

Legacy

David C. Nitz

*Things
That
Matter*

Foreword by Tim Hill

Music

Words

A lifetime of personal experience has given David Nitz a unique and profound experience in guiding you on an adventure of the *Things That Matter*. Arresting! Captivating! Packed with imagery and illustration! You will not want to put the book down. It will be one of the best books you will read this year. Yes, it's that good.

—Dr. Raymond F. Culpepper, first assistant general overseer
Church of God (Cleveland, Tenn.)

So much of what we agonize over is inconsequential, but that doesn't mean nothing matters. Some things matter a great deal. David Nitz's charming new book avoids becoming an insignificant catalog of significant issues. He creatively entices us to think more deeply about those *Things That Matter*.

—Dr. Mark Rutland, director
National Institute of Christian Leadership
and Global Servants

When Moses left Egypt, he took with him “the bones of Joseph” (Exodus 13:19; Hebrews 11:22). Moses took with him something from the past that was extremely important—something that represented core values, something that mattered—that had to go with them into the future.

In *Things That Matter*, David Nitz challenges us to ask, “What are the bones of Joseph for our time?” And Pastor David doesn't leave it to chance. He suggests 16 words—words of importance and significance. These 16 words behave like a refiner's fire, helping us ponder what our driving forces are, what really matters to us. This book will challenge, inspire, and empower us to see again our North Star as we venture into our future. Enjoy the journey.

—Dr. Fred Garmon, founder and director
Leader Labs

How refreshing it is to have a trusted voice going against the grain of society. In *Things That Matter*, David Nitz challenges the reader with 16 areas of life that cannot be ignored. Do yourself a favor and keep this book nearby. These truths will stand the test of time.

—*Rocky McKinley*, lead pastor
Destiny Community Church (Newberry, Fla.)

I laughed, I cried—I experienced a myriad of emotions as I read this inspiring book by David Nitz. Most of all, I was encouraged and challenged to realign my life with those *Things That Matter*. Not only has David modeled what it means to be a father, worshiper, man of integrity, prayer, grace, etc., but he has been a genuine friend—and I count that as one of my highest honors. You will be powerfully impacted by this essential thesis on life's core values. Thank you, David, for sharing your life with us!

—*Randy Morris*, state ministries coordinator
Church of God (Tampa, Fla.)

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Foreword

What matters in life? As a Christian believer, the seemingly automatic response to that question would have to be our relationship with Jesus Christ and winning others to Him. Some might take it to the extreme and proclaim that, besides Christ, *nothing else* matters. They sacrifice “things,” such as material items and perhaps even sustenance in favor of “giving it all away” in the name of Christ. A pastor or evangelist may be so dedicated to seeing lost souls brought into the Kingdom that he ignores relationships in his own home. Giving all for the sake of Christ has been viewed as righteous and noble.

Unfortunately, I have witnessed this rigid and extreme commitment to that “one thing that mattered” damage families and ministries. Spouses and children have been driven away, curtailing their desire for that one thing that matters, sometimes never to return because of a misguided view of things that matter.

Christ gave us the ultimate lesson in balance when He delivered the Sermon on the Mount. The eight beatitudes illustrate perspective and prioritization when considering the things in life that matter:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

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Blessed are the merciful, for they shall be shown mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you (Matthew 5:3-12 NIV).

When scanning the chapters of this book, while they are not necessarily modeled after the Beatitudes, you will recognize a parallel of some of the topics—such as forgiveness, humility, and purity. The same can be said about the Ten Commandments given to Moses in Exodus: fathers, mothers, worship, and words. David Nitz also includes words (chapters) that describe highly desirable character traits—laughter, legacy, and integrity. All sixteen of these chapters are things that should matter, not just in the life of a Christian believer, but among all people.

I challenge everyone to dive in, soak up, and then implement the *Things That Matter* presented herein. Hopefully, most of them are already active in your life. My prayer is that each chapter will become an exercise in self-examination, guiding you toward a Spirit-led Christian life that matters now more than ever before.

—Dr. Timothy Hill, general overseer
Church of God (Cleveland, Tenn.)

Introduction

These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will shrink from the service. . . . What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly: it is dearness only that gives everything its value.

Thomas Paine wrote those epic words in his 1776 work, *The American Crisis*. At the time the fledgling nation was hanging by a thread. If she was going to become the great United States, every man would have to search his heart and decide if freedom was worth fighting for.

Seems fitting to just copy and paste Paine's words on nearly everything we do these days. Just when we think we've gotten a few things figured out, a new wave of crazy comes rolling in. In the past couple of years, we've had to reinvent the way we do life. Nothing seems normal (whatever "normal" is these days).

Lately all of us have struggled to stay connected with our extended network of family and friends. Work from home has become a way of life. Technology allows men and women to interact with their companies and clients without leaving their houses. Churches have had to learn how to navigate the world of livestream. Since most churches do not have the resources or the manpower to produce a television broadcast, we've streamed our worship services in less-than-stellar conditions.

We've been stretched on every level from marriage to education. We've had to dig deep and find the where-withal to sustain or maintain something even remotely familiar to our lives before 2020. War is raging in our

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world as hate-filled men wield their swords of power and destroy innocent lives. Backroom deals are made without regard to the people they will hurt or the destruction they will cause. Indeed, these are times that try men's souls.

Matter defined as a noun means "a substance; something that occupies space." Defined as a verb, however, *matter* is "something of importance or significance." When I speak about things that matter, it is the second definition to which I am referring. Having just celebrated my 65th birthday, I hope by now I can identify some things in life that are truly important, and some that are not. The problem is when we get these confused and allow ourselves to be consumed by the things that, in the big scheme, don't really matter all that much.

Like a refiner's fire, difficult times ought to bring to the surface the things we should discard, or at least push aside. To *refine* means "to remove the impurities." The Bible indicates this is one cause for at least some of the difficulties we face. Consider Simon Peter's words in 1 Peter 1:6-7:

So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you have to endure many trials for a little while. These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world (NLT).

The challenge for me is keeping this in mind whenever I am going through the fire. These days if I tell you I've had my share of fiery trials, you'll say you've had them too. Some of those trials seemed impossible to survive at the time. We've all walked through dark moments when nothing seemed to make sense. In those

hours, if we are willing, we will discover what really matters and what does not. If your house is burning down, which shoes you will wear tomorrow doesn't matter. If your family is falling apart, who is sitting in "your" seat at church seems of no consequence.

Near the geographical center of Ireland is a place with a haunting quality. Clonmacnoise looks like something right out of *Braveheart*. Overlooking the River Shannon, it was founded in the fifth century. There, the remains of a monastery, several churches, a few stone towers, and dozens of Celtic crosses stand in silence as monuments of a story long gone.

In AD 544, a 28-year-old Irishman named Ciaran (pronounced *Kier-an*) settled in this place. He came to start a church to help spread the message of Jesus Christ. The place was nearly perfect for launching out to all corners of Ireland. Clonmacnoise became a major crossroads for learning and the epicenter for spreading the Gospel. For centuries it was home to a thriving community of people whose first mission was the Word of God and making disciples.

At one time Clonmacnoise was the largest Irish settlement outside of Dublin. What started as a small wooden church grew into a place of stone towers and castles. I visited there several years ago. We arrived near the end of a cold and rainy January day. The skies were gray, and the place was nearly empty. Other than a few die-hard tourists and our little group hosted by our friends Nick and Janice Park, no one else was around. It gave the place an eerie solitude. As I stood there among all the crosses, I thought of the determination and bravery it took for a young man to move to this place and establish a stronghold for God. Ciaran (or Saint Ciaran, as he became known), was driven by something that deeply mattered to him. There were no

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stage lights or TV interviews. There was no welcoming committee or five-star hotel waiting for him. No sleek limo picked him up. A refreshment-filled green room was nowhere to be found. When he arrived, it was nothing more than a rocky piece of land overlooking the river. He would have slept in a makeshift shelter, at least for a while. The only way to cut the winter chill was beside a fire, which he would have started himself.

In addition to the struggle just to survive physically and mentally, there must have been a spiritual battle raging as well. I've learned a man who is going to attempt to do anything for God will get the legions of hell unleashed on him. This determined young man had decided to bring the Gospel to a people who were mostly pagans. I don't have to guess if it was a struggle—it was.

The mission mattered deeply to Ciaran. Why else would he do it? What was in it for him? He had nothing to gain except the joy that comes from obeying God. And sometimes that joy is postmarked for the future. Sadly, young Ciaran died in 549 from a plague, just four years after he came to the place. He was not even 33 years of age. He risked everything in hopes God would give him favor and funding to reach lost people.

Today, thousands of people visit Clonmacnoise (apparently not in January) and hear the amazing story of how the place came to be, and the even more amazing story of how it survived attack after attack for more than three centuries. The ruthless Vikings attacked it eight times. Each time the place was rebuilt. The site moved me. I recall standing among the crosses with an unsettling feeling inside asking myself, *Would I have done it? Would I have come to this place with no promise of anything in return except God's approval?*

What matters to you? If you're like me, there is no shortage of things I consider important. I could name ten things in as many seconds that are important. Coffee, TV remote, iPhone, golf, books. I could also give you a more "spiritual" list: the Bible and my church. There's the family list: Amy and our sons, daughters-in-law, grandkids, siblings, Amy's siblings (well, most of them—you know who you are). The "stuff" list: my truck, my tools, my computer, my Fender Jazz bass. If we compared notes, we might be pleased we had listed some really important things. But then there's that other list—the one we don't publish. The list we keep crumpled up in the back pocket of our mind. That list is a culprit. It kills marriages and families, whittles away at our faith, robs our joy, and destroys our character.

The public "what matters" list says family is important, but the secret list says not important enough to get them in church. The public list says being a parent matters, but the secret list says my work, my time, my energy, and my passion is my own, and I will use it any way I like. The public list states integrity matters, but the hidden list says I will bend the truth if and when it benefits me. The list we show everyone says marriage is important. The other list? Well, your spouse might tell you otherwise. The list you show everyone says your faith is unshakable, but the list crumpled up in your head says, "Don't correct me, challenge me, or tell me what I can or cannot do, because nobody tells me what to do." I hear you. You think I'm exaggerating or being a little hard? Not so fast. Can we at least talk about this?

Take out paper and pen, and make two columns. Title one of them "Things That Matter," and the other "Things That Don't Matter." Even if you don't do this exercise on paper, think about what you would put

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in each column. Think long-term with broad strokes. Reflect on everything you have and do—your family, your job, your friends, your possessions, your hobbies, your habits, and your faith. As you make these lists, a few things will cause you to pause. But complete the lists, and then step back and see where all your time and energy are going . . . and where they should go.

It has been said, if you want to know what is important to you, look at your bank statement and your calendar. Where you spend your money and time reveals what really matters to you. That can be painful, but very enlightening. Certain things matter to us, and it is good for us to know what those things are.

During the 2020 Summer Olympics (which were held in 2021 because of the worldwide pandemic), something almost unthinkable happened during a women's bicycle race. I am an admitted Olympic junkie. I love to watch all the competitions. I appreciate the hard work and passion of the athletes. In the women's cycling road race, a Dutch rider, Annemiek van Vleuten, was favored to win. She was at the front of the pack for most of the race. At one point, in a rush, several riders passed her in a push to take the lead. She was able to overtake the group and get back out in front. She was pacing herself as she pulled away from the group. She was leading the race headed for the gold. That is how it appeared to everyone in the race except one lone rider. The Dutch rider just needed to outpace the pack behind her—that's what she thought.

During the group push to take the lead, in all the confusion, one of the riders, Anna Kiesenhofer, got in front without the pack realizing she had done so. The Austrian cyclist was in the lead, but no one knew it except her and the millions of viewers watching on television. Those of us viewing at home could clearly

see who was in front. But those in the race could not, especially Annemiek van Vleuten, who was simply outpacing the riders behind her for the win. The Austrian rider crossed the finish line, and was declared the winner of the gold medal. When the Dutch rider crossed, she had hands raised in celebration, thinking she had won. Then she was given the sad news that she had not won the gold. Van Vleuten probably could have caught Kiesenhoefer if she had known she was there.

In many ways I think Satan and his demonic forces have passed us up without our knowing. In all the confusion of the days we are living in, we have missed some very important things. We've gotten caught up in politics, masks, vaccines, who did what, who didn't do what, and we've taken our eyes off the real prize. We might be in the race but are unaware of the enemy out front plotting against us. While we think we're doing okay, we may actually be focused on the wrong stuff. Some things do not matter, while other things matter very much.

Life is a daily grind of decisions. We must decide hundreds of things. Some of those decisions are small and insignificant. If I choose to eat Corn Flakes instead of Mini-Wheats for breakfast, that decision is not going to be life-changing. Oatmeal or eggs is not a decision that is going to destroy my family. But if I decide, even if it is a slow process, to betray my marriage vows and cheat on my wife, that decision will be exponentially destructive for generations to come. If I choose to deceive and lie to people, those decisions will catch up with me and destroy my reputation and trustworthiness.

In the pages that follow, I will share my heart about things that truly matter. My desire is to write to inspire. If you are a father, I hope this will make you want to be a better father. If you are angry, I hope this will help

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you heal and perhaps laugh a little. If you are contemplating a decision with lifelong implications, I hope this will make you stop and think, and perhaps pray about it one more time.

You might feel put upon or offended if I mention an area of your life which you have no control over. For example, when I talk about the importance of fathers, you might be a single mother who does not have a husband or father in your life. Please don't let that keep you from whatever good you might glean. Take what you can use and pray for the families with fathers who need to hear it.

I'm no expert. I'm just a very flawed guy who has circled the sun lots of times and realize there are some things that really matter. With the courage of Ciaran when he set out to change Ireland's future, let's take this journey together with an open heart. We may find we have a few things we need to push aside, and other things we need to embrace more tightly.