination of your life. And the reason this is so important to God is because He loves you and because He's interested in your destination after Refresh. He wants you to finish well! Your Direction will determine your destination.

Prayer

- Surrender my weights and sins that entangle
- Refocus my attention to God
- Become a Christ follower