

**ON
BEING A SERVANT
OF GOD**

BY
WARREN W. WIERSBE

Highlighted for Leadership Training
by
Jeffrey Pearson

Chapter 1

No matter how difficult the work or how many times we fell like quitting, we can keep going and growing *if we minister the way God tells us to in His Word.*

“When the pilot does not know what port he is heading for, no wind is the right wind.”

I was on the ocean of life with a road map instead of a compass, and I wasn't sure how to handle the rudder of the ship.

**Methods are many, principles are few;
Methods always change, principles never do.**

Methods work because of the principles behind them. To adopt a new method just because it worked for somebody else, without first understanding the principles behind that method, is to abandon both the compass and the rudder and start drifting helplessly.

Ministry is built on *basic principles*, not clever methods. God doesn't want us to have “ministry by imitation.” He wants “ministry by incarnation,” Philippians 2:13: **“For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.”**

Ministry takes place when divine resources meet human needs through loving channels to the glory of God.

The kind of ministry in Acts 3:

Then Peter said, “Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.

Here you have the four basic elements of ministry.

- (1) **Know the divine resources personally,**
- (2) **See the human needs compassionately, and**
- (3) **Become channels of God's mighty resources so that**

(4) God alone is glorified. When God is glorified, His Spirit can work to bring Christ to those who need to know Him. In reaching one individual, Peter was able to reach the masses.

Memorize this definition.

Chapter 2

Too many of us think God called us to be *manufacturers* when He really called us to be *distributors*. He alone has the resources to meet human needs; all we can do is receive His riches and share them with others. Like Paul, we are “as poor, yet making many rich” (2 Cor. 6:10).

The miracle of Christ’s feeding the five thousand comes to mind.

They advised Jesus to avoid the problem by sending the crowd home. *Where was their compassion?* We are often tempted in ministry to get rid of the very people God wants us to help.

The disciples were trying to be manufacturers. They thought it was their responsibility to come up with the money or the food or some clever way to solve the problem. But all the while, “He Himself knew what He would do”. **The *multiplication* took place in His hands; the *distribution* was the work of the disciples’ hands.**

Once you accept yourself as a distributor of God’s riches and not a manufacturer, you will experience a wonderful new freedom and joy in service. You won’t be afraid of new challenges because you know God has the resources to meet them. You won’t be frustrated trying to manufacture everything needed; and when God blesses your work, you won’t be tempted to take the credit. “If you can explain what’s going on, God didn’t do it!” How do you explain a miracle? You don’t! You just receive it and share it and let God have all the glory.

Divine resources God makes available for ministry? The word that best summarizes it is the familiar word *grace*: “And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace” (John 1:16). Image here seems to be that of an ocean, with wave after wave coming in to shore in unending fullness.

You don't *earn* grace, and you don't *deserve* grace; you simply receive it is God's loving gift and then share it with others. We are *channels* of God's resources, not *reservoirs*: Those who give the most receive the most and therefore have the most to give.

We have a "manufacturer mentality," prone to depend on our own resources, experience, training, money, talent, and education. They become liabilities apart from the grace of God. "But by the grace of God I am what I am," "I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me" (1 Cor. 15:10).

"And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work" (2 Cor. 9:8).

Before our service can be used of God is to *confess our bankruptcy and receive by faith the grace that we need for acceptable service.* We must work by grace, through faith, as we seek to minister. Only then can God work in and through us for His glory.

Chapter 3

In ministry, we're called to live for others. Be like Jesus. He met human needs, all kinds of needs; he wasn't always thanked or even appreciated.

"Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better [more important] than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others" (Phil. 2:3-4).

It's possible to be in ministry and *use* people to get what we want instead of helping people. If we aren't careful, we can minister in such a way that we exploit the needs of others to get ourselves recognition, position, titles, honors, and privileges. ***True servants of God help others whether they themselves get anything out of it or not. Concern is only God be glorified and people trust Christ.***

To know about them but do nothing. We must never be thankful for a reason (or an excuse) to escape responsibility, and we must guard against the kind of professionalism that leads to a hard heart.

A sensitive spirit and a tender heart are absolutely essential; George Macdonald, “Nothing is so deadening to the divine as an habitual dealing with the outsides of holy things.” That’s the best definition of religious professionalism. **The only right way for the servant of God to respond is to ask, “Lord, what do You want me to do?”**

Unless we help people grow into a right relationship with God, whatever help we give will be only a stopgap measure, a quick fix until the next time they have a need; and then the cycle is repeated.

That is the major differences between Christian ministry and mere humanitarian benevolence, only true Christian ministry can put grace in the heart so that lives are changed and problems are really solved.

What life does to us depends on what life finds in us, and that is where the grace of God comes in.

Selfishness says, “What will I get?” Service says, “What I have I’ll give to you.”

Chapter 4

Like hedgehogs, some people the closer you get to them, the more they stick you with their protective quills. You want to help them, but if you do, you’re going to get hurt.

If the motivation for our service is anything less than Christ’s love—His love for us and our love for Him—our ministry will not really meet human needs of glorify God: “But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them” (Matt. 9:36); “For the love of Christ compels us” (2 Cor. 5:14).

If the worker doesn’t get a blessing out of the work, something is radically wrong. Serving God isn’t punishment; it’s nourishment. Jesus said, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work” (John 4:34).

People not only have problems, but they can be problems. **Some people are blind to their real needs and constantly want to go on a detour. Other people choose to ignore their needs and perhaps blame somebody else. And there are people who have learned to “exploit” their needs to get what they want from others. They can’t afford to solve their problems because their whole life-style is built on them.**

As Bernard of Clairvaux said, “Justice seeks out the merits of the case, but pity only regards the need.” Who are we to limit God’s grace and mercy?

(Ps. 119:97; 2 Thess. 2:10) If truth and love contradict each other, something is amiss.

Many of us confess that we’re not capable of loving people the way Jesus loves them and us. **But that’s the “manufacturer mentality” again. God doesn’t ask us to work up our Christian love is our own strength. He offers to create it within us when we need it: “the fruit of the Spirit is love” (Gal. 5:22).**

The love that we need for ministry is not a natural ability; it’s a supernatural quality that only God can provide. When the people we serve irritate us or disappoint us. What we ought to do first is pray for ourselves and ask God to increase our love. Otherwise, we may give the devil a foothold in our own hearts, which will create the devil a foothold in our own hearts, which will create problems the next time we try to minister to those people: (Eph. 4:32).

The Holy Spirit can make you adequate for any ministry challenge God brings to you. God often allows problem people to come into your life so that you’ll learn to depend more on His power and not your own resources.

God is as concerned about the servant as He is the service. **He not only wants to do something through us, He also wants to do something in us.** Difficult people and difficult circumstances can be used by the Spirit to help us grow and become more like Christ.

Our tendency is to pray for deliverance instead of growth. As the Lord, “What can I get out of this?” Opportunities God gives us to develop spiritual maturity.

Quitting and running away, the worst thing you can do. Because God won’t let His servants run away. He will keep working until He accomplishes His purpose.

Dr. V. Raymond Edman, Wheaton (Illinois) College, “It’s always too soon to quit. “Remember always to keep chin up and knees down!”

You’ll meet problem people and problem situations wherever you go, so make up your mind to expect them, accept them, and let God use them in your life. *One of the best ways to discover the divine resources that others need is to need them yourself and trust God to supply them.* (2 Cor. 1:3-4).

Jesus was “in all points tempted as we are” (Heb. 4:15) that He might be able to understand our needs and adequately meet them, and we sometimes suffer for the same reason. (Ezek. 3;15). *I sat where they sat.* That’s the posture of the true servant of Jesus Christ who wants to be a loving channel of the grace of God.

People who have—and cause—the greatest problems are those who need us the most. That’s why we must be *loving* channels, no matter how people may respond to our ministry.

Chapter 5

The glory of God is what salvation and ministry are all about. He commands us, “Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31).

If our motive for serving is anything other than the glory of God, only religious activity not true Christian ministry. If undetected, a counterfeit bill can do a lot of good as it passes from hand to hand; but when it gets to the bank—the final place of judgment—it will be rejected (1 Cor. 4:5).

It’s possible to “succeed” in Christian work and be a failure in Christian ministry. The psalmist declared, “and He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul” (Ps. 106:15).

God is glorified when people see the Lord and not the servant: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven: (Matt. 5:16). You have to decide whether you will be a servant or a celebrity.

God is glorified when people see the Master and not the minister.

God is jealous of His glory; “I am the Lord, that is My name; and My glory I will not give to another” (Isa. 42:8). **When you find yourself more concerned about your “image” than your character and your work, you have stopped glorifying God.**

When your service produces fruit, God is glorified. “By this My Father is glorified,” said Jesus, “that you bear much fruit” (John 15:8). **Difference between “fruit” and “results,” you can get “results” by following surefire formulas, manipulating people, or turning on your charisma; but “fruit” comes from life.**

Results are counted and soon become silent statistics, fruit remains and continues to multiply (John 15:16).

One more evidence that your work is glorifying God: the enemy opposes what you’re doing. There are many adversaries (1 Cor. 16:9). Opportunities and adversaries usually go together, and adversaries can create new opportunities.

Personal sacrifice is an insignificant thing when you live and serve for the glory of God alone.

“Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31).

Chapter 6

“He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it” (1 Thess. 5:24).

Christian service should not be “entered into lightly or carelessly, but reverently, soberly and in fear of God.

If God has called you to minister, no matter what that ministry may be, *He hasn’t made a mistake.* Best thing you can do is gratefully submit to His will and trust Him to work.

God always prepares His servants before He calls them, before birth. Our very genetic structure is ordained of God! **“Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations”(Jer. 1:5).**

Instead of complaining about what we don’t have, let’s thank God for what we do have *and find out why He gave it to us.* Your abilities and interests are an important part of the will of God for your life.

In your ministry, you must be yourself. Too many people are trying to imitate “the greats” instead of ministering the way God wants them to minister. You are unique in what you are and what you can do, and God doesn’t want you to destroy that uniqueness by your trying to be somebody else. Nothing wrong with appreciating God’s special servants and being inspired and instructed by them. **Be yourself—your best self—and God will use you in a special way.**

Build on your strengths, and ask God for helpers who can compensate for your weaknesses.

It’s no disgrace to admit your limitations and seek help in strengthening them: (Rom. 12:3).

I believe God matches spiritual gifts with natural abilities so that we can fill the place He has for us and do the job He wants us to do.

Some five-talent people can do many things, and there’s nothing wrong with a godly ambition to do more; but most of us have to settle for being faithful with the one or two talents God’s given us. If we’re faithful, we’ll get the same reward. It’s not how much we have to start with that really counts but what we have to show for it at the end.

Chapter 7

Minister must put others ahead of ourselves, but we must put the Lord ahead of others. (2 Cor. 4:5). “Whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the

inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ” (Col. 3:23-24). Christ first, others second, ourselves last.

Focusing on serving the Lord you will be motivated to do your work and not look for excuses. **If you minister to get recognition, you will start doing less when people don't show their appreciation.** Paul called himself “the bondsman of Jesus Christ,” and slaves didn't have the privilege of saying no.

Result of serving Christ first is that you want to do your best.

When you put Christ first in your ministry and do your work *the burden is light*. “For My yoke is easy and My burden is light” is His promise (Matt. 11:30).

When I fail, He forgives me and helps me start over again. He never leaves me or forsakes me, and He rewards me graciously, though I don't deserve it.

When you put Jesus Christ first *you stop watching other Christians and passing judgment on what they do or what God does with them*. **People watching is dangerous. If you keep your eyes of faith on Christ and seek to please Him alone, you won't have either the time or the desire to watch others.**

Read again the parable of the workers in the vineyard. The first workers mistakes: they complained. Why? Because they were watching the other workers to see how long they had worked and much they were paid.

Have you ever complained because God gave others a better deal. Satan can use a thing like that to get a foothold in your life, make you bitter, and create problems in you ministry.

If you're working for Christ alone, you won't be bothered by what other workers do or what God does for them. Nor will you try to make bargains with God to be sure you get your rightful share.

You can't please everybody, so don't even try. Just live and work in such a way that your Master will be able to say, “You are My beloved servant in whom I am well pleased.”

Chapter 8

God has a specific plan for each of His children. He wants to share his plan with us and help us fulfill it. Ephesians 2:10.

He has been ahead of me preparing the place to which I am coming, manipulating all the resources of the universe in order that the work I do may be a part of His whole great and gracious work.

John of Damascus defined *providence* as “the care God takes of all existing things.” If not one sparrow is forgotten before God (Luke 12:6), surely the Father cares for and guides His own children!

Obedience to the will of God gives you wings, not chains! You are never more free than when you fulfill the plan God has for your life.

In Ephesians 2:10, God is pictured not as a mechanic but as a potter. If the clay refuses to yield, the potter doesn’t give up: “And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter; so he made it again into another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to make” (Jer. 18:4).

Moses began his ministry by defending a fellow Jew and then fleeing for his life, but God made him again. When things got tough, Abraham ran off to Egypt, and twice he lied about his wife; but God made him again. And those men were the patriarchs who founded the Hebrew nation!

When investigating the lives of the apostles, the record doesn’t improve too much. **Peter’s denying Christ three times. James and John wanting to call fire from heaven to destroy a whole village? (Jesus nicknamed them “the sons of thunder”!) The apostles argued who was the greatest. Those things shouldn’t have happened, but they did. However, the failures of those men didn’t stop God from accomplishing His purposes because He made them again and used them in a might way.**

Lest we should get over confident and recklessly tempt God. Read Jeremiah 19 and see the prophet *breaking the vessel because it was beyond repair*. That’s what happened to Samson and King Saul; God had to remove them from the scene.

If a servant of God falls, let’s obey the command of Galatians 6:1 seek to “restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness. Process may take years, but let’s not give up. The purpose of discipline is restoration, and the results of restoration ought to be fellowship and ministry.

Restored servant may not be able to go back to the original place of leadership, but surely some place in the vast harvest field where laborers are still desperately needed.

Ephesians 2:10 gives us confidence and courage when the enemy attacks us or when our work seems to be in vain. *When God calls you, He enables you and He sees you through.*

For behold, I have made you this day
A fortified city and an iron pillar,
And bronze walls against the whole land (Jer. 1:18).

God kept His promises—He always does—and helped us do what humanly speaking we were unable to do.

When the Spirit of God impresses me with a passage in the course of my regular Bible reading, I stop and pay attention. I don't read my Bible in the past tense. He wants to communicate with me each day through His Word. God not only has a special plan for my life, but He wants to reveal that plan to me and help me fulfill it.

If you're serving in the will of God, you're like Esther; "You have come to the kingdom for such a time as this" (Esther 4:14). What God starts, He finishes (Phil. 1:6). If you decide to quit, He will lovingly discipline you until you're willing to obey, just as He did with Jonah. If you persist in your rebellion, He may put you on the shelf and label you disqualified" (1 Cor. 9:27).

Depend on the eternal purposes of God and the unchanging promises of God to keep going when the going is tough. The going will be touch; but God's purposes and promises will not fail.

Chapter 9

Christian service means invading a battleground, not a playground; and you and I are the weapons God uses to attach and defeat the enemy. When God builds a ministry, He needs somebody's surrendered body to get the job done. *You are important to the Lord, so keep your life pure.*

No matter how much talent and training we may have, if we don't have character, we don't have anything. To quote M'Cheyne, "Your . . . sermon lasts but an hour or two—your life preaches all the week."

There's a Grand Canyon of difference between *reputation and character*. It's possible to get a following but not necessarily promote God's work.

Life is built on character, character is built on decisions. The decisions you make, small and great, do to you life what the sculptor's chisel does to the block of marble. *You are shaping your life by your thoughts, attitudes, and actions and becoming either or less like Jesus Christ.* The more you are like Christ, the more God can trust you with His blessing.

There can be no division between "secular and sacred" in the Christian life; everything must be done to the glory of God. **God reminded two of His greatest leaders, Moses and Joshua, that the servant of the Lord is always standing on holy ground and had better behave accordingly. If nobody else is watching, God is; and He will be our judge.**

Character isn't personality, spiritual, charisma. **It takes more than a winning personality to influence people for Christ; it takes godly character. People are like trees: the shadow of the tree is *reputation*, the fruit of the tree is *personality*, but the roots of the tree are the most important part—*character*.**

Somebody asked the wealthy banker J.P. Morgan what the best collateral was for a loan, "Character." True in the financial, true in the spiritual world. For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him: (2 Chron. 16:9).

"Be holy, for I am holy" (1 Pet. 1:15-16; Leb. 11:44-45). Holiness is to the inner person what health is to the body. Holiness is wholeness, Christlikeness, the fruit of the Spirit being revealed in our lives.

God doesn't make us holy so that we can enjoy it. He makes us holy so that He can use us to do the work He wants us to do. Holiness is a very practical thing.

Pharisees had a brand of artificial righteousness and Jesus condemned it; unless our righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means

enter the kingdom of heaven. It was a righteousness of legalistic rules and human-created standards that never penetrated the heart and transformed the life.

As God's children, we much put into our Christian living the same kind of discipline that athletes put into sports. Athletes have to sacrifice and say no even to good things. They must be totally devoted to the goal of becoming winners. Every decision they make is tested by one thing; will it help to make me a winner?

Chapter 10

“That we may present every man perfect [mature] in Christ Jesus” (Col. 1:28). “For the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect [mature] man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:12-13).

God's goal for our lives is not money but maturity, not happiness but holiness, not getting but giving. More like His son, that's what Christian service is all about. **Your purpose in serving isn't to build the biggest church or Sunday school class. Your purpose is to build people of Christian character whom God can bless and use to build others.**

The key idea is maturity. There's no conflict between size and maturity, although all bodies don't mature exactly alike. But where there's life, there ought to be growth.

There's nothing automatic about spiritual maturity.

The danger is that we exploit people instead of ministering to them. **Remember, in God's eyes, the worker is more important than the work.**

Just think of what blessing He could give if we're really prepared!

One of the greatest compliments God's servants can receive is “Being a part of your ministry is really helping me to grow.” Dr. Ted Ward says it best: “Leadership is a serving relationship that has the effect of facilitating human development.”

Chapter 11

Believers who try to serve the Lord can expect to have problems with people—and maybe people will have problems with them!

Sometimes the people you help the most appreciate it the least. Jesus healed ten lepers, and only one of them—a foreigner—came back to thank Him.

Ambrose Bierce wrote, “There are two classes of people; the righteous and the unrighteous. The classifying is done by the righteous.” His satirical pen makes a significant point; sometimes we *create* problems with people because we adopt a “we/they” attitude.

We don’t have to manufacture unity; but we do have the obligation to maintain the unity that Jesus died to create—“endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3). So important is the unity of His people that Jesus prayed about it before He went to the cross (John 17:22-24).

“In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity.” Augustine said.

Even when we defend the faith, we must behave like Christians: “And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gently to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth” (2 Tim. 2:24-25).

Very few ministries divide over doctrine. Most differences center on personalities, methods of ministry allocation of funds, and other nondoctrinal matters.

Appeal must precede attack if we are to act like Christians. The army of Israel was commanded to offer peace to a city before declaring war against it (Deut. 20:10-

20), a good example for us to follow. Jesus instructed us to settle differences with people quickly and privately to take the initiative in seeking peace.

Read aloud in unison Philippians 2:1-18. Next suggest a prayer meeting to ask God to help everybody obey what was just read.

Thomas Merton, “To consider persons and events and situations only in the light of their effect upon myself is to live on the doorstep of hell.”

A lot of Christians are sitting on a hot seat. They expect everybody to agree with them and everything to go their way. The name of the malady is *pride*, and it’s a difficult disease to cure.

William Barclay wrote, “Pride is the ground in which all the other sins grow, and the parent from which all the other sins come.” The trouble is, sometimes pride masquerades as religious zeal; bigoted believers can be mistaken for devoted defenders of the faith and crusaders for the cause of Christ.

When other people don’t see things your way, trust God to show them what’s right (Phil. 3:15). And be sure to ask God to show you if perhaps you may be wrong.

A.W. Tozer say, “Never be afraid of honest criticism. If the critic is wrong, you can help him; and if you’re wrong, he can help you. Either way, somebody’s helped.”

Those who minister *for* Christ should strive to minister *like* Christ. He died for a world that doesn’t want Him.

Keep in mind that while you’re serving others, the Lord is serving you. Your service, *it’s not being wasted*. God is building your character while He is building His church.

Chapter 12

“How do you go about evaluating the missionary candidates who apply to GEM?” “I won’t send a missionary to the field who doesn’t have a sense of humor, they may not make it on the field.”

People who oppose humor among Christians have usually confused being *serious* with being *solemn*. Puritan preacher Richard Baxter advised, “Keep company with the more cheerful sort of the godly; there is not mirth like the mirth of believers.”

Paradoxical as it sounds, laughter is serious business. If you want to know what people are really like, find out what makes them angry, what makes them weep, and what makes them laugh.

A sense of humor is important in Christian service for several reasons. Being able to laugh at yourself and your situation helps to keep you balanced when you've made a mistake or when things fall apart. People who can laugh have a healthy sense of perspective. Laughter isn't an escape from reality; it's evidence that we understand reality and can cope with it.

Laughter is also the lubricant that helps people work better together.

A humorist, "a person who can see more than one thing at a time." The ability to join together in your mind the things that other people put asunder, and then laugh about the combination. Creative people usually have a good sense of humor and know how to control it.

But humor is taboo whenever we're handling what is holy. **In serving the Lord, there's often a place for wit but rarely for comedy.**

The ability to laugh at the right time and for the right reason is a gift from God that will do you more good than therapy. But our laughter must be the kind that strengthens us to face life honestly, not the kind that detours us from responsibility. **Laughter and tears often go together. They balance and enrich each other and work together to keep us sensible.**

C. S. Lewis wrote 'joy is the serious business of heaven.'

We must cultivate a holy sense of humor as we busy ourselves with the most serious work on earth.

Chapter 13

Whether you're a pastor, a church officer, or a camp counselor, there's something noble and enriching about "staying by the stuff" and seeing things through.

"Make every occasion a great occasion, for you can never tell when someone may be taking your measure for a larger place." A quote attributed to somebody named Marsden.

Marsden's quotation would make a good text for a sermon: four implications: work is supposed to make us grow; we're

always being measured; each job prepares us for the next one; the Lord may move us when He sees we're ready. A biblical text to back it up, Lord's statement in Matthew 25:21: "Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord."

If our service for the Lord doesn't make us grow, either we're in the wrong place, or we have the wrong attitude toward the right place. Both are tragic. Being miserable doesn't necessarily indicate that you're in the *wrong* place, don't be too quick to back out. God may have put you there for *your* good as well as for the good of the work. Some unfinished business to accomplish in your life.

The Lord doesn't want me to get too accustomed to the challenge or too comfortable with the work. If that happens, He knows I'll stop growing.

The difficulty of the task God gives us is one of His loving gifts for our maturity. Henry Kaiser used to say, *"problems are only opportunities in work clothes."* *When the Lord sees me mentally wearing pajamas and a bathrobe, He starts shaking things so I'll change clothes and get to work. I need the work more than the work needs me.*

We're always being measured: God and people are measuring us. **Most Christian workers are prone to think either more highly of themselves than they should (Rom.12:3) or less highly. If we think too highly, we'll get proud and start pushing our way into what we think is a more important place. If we think less highly, we'll get discouraged and want to quit.**

The Lord is the only One who can accurately measure both us and our work, *but He doesn't always tell us what He thinks.*

When God wants to encourage you He sometimes prompts people just to say thanks. I don't recommend you start either a fan club or a testimonial scrapbook, but do be thankful for honest expressions of gratitude and accept them humbly as from the Lord.

Sometimes the Lord encourages you with a very special answer to prayer. It's His way of saying, "I like what you're doing and what I'm seeing in your life."

One word of caution: be prepared for a super attack from the enemy because the devil doesn't like it when God's people are encouraged.

Another evidence that you've been approved by the Lord is the opening of new doors of opportunity. If you've been faithful with a few things, God will give you more things. Of course, that means more work; but God has measured you and is sure you can do it.

Leave your usefulness to God to estimate. He will see to it that you do not live in vain.

Each job prepares us for the next job.

Warning, never use assignments as temporary stepping-stones for something greater.

Read the book of Esther and get acquainted with Haman. God wants us to be ambitious, but be sure it's godly ambition.

When it comes to moving His servants, God's plan is never wrong, and His timing is never off. Sometimes He moves us to a bigger place, but He may move us to a smaller place that we're supposed to make bigger. In a situation we feel totally unprepared and in which we aren't at all comfortable. He's giving us room to grow,

Marsden quotation, memorize it, along with Matthew 25:21.

Chapter 14

Knowing when and how to close a ministry and move on to something else. Knowing when to move and *how to make the move* can add special joy to your Christian service; but hanging on too long, or making the move impulsively, can cause scars both in you and in the church.

Nobody except the Holy Spirit is indispensable in the Lord's work.

The fact is people we serve are prone to resist change and will plead with us to stay on the job. **Don't rock the boat! Motto of ministries that lost their compass and their rudder; sinking in a sea of complacent tranquility.**

When unity becomes uniformity, it's time for a blood transfusion.

Never resign when we're tired and discouraged. We aren't getting our way. We feel unappreciated and we're looking for some strokes.

Discouragement and depression are tow of Satan's chief devices for getting Christians on detours. Francois Fenelon called discouragement "the despair of wounded self-love."

Any important decision you make when you're not at your best is likely to be a wrong one, so be patient.

In the Lord's work, we belong to each other, and we need each other; and it's possible to disagree without being disagreeable. Paul admitted that there were times when he was 'perplexed, but not in despair" (2 Cor. 4:8). Only God is omniscient.

Every Christian worker has to learn how to accept disagreement and defeat graciously and admit that others may be right. Like a good marriage; you learn how to compromise lovingly, and you never say, "I told you so." There's a place for happy compromise so long as the integrity of the ministry isn't questioned.

When you best ideas are turned down, remember if the Lord wants to expedite your ideas, and if you wait and pray, He'll start to change people's minds. **It's amazing how much God can accomplish if His workers don't care who gets the credit.**

Wrong motive for resigning; we feel unappreciated.

Thomas Fuller said that praise makes good people better and bad people worse.

One calculated risk Christian workers must take is the possibility of being Misunderstood and not appreciated. If your motive is to please God and accomplish His will, what people say and do—or don't say and do—won't make a great deal of difference to you.

Chapter 15

How do we know when it's time to step out and let somebody else take over?

When your service is the most difficult, God may be doing His deepest work in your life, so don't run away.

See if you're still growing; if you're not, the work will suffer. God kept Joseph in prison two years longer than he expected because He had some more preparation to do in that young man's life.

The second element you must consider is the state of the work itself. Can they handle a time of transition when you won't be there to steady them? Are there still major group

decisions to make or ministry opportunities to seize? Have you planted some seeds that still need nurturing? Only a few of the questions that a compassionate Christian worker must ask before handling in a resignation.

Sometimes it's wiser to confer with a close associate and get another perspective on the situation. But don't talk to too many people; it will lead only to confusion. Keep your circle of confidants small.

Before you write the letter of resignation, wait on the Lord for some word from His Word. **I'm talking about a special word from God *in the course of your regular daily Bible reading.* You'll know that God is speaking to you because the Holy Spirit will make some Scripture vivid and real to you in a way that simply can't be ignored.**

So, before you make that final decision, give the Lord time to talk to you from His Word. **He will if you really want to know His will (John7:17).**

How you leave a place of service is just as important as knowing that God wants you to go.

Your attitude ought to be positive and not negative. God isn't taking something away; He's opening the door to do something new.

It's also a good time to say thanks to the people who have helped you and to tell them that their new leader deserves the same kind of loving support. **Once you leave, don't hover or meddle.**

Chapter 16

More than once, I've wished I could turn to the congregation after the benediction and say, "Would you mind if I preached that sermon again? I think I can do better.

What do Christian workers do when they feel like they've done a poor job of serving the Lord?

How do we learn from our failures? **The smart thing to do is to evaluate what we did and try to find out what went wrong.**

A danger is don't spend so much time on this "autopsy" that you start bleeding to death emotionally and perhaps spiritually. No matter what you did wrong, confess it to the Lord and claim His forgiveness. **Don't sit around recuperating—get busy! Denied *failure*, "the path of least persistence."**

Lesson from failure, we aren't as great as we thought we were. We're human. Failure has a way of humbling us, we've got to be sure we're experiencing true humility and not just punctured pride. Punctured pride says, "How could this have happened to me?" while true humility says, "I'm surprised this doesn't happen more often."

Do your work by faith and leave the results with the Lord. Always strive to do you best.

Chapter 17

This chat is for Christian workers who are classified as senior citizens by the younger crowd.

The older we get and the longer we serve the Lord, the more we need to work at being contemporary and not becoming dusty relics in a religious museum.

Nobody automatically stays young in heart and mind. **Living old is a choice we make; it isn't an inevitable sentence.** "Old age is always fifteen years older than I am." If you let yourself become old nobody will want to risk getting near you. You'll become isolated, critical, bitter, and desperate in your feeble attempt to bring back the past and resist the present.

"We do not count a man's years," wrote Emerson, "until he has nothing else to count."

No matter how old you are, count for something, even if it's only that you listen to the younger crowd, pray for them, and encourage them to lie for God.

Be an encouragement to the younger folks so they won't make the mistakes we made. *Every local church is but one generation short of extinction.*

It's our job to prepare the younger generation to step in and take over.

The younger generation isn't the future *of* the church. It's the future in the church *right now*, and we dare not ignore it.

Chapter 18

Time to chat with the younger workers. Summarize the lessons of history. "Whom the gods would destroy, they first make mad with power; The mills of God grind slowly, but they grind

exceeding small; The bee fertilizes the flower it robs; When it is dark enough, you can see the stars.

I can summarize in four sentences what I want to say to my younger friends serving the Lord:

- 1. Never take down a fence until you know why it was put up.**
- 2. If you get too far ahead of the army, your soldiers may mistake you for the enemy.**
- 3. Don't complain about the bottom rungs of the ladder; they helped to get you higher.**
- 4. If you want to enjoy the rainbow, be prepared to endure the storm.**

Chapter 19

Readers are leaders. If you do, you can stay ahead of the pack and reach your goals a lot easier and a lot faster. You'll find yourself maturing in a balanced way that will honor the Lord and make you a more effective worker.

Your heart grows by giving out, but your mind grows by taking in; both are necessary to a happy and balanced life of service. Christian workers who don't read aren't taking in fuel. Bees gather pollen from many sources but manufacture their own honey.

Several myths about reading you have to be "the student type" to be an effective reader.

One of the qualifications for ministry is "able to teach" (1 Tim. 3:2), and it seems reasonable that "able to teach" implies "able to learn." Otherwise, what are you going to teach?

Reading is a part of our apprenticeship with the Lord; it's one way He teaches us. God gave us an inspired Book to read, and we preach sermons from it, write books about it, and establish churches and schools to teach it.

When you stop reading, you stop growing; and when you stop growing, you start dying.

Another myth, reading books will *of itself* guarantee growth and success. Reading is only the key that opens the door to the vault. *Assimilating* what you read, *relating* it to what you already know, and *practicing* it where you serve put the treasure to work paying dividends. **Readers are leaders only if they turn their learning into living.**

Third dragon to slay is the idea that you have to read *many* books.

A library should be a collection and not just an accumulation of books, a gourmet meal and not a potluck dinner. The mechanic has a tool for every job, but what goo is it to carry around ten tools for every job?

A caveat: if you specialize in some area of study, your library will announce it.

The best-book myth, a book is a tool, and the hammer that's just right for me might be much too heavy for my four-year-old grandson.

I quickly learned not to buy a book just because somebody said it was the best.

The best book is the book that helps you live and do your best.

The myth of the approved author. We have to use discretion and common sense when we recommend books to young people and immature Christians. **As we mature in Christ, we stop choosing between the good and the bad and start distinguishing the better and the best.**

No matter who wrote the books you read, that what you read by the Word of God and hold on to "whatever things are true. . .noble. . .just. . .pure. . .lovely. . .of good report" (Phil. 4:8).

Read widely and learn everything you can from as many authors as possible.

However, don't read so widely that you fail to zero in on authors who are really on your wavelength.

O matter how old a book may be, it's a new book to you if you've never read it. One of the best ways to meet new authors is to read anthologies. An anthology is a smorgasbord prepared by dozens of great cooks, and it's all mine to enjoy!

Chapter 20

If you are married, you've got to take your mate and your children into consideration if you want to serve the Lord effectively. Otherwise you may end up destroying both your ministry and your marriage.

The fact that my wife has been an essential part of our ministry and that we were able to do what God called us to do because we're a team.

In marriage, “two become one,” and this miracle must never be forgotten. A man and woman must no longer say “mine” and “yours”; they should say only “ours.” If one of them has a ministry, they both have a ministry, whether the other one accepts it or not. Marriage isn’t a fifty-fifty partnership; it’s a 100 percent stewardship in which each mate lives for the other and both live for the Lord.

“If you do get married and you want to serve the Lord, choose the kind of Christian mate who is pleased when you please the Lord. Then there won’t be any division in the home, and you can both serve God effectively.”

The relationship between ministry and marriage, **if indeed “two become one,” home and ministry are united; they are one. What God has joined together, we must not put asunder. (Eph. 4:15). The Christian home and the Christian church are built with the same tools—the Word of God and prayer—and on the same foundation: love, truth, and discipline.**

The best thing my wife and I could do for the churches we served was to build a good home and raise children that were a credit to the Lord and to the church. And the best thing we could do for our home was to build good churches for our children to attend. The two became one.

When our children understand that everybody in the family is a part of the ministry, and that together we are all building the church and building our home, we have a common outlook to help us in making decisions. It isn’t an either/or situation; it’s both/and.

In our ministry, there were times when the family schedule had to be adjusted because of needs in the congregation. But there were times when the best thing my wife and I could do for the church was to devote extra time to the family.

When the children get older and start getting involved in all the rites of passage that belong to modern life, we all have to start practicing the give-and-take of managing the family circus. *First rule, nobody is always in the center ring.*

The machinery of the Christian home is lubricated by prayer. Dad and Mom must have their own personal devotional time every day and they also need to lead the children in a family devotional time. A brief (not hurried) look into the Word and a meaningful time of prayer.

Each family has to design its own approach, *and don't be afraid to laugh occasionally*. Paying with your family around the table will mean nothing if your children know you don't take time to pray in private, or if they know that you and your mate don't pray together. Truth, love, and discipline make the home Christian, but these things have to begin with Dad and Mom.

God doesn't usually tear down one good thing to build up another good thing. If your home is competing with your ministry and creating uncomfortable friction, you need to stop and take stock of things and make some radical changes.

Home and ministry are friends, not enemies; and it's your job to keep them that way.

Chapter 21

There is joy in serving Jesus, no matter what kind of service He's called you to do. *Don't ever lose this joy*. If you do, your service will start to become a burden. Why? Because "the joy of the Lord is your strength" (Neh. 8:10).

I'd rather die and go to heaven than do anything that would grieve the Lord and make my lose my ministry!"

It's a privilege to be in ministry and to serve Jesus Christ. It's the hardest work, it's the happiest work in the world; and the best is yet to come!

First, the joy of pleasing the Lord because you're doing what He wants you to do.

There's also the joy of growing more like the Master as you do His will. **"It is not great talents God blesses so much as great likeness to Jesus."**

The joy of helping others come to know Jesus Christ and live for Him. No matter what tasks He calls you to do, God will use them to help somebody if you do them in the power of the Spirit and for His glory.

The joy of knowing that, as you serve the Lord, nothing happens to you except what God ordains.

Another joy of ministry is the wonderful fellowship you have with other people who are serving God.

Let me close with the joy of knowing that your service for Christ will last eternally: “He who does the will of God abides forever” (1John 2:17). **Most of the people you meet day after day are either wasting their lives or merely spending their lives, but God’s servants have the privilege of *investing* their lives in what is eternal. *Jim Elliot said it perfectly: “He is no fool to give what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.”***

Just starting my seminary studies. I asked the Lord to give me a verse that would assure and encourage me during the difficult years; He answered that prayer. The verse, Psalm 16:11

You will show me the path of life;
In Your presence is fullness of joy;
At your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Whatever happens, *don’t lose the joy of serving Jesus!*

Chapter 22

In 1951 Soviet government, describes the Bible “a collection of different legends, mutually contradictory and written at different times and full of historical errors, issued by churches as a ‘holy’ book.”

To us, the Bible is a holy book, the “Holy Scriptures” inspired by the Holy Spirit and written by “holy men of God”.

Dr. Will H. Houghton said, “Lay hold of the Bible until the Bible lays hold of you.” Martin Luther “The Bible is alive, it speaks to me; it has feet, it runs after me; it has hands, it lays hold on me.”

You can’t succeed apart from the Word of God.

The Word of God reveals the God of the Word; and the servants
The essence of idolatry,” “is the entertainment of thoughts about
God that are unworthy of don’t read the Bible to mark “precious
promises,” to understand “Bible doctrine.” *We read the Bible to
get to know the heart and mind of God.* The better we know
God, the better we can enjoy Him and minister for Him.

“How can I know the will of God?” “Get to know the character of God.” God never acts in
violation of His character, and that character is revealed in the Bible. **Too many Christians
think that God tolerates sin the way most people do, and that the absence of His discipline
means the approval of their disobedience. Not so! “you thought that I was altogether like
you.” Warned God, “but I will rebuke you” (Ps. 50:21).**

For too long a time, I saw the Bible as a devotional guide, a theology text, and a sourcebook
for sermons. Not a link between me and God.

“The essence of idolatry,” “is the entertainment of thoughts about God that are unworthy
of him.”

The Word of God reveals the character of God to us, and as it does, it also renews the mind
so that we start to think the way God wants us to think: be transformed by the renewing of
your mind, that you may prove what is that perfect will of God” **(Rom. 12:2).**

**One of the dangers in ministry is that we start thinking the
way the world thinks and then doing things the way the
world does them (Ps. 1:1-3).**

D. L. Moody used to say that “some people are so heavenly minded they’re no earthly
good.” To have “the mind of Christ” means to look at things from our Lord’s perspective,
to look at earth from heaven’s point of view.

Ministry is something that we do by faith, and “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word
of God” (Rom. 10:17). “According to your faith let it be to you” (Matt. 9:29); the measure of

our faith is the result of quality time spent in the Word of God. What we thought was faith was really only sentimental presumption. We were not trusting God; we were tempting God.

Moody said “I used to think I should close my Bible and pray for faith; but I came to see that it was in studying the Word that I was to get faith.”

Along with revealing God, renewing the mind, and strengthening faith, the Word of God cleanses lives. It is a part of the process Paul called “renewing of your mind” because what we think determines what we are and what we do.

The Word of God is not only cleansing water; it’s also a shining light that enables us to see what’s filthy and stay away from it. Far better to *stay* clean than to *get* clean!

The Spirit of God has used the Word to steer us clear of danger and defilement. The Word of God that enlightened a dark and sometimes dangerous path. **If we come to His Word with sincere devotion and a willingness to obey, God will show us our hearts as we have never seen them before and will warn us about what may happen if we don’t follow His will.**

Anybody in ministry is also in a battle. One of the enemy’s favorite tactics is to question the Word of God and undermine your faith. “Has God indeed said...?” **Satan knows that once you start questioning God’s Word, the next step is to deny God’s Word.**

What’s our defense? “The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Eph. 6:17).

Discipline yourself to spend time daily in a systematic reading of God’s Word. Make this “quiet time” a priority that nobody can change.

Word of God equips us to live for Him and work for Him (2 Ti. 3:17). Luke 1:37: “For no word from God shall be void of power.

Christians who live in the Word are used of God to get His work done in this world.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.

Attitude of Peter, “Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net” (Luke 5:5).

That “nevertheless” of obedient faith makes the difference between success and failure.

You can trust in this truth: “There has not failed one word of all His good promise” (1 Kings 8:56).

Chapter 23

What is God looking for?

Ezekiel 22:30 tells us that God is seeking people to “make a wall” and “stand in the gap.” God is looking for workers. There are places of ministry to fill, and the angels can’t take our place.

In John 4:23 the Father is seeking “true worshipers”; in Luke 13:7 the Father is also seeking fruit. These two go together.

I want to focus on Luke 19:10: “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

Purpose of ministry, the glory of God. Goals of ministry, seek the lost and win them to faith. When there were only two sinners on this earth, God the Father interrupted His Sabbath rest to seek them and bring them back. *If reaching lost sinners is so important to God, it ought to be important to us.*

Something vanishes from our ministry when we lose our burden for lost souls. We gradually become professional Christian workers.

Every God-given and God-empowered ministry is a part of bringing in the harvest. Some servants plow, some sow, some water, and some reap; but God gives the increase (1Cor.3:1-9). Whether you're cooking a dinner, cleaning the nursery, folding bulletins, or raking leaves on the church lawn, ask God to use your part of the ministry to reach lost people with the gospel.

Dr. Oswald J. Smith “**the light that shines the farthest will shine the brightest at home.**”
To win people to Christ where we don't live, no substitute for winning people to Christ where we do live! The two really go together; but the shining begins at home.

A famous theologian once said that the church exists by mission just as fire exists by burning. *No matter what task God has called you to do, always remember that your ministry touches a whole world if you are truly serving the Lord.* You may not see how God is using your ministry, but that's not important.

Keep the big picture in mind—the vision of evangelizing a whole world for Christ.

Only fifteen people in Bethany saw Mary's act of worship when she anointed the feet of Jesus—and twelve of them criticized her for it!—but Jesus said that the message of what Mary did would travel around the world!

One of the special joys in heaven will be meeting people we never met before, people who came to Christ because of our witness and ministry, and we knew nothing about it.

Chapter 24

English word *loyal* comes from the Latin word *legere*, which means “to choose,” “to pick.” It also gives us the words *diligent*, *eligible*, and *allegiance*, all are good words to remember in ministry.

Remember that being loyal to the Lord also means *being loyal to one another*. If we are really true to the Lord, we’ll be Christlike in the way we treat other people, especially those who disagree with us.

Practicing loyalty means first of all maintaining perspective. It’s not the purposes of the church or the biblical principles we follow that create problems in ministry, but the procedures we use to accomplish those purposes and implement those principles.

Another key factor in loyalty is caring about the interests of others.

Holy places and holy occasions provide no immunity against selfishness and pride.

Loyalty requires humility. God not only hates pride, but He *resists* it.

Loyalty must not be blind; devotion must not lack discernment. Proud Christians sometimes hide behind the cross, and to differ with them is to resist the Lord Himself.

True loyalty doesn’t destroy your individuality; it dedicates it to a higher goal and makes you a better person because you’re a part of something bigger than yourself.

“Loyalty is making yourself a part of an organization—and making that organization a part of you.”

David’s words to Solomon, “Know the God of your father, and serve Him with a loyal heart and with a willing mind; for the Lord searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts” (1 Chron. 28:9).

Chapter 25

The mountaintops of ministry are often accompanied by deep valleys of disappointment and discouragement.

When Moses was discouraged because of what his people did, he communed with God and prayed, “Please, show me Your glory: (Exod. 33:18).

So, the next time people fail you and you feel like you’ve failed, go to the mount and ask God to show you His glory.

If we don’t see the glory on the mountain, we’ll never be able to face the discouragement in the valley.

In the economy of God, suffering and glory together.

Chapter 26

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men” (2 Cor. 5:10-11).

“Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling,” Psalm 2:11. How strange that fear and trembling are linked by rejoicing and that all three are a part of serving the Lord!

Unless joy is balanced by godly fear, our service may not amount to very much.

Joy of the Lord grows primarily out of our relationship with Him, while the fear of the Lord grows out of our responsibility to Him. Joy and fear are neither enemies nor competitors; they’re friends and allies.

All responsibility without joy will crush a person. All joy without godly fear will make that servant shallow and immature. We enjoy intimacy and carry responsibility, and we must keep them in balance.

Contemplating the future, *reckoning* encourages me to “serve God”. *Reward* encourages me to rejoice in the Lord.

Anyone who tries to serve the Lord will be criticized by both friends and enemies.

If they need my help, I should help them. If I see them in danger, I must warn them. If they sin against me, I must tell them. And if they repent, I must forgive them. I should do everything I can for my brothers and sisters that will help them give a good accounting when they stand before the Lord. But I must not pass judgment on their motives or their work.

Chapter 27

We all have them, we have to accept them and learn to make the most of them. I’m talking about those bad days from time to time.

So, what do you do?

The best thing to do is accept the situation, smile, take a shower, get ready for the day, and determine to do your best. If you pamper yourself every time you don’t feel good, you’ll end up doing less and less and eventually will do nothing.

Fortunately, acceptable Christian service isn’t based on feelings; it’s based on obedience. It’s a matter of the will and not the feelings. When He was dying for us on the cross, our Lord was never more in the will of God; yet His body certainly didn’t feel good.

Christian service that’s based only on feelings will be a roller-coaster kind of experience, up one day and down the next. It will also lead to a shallow ministry that thinks more about pleasing ourselves than helping others.

“The greatest ability is dependability.” I would rather serve with an average worker who is reliable than a talented one who can’t be depended.

Make up your mind that you're going to serve God, not matter how you feel. Then you can stop wasting precious time and energy having a debate with yourself every time you don't feel good.

Keeping the most vital appointment of every day; spending time alone with the Lord. Tell Him just how you feel and ask Him for the grace you'll need to do His work that day.

In my devotional time each morning, I like to pray my way through the day's schedule and turn every commitment over to the Lord. That means the day's obligations and interruptions are in His hands, and I shouldn't fret if He changes my plans. This little step of faith takes away a lot of the pressure that can be generated by a busy schedule.

You have to depend on your "spiritual instincts" as the Lord directs you.

His grace is still sufficient, and His strength is still perfected in your weakness (2Cor. 12:9). It's not your feelings but His faithfulness that carries you through.

Then what? Live your day, a step at a time, and do each task and meet each person as if you felt like entering the Olympics. Resist the temptation to tell others that you don't feel good. Don't become toxic and spread gloom and doom. "This, too, shall pass."

Off days are not for any of us, but we must not let them become excuses for papering ourselves and creating problems for our fellow workers. Chronic physical complaints call for profession help, but occasional miseries are more nuisances and ought to become servants and not masters.

Off days are also *offer* days; they offer you opportunities to catch up on routine jobs that don't demand a lot of creative concentration. Answer routine mail. Clean out the correspondence file. Help my wife do some household task that she shouldn't handle alone.

If we can't handle the minor complaints of life heroically, how will we respond if something really serious comes our way?

**If you have run with the footmen,
And they have wearied you,
Then how can you contend with horses?
And if in the land of peace,
In which you trusted, they wearied you,**

Then how will you do in the floodplain of the Jordan? (Jer. 12:5).

“Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day” (2 Cor. 4:16).

“Day by day”—even the off days!

Chapter 28

If you’re nursing a grudge, expect to pay some big doctor bills.” Little by little your grudge robs you of peace and power and makes you miserable.

You can’t always help *having* an enemy, but you can help *being* an enemy. *If you have an enemy eating away at your heart, it’s probably because you choose to have that enemy there.* You aren’t responsible for the way others treat you, but you are responsible for the way you respond.

First response has to be that of prayer. ***I need to pray for them.* Jesus instructed us to love our enemies, bless them, do good to them, and pray for them (Matt. 5:44). A surefire remedy for protecting a heart that’s in danger of being poisoned by a grudge.**

“Okay,” you say, “I’ll pray for them; and call fire and brimstone down from heaven on the heads of your enemies.

That isn’t exactly the kind of praying Jesus was talking about. We need to pray first of all for ourselves that we won’t become bitter and start seeking revenge. Then we can pray for our enemies as we should ask God to bless them with insight into His Word so they’ll see their own need and turn to Him for help. Pray for opportunities to do the good and manifest a Chrislike spirit. Also need to pray that we’ll not discredit them before others. Instead say something good about them or say nothing at all.

If you respond to your enemy in the wrong way, the devil gains a foothold in your life. (Eph. 4:27). Warning about the sins that help Satan establish a beachhead; lying, unrighteous anger, corrupt speech, malice, an unforgiving spirit, to name but a few. Enemies are on the outside, you're safe; but when you let them get on the inside, you're in for trouble.

Remind yourself that your battle is not with flesh and blood (your enemy) but with the invisible satanic hosts (Eph. 6:12). Be sure you put on the whole armor of God by faith every day and use the equipment God has provided for you.

The right kind of praying ought to lead to our forgiving our enemies from the heart, asking God to defuse the painful memories that could explode within and do a lot of damage.

The biblical meaning of *forget* (as in Heb. 0:17) is "not to hold it against the person and let it affect your relationship." God chooses not to hold our sins against us. He remembers to forget.

"At my first defense no one stood with me," Paul the prisoner wrote to Timothy, "but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them" (2 Tim. 4:16). Jesus prayed from the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (Luke 23:34).

Remember to forget.

Chapter 29

Jesus said a good deal about wealth, so the subject is obviously important.

Money is basically evil and that only the blessing of God can sanctify it and make it useful in kingdom work.

Some people trust God, some people trust wealth, and some people try to do both. We cannot serve both the God of heaven and the god of gold.

Wealth can slowly seduce us into treating it like a god. We try to love God and money; before long, God loses out. Money possesses the heart; thoughts of ways to get money control the mind; and before long, the will is captured, money starts to rule the will. Paul equated "covetousness" with "idolatry" (Col. 3:5).

Money is a substitute for God. Money is more tangible, less faith is required to trust it. Pharisees were trying to mix riches and religion, and Jesus told them they were wrong (Luke 16:14-15).

Money is the god of modern civilization, and its worship has invaded the church. The “health and wealth” preachers have convinced millions of people that poverty is the penalty for unbelief.

Dedicated Christian workers often have to minister with what Spurgeon called “slender apparatus.”

***We can’t divorce money and ministry!* If God can’t trust us with money, He can’t trust us with the “true riches” necessary for ministry (Luke 16:9-13). The worker who can’t be trusted with the treasury can’t be trusted with the ministry. “Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?” (Luke 16:11).**

When money takes over, character goes—and so does ministry. John Henry Jowett, “The real measure of our wealth is how much we’d be worth if we lost all our money.”

Each one of us must find the economic level at which God wants us to live and be content to live there. It takes commitment and courage to challenge and defy the money myths that are fooling Christians today; but if we’re going to service in effective ministry, we have to do it. Unfaithful stewardship is one sin that is holding back revival.

Money is the “god of this world,” and it empowers millions of people to enjoy life by living on substitutes. They can buy entertainment, but they can’t buy joy. Money will attract a lot of acquaintances but very few real friends. Wealth gains them admiration and envy but not love.

It’s good to have the things that money can buy, *provided we don’t lose the things that money can’t buy*. God...warns us not “to trust in uncertain riches” (1 Tim. 6:17). If Christian workers can’t learn to trust God for daily needs, how can we trust Him for the needs of the ministry?

Serving God means being a part of a daily miracle, and one aspect of that miracle is the way God provides for His people. David in Psalm 37:16, verse 25:

I have been young, and now am old;
Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken,

Nor his descendants begging bread.

Paul would add, “**And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus**” (Phil. 4:19).

Chapter 30

I’ve been reading “the futurists.” They tell us that change itself is changing; and the church no longer has time to play the waiting game.

One thing about change hasn’t changed; it still fascinates some people, frightens others, and provides a good living for a prophetic minority.

Things change, old problems fade, and new problems take their place, *but life goes on; you and I have but one life to live and a job to do for God before it ends. But I can do something about bringing God’s presence into the world in which He has put me, and that’s what ministry is all about.*

Fable, an ant asked a centipede, “How do you know which leg to move next?” “**I’ve never thought about it.**” The more he thought about the question, the more perplexed he became until finally he was so confused he couldn’t walk at all.

We can get so wrapped up in pondering the perplexities of the future that we fail to seize the opportunities of the present and do the work that’s needed right now. We’re always learning how to get ready.

All of God’s people are ministers; a few are Ministers with a capital M. As ministers we shall be judged by the Lord on the last day. It won’t matter how much we knew but what we did with what we knew. *Were we loving channels through whom the divine resources could come? Did we meet the needs of others to the glory of God?*

I’m encouraged about the future because God is in it and Jesus promised that the gates of hell would not prevail against His church. The future is our friend when Jesus is our Lord. Our job is to follow Him. He’ll take care of the rest: “Known to God from eternity are all His works” (Acts 15:18).

It has always taken courage and compassion for God's people to minister in any age. The sovereignty of God and the love of God made an unbeatable combination for any servant of God, against which the devil has no power.

Start ministering and keep ministering as long as you can. There is no discharge in this war.

John Wesley's dying words, "The best of all is, God is with us!"

