

CALLING ALL MINISTERS

(Yes, that means you)



Jesus had already warned His followers three times that He was going to Jerusalem to be rejected and killed. They couldn't accept this message. They had no way to truly understand it. Their misunderstandings led to an argument about who was going to rule at Jesus' right and left side. So Jesus tells them one more time the essence of His life and ministry:

"You know that in this world kings are tyrants, and officials lord it over the people beneath them. But among you it should be quite different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be the servant of all. For even I, the Son of Man, came here not to be served but to serve others, and to give my life as a ransom for many." (Mark 10:42-45)

Look carefully at that last sentence and notice the two key phrases that describe Jesus' ministry — "to serve" and "to give." If we are to ever really get a handle on the concept of ministry, we must commit to follow the Master's example in those two key ways. We must be willing to serve and we must be willing to give.

Being a servant is not popular. It never has been. Voluntarily being a servant to bless others simply does not make good human sense. But Jesus reminds us that it makes perfect heavenly sense. (Philippians 2:5-11) To voluntarily give of our goods, our finances, our resources, and ourselves also runs against conventional wisdom. However, this is heavenly wisdom in action. (John 3:16)

In a world of instant gratification, the call to give up our rights and our possessions to bless others appears stupid, shortsighted, naïve, and weak. The long-term call of Jesus, however, reminds us that this world is not our home, that the riches we have now are only on loan from the Creator to whom we will give an account, and that glory awaits those who live the counter-culture lifestyle of the Savior. The last will be first. The least will be greatest. The sick will be well. The lonely will be included.

God wired all of us to be involved in His great ministry of redeeming the world. However, such a powerful impact on the world cannot be made by audiences in church buildings or self-absorbed religious dilettantes who have read all the best sellers on the Christian market but have been unwilling to soil their hands with the dirt of the street and the grime of lost souls. Now don't read this as being critical of going to church or reading Christian books. Both are important! But, those activities should move us to minister, not insulate us from the messy and costly nature of ministry!

The work of ministry still boils down to two, powerful, convicting, and moving commitments: to serve and to give. Jesus became this truth. Jesus taught this truth. Jesus demonstrated this truth. As those who gather around the Lord's Table and share in the communion meal that makes us one, we also hear the call of the Savior to remember Him by being His bodily presence in this world by committing to serve and to give. (I Corinthians 10:14-17)

“Now I want to tell you, dear brothers and sisters, what God in his kindness has done for the churches in Macedonia. Though they have been going through much trouble and hard times, their wonderful joy and deep poverty have overflowed in rich generosity. For I can testify that they gave not only what they could afford but far more. And they did it of their own free will. They begged us again and again for the gracious privilege of sharing in the gift for the Christians in Jerusalem. Best of all, they went beyond our highest hopes, for their first action was to dedicate themselves to the Lord and to us for whatever directions God might give them.”. (II Corinthians 8:1-5)