

HOW TO FIND ONE'S MINISTRY

A ministry is any work of service, which the Lord calls a believer to discharge. Any such work should be done in the will of God, in the strength of God and by the holy love of God. There are many types of ministry and to associate it solely with some form of church work is to adopt too narrow a definition – thus a ministry can include one's job or role as a parent.

It should also be stressed that ministries within the world and ministries within the church have an equal status before God. No one type of work is innately superior to the other. Through their ministries, those who follow Christ are able to do those good works the Lord had planned from before the foundation of the world, (Ephesians 2:10).

1) Ministry begins with: -

- 1.1 God's grace.
- 1.2 God's plans.
- 1.3 God's love.

2) A '*calling*' to a particular ministry may either come quickly or unfold gradually, as the Spirit leads. However, one must avoid being a religious dreamer who is always waiting on the Lord to give a spectacular ministry. A true ministry often develops only after following God in the '*little*' things.

3) With any ministry it is wise to: -

- 3.1 Be humble.
- 3.2 Allow it to settle down and clarify.
- 3.3 Test it against scripture and circumstances.
- 3.4 Let it be tested by adversity.

4) Common sense is crucially important in finding a ministry. It involves three simple questions: -

- 4.1 Is there a need for a particular ministry?
- 4.2 Are the abilities, desires and opportunities for such a ministry present?
- 4.3 Are God's blessings apparent when attempting a particular ministry?

N.B: All three questions need to be answered positively before launching out on a ministry.

5) Awareness of need doesn't necessarily mean that one has a ministry to meet that need. One must have the ability, desire and opportunity to meet that need. Remember each ministry is there to benefit other people. It should be a selfless and not a selfish exercise.

6) In order to find one's own ministry, there needs to be an awareness of one's own talents. In addition, two types of blessings must be present: -

- 6.1 The inner, personal blessings of love, joy and peace.
- 6.2 The outward, external blessings of good relationships, opportunities to serve and obvious '*good fruit*' seen in others lives as a result of that ministry.

7) To develop a ministry the believer needs to: -

- 7.1 Put plans into action.
 - 7.2 Learn from mistakes.
 - 7.3 Take criticism and rejection.
 - 7.4 Patiently build it up in the face of difficulties and setbacks, (which will inevitably come.)
 - 7.5 Be open to God and His correction.
 - 7.6 Be vigilant against Satanic temptations – most notably in the areas of money, sex or power.
 - 7.7 Carefully avoid pride or the use of a ministry to '*puff up*' social or spiritual status.
 - 7.8 Draw on the resources of God.
 - 7.9 Re-evaluate the effectiveness or '*fruit*' of the ministry, (once or twice a year).
 - 7.10 Know when it's God's time either to begin or end a ministry
- N.B:** It's important at all times to avoid a proud "*it's MY ministry*" attitude.

8) Churches need it be careful to match people to the right ministry in order to avoid tragedy and frustration.

9) To exercise a ministry, the believer need not be especially mature or a “*super saint*.”

However, he/she must possess:-

9.1 Humility.

9.2 Reliability.

9.3 Punctuality.

9.4 Effective organisational skills.

9.5 A realistic estimation of the cost and commitment required of such a ministry.

9.6 The faith to believe that God can change both people and circumstances.

10) The central purpose of every Christian ministry is to glorify Jesus by expressing His love for both the church and the world. If no love results from a ministry then it is not genuine or if it once was it has now gone very badly wrong.

HOW TO BE EFFECTIVE IN ONES MINISTRY?

(A summary of 2 Chronicles 17:1-19)

1) CONTEXT

A description of the reign of Godly King Jehosaphat who has just succeeded Asa to the throne of Judah

2) ASSUMPTIONS

Jehosaphat had: -

2.1 A clear sense of priorities.

2.2 Good organising ability.

2.3 A strong concern for Israel's security.

3) KEYS TO EFFECTIVENESS

In King Jehosaphat's case the keys to his greatness were: -

3.1 A rightful authority - he was in the place where God wanted him to be.

3.2 A willingness to take responsibility for those within his sphere of authority.

3.3 An avoidance of compromise with any false religion.

3.4 A heartfelt desire for God, which led him to obey and consult Him on all major issues.

3.5 Circumstantial blessings, which gave him a good reputation.

3.6 A courageous decisiveness, causing him to oppose the tide of popular opinion.

3.7 An ability to accept and delegate responsibility.

3.8 A capacity to appoint the right people, to do the right tasks.

3.9 A concern for the honour of God's word and the welfare of His people.

3.10 A reverential fear of God.

3.11 A willingness to relate to those whom he would have preferred to avoid.

3.12 A shrewdness to capitalise on God-given opportunities, in order to strengthen his own position.

3.13 The foresight to prepare resources to deal with difficult times ahead.

3.14 His wisdom in entrusting tasks only to those capable of them.

3.15 Having clear chains of command where it was obvious who did what.

3.16 His personal charisma, which attracted high calibre volunteers.

3.17 Having the appropriate weapons to deal effectively with any opposition.

3.18 Insight to further fortify God's people against any future opposition.

3.19 Willingness to secure the safety of those he was responsible for.

N.B: Each of the above decimal numbers corresponds to a verse number in 2 Chronicles 17:1-19

4) PROPHETIC SIGNIFICANCE

This chapter illustrates: -

- 4.1 The need for farsighted and vigilant organisation in the Christian life.
- 4.2 Jesus Christ's reign during the Messianic age.
- 4.3 Godly leadership.

5) APPLICATION

Not only does greatness in God's service require the qualities mentioned in 3.1-3.19, it also demands: -

- 5.1 A willingness to take planning and good organisation seriously.
- 5.2 An ability to obtain good advice.
- 5.3 An avoidance of isolationism.
- 5.4 A determination not to compromise with unbelievers. This is where Jehosaphat went badly wrong in 2 Chronicles 18.1. Great care must be exercised in personal relationships – particularly emotional ones
- 5.5 An unwillingness to settle for second best or for mediocrity.
- 5.6 Perseverance and hard work – even where there are no obvious results.
- 5.7 The insight to realise that true greatness is shown by “*ordinary Christians doing little things in the power of the Holy Spirit.*” This type of greatness is open to all.

6) OTHER COMMENTS

- 6.1 God often begins a new work amongst the marginalized members of society. To be on the margins is often to be in a position of strength, (1 Samuel 22:1-2).
- 6.2 Spiritual greatness involves service to others and is not to be confused with the ‘*status seeking*’ involved in worldly greatness, (Luke 22: -24-27). Status seeking provoked dissension amongst Christ's disciples.
- 6.3 Greatness in service gives joy, it allows Christ to increase and self to decrease, (John 3: -29-30).
- 6.4 We can test a possible calling to ministry by asking: -
 - 6.4.1 Do I have a persistent, heartfelt desire for that ministry?
 - 6.4.2 Does this desire survive despite repeated setbacks and adversity?
 - 6.4.3 Does this desire produce practical results, which benefit others and build up the body of Christ, (Matthew 7: 20)?

IF A MINISTRY IS ENCOUNTERING INSOLUBLE FINANCIAL PROBLEMS THEN SERIOUS CONSIDERATION SHOULD BE GIVEN TO ABANDONING IT ON THE GROUNDS THAT THE LORD IS NOT PROVIDING THE RESOURCES FOR ITS CONTINUATION. REMEMBER, GOD CAN SPEAK THROUGH A PERSISTENT LACK OF RESOURCES AS WELL AS THROUGH THEIR MIRACULOUS PROVISION. SUCH A LACK MAY INDICATE THAT GOD EITHER WANTS A MINISTRY TO CLOSE OR MAKE SOME DRASTIC CHANGES IN ITS PRIORITIES OR THE WAY IT DOES THINGS. HE'S ALERTING RELEVANT PARTIES TO THE FACT THAT SOMETHING IS WRONG.

7) CONCLUSION

There are many keys to greatness in Christian service, but we begin by LISTENING TO GOD AND OBEYING HIM. Other requirements include: -

- 7.1 A ruthless self-honesty about one's own motives and personality.
- 7.2 A Willingness to engage in the little, tasks, which carry no glamour and bring no recognition from anyone but Jesus Himself.

Finally, we must never forget that TRUE GREATNESS INVOLVES ORDINARY CHRISTIANS DOING ORDINARY THINGS IN THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT WITHIN BOTH THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD.

BIBLE REFERENCES: Luke 12.42-48, 2Timothy 1.6-18, James 3.2, (Also look up the word ‘*Minister,*’ ‘*Ministration*’ and ‘*Ministry*’ in a Bible Concordance).