

By Phil Clark

I enjoy canoeing, hiking, scrambling (climbing mountains where ropes are not required), mountain biking and skiing. I like exploring and getting to know other cultures, languages and places. I love discussing and devising new engine and vehicle concepts. I enjoy flying!

And . . . I have done all of these:

I have taught canoeing and archery at camp;

I used to lead day hikes, backpacking trips and small climbs with camp cabins, friends and international students from the University;

I was born to missionary parents in Belize, then in my teens built a small car with my brother and drove it from Calgary to Central America. I had the opportunity of working for three years in Papua New Guinea;

After working for several years, I took a year off, bought a lathe, went through the patent process, and worked on a Free Piston Electric Generator prototype; and...

I took flying lessons at the Springbank Airport, got my pilots license and night rating and chalked up over a hundred hours.

But I haven't flown or worked on novel engines and vehicles for over fifteen years, and have done very little of these other things that I enjoy. Why? Do I no longer enjoy them? Is it wrong to desire these things? Is it a great sacrifice to give them up?

Sometimes I consider it a sacrifice, I confess, when I see other fathers actively pursuing their interests or desires. But then the Lord reminds me of the reason that these desires have taken a back seat – it is because of LOVE.

For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised again (2 Cor. 5:14-15).

I am not my own; I was bought at a price (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

When I forget the greatness of my sin and my need for salvation, I consider these things a sacrifice. But, when I am reminded of the consequences of my sin and the greatness of God's love and grace that have brought me from a position of utter despair to that of being a prince in His eternal kingdom, my priorities are changed. Letting go of "my desires" is only the starting point of calling Him my Lord; of serving and obeying Him. I want to "present my body

(its aptitudes and desires) as a living sacrifice to God". I am no longer my own . . . I am constrained by Love. (I have so much more to learn about reflecting God's love).

He has commanded me to love my wife, Sheryl, in the same way that He has loved me (Ephesians 6:1). This love requires time, commitment, support, planning and more time. So, I don't have time for many other things, and I need to do things that we can engage in together – things that bring her joy and help her to blossom (I have so much more to learn about loving Sheryl).

We have young children, and it is my responsibility to bring up our children "in the training and instruction of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4b). This is one of the primary reasons we homeschool. I need to ensure that our children receive good training, and are protected from the false values of this world. But it takes time to homeschool (even for a father) and to train them to fear the Lord and to serve Him. (I have so much more to learn about loving my children)

The family of God is made up of all those who believe on the Lord Jesus and have accepted His gift of grace. They are the "bride of Christ" and the focus of God's attention. Jesus has commanded me to love other Christians (John 13:34-35), and I desire to help in our local church group where I can, but this takes time (I have so much more to learn about loving God's people).

The curse of my forefather's sin (and the requirement of God) is that I should provide for my family (1 Timothy 5:8), even though it is through "painful toil" and the "sweat of my brow" (Genesis 3:17-19). Over time, I have gained considerable knowledge and expertise in the planning and design of roads and freeways, and can best provide for my family by working as a Transportation Engineer. I would rather be doing other things, but most weekdays find me in the old minivan commuting an hour to downtown Calgary.

I now find joy in playing hide and seek in our house, holding a little one when he or she is cold or needing re-assurance, playing a board game, helping my son with his spelling or math, encouraging the children in their music lessons and helping them to work out a difficult piece of music, visiting with Sheryl, repairing broken toys, maintaining the house, and trying to instill the fear of the Lord and a love for His Word and His people.

God has set priorities in my life that are different from what I naturally desire. If I make the Lord my delight, then He will give me the desires of my heart – at the right time (Psalm 37:4). God may allow me to enjoy some of these desires, but am I willing to put off the fulfillment of these desires for heaven? Am I willing to be counted among the heroes of faith who "didn't receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance? They

were looking for a heavenly city” (Hebrews 11:13-16).

Though I cannot see it now, I am firmly convinced that, when I look back from the viewpoint of eternity, I will be overwhelmed at the wonder of God’s plan for my life here on earth, and how He worked out situations and circumstances for my eternal benefit. My daily priorities need to be guided not by what I want or feel, but by God’s Word.

And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ – to the glory and praise of God (Phil 1:9-11).

Phil & Sheryl Clark homeschool their three children (ages 4 to 11) in Beiseker. They desire to be an encouragement to God’s people – especially families. Phil can be reached at (403) 947-0009 or Phil@The-Clarks.ca if you wish to contact him.