

## 7. The recipes of a godly ministry

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Before I became a Christian, I could care less what the pastors would do during the week. But after I became one, I wonder what they did. I am sure that you also wonder what the heck I do during the week. I know that some of you think that I work only on Sunday morning, Wednesday and Thursday night.

Just in case you think that I only work on Sunday morning, Wednesday and Thursday night., here is my weekly schedule:

**Sunday:** Get up at 5:30 am get ready and do my devotion. Get to the church 8 am unload the stuff with the guys. Go over my teaching one last time and pray like a crazy and begging to the Lord to take over the sermon, because I know that I am so inadequate. After the service, I and my wife go home. I start to catch up the things that I left from Tuesday evening, such as graphic designs for Calvary Tucson or my side job. We go to bed around 10:30 or 11 pm.

**Monday:** Get up at 6:30 or 7 am, do my devotion and start to do chores around the house or do errands. Have a lunch with the guys from the church or other people. I spend the majority of the time in doing graphic design and web design for Calvary Tucson. Time to time, Karen and I get to go out for a dinner.

**Tuesday:** Get up at 6 am and do my devotion. Get ready for the staff meeting at Calvary Tucson which starts from 8:15. I usually have two to four meetings with the people at Calvary Tucson. Do more errands or a lunch with our church guys or others. I make hospital visits or picking up church supplies.

**Wednesday:** Get up at 6 am getting ready and do my devotion. Start to read the text of the midweek study. Make an outline and interpretation of the texts. Read three to four commentaries. Last five months, I had to stop it at 3 pm and switch my study to the one I did last week to prepare for the Rio Rico study. Either way, my day ends at 10 pm.

**Thursday:** Get up at 6 am, get ready and do my devotion. Start to put together a sermon for the midweek service at the Sahuarita Study. Make overhead slides and song sheets. By the time we get home, it is around 9:45 pm.

**Friday:** Get up at 6 am, get ready and do my devotion. If I go on for a ride along with a Sheriff deputy as a chaplain, I have to start my study earlier. Read the text of the midweek study. Make an outline and interpretation of the texts. Read three to four commentaries. I stop my study at 9-10 pm.

**Saturday:** Get up at 5:30 or 6 am, get ready and my devotion. Start to put together a sermon and go over it two times. Between 3-5 pm, I send e-mails to Willie Stubbs for the overhead and bulletin announcements. After a dinner I go over my notes two more times. If I go a ride along, I must finish my study by 5 pm and grab a dinner and run out the door. I return to home at 10 pm. We go to bed around 10:30 or 11 pm.

I think I work more than a few hours a week.

The most familiar concepts of ministry are like these:

1) Many think ministry is an ivory-tower existence.

They think of it as a place of stained-glass solitude and knee-worn prayer with a frequent angelic visitation and organ music in the background. They envision long hours of poring over the Scriptures by candlelight and meditating in a musty study.

2) Many think of ministry as public manipulation and exploitation. These cynics look at the minister not as a pious monk but as a powerful mogul.

3) Many think ministry is for an spiritual elite who have arrived spiritually and are models of perfection.

As you can see, I don't fit in any of these categories. I am not always loving or patient or unselfish or forgiving. Though I am a pastor still, in a word, imperfect sinful human.

In this chapter, we find apostle Paul shares his wisdom to have a godly ministries in Christ.

### **A. NOT RECEIVING THE GRACE OF GOD IN VAIN**

*2 Corinthians 6:1-2 We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain. 2 For He says: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.*

Paul sees himself as a co-worker with Jesus Christ. It isn't that God needed Paul, nor any of us. Instead, it is that God wants us to be workers together with Him for our good. It's like the little boy with the toy lawnmower following dad as dad mows the lawn. For the sake of pure efficiency, dad should ask the boy to go away because he is really just in the way. But it is so good for the boy to work with dad! And because dad loves his boy, he wants him to work together with Him.

Paul was not certain that everybody in the church who professed to be saved was truly a child of God. He quoted Isaiah 49:8 as his appeal for them to receive God's grace.

*Isaiah 49:8 Thus says the Lord: "In an acceptable time I have heard You, And in the day of salvation I have helped You; I will preserve You and give You As a covenant to the people, To restore the earth, To cause them to inherit the desolate heritages;*

Because of the reconciling work of Christ on the cross, today is indeed "the day of salvation." There is no guarantee that any sinner will have the opportunity to be saved tomorrow.

*Isaiah 55:6 Seek the Lord while He may be found, Call upon Him while He is near.*

### **B. CULTIVATING CREDIBILITY IN MINISTRY**

*2 Corinthians 6:3-4a We give no offense in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed. 4 But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God:*

How can we keep the ministry from being discredited? By not giving any cause for offense and by being servants.

The ministry can become discredited or dishonored when we break a promise, exploit people, live hypocritically, are unfaithful, compromise truth, become greedy, or expect special treatment.

### **C. STAYING THE COURSE IN DIFFICULT TIMES**

*2 Corinthians 6:4b-5 in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fastings;*

That's not exactly the description you'd expect to read on a divinity school brochure! Granted, not all ministry encounters are like this. But ministers must prepare themselves for pleasant and unpleasant times. In a word, they must be 'patient'. The Greek word for 'patience' is 'hupomone'.

You may say, "Well, I am not a minister of the Gospel." Yes, you are. Remember, we all studied last week that we all are the ambassadors for Christ? We all are ministers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, whether we are full time workers or volunteers.

If there is anyone who has ever endured hardships for the sake of ministry, it's Paul. But because he set up his life as a model to others, we can learn from the various trials he endured.

- 1) Paul battled inner struggles – tribulations, needs, and distresses.
- 2) He also experienced external troubles – stripes, imprisonments, and tumults.
- 3) He endured the private disciplines of commitment to the cause – to spread the Gospel through the land, but he counted it all expedient for the joy of the Cross.

By the way, apostle Paul was a regular jail birds. He had been prisoned for seven times in his life and while he was writing this letter to the Corinthian people he was sitting on a death row.

How did Paul remain committed to the ministry and encouraged at heart while facing such terrible circumstances? Because he kept his eyes on the Lord who is the Author of our faith.

I don't believe for one moment that any of the faith movement teachers would teach this portion of the Scripture to their congregation. According to them, none of them ever go through difficult times, because they have so much faith in them. They cannot have this kind of study because this would topple their false doctrines.

#### **D. NINE QUALITIES THAT PROTECTS US**

*2 Corinthians 6:6-7 by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, 7 by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left,*

Instead of fighting against our enemy in their turf, apostle Paul took it to the high ground where he found God's strength in his life.

Through purity, knowledge in the Word, patience, kindness, by the Holy Spirit, sincere love for everyone, the word of truth, the power of God and the righteousness of God, Paul could withstand the onslaught of the enemy.

Surely, if we add these qualities in our personal lives and our ministries, the results will be nothing short of tremendous, right? Not necessarily.

*2 Corinthians 6:8-10 by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true; 9 as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and yet not killed; 10 as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.*

Paul's efforts were met with some successes, some lukewarm receptions, and some downright violent resistance to his outreach. In our own ministries, we can expect that some will respect and respond to us while others will resent us. Some will adore us. Some will wish they never knew us. But we're in good company. Not only Paul but also Jesus experienced the same thing.

#### **E. THE LOVE THAT OVERCOMES EVERYTHING**

*2 Corinthians 6:11-13 O Corinthians! We have spoken openly to you, our heart is wide open. 12 You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted by your own affections. 13 Now in return for the same (I speak as to children), you also be open.*

Paul genuinely loved the Corinthians with an open heart, yet he would also speak openly to them.

The Corinthian Christians were playing the “victim” before Paul. He had, out of godly necessity, been firm with them on previous occasions. Now, they are probably claiming to be restricted by the “hurt” Paul has caused them. They were probably saying, “We would love to reconcile with you Paul, but the pain you caused us restricts us. We just can’t get over it.”

The distance between Paul and the Corinthian church could be healed, but it was in the hands of the Corinthian Christians to do it.

## **F. NEVER TO BE UNEQUALLY YOKED**

*2 Corinthians 6:14-18 Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? 15 And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? 16 And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: “I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people.” 17 Therefore “Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you.” 18 “I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the Lord Almighty.”*

If you have been around a Bible teaching church for some time, you are bound to hear this portion of Scripture which originally comes from Deut 22:10 more than once.

This is where the precept of the Bible is too close for comfort to many people.

I had many occasions to tell Christians who want to get marry or want to go out with non-believers. Instead of taking this precept as God’s truth for their lives, they’d rather stop coming to church or avoiding me. Then I find that person got married to the non-believer and started to have major problems in their marriage rather quickly. That Christian doesn’t know what to do. He or she is miserable. Pretty soon, he or she backslides all the way down. You might say, “I am going out with this non-believer to bring that person to Christ.” That is a MB – it stands for major bologna.

Throughout the Old Testament, God warned the Israelites not to marry foreign women. Did they listen to God? Are you kidding? As soon as they get comfortable with the blessings from God, what did they do? They turned to foreign women and take them as their wives. These foreign women brought their own idols and pretty soon, the Israelites got involved in idolatry. What happened then? Of course, God punished them for their stupid idolatry. It was a vicious circle.

As God wanted to bless the Israelites who had come into the Promised Land with abundance of things and love for them, God wants to bless us. All we have to is obey Him.

Paul means much more here than only marrying an unbeliever. It really applies to any environment where we let the world influence our thinking. When we are being conformed to this world and are not being transformed by the renewing of our minds. That means that we are joining together with unbelievers in an ungodly way.

We all like to believe that we can be around ungodly things as much as we want, and that we are strong enough to shake off the influence. But we must take seriously the words of Scripture.

*1 Corinthians 15:33 Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits."*

Whenever we lower our standard to accept the worldly thing, we end up compromising the truth of God. We get to pay very high penalty for it. The United Methodist church is a prime example. They embrace everything and everyone under the name of love, now they are completely walked away from God.

The major part of this quotation in v 17 is from Isaiah 52:11 and Ezekiel 20:34, 41. The reference in Isaiah is to the captive nation leaving Babylon and returning to their own land, but the spiritual application is to the separation of the people of God today.

### **G. APPLICATIONS**

**1) By purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left**

**2) Separation from the worldly influence is not just a negative act of departure, but it is a positive act of dedication to God.**

We must separate from sin and unto God. "Touch not the unclean thing" is a warning against defilement. The Old Testament Jew was defiled if he touched a dead body or the issue from a festering sore. Of course, Christians today do not contract spiritual defilement by touch, but the principle is the same: we must not associate with that which will compromise our testimony or lead us into disobedience.