

## THE BASICS FOR EFFECTIVE MINISTRY

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- Our **mission** is to *Reach* people in the Name of Jesus; *Disciple* people in the Way of Jesus; *Empower* people in the Service of Jesus.
  - Our **method** is to ensure that everything we do is *Christ Centered; Word Focused; & Ministry Minded*
  - Our **message** is *the Gospel*.
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### 2 CORINTHIANS 4:1-5:10

#### INTRODUCTION:

There has probably never been more confusion as to how churches ought to carry out ministry. Style has become a substitute for substance. Faith has been substituted with the thrill of emotionalism. The mentality of Christ has been substituted with the mentality of the world. Authenticity has been substituted with hypocrisy and dishonesty. Selflessness has given way to selfishness. Sincere ministry has given way to egotistical pride and unwillingness to submit to established order. The result has been confusion and ineffectiveness in carrying out the mission of the Christ. The confusion has led to a breakdown in the personal integrity of Christians. The effect is that Satan is succeeding in blinding the world to the true message of the gospel.

In the verses for this lesson Paul outlines the basics of an effective ministry. When I speak of 'ministry', I am speaking about each of us, not just to preachers, deacons and teachers, for each of us are a 'minister' of God. Each one of you is a priest of God built up into a spiritual house (1 Peter 1:4-5).

#### DISCUSSION:

##### **A Ministry of Mercy is Essential (2 Corinthians 4:1-6)**

The word "*therefore*" in the verses before us indicate that what is said in these verses is dependent upon what has already been stated in the previous chapters of 2 Corinthians. The summation of what was said in the previous chapters is succinctly stated as Paul writes, "*Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart*" (4:1). The foundation of Paul's ministry was the mercy of God. Paul's focus was upon experiencing God's power in weakness and in impossible circumstances. Paul's focus was on seeing the unseen things of God.

In the first three chapters Paul recognizes the mercy of God as the sustaining force of his ministry. It was God's mercy that empowered his ministry when he felt as though he was as good as dead (1:8-11). His ministry was based upon the integrity of God's message (1:12-14). His ministry was totally dependent upon what God was doing in the hearts of the Corinthians (2:5-3:18). Therefore, Paul did not lose heart or become discouraged in the most difficult and trying circumstances. He knew God's grace was sufficient to sustain his ministry.

***A ministry founded upon the mercy of God is one built upon biblical principles.*** It seems as though biblical instruction is a rarity today. Today it seems we resort to everything but biblical instruction to reach the masses. Often, the Bible is not even used as a basis for preaching, teaching and leading. Many churches use slick advertisement gimmicks to persuade people emotionally while leaving their minds void of reason.

Satan is at work in churches around the world to blind the world to the light of the gospel. If we want to be effective in ministry we must let God's light shine through this darkness, by first letting it shine in our own hearts. The world must see that we are persons of integrity.

***A ministry of integrity is built upon the power of God and not upon egos.*** Often our egos get in the way of God's ministry of mercy as we seek to take credit for what God is doing. ***Paul says, "For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake."*** Nothing blinds others to the gospel more than egos. Egos were flaring in Corinth, but Paul was pointing to the mercy of God as the basis of a ministry of integrity. God's mercy was the source of the light shining in their hearts. *"For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ."*

Human hearts are easily lifted through pride, so Paul gives special emphasis in his life to prevent this from happening in his heart. When we serve God for the purpose of boosting our own egos, it is an attempt to steal God's glory at the expense of God's power. We may be impressive, but it will not empower us in difficult times. When the glory is gone we will soon lose heart. When God gets the glory our ministry is glorified with the power of God.

### **We get into deep trouble when we seek to steal God's glory for ourselves.**

(1 Samuel 18:6-16; 2 Chronicles 26:17-21; Leviticus 10:1-2)

***God knows what motivates our service.*** Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead because they couldn't lie to God about their motives (Acts 5:1-10). Simon the sorcerer learned that God's power couldn't be bought or sold. Peter told Simon, *"May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money! You have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God. Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps he will forgive you for having such a thought in your heart. For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin"* (Acts 8:20-23 NIV).

### **Essentials for a Ministry of Integrity (2 Corinthian 4:7-12)**

***Paul continually points to God as the sustaining force of his ministry.*** For we have no power to resurrect our dead lives from the death grip of sin. Paul writes, *"But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us."* God's power resides in the message from God.

It is a power from God and not from us that accomplishes his purposes. That power comes to life when we can look beyond ourselves, and our accomplishments to the life of Jesus Christ. The power for ministry doesn't reside in the person engaged in ministry. It resides in the integrity of God.

We can look beyond ourselves when we are given over to death for Jesus sake. Paul writes, *"We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body. So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you."*

Our death in Christ becomes evident when we are willing to die to the hardships ministry imposes. It is giving ourselves over to death for Jesus sake that we see Christ's message come to life in others. Paul's willingness to die for others brought Christ to life through the message that was proclaimed to the Corinthians.

*Paul defines what he means by "death."* It is when we accept the painful realities of ministry, which include perplexity . . . despair . . . persecution . . . abandonment . . . and being struck down. It is when we are being crushed beneath the load that we experience God's power for ministry. This happens when we have delivered ourselves over to death for the sake of Christ. When others see that we are not out to glorify ourselves, the message of the gospel will seep through. See (2 Corinthians 1:8-11)

**Egos blind others to their possibilities in Christ.** An egotistical ministry is self-defeating, because egos seek glory through intimidating the weaknesses of others. Egotistical ministries leave others thinking they cannot accomplish what the egotistical person accomplishes.

There is no way that we can accept the life Jesus offers, without facing the fact that we must die his death. If you want to impact your personal world for Jesus Christ, you must live out the death of our Lord in the sight of those you come into contact with. Don't try to be sanctimonious, and don't whitewash your weaknesses with egotistical pride. Let Christ shine through the cracked clay pot. God loves to use broken pottery. When others see God using your broken life, they will sacrifice their broken lives to his power.

### **God's Promises the Basis for Ministry (2 Corinthians 4:13:-15)**

***Faith allows us to align our lives with God's purposes.*** Paul aligned his life with the message he preached. He spoke God's message because he believed in God's power to raise the dead. His ministry was based upon the belief that God's power would allow the message of the gospel to reach more and more people. He was confident that this would result in thankful praise to God.

***Faith motivates ministry through an attitude of gratitude.*** Faith is built upon gratitude for what Christ has done for each of us. When sincere gratitude is the motivation behind our service sacrifice, becomes a joy. Gratitude makes it much easier to be given over to death for Jesus sake, and for the sake of those who will be benefited. We discover a great source of encouragement when gratitude motivates our service for the benefit of others.

**The revelation of God's glory through us motivates an attitude of gratitude, which encourages us, and others to do even greater things.**

***When our lives are properly motivated we discover the power for personal renewal and encouragement.*** Paul writes, *"Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting*

*away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all" (4:16-17).* The word "**renewed**" in the original language has to do with our lives being renovated as dead lives are transformed into the image of Christ.

***Faith forces us to look beyond what is seen and felt to the unseen eternal things of God. (2 Corinthians 4:18-5:5)***

It is often impossible to see what God is doing through observation of our temporary circumstances. But one thing we do know is that God is at work in them. We may not see or understand, but we can choose to believe in his eternal presence. And we can know that we will not be found naked. This gives us confidence to make it our goal to please him, wherever we are found. This focus encourages us to make the necessary sacrifices. (2 Corinthians 5:6-9)

## **CONCLUSION:**

What you see is influenced by your perspective. There are two kinds of perspective: Your attitude and your altitude. **Altitude** – like being in space and seeing the curvature of the earth helps you see the world in its proper perspective among creation. If you are hiking through the woods and are having trouble finding your way, one of the best ways to find your direction is to get above the clutter of the trees and see the overarching picture. **Attitude** – is similar, and it affects how you respond to the challenges you face.

**ILLUSTRATION** – A shoe manufacturer who decided to open a shoe market sent two salesmen to the undeveloped territory. One salesman came back: "Prospect here nil. No one wears shoes." The other salesman reported enthusiastically, "Market potential terrific! Everyone is barefooted." One saw no market for shoes because no one was wearing them. The other saw the potential because no one had shoes. We encounter a situation and our personal perspective influences how we see it and how we react to it.

When Goliath came against the Israelites, the soldiers all thought, "He's so big we can never kill him." David looked at the same giant and thought, "He's so big I can't miss." The Holy Spirit calls us to be willing to take creative risks by faith regardless of the shame, difficulty, or suffering we may have to endure.

The stench of death runs through almost every verse in this section of our study, but one sure way to know that we are living for Christ and in Christ is that our lives become the fragrance of life. It indeed becomes a sweet smelling odor to God. The fragrance we give off reminds the egotists and non-believers of God's judgment. (2 Corinthians 5:10-11) Is your ministry or service given over to death for Jesus' sake? Does it have the fragrance of life, which is a sweet smelling odor to God?