

Ministerial **DEVELOPMENT**



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Introduction to Ministerial Development

Three and one half minutes rocked the world. The memorable rendezvous was January 21, 2009. It was the day that, out of obscurity, Susan Boyle, with her Celtic twang, encumbered by learning difficulties and shyness, stepped onto the stage of Britain's Got Talent in Glasgow. She literally shocked the panel, and mocking crowd, when she started to sing eight words, "I dreamed a dream in time gone by...." One of the judges gave her the biggest yes ever awarded in three years of the contest. She captured and then liberated the hearts of millions. There have been more than three hundred million hits on the YouTube video incarcerating those short moments. Susan's "I Dreamed a Dream" holds the global record for the most preordered albums of all time. She defied preconceptions, probabilities, and set the stage for anyone and everyone with a dream. Susan brings modern meaning to the ancient proverb, "A man's gift makes room for him and brings him before the great" (Proverbs 18:16, ESV).

The Nissan Terrano crept, tossing and turning, through the twisting rustic roads. It glided past an Africa village with a dozen or so weather-beaten huts, sporting dried grass covered roofs. The ocean—with rocks protruding and waves crashing—served as its only backdrop. A few scattered sheep scurried for cover at the sound of the approaching vehicle's engine. A tiny boy, perhaps three or four years old, naked apart from a dirty pair of stained briefs, roused and raced from his perch on a nearby tree trunk. He boldly and briskly ran gleefully towards us. He was all smiles; waving wildly. With his free hand he firmly grasped an unusual, unique treasure; a red convertible car. A real toy; not one fashioned from a discarded tin can. Happily, he extended it toward us; shouting friendly words in his local dialect. He arrested my attention. I longed to understand what he was saying. Interpretation was not a luxury so I imagined. Perhaps, he wanted us, the six foreigners tightly packed in the huge grey machine to know that he had a car too. Or, that he had a dream that one day he would grow up and drive a vehicle similar to ours. I will never really know. Such was my short-lived meeting with a merry miniature visionary. You see, everyone dreams. Everyone wants a better future. This thinking was encapsulated in a billboard I saw today. It pictured a boy playing soccer in his neighborhood. The potent words read, "Twelve-year-old Kofi; nation's best striker, 2022. Yes, we believe in the future."

I'm sure we all believe in the future. Yet, too many meander through life's twisting roads, tossing and turning, with no direction and—in the end—no enduring legacy. What a tragedy to live and leave without anyone noticing that you ever existed. A Middle Eastern Blessing says, "When you were born, you cried, and the world rejoiced. May you live your life so that when you die, the world will cry, and you will rejoice."

All I ever wanted was to make a difference! To take my talents and place them in the Master's hands, use them for His glory, and hear Him say, "Well done!" That aspiration took me to West Africa over twenty-seven years ago, a week before my twenty-third birthday. I was armed with a degree in education, only three years in the United Pentecostal Church International, lacking religious ancestry, but with a vision of "teaching all nations" beginning in thickly populated Nigeria. I was so naïve back then. I had never travelled overseas. I couldn't sleep that first night thinking that a powerful python was going to crash through the hotel window robbing me of my dream and my life. I survived! A couple years later, in Africa, I met my wife, a teacher from Alabama. We've been on a journey ever since. Our mutual heartbeat has been unwavering: teach others so they can reach their own people. My relentless dream is to entrust, empower, and equip the next generation. I still dream of taking God's Word to the world, touching people, transmitting truth, and transforming nations. More than that, I get to live out that dream. I am so thankful that God has chosen me to be a minister.

Dear friends and former leaders in Africa, John Paul and June Hughes sent me these words, in a card, on my 50th birthday: "Just think, you're here not by chance, but by God's choosing. His hand formed you and made you the person you are. He compares you to no one else. You are one of a kind. You lack nothing that His grace can't give you. He has allowed you to be here at this time in history to fulfill His special purpose for this generation" (Roy Lessin). Half a century, and climbing, I still possess a dream to reach our world.

Writer A. W. Tozer said, "A man by his sin may waste himself, which is to waste that which on earth is most like God. That is man's greatest tragedy and God's heaviest grief." God grieves when I waste my split second in eternity and fail to attempt to measure up to my fullest potential in accomplishing His divine plan and purpose. An Arabic proverb teaches that the dawn does not come twice to awaken a person. Opportunity knocks but once. An opportunity missed will eventually bring ample repentance. I have one chance to impact my world.

Someone asked, "How will you spend your life?" Life is a currency. Once spent, it can never be recovered. It is gone, forever, unless you invest it in the afterlife. There, stored treasures are more valuable than hand-held red convertibles that will ruin, rust, and ripple away. No wonder, Jesus said: "Don't hoard treasure down here where it gets eaten by moths and corroded by rust or — worse! — stolen by burglars. Stockpile treasure in heaven, where it's safe from moth and rust and burglars. It's obvious, isn't it? The place where your treasure is, is the place you will most want to be, and end up being" (Matthew 6:19-21, MSG).

The dreams—expressed and experienced—of great men and women changed and charted the course of history. Nick Sisco, in his *Pentecostal Herald* (July 2010) article entitled “The Dream Beats On” said, “The dream drove them towards destiny. A dream is a powerful commodity full of possibility. It pushes you forward, giving life, energy, and focus.” He goes on to say, “Imagination creates the soil in which the dream can germinate, grow, and come to life.”

You may struggle wondering when your dream will come to pass. You may speculate you are wasting your time preparing for a lifetime of ministry from a wooden writing desk in a classroom. You may lament with the amount of your life that you feel you have wasted. You may get frustrated performing (what you imagine are) menial tasks for a seasoned senior minister. Remember, all of this has brought you into God’s kingdom for such a time as this. Nothing will stop the fulfillment of a God-given dream—unless it is the one presently operating your skin. Avoid the pain of regret and go for the pain of disciple. “Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn’t do than by the ones you did do.....Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover.” (Mark Twain)

Face it, in our gigantic world, you may feel small and insignificant, my young minister friend? Like a butterfly struggling in a cocoon, through ministerial development, you are about to be launched into a lifetime of effective ministry. The world anxiously awaits! Heaven is preparing its animated applause!

Are you ready to embark on the most exhilarating undertaking of a lifetime? Turn the page. Let the journey begin.

The Minister and Seeds of Eternity

“But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose”
(Acts 26:16).

“I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision”
(Acts 26:19).

Who am I?

Have you ever wondered, “Who am I? Why am I here? What is my purpose? Does God have a plan for me?” I’m sure everyone has asked one or all of these questions at one point in life.

The Bible clearly answers the question, “Who am I?”

I am...
 ... A flower quickly fading,
 Here today and gone tomorrow,
 A wave tossed in the ocean,
 A vapor in the wind
 (Job 14:1-3; *Casting Crowns* lyrics).
 Like the morning fog,
 I’m here a little while, and then gone (James 4:14)
 I am a breath of air,
 A fleeting shadow (Psalm 144:4)
 I am a traveler passing through (Hebrews 11:13; Psalm 39:12)
 I am a man of numbered days.

"Lord, remind me how brief my time on earth will be.
 Remind me that my days are numbered,
 And that my life is fleeing away.
 My life is no longer than the width of my hand.
 An entire lifetime is just a moment to you;
 Human existence is but a breath"
 “We are merely moving shadows,
 And all our busy rushing ends in nothing.
 We heap up wealth for someone else to spend” (Psalm 39:4-6, *NLT*).

Why am I here?

The book of Acts gives a glimpse of our mission (Acts 1:8); vision (Acts 26:19); and purpose (Acts 26:16).

“Mission” is a general, universal declaration of purpose. We often call it the great commission or co-mission. Everyone has a role to play in accomplishing the mission. The reason why we were born; what God calls us to accomplish is termed “purpose.” “Vision” is the faith needed to bring our purpose to pass. Our vision is precise and has definable restrictions. All of these come from the heart and plan of God. He has prepared us for the work He wants us to accomplish. “For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Ephesians 2:10, *NIV*).

Does God have a plan for me?

God has big plans for each of us. “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future” (Jeremiah 29:11, *NIV*).

“The Lord of hosts has sworn, saying, Surely, as I have thought and planned, so shall it come to pass, and as I have purposed, so shall it stand” (Isaiah 14:24, *AMP*).

God places in our heart what He expects us to do for Him and His kingdom. “I had not told anyone what my God had put in my heart to do for Jerusalem” (Nehemiah 2:12, *NIV*).

What will you do with your split second in eternity?

We have been blessed to be a blessing. We are pilgrims passing through this life and need to leave our mark. Winston Churchill once commented, “There comes a special moment in everyone’s life, a moment for which that person was born. When he seizes it, it is his finest hour.”

Bill Bright said, “None of us has a long time here on planet earth. It’s our split second in eternity when we have an opportunity to invest our lives to help fulfill what our Lord came into this world to do.”

His ministry began in 1952 on the UCLA campus with thirty people responding to the gospel message. By the time of his death in 2003, more than 2.5 billion people had received his pamphlet, “The Four Spiritual Laws.”

Time on earth is short. What will you do with your “split second in eternity”?

Ferdinand Foch said, “The most powerful weapon on earth is the human soul on fire.” What a tragedy to leave this life without a flicker of a legacy, without a flame of a witness.

What has God planted in your heart?

“He has made everything beautiful in its time. He also has planted eternity in men's hearts and minds [a divinely implanted sense of a purpose working through the ages which nothing under the sun but God alone can satisfy], yet so that men cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end” (Ecclesiastes 3:11, *AMP*).

God plants a piece of eternity—His eternal purpose—in each human heart.

1. It is out of this world.
2. It is a purpose or a call that comes from outside this world. Every day it can be heard.
3. It is beyond our human, natural ability. It takes God's help to accomplish.
4. It is eternal. It never dies.
5. It is after the heart of God. It is from the heart of God to the heart of man. Deep calls to deep!
6. It grows through prayer and fasting.
7. It moves from the seen to the unseen.
8. It is a seed. It grows through obedience.
9. It is the portion that will be fulfilled in our generation.
10. It is in your heart, but it is also in His heart too.

What is the Father's business for you?

Jesus said, “I must be about my Father's business” (Luke 2:49). He understood His mission—the reason for being on earth. He came to...

1. Destroy the works of Satan (1 John 3:8).
2. Seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10).
3. Build His church (Matthew 16:18).
4. Bear witness of the truth (John 18:37).
5. Provide abundant life (John 10:10).

Thousands of years later we continue to do the Father's business. The mission has been passed from generation to generation.

What legacy will you leave for others?

Dr. Myles Monroe in *The Principles and Power of Vision* explains the generational nature of vision. He said, “You were born to do something in life that leaves nutrients for the seed of the next generation to take root in and grow.” Monroe believes that life has four seasons.

1. The first season is birth. During this time we depend totally on others for survival. This is a season of dependence.
2. The second season is independence. Here we capture what we were born to do, our purpose in life, and start gathering the resources to accomplish it.
3. The third season is interdependence. We share our dreams and visions with other people. We pass the vision on to the next generation.
4. The fourth season is death. Here we provide the nourishment for the next generation.

“People should be able to flourish on the fruit of the vision you leave behind on earth...You should live so effectively that...your life will be in the hearts and memories of those who could never forget you or what you did...If you live properly, history will not be able to ignore that you lived.” (Myles Monroe)

What are you doing to pass the truth to the next generation?

As Paul completed the race, and neared the end of life, he was able to pass the mission to his son, Timothy.

“I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Timothy 4:1-2).

Timothy was encouraged to pass the mission to the next generation.

“And the [instructions] which you have heard from me along with many witnesses, transmit and entrust [as a deposit] to reliable and faithful men who will be competent and qualified to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:2, AMP).

Notice the progression in the verse above.

1. “The [instructions] which you have heard from me”—Paul passes this to Timothy (first generation to second generation).
2. “Entrust [as a deposit] to reliable and faithful men”—Timothy is to pass the truth to the next generation of leaders (second generation to the third).

3. "Who will be competent and qualified to teach others also"—third generation to the fourth, and so on.

What a tremendous privilege to be here for a split second in eternity, and to know that God has planted seeds of eternity in our hearts. Our portion of the mission is to be fulfilled in our generation. Like Esther, we have been brought into the kingdom for such a time as this (Esther 4:14). Like the sons of Issachar, we have an understanding of the times and now what we ought to do (1 Chronicles 12:32). Let's be about our Father's business!

Lesson in Review

1. What are the differences between mission, vision, and purpose? _____

2. Quote one Scripture that shows God has a big plan for us. _____

3. Prove, using Bible verses, that a person's time on earth is short. _____

4. Describe what is referred to by "planted eternity in our hearts." _____

5. According to this lesson, list three things Jesus came to do. _____

6. Explain what is meant by the generational nature of vision. _____

7. What are the four seasons of life explained by Myles Monroe? _____

8. How does the fruit of one's vision allow for others to flourish? _____

9. According to 2 Timothy 2:2 show how the truth can impact at least four generations.

The Minister and Understanding Life

“But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24).

I know I shouldn't probably start talking about famous last words at the beginning of a book. However, what better way to plan your future than to look at the end of life and work back to the beginning. So, imagine your life as it nears the finish line. You have a few minutes to speak your last words. What would you say?

Have you ever been called to the bedside of a dying loved one? Recall how you strained to hear the final words. Do they linger in your memory as if it were yesterday?

Think about the great men and women in your life. What last words would they have to whisper to you?

Why are last words so special?

- Last words give a glimpse of what is important to the dying person.
- Last words remain as a special memory after the person is gone. Last words are lasting words.
- Last words are usually encouraging—words of blessings that help affirm the hearers.
- Last words could contain final instructions, advice or directives to family.
- Last words are special because they are the final words you will hear from a loved one, soon to depart this life.

Warren Wiersbe in *Be Faithful* says, “A great person's last words are significant. They are a window that helps us look into his heart, or a measure that helps us evaluate his life.”

The Apostle Paul had a final message for his son in the gospel, Timothy. It would be great if Paul had a message for all of us. He does. His last words were not only to Timothy, but also to all that follow Christ. How did Paul get the news to us? He wrote. Like all who reach life's end, Paul had a desire to leave a legacy to generations to come.

“Write these things for the future so that people who are not yet born will praise the LORD” (Psalms 102:18, *NCV*).

Paul's words did not come from a sickbed in a hospital. He wrote them from a dark, cold, filthy prison cell. He sat alone with only an occasional visitor. He did have a faithful

companion—his writing materials. He waited on death as if he were a common criminal. What was his crime? He was condemned for preaching the gospel. He set prisoners free from the chains of sin and tradition.

Paul penned his letter so he could pass the torch of leadership and truth on to the next generation. He reminded Timothy—and each of us—what is truly important. Paul's last three letters were to those that would carry on the church after his death. They reveal the heart, mind, and soul of a beloved mentor to his friends.

Paul knew that it was imperative to entrust truth into the hands of dependable men who could teach others. In 2 Timothy 2:2 he is saying, "I trust you to carry on!"

"You have heard me teach many things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Teach these great truths to trustworthy people who are able to pass them on to others" (2 Timothy 2:2, *NLT*).

You and I have heard the gospel because men like Paul and Timothy were faithful to teach others. The truth has been passed from disciple to disciple, and from generation to generation. The chain has never been broken. We must continue the process.

Gary Erickson in the *Christian Educator* describes teachers as a link in the generational chain; large vessels pouring truth into empty ones; bridges connecting one generation to another; and passing the baton of truth.

"But watch out! Be very careful never to forget what you have seen the LORD do for you. Do not let these things escape from your mind as long as you live! And be sure to pass them on to your children and grandchildren" (Deuteronomy 4:9, *NLT*).

We are always one generation away from extinction. We joyfully repair the breach between the generations, and pass the baton on to them. As we remain faithful, the race will one day be finished.

As Paul reviews his lifetime he may have recalled his words at Ephesus, "But life is worth nothing unless I use it for doing the work assigned me by the Lord Jesus—the work of telling others the Good News about God's mighty kindness and love" (Acts 20:23-24, *TLB*).

Years had passed since then. Examining his life he wrote, "As for me, my life has already been poured out as an offering to God. The time of my death is near. I have fought a good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful" (2 Timothy 4:6-7, *NLT*).

Life is an offering to God

Paul looked at life as a sacrifice to God. He did not think of success in terms of what one gains, but in what one gives.

"I have been a constant example of how you can help the poor by working hard. You should remember the words of the Lord Jesus: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive'" (Acts 20:35, *NLT*).

"And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will accept. When you think of what he has done for you, is this too much to ask? Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will know what God wants you to do, and you will know how good and pleasing and perfect his will really is" (Romans 12:1-2, *NLT*).

"For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all" (2 Corinthians 4:16-18, *NIV*).

In ministry and the Christian walk, we have troubles. God never promised a problem-free life (Genesis 35:10; Psalms 18:32-34). Troubles are opportunities for growth. They purify our character; build our trust in God; work for our good (Romans 8:28); strengthen perseverance (Romans 5:3-5); and develop our sensitivity to others as they experience problems (2 Corinthians 1:3-7). Some turn to God thinking that they will escape troubles. God does not promise that but He gives power to go through suffering. The testing of our faith develops endurance and makes us strong (James 1:2).

Life is short

Job asked, "Are not my days few?" (Job 10:20). He answers his own question, "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble." Life is described in several ways throughout Scripture: water spilled on the ground (2 Samuel 14:14); a pilgrimage (Genesis 47:9); but a step between life and death (1 Samuel 20:3); a shadow (1 Chronicles 29:15); swifter than a weaver's shuttle (Job 7:6); like the wind (Job 7:7); like grass that grows in the morning, and in the evening it is cut down and withers (Psalms 90:5-6); a morning fog—here a little while, and then gone (James 4:14).

"LORD, remind me how brief my time on earth will be. Remind me that my days are numbered, and that my life is fleeing away. My life is no longer than the width of my hand. An entire lifetime is just a moment to you; human existence is but a breath." We are merely

moving shadows, and all our busy rushing ends in nothing. We heap up wealth for someone else to spend" (Psalms 39:4-6, *NLT*).

Life has a purpose

We are not here by accident. God has us here on purpose—for a purpose. He has a plan for our lives. We finish the course and win the prize when we run according to God's plan.

"Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the LORD's purpose that prevails" (Proverbs 19:21, *NIV*).

The Bible resounds with stories of triumphant men and women who followed God's purpose.

Consider the testimony of King David. "For when David had served God's purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep." (Acts 13:36, *NIV*).

Jesus came to earth for a purpose—with a plan.

In Gethsemane He was able to say, "I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do" (John 17:4-5, *NIV*).

Hours later on the cross, Jesus said, "'It is finished.' With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit" (John 19:30, *NIV*).

Paul made up his mind that he was going to press toward the mark, run the race, and win the prize (Philippians 3:14). Early in his ministry he proclaimed, "So I run straight to the goal with purpose in every step" (1 Corinthians 9:26, *NLT*).

His life closed with this epitaph: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7).

Paul had settled his destiny years before, and defined his journey in light of it. Kenneth Boa in *Conformed to His Image* suggests that we ask two questions:

- What do I want my life to add up to, and why?
- At the end of my stopover on earth, what will I want to see when I look back?

He says, “From the biblical perspective, the real question is not what we will leave behind (the answer to this is always the same—we leave everything behind) but what will we send on ahead (Matthew 6:20).”

Today’s decisions determine tomorrow’s destiny. Look ahead and establish your last words. Mine will be, “I have fought long and hard for my Lord, and through it all I have kept true to him. And now the time has come for me to stop fighting and rest” (2 Timothy 4:7, *TLB*).

His words to me will be, “Well done, good and faithful servant...Enter into the joy of your lord” (Matthew 25:23, *NKJV*).

What about you? What will be your last words?

Lesson in Review

1. List three reasons why last words are so special. _____

2. What did Wiersbe say about a person’s last words? _____

3. Where do we find Paul’s final recorded message for his son, Timothy? _____

4. What did the Psalmist tell us to write? _____

5. From what location did Paul write his final recorded message to Timothy? _____

6. Why did Paul write this message? _____

7. How does Gary Erickson describe teachers in this lesson? _____

8. How is life described throughout Scripture? _____

9. What two questions does Kenneth Boa suggest we ask ourselves? _____

10. What do you want your last words to be? _____

The Minister and the Daily Climb

“But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24).

It’s time to take an examination. Don’t sweat it. It won’t hurt or be difficult. Maybe we could call it “taking inventory.” We are specifically looking at three phrases and three phases of life; your life.

For every twenty who enter the ministry, by the time each reach retirement age, only one will still be in the ministry. Consider those that graduated from Bible school or entered ministry with you. How many are no longer in the ministry? (The statistics are not much different when you consider members rather than ministers.)

Too many have come through the front door, have left through the back, never to return. My greatest regret is that we have lost too many that once were part of the family. My greatest tears have been shed over those that have disqualified themselves from the ministry. Some have walked away from the truth. Others have sadly fallen into fornication or adultery. Others became offended, feeling they were abused, or squabbling over maintaining leadership territories and positions. Sadly, like the African proverb says, “When the elephants fight, the grass gets hurt.”

The Scripture commands: Bring forth fruit. And it promises: Your fruit should remain (John 15:16). Perhaps, you are like me. I long for the complete work. To bring forth fruit and that it would remain. I want to count gains for the kingdom of God; not losses. I long to be part of the building process; and never be found tearing down what God is trying to build up. Most of all I never want to be found on the AWOL (Absent Without Leave) list. I want to keep going; keep climbing.

Warren W. Wiersbe is a fabulous writer. In reading through his classic *The Bumps are What You Climb On* there was a chapter “How to Keep Going” that grabbed attention. It provides the seed thought for this lesson.

Paul did not count his life of any value. What he did value was to finish the course and the ministry. “But I do not account *my life* of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish *my course*, and the *ministry* that I received from the Lord Jesus...” (Acts 20:24, *ESV*, emphasis mine).

A close look at this verse reveals three phrases for the daily climb. They are personal. They are mine!

They are:

- My Life

- My Course
- My Ministry

My Life

Paul knew his life was a treasure. Warren Wiersbe said, “His life was not a treasure for him to guard; it was a treasure for him to invest...”

“So if you're serious about living this new resurrection life with Christ, act like it. Pursue the things over which Christ presides. Don't shuffle along, eyes to the ground, absorbed with the things right in front of you. Look up, and be alert to what is going on around Christ—that's where the action is. See things from his perspective. Your old life is dead. Your new life, which is your real life—even though invisible to spectators—is with Christ in God. He is your life. When Christ (your real life, remember) shows up again on this earth, you'll show up, too—the real you, the glorious you. Meanwhile, be content with obscurity, like Christ” (Colossians 3:1-4, *The Message*).

Place your life in God's hands:

“So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you” (Romans 12:1-2).

God has a great plan for your life. Conform to it. Run with it! Live it! It requires daily pulling yourself onto the altar of sacrifice and surrendering our lives for His highest purpose.

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future” (Jeremiah 29:11, *NIV*).

“The LORD Almighty has sworn, “Surely, as I have planned, so it will be, and as I have purposed, so it will stand” (Isaiah 14:24, *NIV*).

Reverend Kenneth Haney, UPCI General Superintendent, reminded us we need to pay the price for revival. He called us back to the preaching and way of the cross. Self-denial is the way to the heart of this world. He told a story of a communist boy, standing on a street corner, with tattered clothes, propagating communism. Someone walked by and said, “You're paying a big price for communism!” The boy responded, “When you're changing the world, no cost is too great.”

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Leonard Ravenhill in *Meat for Men* wrote, “Recently, we visited an elaborate and opulent temple in the Far East. This experience reminded me of one Christian visitor who, overwhelmed with the ornate place and its static wealth, asked a heathen worshipper, ‘What is the actual cost of erecting a temple like this?’ The startled devotee replied in pained surprise, ‘What is the cost? This temple is for our god, and for him we never count the cost.’” Give God your best. Never count the cost. No cost is ever too great!

My Course

The “course” speaks of life’s race. We are all assigned our own track; our special lane. Wiersbe said, “The important thing is that we obey the rules, keep running for the prize, and stay in the correct lane.” Paul’s aspiration was to run his race well. He kept his eyes in his own lane; not that of someone else.

Yes, there will be obstacles that come our way. No one promised it would be easy. In fact, “race” comes from the word that means “agony.” It’s tough. It’s worth it. You can make it. There are patriarchs of old cheering you on. “Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us” (Hebrews 12:1, *NLT*).

Give it all you’ve got: “I don’t know about you, but I’m running hard for the finish line. I’m giving it everything I’ve got. No sloppy living for me! I’m staying alert and in top condition. I’m not going to get caught napping, telling everyone else all about it and then missing out myself” (1 Corinthians 9:27, *The Message*).

“Do you not know that in a race all the runners compete, but [only] one receives the prize? So run [your race] that you may lay hold [of the prize] and make it yours” (1 Corinthians 9:24, *AMP*).

It’s easy to get perturbed—or even perplexed—when reading this verse; especially if you have a competitive spirit or attitude. It’s also easy to get discouraged with this verse. Why run the race, if only one gets the prize? But, perhaps this is different. We all run the race. It is a personal pursuit prescribed and designed just for us. And each of us can finish the course.

“You were running superbly! Who cut in on you, deflecting you from the true course of obedience? This detour doesn’t come from the One who called you into the race in the first place. And please don’t toss this off as insignificant” (Galatians 5:7-8, *The Message*).

Let us be careful never to do anything that will disqualify us from the race or ministry, and be destructive to our Christian lives.

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” (2 Timothy 4:7, *NKJV*).

We are not in competition with anyone else. Everyone can run his own race and win his own prize.

In life's race there are times when we trip, falter, give up, and occasionally retreat. What should we do? Get up and keep moving. It is not how one starts the race or how fast one runs that is so important, but how one ends.

"I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong..." (Ecclesiastes 9:11).

You just can't keep a godly man or woman down. Trip them time after time. They won't stay down long. They'll jump back on their feet again. Why? They are in a race. They are destined to win!

"If you fall to pieces in a crisis, there wasn't much to you in the first place" (Proverbs 24:10, *The Message*).

God is your strength. Don't fail under pressure (*NLT*) or falter in times of trouble (*NIV*). And if you do fail, falter, or fall; get up again. Dust off the dirt, and keep running. Heaven is your goal! "Well done" is your expected commendation.

Don't look back. Keep your eyes on the goal. "By no means do I count myself an expert in all of this, but I've got my eye on the goal, where God is beckoning us onward—to Jesus. I'm off and running, and I'm not turning back" (Philippians 3:12-13, *The Message*).

"This is the only race worth running. I've run hard right to the finish, believed all the way. All that's left now is the shouting—God's applause!" (2 Timothy 4:5-8, *The Message*).

My Ministry

Each of us has a vision to fulfill. We are to make jam-packed proof of our ministry. God has placed us all in the body. We are not all the same. We do not operate the same. There is strength in unity and in our diversity. Each has different gifting, talents, and ministries. We are not called to compete with each other, but to complete one another. Learn to operate within your ministry. When you use your talents, God will perfect them for His glory, and may even give you more talents. Remember the parable of the talents. You lose what you don't use. Use and God will give you more. The purpose of ministry is to prepare God's people for acts of service in God's kingdom (Ephesians 4:11-12). We are here on earth to advance the kingdom!

As is often said, it is important to be in submission to those that are over us. Submission is being under the protection of another; usually someone in higher authority. That casts a different light on things. We are not enslaved. We are not beaten down or belittled. We are protected. We complete. Working together, in harmony, we accomplish our maximum for God.

“Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 15:26). They were willing to risk all—to give all—for Jesus.

“I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God’s grace given me through the working of his power” (Ephesians 3:7, *NIV*). A lot has been said and written about “servanthood.” Being a servant is foundational in God’s kingdom. How can one tell whether he or she is really a servant? That’s easy. Check how you respond when treated like a servant. It’s not so easy or glamorous then, is it? We are not merely a servant to humanity, or to our spouses. No, when we were converted we became “a servant of this gospel.” The things we do for the kingdom, we do for the Gospel’s sake, so that the truth is spread to the four corners of the earth.

“...And *that* they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints, That ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with *us*, and laboureth” (1 Corinthians 16:15-16).

They were spending their lives in service to God’s people (*NLT*). They were consecrated and devoted to the service of the saints (*AMP*). They could be looked up to, acting as our examples, and giving us something to aspire to.

We don’t usually think of hazards and addictions in a positive light. In these two verses it is upbeat, healthy, and productive. An “addiction” is when the body is in a state where it depends on something for its normal functioning. The body cannot cope without the substance and goes into withdrawal. We are dependent on ministry—following God’s will—for our daily sustenance. When witnessing to the Samaritan woman, Jesus rejected food from His disciples, and explained, “My nourishment comes from doing the will of God, who sent me, and from finishing the work” (John 4:34, *NLT*). It was the food that kept Him going. He was addicted to fulfilling His mission.

We can also be addicted to God’s Word: “I have not gone back from the commandment of His lips; I have esteemed and treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food” (Job 23:12, *AMP*).

Wiersbe concluded, “My life—my course—my ministry. It would be good to repeat those three phrases at the beginning of each day, for they help us take inventory of our spiritual experience.”

Let’s review:

My Life	It is my gift from God.
My Course	It is my assignment from God.
My Ministry	It is my gift back to

	God (Warren Wiersbe).
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We are pilgrims on the earth; just passing through. We are climbing onward and upward. Keep the expedition in perspective by taking inventory of the three phrases for the daily climb. See you at the top!

Lesson in Review

1. As stated in this lesson, what did the Apostle Paul value? _____

2. For every twenty people that enter ministry, how many will still be in the ministry when reaching retirement age? _____
3. What three phrases taken from Acts 20:24 serve as the foundation for this lesson? _____

4. What did Warren Wiersbe say about Paul's life being a treasure? _____

5. According to Colossians 3:2-4, who is our life? _____
6. According to Romans 12:1-2, what should we do with our lives? _____

7. What did the young communist (in this lesson) say? _____

8. What was the response of the heathen worshipper when asked the cost of the temple? _____

9. The word "race" comes from the old world and means what? _____

10. What should one do when he falters or falls in life's race? _____

11. What is meant by submission? _____

12. What happens when we use our talents? _____

13. Explain how we are servants of the Gospel. _____

14. Explain what is meant by the addiction recorded in 1 Corinthians 16:15-16.

15. Why was Jesus not hungry in John 4:33-34? _____

16. What are the three things we should take inventory of each day? _____

The Minister and His Calling

This lesson is written “to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28). God “hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose...” (2 Timothy 1:9). “I therefore, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called” (Ephesians 4:1).

Paul, Bunty, and David Collins in their Bible Study Warehouse website provided an excellent lesson on the call. They identify three levels of calling.

General Calling	“...a servant of Christ Jesus...”	The call to be a servant is a general calling to every believer and is the starting point and foundation of ministry.
Specific Calling	“...called to be an apostle...”	Each minister is called to a particular ministry or function. There is great variety in the body of Christ.
Particular Calling	“...set apart for the gospel of God” (Romans 1:1, ESV).	Paul specifies the bounds or perimeters of his ministry. Paul was an apostle to the Gentiles (2 Timothy 1:11). Peter was an apostle to the Jews. See Galatians 2:8.

They go on to explain that there are four expressions of ministry which need to be in balance.

Ministry to the Lord.	“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Peter 2:9).
Ministry to ourselves.	“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to

	<p>the Lord” (Colossians 3:16). “But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life” (Jude 20-21).</p>
Ministry to the Body.	<p>“For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me” (Romans 1:11-12). “Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality” (Romans 12:13).</p>
Ministry to the world.	<p>“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.....And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover” (Mark 16:15, 17-18).</p>

Alistair Bragg in *On Being a Pastor: Understanding our Calling and Word* identifies a double-call to ministry. I have organized his thinking in the table that follows:

Inward Call	<p>The individual becomes acutely aware of his call.</p>	<p>“But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, and to turn them from</p>
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		darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me" (Acts 26:16-18).
Outward Call	God's people recognize the calling and gifting the individual has for the ministry. This call is put to the test by those responsible for the Bible school and/or beginning ministry in the local church under the supervision of the senior pastor. Here the individual submits to leadership, testing, and proving his call. When the inner and outer call matches or comes together, then it is time to proceed into active ministry.	"As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away" (Acts 13:2-3).

"He chose David also his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds: From following the ewes great with young he brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance. So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart; and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands" (Psalms 78:72).

"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock" (Acts 20:28-29).

"But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel" (Acts 9:15).

Using the three Scriptures provided above, note that those in the ministry:

- Are chosen.
- Are chosen to be servants and shepherds (Matthew 9:35-38; John 21:15-19).
- Are chosen according to the integrity of heart (1 Samuel 16:7).

Henry Blackaby in *The Power of the Call* explains, "One does not choose the ministry! A pastor is chosen. He is chosen by God for God's purposes, in God's time and place, and to serve Him in God's ways."

God personally selects His leaders: "There came a man who was sent from God; his name was..." (John 1:6). He calls specific people for specific purposes. Jesus called the twelve Early Church leaders by name (Mark 3:13-19). "Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him" (Mark 3:13). God calls. The Christian leader volunteers (1 Timothy 3:1). Isaiah experienced this firsthand: "Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here am I. Send me!'" (Isaiah 6:8). Unfortunately, not all who receive the call embrace it. The table that follows shows the essentials of what God does (for and to) those He calls:

God <i>establishes</i> those he calls.	"But He knows the way that I take; when He has tested me, I will come forth as gold" (Job 23:10, NIV). The call is developed through life's experiences. Your call will stand the test of leadership scrutiny. Your gifts will make room for you (Proverbs 18:16).
God <i>equips</i> those He calls.	"See, I have chosen...and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge..." (Exodus 31:2-3, NIV). See also Ephesians 4:11-12. God backs those He calls with His power and authority. He provides all that is needed to accomplish His purpose. We use this authority to build up or edify others; helping them to reach their optimum. "I may seem to be boasting too much about the authority given to us by the Lord. But this authority is to build you up, not to tear you down" (2 Corinthians 10:8, <i>NLT</i>).
God <i>enables</i> those He calls.	"Are you called to help others? Do it with all the strength and energy that God supplies" (1 Peter 4:11, <i>NLT</i>). In our cultural context we are limited in our resources. God is unlimited in His, and supplies our needs (Philippians 4:19). He exceeds our limited education and wisdom.
God <i>empowers</i> those He calls.	"So then, being sent out by the Holy Spirit"

	(Acts 13:4, <i>AMP</i>). “Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,” says the LORD Almighty” (Zechariah 4:6). “Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us” (Ephesians 3:20-21).
God <i>expands</i> those He calls.	“His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’” (Matthew 25:21, NIV).
God <i>elevates</i> those He calls.	“For promotion and power come from nowhere on earth, but only from God. He promotes one and deposes another” (Psalms 75:5-8, <i>TLB</i>). We are not lifted up to be served, but so we can, with humility, bend down, take up the towel, and serve.
God <i>extracts</i> those He calls.	“While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them’” (Acts 13:1-3, NIV). Leaders are both called and called out. (Taken from <i>Growing Leaders</i> by James Poitras.)

A calling by God implies a specified purpose or vision. Paul said, “And for this purpose I was appointed” (1 Timothy 2:7). “I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant” (Acts 26:16). Vision is an expected byproduct of a call, and Paul was able to say, “I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision” (Acts 26:19, *NKJV*). For now, we “press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:14). Halstead said, “To be called by God is a requirement to lead” (4). No escape!

As a minister we have been given an assignment. Our message is “that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations” (Luke 24:47). We have been given “the keys of the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 16:18), and the “ministry of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:18).

“He called the twelve disciples and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness” (Matthew 10:1, NIV). When God calls, He also equips and empowers. He backs up the called with spiritual authority for the ministry at hand. An army never sends anyone into battle without weapons and providing the best equipment or tools they have to offer. God gives us everything we need to win the battle.

Daniel Scott said, "The called of God is that select group that God has chosen out of each generation for the preservation of that generation."

Lesson in Review

1. What is meant by the "inward call"? _____

2. What is meant by the "outward call"? _____

3. What three things (about the call) that we learn from Psalms 78:72? _____

4. What is the message of the minister? _____

5. What have we been given according to Matthew 16:18? _____

6. What have we been given according to 2 Corinthians 5:18? _____

7. What is the difference between the contract provided by a corporation and one designed by the Lord? _____

8. Prove, using Scriptures, that whoever God calls He also empowers and gives spiritual authority. _____

9. According to Daniel Scott, who are the called of God? _____

The Minister and His Role in the Fivefold Ministry

“For I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister”
 (Acts 26:16).

“Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men” (Ephesians 4:8). When Christ ascended he gave gifts to His people and for His people. This started with the outpouring of the baptism of the Holy Spirit which is promised to all believers. He provided a diversity of gifts (1 Corinthians 12:4) and ‘gifted’ people to the body of Christ. God has “set the members every one of them in the body as it hath pleased him” (1 Corinthians 12:18).

The great majority of spiritual gifts mentioned in the Bible are found in three key chapters:

Service Gifts	Romans 12:6-8
Gifts of the Spirit/Spiritual Gifts	1 Corinthians 12:8-10, 28-30
Ministry Gifts	Ephesians 4:11

This lesson deals primarily with the ministry gifts. All five ministries mentioned in Ephesians 4:11 can—and should—be active in the twenty-first century apostolic church. They minister together—cooperatively and not in competition with each other—to bring about spiritual maturity in the lives of every believer. Each of these specialized ministries is an extension of the ministry of Christ Himself.

The fivefold Ministry consists of:

Apostles	Govern
Prophets	Guide
Evangelists	Gather
Pastors	Guard
Teachers	Ground

It should be noted that some refer to the above as the fourfold ministry and combine pastors and teachers into one. This would make one office having two ministries. For simplicity, rather than doctrine, this lesson will assume that there are five offices or ministries.

Interestingly, every pastor teaches but not every teacher is a pastor. Every prophet prophesies. However, not everyone that prophesies is a prophet. A believer can be used in

the gift of prophecy. A prophet is called into that ministerial role. Every pastor should do the work of evangelism (2 Timothy 4:5). However, not every pastor is an evangelist.

Apostles	One that is sent out.	Sent by God (John 3:16).
Prophets	One who listens to God and speaks for Him.	Foretold events, was a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, and words spoken were a revelation from God.
Evangelists	One who brings good news and eagerly shares the message of salvation.	He embodied the Good News. See Him at work with the Samaritan woman.
Pastors	One who shepherds God's people.	Referred to as the Good Shepherd who came to lead people. See John 10:11.
Teachers	One who teaches and enlightens God's people in doctrine and lifestyle.	Often referred to as Teacher. He taught with authority. See John 13:13.

Apostle	Thumb	Touches all of the others
Prophet	Pointer	Used for direction
Evangelist	Middle	Reaches the furthest
Pastor	Fourth finger	Covenant finger
Teacher	Pinky	Maintains balance



Taken from: <http://www.spiritwatch.org/firefivespab2.htm>

You can utilize a hand with only three fingers. It is not ideal. A hand works best with five fingers. Anything less indicates a handicap.

“For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ” (Ephesians 4:12-15, Emphasis mine).

There are at least three goals of the fivefold ministry revealed in Ephesians 4:12:

1. Perfect the saints. To perfect means to equip, complete, and prepare.
2. Equip God’s people for works of service. “To train Christians in skilled servant work, working within Christ’s body, the church” (MSG).
3. Edify or build up of the body of Christ. To edify insinuates that the minister is promoting the growth of another.

The fivefold ministry works together to achieve these goals until God’s people:

1. Reach the unity of the faith and knowledge of Jesus Christ.
2. Mature or become perfect: “Fully developed within and without” (MSG).
3. Attain the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. We need to be fully developed, brought to completion, ready for use in the kingdom.
4. Reject false teachers and preachers.
5. Know the whole truth and speak it wisely and in love.
6. Grow in every way to be fully like Christ.

It is difficult to accomplish this without each aspect of the fivefold ministry. They work together as a team to do the work of the church. It is easier to achieve the unity of all believers if we can recognize the uniqueness of all believers.

“Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them” (Acts 13:2). One’s calling and gifting decides one’s ministry in the body of Christ. Daniel Scott wisely said, “The office of the minister is not entered into by a believer’s choice, rather by the calling of God...It is honorable to desire the vocation and responsibility...demonstrating a burden for the cause of evangelizing the world, and developing individuals into a godly state, but a desire alone is not a sufficient reason to choose a vocation in the ministry. The choice is God’s alone...”

“See that you discharge carefully the duties of this ministry” (Colossians 4:17, AMP).

Characteristics of each Ministry

Apostles:

- Provide the government for the kingdom.
- Envision and pioneer.
- Progress and push forward into new territory.
- Enjoy establishing new churches and ministries.
- Advance into unreached areas and set up churches.
- Open doors of opportunity for the spread of the Gospel.
- Possess the other ministerial gifts or offices within his call.
- Lay the foundation, along with the prophets (Ephesians 2:20).
- Witness of the resurrection (Acts 1:15-22).
- Sent.

Some feel apostles do not exist in the church today. This is based on the assumption that the foundation has already been laid (Ephesians 2:20), no further construction is needed, and that apostles must have seen the risen Lord personally (1 Corinthians 9:1-2). The other angle is that there are those that attach the title of apostle or prophet effortlessly to their names without displaying the characteristics of the ministry. They are name-promoting and title-seeking. Misuse of the ministerial function abounds. The proper response to misuse is not elimination but proper use and sufficient education.

Others suggest that missionaries are modern day apostles. Perhaps, some are. Although all missionaries are indeed sent it would be stretching it say that all could be considered apostles. Missionaries do possess a special gifting to be able to adapt to other cultures.

Prophets:

- Guide the church government.
- Foretell the future.
- Possess a clear picture of what is happening.
- Have an understanding of the times.
- Proclaim and interpret the divine revelation provided to him.
- Revealing what is hidden.
- Interpret to what is being revealed to him.
- Speak for God.
- Issue proclamations in agreement to the written Word.

- Referred to in the Old Testament as a “seer” (1 Samuel 9:9).
- Envision the times and present day apostolic church.
- Directive or corrective in their approach.
- Exhort, edify, encourage, and comfort through prophecy (1 Corinthians 14:3).
- Predict coming judgment.

Evangelists:

- Gather others into the kingdom.
- Remind other Christians they need to reach the lost.
- Reach people with the salvation message using a special anointing for the purpose.
- Know how to make the Word of God relevant to non-Christians.
- Draw others into a discussion about Jesus, wherever they go.
- Passionate about sharing the Gospel.
- Bold in sharing their faith.
- Announce good news.
- Relate the facts of redemption.
- Preach “Jesus.”
- Reconcile people to God.
- Declare the promises of God.
- Herald of salvation.
- Soul-winning is the mark of their calling.
- Anointed to draw people.
- Employ wisdom in winning the lost.
- Travels from place to place.

Pastors:

- Guard, protect, nourish, and care for the spiritual needs of the flock.
- Spend most of their time with other Christians.
- Serve as spiritual overseers.
- Watch over souls.
- Model Christianity.
- Serve and nurture of the flock.
- Display great patience in dealing with the issues of others.
- Possess an ability to speak the truth in love.
- Listen and make it easy for others to share their feelings.
- Able to invest long-term in the spiritual welfare of believers.

- Do whatever is necessary to see people grow in faith and in their spiritual lives.
- Help direct others to continue moving in a heavenly, godly direction.
- Lead the sheep into the fold.
- Sacrifice for the sheep (John 10:11).

Teachers:

- Ground believers in apostolic doctrine.
- Explain, enlighten (Psalms 119:130), and educate others in understanding and applying truth.
- Enjoy reading and studying God's Word. False teaching comes because the teacher fails to study and prepare himself properly.
- Exposes truth with simplicity.
- Get excited about teaching the Bible to others.
- Possess the ability to make God's Word clear or plain to people at whatever level of maturity or education they are.
- Instructs by personal example and lifestyle. Life needs to match instruction.
- Explains Scripture in a way that it will be easily understood by the hearers.
- Spiritual ability. A person may have the natural ability, inclination, or training to teach. However, that does not mean he is necessarily called into the spiritual office of a teacher.
- Convey truth using simple, ordinary examples or things.
- Instruct people in knowing God rather than merely understanding religion.
- Replicate themselves in the lives of others (Luke 6:40).
- Train and commit truth to those that will be able to teach others (2 Timothy 2:2).
- Live a higher standard knowing they are held to greater judgment and scrutiny (James 3:1).
- Strike a balance between theoretical and practical.

“And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry” (1 Timothy 1:12, NKJV).

It is such an honor to be counted among those in the ministry. When selecting a replacement for Judas the writer of the Acts 1:25 recorded they were looking for someone “to occupy this ministry” (NASB); “to take the place in this ministry” (MSG); “to take part in this ministry” (NKJV); “to receive the share of this ministration” (Young's Literal Translation); “to receive the lot of this service” (Darby Bible). According to Acts 1:17, Judas had his “assigned place” (MSG); “active role” (God's Word); “obtained part” (KJV); and

“allotted share” (ESV) in the ministry. How shameful and disheartening that he failed to identify and then fulfill it. God forbid this same lot falls on any of us.

I once asked a young man arriving in our field, “What is your ministry?”

He responded, “They say I am a teacher.”

I retorted, “I didn’t ask ‘what they say?’ I asked, ‘what is your ministry?’”

Before this young man completed his first field assignment he understood his ministry and how to operate within it. Nearly fifteen years later this fabulous minister is still blossoming and doing a marvelous work for God. Knowing how one fits into the body of Christ, and understanding one’s role in ministry, is foundational to ministerial success and contentment. Everyone should be able to identify his place in the ministry and every ministry needs to be in its place.

May I be so bold to close this lesson with a personal question, “What is your ministry?”

A clear answer sets the foundation for a life of ministerial development.

Lesson in Review

1. Locate the three key chapters that tell us about the majority of spiritual gifts? _____

2. When Christ ascended, according to Ephesians 4:8, what did He do? _____

3. According to Ephesians 4:11 the ministry gifts consist of what five offices or ministries?

4. List these again with the special verbs that go with each. _____

5. Why do some refer to the ministry gifts of Ephesians 4:11 as the fourfold ministry?

6. Explain this statement, "Not everyone that prophesies is a prophet." _____

7. Explain how Jesus Christ fulfilled each of the ministerial offices. _____

8. Explain how the prophet relates to the pointer finger. _____

9. Why is the middle finger compared to the evangelist? _____

10. List the three goals of the fivefold ministry. _____

11. Can a person decide, on his own, which ministry he wants to operate in or with? Explain your answer. _____

12. Provide five characteristics of an apostle. _____

13. Why do some believe that the ministry of the apostle (and prophet) are no longer available in the modern day church? _____

14. Do you agree that the ministry of the apostle and prophet is no longer available? Explain your answer backed with Scriptures. _____

15. What is your ministry? List five characteristics of this particular ministry. _____

The Minister and His Gifting



“...Behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek: Which was well reported of by the brethren...”
(Acts 16:1-2).

“And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Genesis 2:7).

Dutch Sheets and Chris Jackson wrote an excellent book for ministers entitled *Second in Command*. It is full of gems and is a highly recommended read for any aspiring, developing minister. In one of the chapters, Chris talks about the fingerprint of God. God formed man from the dust of the earth. “The word ‘formed’ describes a lump of clay that is squeezed into shape on the potter’s wheel. One of the most wondrous consequences of being formed by the hand of God is that God’s fingerprints cover His handiwork. Adam bore the imprint of the hand of God. So do you. A major key to enjoying your calling and obtaining security in it is to understand that you are carrying the fingerprint of God on your life.”

1. Our fingerprints do not change throughout our lifetime.
2. Our fingerprints are uniquely different than any other set of fingerprints in the world. Fingerprints are formed in the womb during the third or fourth month of pregnancy. The basic pattern stays the same throughout life. No two prints have ever been found to be exactly alike. Even those found in identical twins are different.
3. Our fingerprints validate and verify our identity.
4. Our fingerprints verify identity. Is this person who they claim they are? Fingerprints can affirm a person’s claims.

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“Before I formed you in the womb I knew (and) approved of you (as My chosen instrument), and before you were born I separated and set you apart, consecrating you; (and) I appointed you as a prophet to the nations” (Jeremiah 1:5, AMP).

“For I know the thoughts and plans that I have for you, says the Lord, thoughts and plans for welfare and peace and not for evil, to give you hope in your final outcome” (Jeremiah 29:11, AMP).

Paul recalled the sincere, real faith that was first in Timothy’s grandmother, Lois and in his mother, Eunice and now in Timothy. Paul also built on that foundation as he took Timothy as his true son in the faith. Faith is the greatest heritage that can be passed from one generation to the next. His faith was set on a firm foundation. The fingerprints of two generations of faithful believers assisted in crafting his life.

With such an unyielding groundwork Paul was able to say, “That is why I would remind you to stir up (rekindle the embers of, fan the flame of, and keep burning) the (gracious) gift of God, (the inner fire) that is in you by means of the laying on of my hands (with those of the elders at your ordination)” (2 Timothy 1:6, AMP).

The New King James Version tells us to “Stir up the gift of God.” Paul urged the young minister, Timothy, and every young minister since then to keep at full flame God-given abilities that are provided for ministry. As these gifts are exercised they reach and maintain their intended potential. The special gifting provided to each of us represents the unique fingerprint God has placed on each of us.

Our gifting is something:

1. God gave us.
2. We need to discern, discover, and determine.
3. We need to stir up.
4. We must stir up on our own. No one else can do it for us.

We stir up our gifting by discovering it, developing it, refining it, and of course, using it. Many of us know our gifting. We just need to stir it up. Fan it into flame. We are admonished with these words “Do not neglect....” To neglect is to treat carelessly, to be negligent, to disregard, ignore, and fail to give the proper care to. God has placed His fingerprint of gifting upon us. To be profitable for the ministry, we cannot neglect it. No one wants to be a failure. Strive to achieve all God has planned for you and equipped you for in this generation.

“Do not neglect the gift which is in you, (that special inward endowment) which was directly imparted to you (by the Holy Spirit) by prophetic utterance when the elders laid their hands upon you (at you ordination). Practice and cultivate and meditate upon these duties; throw yourself wholly into them (as your ministry), so that your progress may be evident to everybody” (1 Timothy 4:14-15, AMP).

Throughout Scripture the laying on of hands was spiritually significant. It was used to:

- Bless (Genesis 27: 26-30, 38-41; Genesis 48: 13-20; Matthew 19:13-15; Luke 24:50).
- Identify (Numbers 8:10).
- Heal (Mark 16:18; Acts 9:17; 28:8; James 5:14).
- Ordain (Deuteronomy 34:9; Numbers 27:18-23; 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6).
- Employ signs and wonders (Acts 5:12; 14:3; 19:11).
- Strengthen (Matthew 17:7; Revelation 1:17).
- Impart gift(s) of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:4-10), baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:17-18; Acts 19:6) or ministry gift (Ephesians 4:11; Romans 12:4-8; 1 Peter 4:10)
- Dedicate/Consecrate/Set apart (Leviticus 1:1-4; Acts 13: 2-3)
- Mark the beginning of apostolic ministry (Acts 6:6; Acts 13:3; Acts 14:23).

“And he laid hands upon him, and gave him a charge, as the Lord commanded...” (Numbers 27:23).

At ordination laying on of hands represents leaders recognizing the call and anointing on a person for a particular aspect of the fivefold ministry. It confers authority and shows that the person being ordained should be submissive and accountable to leadership. Only the Holy Spirit can give spiritual gifts. There is little to no evidence in God’s Word that humans can prophetically impart gifts. Every gift comes from above (James 1:17). Leaders act as conduits or channels of God’s blessings.

We are all born with a unique personality and pick up skills throughout life. However, there are also gifts imparted by the Holy Spirit. Here Paul reminds Timothy that such a gift was imparted through the laying on of hands or putting on of hands (1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6). The elders leave an imprint, fingerprints on the lives of the young ministers. A sacred charge and the ability to fulfill it, is passed on at the ordination. Paul also mentioned a “prophetic utterance.” Think about it. What type of prayer is pronounced at the time of a person’s ordination? It is always a prayer of blessing and persuasion that the person will be greatly used of the Lord.

- Preach the Word
- Endure sound doctrine
- Do the work of an evangelist
- Fulfill your ministry
- Fight the good fight
- Finish the course
- Keep the faith (2 Timothy 4:2-7).

At times our gifting may be dormant, dead or depressed (pressed down), and cause us to become discouraged or intimidated. That is why Paul told Timothy not to have the spirit of fear or “timidity.”

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Many know their gifting, but want to shift or exchange it with someone else. We should not be jealous of other people's gifts. Dutch Sheets and Chris Jackson tell us that Jesus will never ask us, "Why weren't you more like others?" He may ask us, "Why weren't you more like me? Why weren't you more like the you I planned for you to be? Why weren't you more like yourself?"

Myles Munroe in an online article, "Stir Up Your Gifts!" says, "Jealousy is a gift robber. Jealousy is an energy drain. Jealousy will take away the passion of life from you. You should be so busy stirring up your gift that you don't have time to be jealous of anyone else or to feel sorry for yourself."

"Not that we (have the audacity to) venture to class or (even to) compare ourselves with some who exalt and furnish testimonials for themselves! However, when they measure themselves with themselves and compare themselves with one another, they are without understanding and behave unwisely" (2 Corinthians 10:12, AMP).

"A gift opens the way for the giver and ushers him into the presence of the great" (Proverbs 18:16, NIV). According to Keith Butler in his featured devotion "Your Gift Will Make Room for You" it was customary for a man to bring a gift to a person in order to be heard by him. You had to present a gift before business could be discussed. A man's gift makes room for him.

Another translation says, "A man's gift makes room for him and brings him before great men" (Proverbs 18:16, AMP).

1. "Makes" means causes or creates.
2. Your gifting 'makes' or causes action.
3. Your gifting will bring you before great men. It opens the way.
4. To "make room" means to broaden. It causes expansion and present opportunities for the person.

Kent Otey in "Let Your Gift Make Room for You" states that the word "room" in the Hebrew means, "A place no one has ever been before." "God has given every man, woman, and child a gift that has the power to make a way into, or give entrance, into a place He has ordained us to occupy. Notice the man does not make room for the gift. The gift makes room for the man! This truth reveals to us we are very unique to God, and the things He has prepared for us to accomplish are equally unique as well." The fingerprints of God are upon our lives providing us a unique, one-of-a-kind spiritual fingerprint of our own, allowing us to leave an imprint on others and to impact our world.

"I believe when you're in the right place (the room He has prepared), at the right time, you will experience maximum effectiveness and minimum weariness in ministry. This is why we must all develop and use the gifts we've been given, rather than mimic another's gifts and callings." (Kent Otey)

Are you in the room God has prepared for you? Check for His fingerprints?

Lesson in Review

1. What does the word “formed” found in Genesis 2:7 mean? _____

2. How or where did Timothy derive his sincere faith? _____

3. How do gifts reach their intended potential? _____

4. What did Paul mean when he told Timothy to “stir up the gift”? _____

5. List four reasons for laying on of hands. _____

6. At ordination what does laying on of hands represent or accomplish? _____

7. Can a man of God provide spiritual gifts? If so, how? _____

8. Where does every perfect gift come from, according to James 1:17? _____

9. What type of prophetic utterance is provided at ordination? _____

10. Explain Proverbs 18:16. _____

11. Why should we not be jealous over someone else's gifts? _____

12. According to Kent Otey what happens when you're in the right place at the right time?

The Minister and the Will of God

The Continuous Journey

“And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them”
(Acts 16:9-10).

Discovering God’s direction; why does it cause such a brain pain, and so much worthless worry? Too often, we see it as an ultimate destination, not realizing it is a continuous journey. We erroneously envision ourselves being led through a huge maze and being plumped down and told, “The puzzle of your life is in a thousand pieces. Put it together!” God is not messing with our minds. He is not playing hide-and-seek. We are not pawns or players in his mystery thriller. He longs to provide us the direction we need. He orders our footsteps. And He reveals His will in the increments that would be best suited for us. The process unfolds according to the Master’s master plan. The will of God does not have to be a mystery. It reminds me of the winding road depicted in the letter “S.” As you start out on the trip, you can only see as far as the headlights shine, or until you reach the bend in the road. Once you travel faithfully through the twist, and around it, you can see further.

“God has made everything beautiful for its own time. He has planted eternity in the human heart, but even so, people cannot see the whole scope of God’s work from beginning to end” (Ecclesiastes 3:11, *NLT*).

God says, “I have a plan for your life” (Jeremiah 29:11). You respond, “Great, Lord. What is it?” The race is “set before us.” It has already been decided. The path, the race, that God has set has been selected.

Paul, in obedience to his missionary call in Acts 13 established a number of churches in the faith and was seeking the will of God for his life. Finding the will of God seems to be one of the major areas where people struggle. Paul thought that he would go to Asia but he was “...forbidden of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 16:6). Then his team considered going to another place “...but the Spirit suffered them not” (Acts 16:7). Finally Paul had a vision of a man who stood on a distant shore and called across the sea, “Come over into Macedonia, and help us!” (Acts 16:9).

Daniel Scott in his lessons on “The Body Ministry: Striving for Excellence” points out, “The first church had learned by experience that the will of God was the shortest route to the

greater results. The obedience to His will produces success...At times the Spirit forbids an action a person thinks is right....the army of the called march in formation. Each step is ordered as though by prearranged training and practice; the will of God being the drummer calling the steps, the resolute faces of those in the columns indicating the willingness to move with submission.”

“The dream gave Paul his map. We went to work at once getting things ready to cross over to Macedonia. All the pieces had come together. We knew now for sure that God had called us to preach the good news to the Europeans” (Page 274, The Message).

Eugene Peterson suggests that Paul and his team felt that all of the pieces had come together to the Will of God. There seems to be a process that they went through to determine this since they knew for sure that it was God’s will. Their assurance was not based on the vision alone. Christians often ask, “How can I be sure of God’s will for my life?” To many, this is a difficult question and one that many Christians struggle with.

Dr. Bill Hamon in his book *Prophets and Personal Prophecy* suggests that there are three “W’s” in decision making when it comes to the will of God.

God’s <u>W</u> ord	...on the matter.
God’s <u>W</u> ill	...about it.
God’s <u>W</u> ay	...to fulfill it.

Traveling the Road of the Will of God

Dr. Hamon (whose book was very helpful in the preparation of this portion of this lesson) compares the three “W’s” to three sets of traffic lights. You must make sure that you have a green light on all three before proceeding. Three colors are normally used on traffic lights. They are: Red - which means to “Stop.” Yellow - which means to “Yield, get ready to stop, or Caution.” Green meaning “Go.”

God’s Word

The Bible is God in print. It is the revelation of God in written form. The Greek word is “Logos”, which refers to the Word of God in general. Another Greek word is “rhema” which is a specific “word from the Word.” It is a personal word from the Lord giving us direction and a command.

“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). Andy Stanley in his DVD series

“Discovering God’s Will” explains why it is so pivotal to study God’s Word when seeking His will:

- We study His Word to find the big picture: God’s plan for everything that happens.
- We study His Word to find the commands and law He gives for all to obey.
- The more we study and learn about God, the closer we get to Him. The closer we get to the understanding of who and what He is, the easier it is to make a decision about God’s plan for our lives.

Howard Hendricks said, “The will of God is found in the Word of God. The more a person grows, the more he begins to think instructively and habitually from a divine perspective.”

God will never provide guidance, or ask you to do anything that is contrary to His Word; “I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye” (Psalm 32:8).

Stay in the Word! Saturate yourself in the Word! As the hub keeps the wheel centered on the axle, so the Word of God keeps us centered on truth. The Bible is primarily and essentially the written will of God for our lives. Examine the Scriptures. The Bible is our guidebook in all things. He also provides certain unwritten directives. Obey God’s written Word first (Psalms 1:2-3). Know God. Love God.

God guides us as we search the Scriptures: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

John Wesley said, “It’s how God teaches, rebukes, corrects, and trains us for the journey so we may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

If you could summarize up the Bible in one word it would be “submission.” We need to submit to the will of God as revealed through His Word. Submission is willingly giving up your own desires in favor of God’s desires. A prerequisite to knowing the will of God is the willingness to submit and obey. Jesus asked, “Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not what I say?” (Luke 6:46-47, *NIV*).

“His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it” (John 2:5).

It's one thing to know. It's quite another to do. Are you teachable? Will you follow God's will once you know it?

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake" (Psalms 23:1-3). An old song by E. W. Brandy says, "Where He leads me, I will follow. I'll go with Him, with Him all the way."

"Show me the way I should go; for to you I lift up my soul. Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; may your good spirit lead me on level ground" (Psalm 143:8, 10, *NIV*).

Submission is the willingness to do things God's way; "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh unto God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye doubleminded" (James 4:7-8).

It is wrong to decide what you want to do and then make the Bible conform to it. People have the habit of doing this. They make their plans and then they expect God to go along with it. Doctrines have even been formed using and/or abusing one isolated Scripture. When determining the will of God the first traffic light that you drive up to is called "**God's Word.**" What you feel is the will of God for your life must be measured up against the Word of God. The Word of God has been provided as a "...lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path" (Psalm 119: 105). Most of God's will is revealed through His Word.

We cannot base our decision on one Scripture alone. "This is the third time I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established" (2 Corinthians 13:1).

The Spirit will never speak to us—even through spiritual gifts—and tell us to do anything that would be contrary to the Word of God. God's will for us conforms to the principles of His Word. The Spirit guides us in agreement with the Bible.

God's Will

People today feel they are able to find the Will of God on their own and do not need the help of men. They say, "I'm not going to listen to men but only to the voice of God." First of all, it will be a very lonely life if you determine not to listen to men. Secondly, this attitude is very dangerous.

Wise and Godly Counsel Provides Safety on the Road

The will of God will stand up to the examination of spiritual men of God. They will be able to give you wise and godly counsel. We can go to men of God that have been seasoned in the ministry and are mature.

The Wise Man said, "Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counselors there is safety" (Proverbs 11:14).

"Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established" (Proverbs 15:22).

"For by wise counsel thou shalt make thy war: and in multitude of counsellors there is safety" (Proverbs 24:6).

Who should you receive counsel from?

- Those that have made the journey before.
- Those that have our best interest at heart.
- Those that are spiritually-minded and can give good advice (Psalms 1:1-2).
- Those that are in spiritual leadership or authority over us.
- Those we trust and have confidence in.

What are the benefits of receiving counsel?

- Wise advice.
- Confirmation.
- Affirmation.
- Mentorship.
- Discerning questions.
- Clarity.
- Focus on the right path.

When Samuel heard God's voice: He heard it in the voice of his pastor, Eli. He went to his pastor for confirmation. His pastor gave him the right counsel.

Avoid people who:

- Tell you exactly what you want to hear.
- Always see it your way.

- Have something to gain or lose through the counsel they provide.

Watch out for ear-ticklers: “Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth” (2 Timothy 4:3-4, *NIV*).

A great friend and mentor, Robert K. Rodenbush, expresses his concept of God’s will through asking five reflective questions:

1. Is there a need greater than where I am?
2. Are my ministry skills suitable to be used to meet that need?
3. Is my family able and willing?
4. Do my elders agree and will they give their blessing?
5. Is the door open to me?

Hearing the Voice of God

- Another way that we can hear the voice of God concerning His Will is through the “still small voice.” Elijah stood upon the mountain and waited for the Lord to pass by. The wind came and broke the rocks but God was not in the wind. After the wind, there was an earthquake, but God wasn’t in the earthquake. After the earthquake there was a fire, but God was not in the fire. Finally, after the fire there was the “still small voice” (1 Kings 19:11-12).

We need a close relationship to the Lord that will allow us to hear and know His voice. Paul came “declaring the testimony of God” (1 Corinthians 2:1). Paul knew this because he determined “not to know anything...save Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2). He later mentioned that “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit...” (1 Cor. 2:9-10).

- The Holy Spirit will “guide us” (John 16:13). The Lord is compared to a Shepherd in John 10 and we are His sheep.

When God speaks to us with a still small voice; we can hear it, and we will have a deep assurance in our heart that God has spoken.

How do you know when God is speaking to you? Roger Barrier in *Listening to the Voice of God* explains, “Ever had an experience where deep down inside you just knew what to do; where God gave you impressions, encouragement, and advice?” He calls that place his “knower.” “Deep down in my ‘knower,’ I knew what God wanted.” Barrier defines his

'knower' as "this place deep inside where I know God speaks...it is there that I have heard the voice of God."

D. Martin Lloyd-Jones said, "Then God sometimes answers directly in our spirit. The prophet said, 'I will wait and see what he will say in me.' God speaks to me by speaking in me....He can impress something upon our spirits in an unmistakable manner. We find ourselves unable to get away from an impression that is on our mind and heart." Perhaps this is what Elijah experienced when God spoke in a "still, small voice" (1 Kings 19:12). Some call it an inner compulsion (1 Corinthians 9:16); inner peace (Isaiah 26:3); inner voice; inner feeling; inner impression; inner aspiration (1 Timothy 3:1); and/or inner desire (Psalms 37:4).

The early preachers cultivated sensitivity to the Spirit. The Spirit spoke to them, and through them many times. "Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot" (Acts 8:29). "And the spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting" (Acts 11:12).

Who is leading you? It is important to be led by the Spirit; "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Romans 8:14).

We need to be sensitive to the Spirit: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27). Paul testified, "For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2).

The key to knowing God's will is in knowing God, and His voice: "And the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers" (John 10:3-5).

Gifts of the Spirit

The Will of God can be confirmed to us through the Gifts of the Spirit. The revelation gifts that reveal something are especially helpful.

Desire

Another way to confirm the Will of God is whether or not we have a desire in our heart to do what we feel God is telling us. "Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart" (Psalm 37:4).

God gives us the desires of our heart because He puts the desire there in the first place. However, desire alone, is not a safe way to determine the Will of God.

Clearance from Road Control

Dr. Hamon mentions “the witness, clearance, or restraint of the Holy Spirit.” In Acts 16:6 Paul was “forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia.” In Acts 16:7 “the Spirit suffered them not.” Paul also testified “the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city” (Acts 20:23).

We should never ignore the prompting of the Holy Ghost, because it will dull our spiritual senses. It can also change the green light into a red light.

A missionary traveling back to his home in the night passed through a city. He was traveling with two nationals. Anxious to see their families they continued on toward their home. Soon armed robbers ambushed them. The vehicle was shot many times with a gun and the missionary and national preachers barely escaped with their lives. Later each one testified that they had thought that they should not go on, but did not tell each other. It is better to listen than to regret it later.

Did You Pass the Test?

When you pass the majority of these tests, you have a green light and can proceed on to the next light.

God's Way

You have passed through the first two traffic lights and have now come to the third light. You may have the mind of God but will need to wait on the correct timing.

Confusion usually indicates that the timing is not correct. The Will of God normally falls into place at the appropriate time.

“For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints” (1 Corinthians 14:33).

Walking and Driving in the Will of God

God has a way that He wants us to walk in order to fulfill His will. “...This is the way, walk ye in it...” (Isaiah 30:21).

“The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way” (Psalm 37:23).

God’s ways are not our ways. Therefore we must wait on Him to reveal the correct timing, direction, and the manner in which we will accomplish the will of God.

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord” (Isaiah 55:8).

“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end” (Jeremiah 29:11).

The Light is Getting Ready to Change

Once you have a green light at each of the three traffic lights you should move quickly. You must obey the light when it is green, knowing that it can change colors at any moment. You need to act WHEN God wants you to act.

“...Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you...” (John 12:35).

“To know the will of God is the greatest knowledge;
To find the will of God is the greatest discovery;
To do the will of God is the greatest achievement.”

Anonymous

“Being Out of the Will of God Stinks” Jonah’s Testimony

There is such peace being in the perfect will of God. However, when we run from the call and will of God it is a different story. God sent Jonah to preach to the city of Ninevah. Instead of passing through the traffic lights on the road to the will of God, Jonah changed roads all together and started running from it. Jonah’s failure was not delighting himself in the Lord. Instead of running to God; he was running away from God. This took Jonah down.

- Down to Joppa. (Jonah 1:3)
- Down into the Ship. (Jonah 1:5)
- Down into the Sea. (Jonah 1:15)
- Down into the belly of the Big Fish. (Jonah 1:17)

It was in the belly of the big fish that Jonah started praying for the will of God to be done. God can put us into situations where we will become delighted to do the will of God. We need to make sure that our heart is right with God and that it is ready to do the Lord's will. This means that we must first surrender our own will and bring it under subjection to His will.

Don't Give Up; Things Could Get Worse

An article entitled, "Resignation Fever," by Oliver Price appeared in *The Parson Page* in April 1982. This article mentioned an interesting story about a pastor who was experiencing criticism from some people in his church. (This story has been adapted for use in this lesson.)

The pastor wrote, "Two deacons used to meet me after church every Sunday and mercilessly lecture me. " This pastor went home discouraged each week.

"Why don't you leave the church?" his wife suggested.

"Well," the pastor replied "there was one deacon who made me miserable in my last church I served. Now there are two who attack me here. I'm afraid if I run from them there will be four in the next place."

Problems in the ministry or in your personal life do not necessarily mean that you are out of the will of God. We can minister where God has placed us with the assurance that we are doing what God has asked us to do.

Lord, What Do You Want Me to Do?

"And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do"
(Acts 9:6).

Knocked down on the road, Paul asked, "Lord, what do you want me to do?" He never stopped asking this question throughout his life and ministry. It is the same question we should ask.

In earnest conversations among believers, the "will of God" is often discussed. In each step of our Christian walk, we want to be confident that we are doing the Lord's will. Christians have a true longing to please the Lord.

The will of God is not a destination or an end in itself. It is a progressive journey experienced daily throughout a lifetime.

Daily we should ask, “Lord, what is your agenda for today? What is Your plan?”

**“The mind of man plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps”
(Proverbs 16:9 NASB).**

Paul told his friends and followers, “I will return again unto you, if God will” (Acts 18:21).

James advised, “Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that” (James 4:14-15).

Dan Southerland in *Transitioning: Leading Your Church Through Change* gives a working definition of God’s will.

- Doing the right *thing*
- In the right *way*
- For the right *motive*
- At the right *time*

Warren Wiersbe said, “Obeying the will of God involves not only doing the right thing in the right way for the right motive, but it also means doing it at the right time.”

The writer of Hebrews calls us “pilgrims” on this road called “life.” The Christian life is often referred to as the Christian walk; a journey. As we journey, many times we see only as far ahead as the road will allow. We do not see what is around the next bend, or what is beyond the roadblock. However, we know there is a God leading us who does see. He knows the way because He is “the way” (John 14:6). We must stay on His road and keep going, even when we cannot see far ahead. We must continue walking in the will of God though the view may be short. We persist to “walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7).

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Romans 12:1-2).

Preparing to Take a Trip

Preparing for any journey requires groundwork. This includes the daily journey in discovering and obeying the will of God.

- Daily present your body a living sacrifice. Visualize placing yourself on the altar of sacrifice surrendering yourself and your will to God (1 Corinthians 15:31, Matthew

10:38-39). Someone has said, “In God’s service, our greatest ability is our availability.”

- Don’t be conformed to this world. The world’s thinking and solution may not apply in spiritual situations. Let your heart be fixed on the Lord (Psalms 57:7). Focus your attention on Him. Get the Lord’s thoughts (Isaiah 55:8).
- Trust the Lord for direction. “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths” (Proverbs 3:5-6).
- Do not try to work out His will with your limited understanding. Ask for the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16-3:1).
- Acknowledge Him through prayer, fasting, and reading His Word (Jeremiah 33:3).
- Develop a listening (spiritual) ear to hear the Lord’s voice (John 10:3-8, 1 Kings 19:12, Mark 8:18).
- Wait until the answer comes (Lamentations 3:25-26, Psalms 130:5, Isaiah 40:31).
- God will order and direct your footsteps.

“The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way” (Psalms 37:23).

- Finally, “whatsoever he saith unto you, do it” (John 2:5).

You may be thinking, “That all sounds so simple, yet finding the will of God has been difficult for me.” The longest journey begins with a single step. God reveals His will as we walk with Him from day to day. We place a lot of emphasis on the journey ahead. This results in worry—needless worry. Concentrate on doing what God has revealed to you. Proceed as far as you can see. When you get to the bend in the road, God will be there. He will let you know all you need to know about the next phase of the journey. Happy traveling!

Please Note: This material was taken from *Acts: God’s Training Manual for Today’s Church* and *Sensing God’s Direction*, and written by James Poitras

Lesson in Review

1. What are the three (3) “Ws” to be used in decision making concerning the will of God? _____

2. What are the three (3) colors of traffic lights and what do each mean? _____

3. If you were to sum up the Bible in one word, what would it be? _____

4. According to Psalm 119:105, what is the Word of God to us? _____

5. According to 2 Corinthians 13:1, what principle should be followed in establishing doctrines and the will of God for our lives? _____

6. Write out Psalms 119:105. _____

7. Provide Scriptures that prove that we need to receive wise and godly counsel. _____

8. Private revelation must stand which test? _____

9. List some ways that we can determine and confirm God's will for our lives. _____

10. What is the greatest knowledge, discovery, and achievement? _____

11. Jonah's refusal to do the will of God brought him down to four places. What are they?

12. What question(s) did Saul (Paul) ask on the Damascus Road? _____

13. Explain the will of God by relating it to a journey. _____

14. What should we ask on a daily basis? _____

15. What is the working definition of God's will? _____

16. What does the writer of Hebrews call us? _____

17. How can we present our bodies as a living sacrifice? _____

18. Why should we not be conformed to this world? _____

19. Quote Proverbs 3:5-6. _____

20. What kind of mind should we ask the Lord for? _____

22. What should we do until the answer comes? _____

23. Who will order our footsteps? _____

24. What is the result of putting emphasis on the spiritual journey ahead (that we cannot see)? _____

25. Instead of placing emphasis on the journey ahead that we cannot see, what should we do? _____

26. List three characteristics of those that one should receive counsel from. _____

27. List five benefits of seeking and receiving counsel. _____

The Minister and His Vision

“...And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams” (Acts 2:17).

Symbolically, a minister’s role is that of (a) seer; (b) servant; (c) shepherd; and (d) steward. These roles are interlocked and inseparable. This lesson addresses the minister as a seer; a visionary.

As Peter, on the Day of Pentecost repeated the Old Testament prophecy concerning the visitation of God’s Spirit upon all flesh, he reiterated that young men shall see visions, and old men shall dream dreams. The Wise Man in the Book of Proverbs 29:18 wrote, “Where there is no vision, the people perish.” One translation says, “Where there is no vision the people dwell carelessly.”

What is vision?

George Barna of the Barna Research Group in his book, *Power of Vision* defines vision as: “Vision for ministry is a clear mental image of a preferable future imparted by God to His chosen servants and is based upon an accurate understanding of God, self and circumstances.” A vision for ministry is like a picture of the way things can be or should be in the future.

Wayne Cordeiro in *Doing Church as a Team* writes, “Vision is the ability to see what others may not. It is the capacity to see potential – what things could be. Vision is the ability to see what God sees and the God-given motivation to bring what you see to pass!”

Vision is faith. “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1).

Dale Galloway in *Leading with Vision* defines vision as “the ability, or God-given gift, to see those things are not as becoming a reality.” He further states, “Vision – the place where tomorrow is shaped – motivates ministry and determines achievement.” He believes that if you were to tell him your vision, he would be able to predict your future.

Tim Barton says “vision addresses the future by creating a picture of what we desire tomorrow to look like.”

What do you see?

Jesus questioned his disciples one day by saying, “Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember?” (Mark 8:18).

Immediately following his statement, Jesus came to Bethsaida and they brought a blind man to him. Jesus led this man, by the hand, out of the town, spit on his eyes, put his hands on him, and asked him if he could now see. The blind man looked up and said, “I see men as trees, walking.” Jesus wanted the man to have correct vision so He put His hands on his eyes once more and told him to look up again. This time “he was restored, and saw every man clearly.” (Mark 8:23-25). It is also interesting to note that He then immediately asked His disciples, “Whom do men say that I am?” He was asking, “How do others see me?” Then “What about you? How do you see me?”

Our prayer should become, “Lord give me eyes to see what you see. Give me ears to hear what the Spirit would have me to hear.”

What we see is a matter of perspective. In I Samuel 3:1 we are told that the “Word of the Lord was precious in those days; there was no open vision.” Everyone was doing what they felt was right in their own sight. Eli, the man of God had failed to pass on the faith to his sons. The Bible records a tragic statement concerning them, “They knew not the Lord” (I Samuel 2:12). Into the hands of this spiritually impotent leader was placed the young boy, Samuel. Samuel did not yet know the Lord (3:7) and Eli was a man whose “eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see” (3:2). It took God calling Samuel three times before Eli realized that it was a possibility that God was revealing Himself to the boy. How tragic that Eli could not see.

In contrast, Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he went up into the mountain and God showed him the Promised Land. “His eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated” (Deuteronomy 34:7). Perhaps the difference was revealed in Deuteronomy 34:10, “whom the Lord knew face to face.” Moses had a relationship with God, knew God face to face, and could see what God saw.

In the Old Testament we recall the story of the twelve spies sent to view the Promised Land. What these twelve spies were able to see was a matter of perspective (how they looked at it). They were told to look at the land (Numbers 13:18). They went and came back to Moses.

Perhaps Moses asked them upon their return “Men, what did you see?” Ten of them said, “There we saw giants...and we were in OUR OWN SIGHT as grasshoppers, and so we were

in their sight” (13:33). However, two of them boldly stated, “Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it” (13:30). The other ten argued, “We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we...It is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of great stature” (13:31-32).

Eventually the majority prevailed and even wanted to stone the minority. The difference in the report of the two groups can be found in their perspective. The majority saw their own abilities, and saw the giants. The minority saw above the giants to see that God was bigger. Ten said, “We cannot” and two said, “We can.” Was this not the same with David and Goliath? The Israelites saw how small they were but David saw how big His God was. He proclaimed, “Is there not a cause?” (1 Samuel 17:29).

Elijah reached the place where he cried out to God, “I am all alone.” That was his perspective and what he saw. However, God said, “I’ve still got 7000 that have not bowed their knee to Baal” (1 Kings 19:14, 18).

If we can focus on Jesus Christ, and really understand the attributes of God, we will believe God for great things and we will see things as He would have us to see them.

In 2 Kings 6:14-19, Elisha was in trouble for telling the King of the secret battle plans of the King of Syria. He sent his men to capture Elisha.

Early in the morning Elisha’s servant rose up and saw that the city was compassed about with horses and chariots. Elisha comforted the servant by explaining that those “that be with us are more than they that be with them.” Elisha knew the problem was with the way the servant saw things and prayed that the Lord would open his eyes. “And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.” He then asked the Lord to smite the opponents with blindness.

Zechariah was asked in Zechariah 4:2, “What seest thou?”

It is the will of God to open our eyes (Luke 4:18) and it is the devil’s will to blind us (2 Corinthians 4:3-4).

“But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” (1 Corinthians 2:9).

Where are you going?

“...I have appeared unto thee for this purpose...” (Acts 26:16).

Huxley had just finished a series of attacks against Christians. He was in a hurry to catch a train and as he left the hotel he assumed that the doorman had told the taxi driver his destination. Huxley jumped in the taxi and demanded, “Hurry, I’m almost late, drive fast!” As the taxi rushed through the streets of the city, Huxley finally realized that the driver was not going in the right direction. He shouted, “Do you know where you are going?” Without looking back the taxi driver responded, “No, but I am going very fast.”

Peter, on the Day of Pentecost, admonished the people to save themselves from this untoward generation. (Acts 2:40) It was a generation going somewhere but didn’t know where, and they were going very fast. We can get caught in the same situation today. It has been said, “If you don’t know where you are going, any road will take you there.” It could also be added, “...and you’ll never know when you get there.”

“A nowhere destination always results from a nowhere plan.” (Dale Galloway)

A small child was riding his bicycle round and round in circles. An older man asked, “Where are you going?” The boy responded, “Nowhere” and continued to ride in circles. The man continued to ask, “Where are you going?” Each time the little boy would respond, “Nowhere!”

Do you have any idea where you are going in life? Do you understand your purpose in the journey of life? Basil Pennington claims, “It is your life’s work to learn to think and act in accord with who you are by creation.” (As quoted in *People Power*).

In order for you to understand where you are going, you must first look at where you have been (past) and where you are (presently.) After Adam and Eve had transgressed in the Garden of Eden God asked, “Adam, where art thou?” (Genesis 3:9). The same question could be asked of you, “Where are you?”

- What is your ministry?
- What is your vision?
- What is the will of God for your life?

All of us are most effective when we are in the center of the will of God.

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In 1997 Kofi Annan addressed MIT graduates and told of his own experience as an MIT student. Walking along the Charles River in his first term, he reflected on survival in the midst of over-achievers. The answer came to him, "Follow your own inner compass....Listen to your own drummer. To live is to choose. But to choose well, you must know who you are and what you stand for, where you want to go and why you want to go there." I would also add you need to know how you are going to get there.

Danny Cox and John Hoover in *Seize the Day*, "If your eyes are fixed on what lies ahead of you, then you're at least pointed in the right direction." However, being pointed in the right direction is not enough. We must know where we are going!

Imagine what it would be like to be blind. What are some of the different emotions that you would feel? Now imagine what it would be like if you were blind and you were being led down the street by another blind person. What emotions would you feel? Would you like to get on a bus or in a taxi where the driver was blind? What about if the driver was always becoming distracted and turning around to talk to others instead of focusing on the road ahead?

No one wants to follow a leader that is blind (without a vision) - not a wife; not a family; not students in the classroom; not workers in the workplace; not saints in the church; not members of an organization - NO ONE! Followers will always be afraid of falling in the ditch.

"Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch" (Matthew 15:14).

We already know that vision is a clear picture in our minds of what life will be like down the road. It gives us an understanding of where we are going. Vision sets direction for our lives and serves as a roadmap to us. Once we understand where we are going we must know how to get there from where we are. We then fix our eyes on our destination and start working on a PLAN to get us there. Our destination needs to be kept clearly in sight.

Some spiritual people have a problem with planning. They think that "walking by faith," means that you have no plan. It has been aptly said, "If you fail to plan, you plan to fail." Planning and faith go hand in hand. Effective, biblical faith is defined in Hebrews 11:1; "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

Faith involves having something that you hope for (a goal, plan, or vision). If you look at the Heroes of Faith mentioned in Hebrews 11 you would notice that many of them shared

the quality of having a vision. They were men with a vision. The church was birthed in Acts 2 using men of vision.

Nehemiah was a visionary leader that prayed and planned. He didn't ask God for a miracle – he asked for an opportunity. There are lots of opportunities that will come our way. We need to learn to take advantage of the ones that will enable us to fulfill the vision God has given to us. Each opportunity and open door should be assessed by asking, "How does this help me fulfill my life's calling and vision?" Not all good ideas are God's ideas, so we must be careful. Everything that moves us forward toward accomplishing our vision gets a green light on the road of life. Everything else gets a caution light or even a red light. We will need to continue to align ourselves and refocus on our vision for ministry. This way we conform our lives to the roadmap and plan that God has prepared for us to follow.

How Will You Get There?

Once we understand where we are going it is only natural to ask, "How will we get there?" We must be careful here because we can begin to "how" our vision to death. In fact, others will try to "how" your vision to death by asking many questions. Where did the vision come from? If it is from God (and it should be) then "how" is God's problem. What God has ordained, He will bring to pass.

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end" (Jeremiah 29:11).

For each man of faith in the Bible God provided not only the "what" but also the "how." Moses was asked to deliver God's children from the land of Egypt. He was told what to do and how to do it. Noah was told to build an ark. He was told what to do and how to do it. In both the construction of the Tabernacle and the Temple they were told what to do and how to do it. The disciples were called to take the gospel to the whole world. They were told what to do and how to do it. I'm sure you can think of other Bible men of vision who were told what to do and how to accomplish the vision.

As we look at the history of visionary leaders throughout the Word of God and throughout time we conclude:

- "What" always precedes "how."
- You'll often know "what" to do before you know "how" to do it.

It is important to wait on the Lord, in prayer, until you know the steps (the how's) needed to accomplish the vision.

In Luke 1 a virgin named Mary was given a vision for her life. WHAT was it? She would bring forth the Messiah and call his name Jesus.

Quite naturally the first thing that came into Mary's mind was, "HOW shall this be?" The angel gives a brief explanation and wraps it up with, "For with God nothing shall be impossible."

Perhaps, in your mind you've already made a list of "why" the vision can't be done through you. When you complete this list of vision killers you need to give it a befitting burial.

"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13).

What's in the Blank?

"For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God..." (Acts 13:36).

Cultures around the world have many differences. Languages spoken vary. Ways of life and manner of dress change. However, on the road of life there are three things that we all have in common. Every living person shares these similar elements.

We each have a past, present, and Lord willing, a future.

- PAST: Where have you been?
- PRESENT: Where are you now?
- FUTURE: Where are you going?

Rev. T. D. Jakes, and his book *Maximizing the Moment* were helpful in the preparation of this portion of our booklet. He mentions that John F. Kennedy was born in 1917. He made his mark in life as the 35th President of the United States of America. President Kennedy is well remembered for many things, one being this statement: "Ask not what your country can do for you-ask what can you do for your country."

On November 22, 1963 an assassin killed Kennedy. His simple tombstone reads:

1917 - 1963

There is a lesson that can be learned from this. Everyone has a date of entry (starting) into this world (birth date) and a date of departure (finishing) from this world (death date). All that is between the two is the --.

What are you putting in the blank between the time of your entry into this world and departure?

You see, what we place in the blank determines the type of impact that we will have between the two dates.

Vision – Looking At the Future

All leaders have both an interest in the future and the capacity to deal with it. They know the way, show the way, and go the way. Leaders take the lead when planning for the future. They lead others into the future. Leaders have a passion to make a difference today and impact tomorrow. Each one of us wants to live a life that counts; counts for eternity. They want their achievements to remain after they are gone. “Leaders are paid to be dreamers. In fact the higher you go in leadership, the more your work is about the future.” (Hanz Finzel in *The Top Ten Mistakes Leaders Make*)

Our vision for ministry is the best predictor of our future. Vision is looking at the future. It is always looking ahead instead of merely looking at our past. No matter what has happened in your past, your future is spotless. It is fresh from all sins, failures, and mistakes. Each day God gives us a new chalkboard with nothing written on it. It is totally clean. What are you going to do with the future that God is going to give to you? George Barna stated, “Vision is not dreaming the impossible dream, but dreaming the most possible dream.” You are not asked to dream the impossible but dream the most possible thing you can do with your life and ministry. As we look at our God given vision we focus on God.

Charles Kettering has said, “My interest is in the future because I am going to spend the rest of my life there.”

David was hoping to make an impact in life when he penned these words: “Now also when I am old and grayheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come” (Psalms 71:18).

There is a reason why each of us was born. God has a plan, purpose, or vision for each one of us. Martin Luther King Jr. said, “If a man hasn’t discovered something he is willing to die for, he isn’t fit to live.”

Donna Fisher in *People Power* said, “The life we desire deep in our being is the one were created to have, consistent with the way God made us.”

James Berry said, “The life of every man is a diary in which he means to write one story but instead he writes another. And his saddest hour is when he compares the volume as it is with the one he vowed to write.”

When Saul was knocked down on the Road to Damascus, Jesus told him, "...for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose." (Acts 26:16) He had an understanding of his purpose in life and ministry. Later Paul was able to conclude, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7).

How did Paul get this vision? He asked. After asking, "...Who art thou, Lord?" (Acts 9:5) he then asks, "...What wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6.)

Teachers provide students with a variety of types of test questions; ranging from true/false, essay, short answer, multiple choices, and fill in the blank. The fill in the blank questions can be the most difficult. Why? There is only one answer that fits into the blank. Guessing games are minimized. You either know it or you do not.

Psalms 90:10 mentions that "...our years are threescore years and ten..." Approximately how many years do you have left in your lifetime?

"LORD, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am" (Psalm 39:4).

What is your vision?

"I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision" (Acts 26:19).

God's vision for Paul was revealed to a disciple named Ananias in Acts 9:15, "...for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles..." Paul explained to King Agrippa what Jesus had said to him on the road to Damascus: "But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose...and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God..." (Acts 26:16-18).

When Paul was converted he knew exactly what his purpose and vision in life was. God has a plan for each one of us. Paul knew what God wanted him to do, and he did it with excellence. Because of this he was able to reach the end of his ministry and say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7).

The Apostle Paul received his heavenly vision by asking, "Lord, what do you want me to do?" Throughout his lifetime (as we should also do) he continued to ask this same question.

Peter L. Hirsch in *Living With Passion* quotes a conversation with Napoleon Hill, "...If you want success in any endeavor, there is one and only one quality you will require—

definiteness of purpose; you must have the knowledge of what you want and a burning desire to possess it...Our world has a habit of making way for anyone whose words and actions show that he knows exactly where he is going.”

The heavenly vision always comes from God. Can you state in one sentence what are God’s purpose, plan, and vision for your life? In the small box given, write your God given vision for ministry. Keep this in mind, and remember it on a regular basis and explain it to others.

My Heavenly Vision is:

God spoke to Habakkuk and said, “...Write the vision, and make it plain...” (Habakkuk 2:2). Writing down the vision will help you to remember what God originally said to you. Thank God for His direction, and allow the vision to develop through prayer, fasting, and obedience. Most people go through life as a passenger in the vehicle called life. We need to get into the driver’s seat with our map of God’s vision and drive into the future. Remember, “If you don’t know where you are going, any road will take you there.”

Please Note: This lesson is taken from various lessons on “vision” taken from the various levels of *Acts: God’s Training Manual for Today’s Church* by James Poitras.

Lesson in Review

1. Define “vision.” _____

2. Quote and explain Proverbs 29:18. _____

3. How is vision and faith the same or similar? _____

4. What question did Jesus ask in Mark 8:18? _____

5. Kofi Annan said that to choose well, one needs to know four things. What are they? ____

6. What response did two of the spies bring from the Promised Land? _____

7. What is the difference between what God wants and what the devil wants when it comes to seeing? _____

8. How does the story of Huxley relate to vision? _____

9. What three questions should the minister ask himself (closely related to the question God asked Adam in the Garden)? _____

10. Why is it important to know where you are going in your ministry? _____

11. Lots of opportunities will come the minister's way. Which one(s) should be taken advantage of? _____

12. Explain the statement: "What" always precedes "How." _____

13. What three things does everyone have in common, regardless of their language or culture? _____

14. What lesson can be learned from John F. Kennedy's simple tombstone which reads 1917-1963? _____

15. Why (according to Charles Kettering) should we be interested in the future? _____

16. What question did Saul (Paul) continue to ask once he understood who the Lord was? _____

17. What is your vision? _____

The Minister and the Side Effects of Biblical Vision and Purpose (Part 1)

“But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake” (Acts 9:15-16).

There are several aspects of Saul's Damascus Road encounter we all could excitedly go for:

- Saw a brilliant light from heaven.
- Heard an audible voice.
- Spoke directly to Jesus.
- Received revelation.
- Healed of blindness.

Jesus had a grand purpose for Saul's life. He was “chosen.” He was God's “vessel;” an empty cup ready to accomplish the Master's purpose. God was going to show him “great things.” Sounds like an ideal situation. But show him what? “I will show him how much he must suffer for me” (Acts 9:16, *NLT*). Now, wait a minute! Did you mention “suffering”? Surely, this is an isolated case, meant for Paul, and not for other ministers of the gospel (like me). Certainly, we can go for the vision, and bypass discomfort.

Have you ever taken a strong medication and experienced side effects? They are the undesired, unwanted, consequences of taking medication. These include (among others) a headache, rash, increased heart rate, blurred vision, dry mouth, sleepiness, weight loss, a drop in blood pressure, constipation, and diarrhea. Two people can take the same medicine and have different experiences. However, side effects are usually worth the risk, because health is restored. There are also side effects to having a biblical vision and purpose. Success costs! Not all ministers experience the same side effects but all testify, “Ministry is not an easy road.”

Ministry side effects might include:

- Suffering
- Sacrifice
- Surrender
- Submission
- Stewardship
- Service
- Sensitivity
- Steadfastness

Suffering

At times, we suffer persecution because of our faith; for righteousness' sake. Even fellow "Christians" may persecute us when we take a stand on a biblical issue.

Suffering or trouble can be for our benefit because they strengthen us as Christians. "It takes a world with trouble in it to train men and women for their high calling as children of God. Faced with trouble, some people (like Joseph) grow wings; others buy crutches. Which kind are you?" (*Daily Walk Bible*)

Here's a promise in God's Word you may not normally pray for:

- "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12).

All who live godly will suffer persecution.

- "For you have been given not only the privilege of trusting in Christ but also the privilege of suffering for him. We are in this fight together. You have seen me suffer for him in the past, and you know that I am still in the midst of this great struggle" (Philippians 1:29-30, *NLT*).

Check it out. All God's prophets suffered for their faithfulness to Him. Stephen asked, "Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute?" (Acts 7:52).

God's call, will and vision may require suffering.

- "Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator" (1 Peter 4:19).
- "This suffering is all part of what God has called you to. Christ, who suffered for you, is your example. Follow in his steps" (1 Peter 2:21-22, *NLT*).

You probably have heard enough about suffering, but let us add the following Scriptures:

- "I send greetings to Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in the service of Christ Jesus; they risked their lives for me. I am grateful to them — not only I, but all the Gentile churches as well. Greetings also to the church that meets in their house" (Romans 16:3-5, *TEV*).

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- “[But what of that?] For I consider that the sufferings of this present time (this present life) are not worth being compared with the glory that is about to be revealed to us and in us and for us and conferred on us!” (Romans 8:18, *AMP*).
- “Endure suffering along with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. And as Christ's soldier, do not let yourself become tied up in the affairs of this life, for then you cannot satisfy the one who has enlisted you in his army” (2 Timothy 2:3-4, *NLT*).
- “So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God, who has saved us and called us to a holy life-not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace” (2 Timothy 1:8-9, *NIV*).
- “And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8:17-18).
- “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead” (Philippians 3:10-11).
- “And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ” (Acts 5:41-42).

We do not pray to suffer, nor do we rejoice for suffering, but we can rejoice in being able to suffer for His name's sake.

- “Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me” (John 15:20-21).

Paul knew well suffering so he could realize his vision and purpose. Because of his willingness to suffer the gospel spread throughout the known world. Consider this short list of things he encountered:

- “They say they serve Christ? I know I sound like a madman, but I have served him far more! I have worked harder, been put in jail more often, been whipped times without number, and faced death again and again. Five different times the Jews gave me thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. Once I spent a whole night and a day adrift at sea. I

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have traveled many weary miles. I have faced danger from flooded rivers and from robbers. I have faced danger from my own people, the Jews, as well as from the Gentiles. I have faced danger in the cities, in the deserts, and on the stormy seas. And I have faced danger from men who claim to be Christians but are not. I have lived with weariness and pain and sleepless nights. Often I have been hungry and thirsty and have gone without food. Often I have shivered with cold, without enough clothing to keep me warm. Then, besides all this, I have the daily burden of how the churches are getting along" (2 Corinthians 11:23-29, *NLT*).

Which, if any, of Paul's sufferings can you identify with?

In a prosperity pleading and success conscious world, suffering for His name's sake is far from popular.

So, what should you do with this discussion about suffering? Warren and David Wiersbe in *Ten Power Principles for Christian Service* advise the following:

- Expect it (1 Peter 4:12; John 15:18, 20).
- Accept it as God's gift (Philippians 1:29).
- Evaluate it and yield to God's purposes (Job 23:10).
- Learn to live a day at a time and give your cares to God (Psalms 69:19; 1 Peter 5:7).
- Trust God to turn suffering into eternal glory (2 Corinthians 4:17).

Surrender

- "And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it" (Luke 9:23-24).

We choose to surrender what we perceive as our rights, and place ourselves in the hands of a higher power. We give up, so God can take up, and use us for His glory.

An old Nigerian chorus proclaims, "Jesus surrendered His life for me. What have I done for Him?"

At times, even though we may not express it verbally, we feel that we are "owed" something for ministering the gospel. The church owes us for our sacrifice. The people owe us for our work. We sometimes approach giving of our finances the same way. We give to get, instead of give to bless, or extend God's kingdom. This is faulty thinking. We own nothing. But, we surrender everything to accomplish His vision. We must surrender ourselves to the vision that God has given us, to His will, and ways.

Sacrifice

Sacrifice is not merely for divine favor, but to honor God. We owe everything to God, who paid the ultimate sacrifice for our sins.

Jesus' sacrifice accomplished His vision and purpose on the earth. He came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10); give abundant life (John 10:10); destroy the works of Satan (1 John 3:8); and to build His Church (Matthew 16:18). Sacrifice pays off!

- “The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise” (Psalms 51:17, *RSV*).
- “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Romans 12:1-2).

Daily one must pull himself onto the altar of sacrifice.

- “[Come] and, like living stones, be yourselves built [into] a spiritual house, for a holy (dedicated, consecrated) priesthood, to offer up [those] spiritual sacrifices [that are] acceptable and pleasing to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:5, *AMP*).

Consider the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:20-37). Jim George (*God's Man of Influence*) suggests five areas of sacrificial service.

- Sacrifice of time (he stopped and helped the wounded man).
- Sacrifice of resources (he gave his bandage and dressing for the wounds.)
- Sacrifice of personal transportation (he carried the man to the inn).
- Sacrifice of life (he personally took care of the man).
- Sacrifice of money (he gave money and promised to pay for the wounded man's continued care).

He closes his study on sacrifice by saying, “The greater the level of your service to others, the greater the level of your influence on others.”

“Ministry that costs nothing accomplishes nothing. If the minister's life is without a measure of pain and sacrifice, his ministry will be without blessing.” (Warren and David Wiersbe)

Lesson in Review

1. Comment on the following statement: "Ministry is not an easy road." _____

2. List five side effects or results of ministry. _____

3. According to the *Daily Walk Bible* what are the two responses to troubles that people take? _____

4. What does 1 Peter 2:21-22 say about suffering? _____

5. What did Paul tell Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:3-4? _____

6. Why did the Apostles rejoice in Acts 5:41-42? _____

7. List five types of suffering that Paul endured. _____

8. What response(s) should we give to the discussion of suffering? _____

9. What did Jim George say about the level of service to others? _____

10. How often should one pull himself on to the altar of sacrifice? _____

11. List the five areas of sacrifice provided by the Good Samaritan. _____

12. Write out the closing quote used in this lesson. _____

The Minister and Side Effects of Biblical Vision and Purpose (Part Two)

In order to achieve a biblical vision and purpose you must be willing to submit to God's will, in God's way, and to obey His instructions. Submission and obedience are inseparable.

Submission

Mark portrays Jesus as the "Selfless Servant" who was immediately submissive to the will of God. The word "immediately" is recorded at least seventeen times in sixteen chapters of the Book of Mark.

Think of submission as bringing yourself under the protection of someone in authority. We must submit to our leaders if we expect our followers to submit to us.

At a wedding celebration, Mary told the servants, "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it" (John 2:5). We offer the same advice to you, preacher. Whatever, Jesus tells you to do; do it!

God's Word often refers to submission in connection with:

- God
- Leadership and authority
- Society
- Other believers

"...They have devoted themselves to the service of the saints. I urge you, brothers, to submit to such as these and to everyone who joins in the work, and labors at it" (1 Corinthians 16:15-16, *NIV*).

At times, we need to submit to others and help them accomplish their vision. Many times this also helps us accomplish our vision.

Service

Jesus set the example for all of us and came in the form of a servant (Phil. 2:7) He testified, "I am among you as one who serves" (Luke 22:27, *NIV*). During the final night He had with His disciples He picked up a towel and basin and washed their feet. Why? He explained, "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you" (John 13:15). Jesus is the real leader of the church and its ministries. We are His servants and please Him when we help others in reaching their potential. We are called to "prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up" (Ephesians 4:12, *NIV*).

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Jesus taught James and John, the Sons of Thunder, a vital lesson. They came to Him with a request, "We want you to do for us whatever we ask." This statement demonstrates not only ignorance but a selfish attitude. Leadership is not about being served (receiving) but serving others (giving). They went on to say, "Let one of us sit on your right and the other on your left in glory." The world today would likely applaud James and John but Jesus corrected them. They mistakenly thought that the Lord's kingdom was the same as all the others. Jesus explained His kingdom was not like those of this world that exercise authority over others, but that the greatest is the servant of all. (See Mark 10:35-37; 41-45).

We are servants to our:

- God
- Family
- People
- Vision

The Apostle Paul refers to himself as a servant of Jesus Christ. Additionally, he writes: "I became a servant of this gospel" (Ephesians 3:7, *NIV*). We have the privilege of proclaiming a life-transforming message.

"By God's special favor and mighty power, I have been given the wonderful privilege of serving him by spreading this Good News. Just think! Though I did nothing to deserve it, and though I am the least deserving Christian there is, I was chosen for this special joy of telling the Gentiles about the endless treasures available to them in Christ. I was chosen to explain to everyone this plan that God, the Creator of all things, had kept secret from the beginning" (Ephesians 3:6-9, *NLT*).

Jim George in *God's Man of Influence* offers nine insights on establishing a servant ministry. They include:

1. Serve for a higher purpose (1 Thessalonians 2:1).
2. Serve in spite of your situation (1 Thessalonians 2:2).
3. Serve with integrity (1 Thessalonians 2:3).
4. Serve to please God (1 Thessalonians 2:4).
5. Serve with pure motives (1 Thessalonians 2: 5-6).
6. Serve with love (1 Thessalonians 2:7-8).
7. Serve sacrificially (1 Thessalonians 2:9).
8. Serve blamelessly (1 Thessalonians 2:10).
9. Serve to nurture (1 Thessalonians 2:11-12).

Understanding that we are servants is simple. To actually serve; that is a problem. It does not fit into the world's view of leadership nor does it please the desires of the flesh. We must constantly strive to be the servant that God wants us to be.

Stewardship

David J. Hesselgrove in *Planting Churches Cross-Culturally* states that stewardship involves what a Christian possesses:

- His time
- His talents
- His treasures

Add to these:

- His tongue
- His testimony
- His temple

He notes seven basic principles (attributed to Ralph Martin, the author of *Worship in the Early Church*.)

1. The basis of stewardship is God has given abundantly to His children.
2. The most important offering is committing one's life to God.
3. All Christian giving should be voluntary and cheerful.
4. Stewardship is offered in accordance to one's ability and the needs of others.
5. God is no man's debtor.
6. Churches and people should be open in providing accountability in the area of finances.
7. Concern for the welfare of others creates a bond of love between the giver and the recipient.

"It is more blessed to give than to receive" could be talking about more than giving of money (Acts 20:35). We also give our time and talents.

An African proverb states, "The hand that gives is always higher than the hand that receives."

Anthony Tamel in an article "Removing the Curse of Poverty" (as quoted in *Wisconsin District News*) states, "When we talk about the prosperity doctrine, we can go to the extreme and believe that God wants you to have plenty for any purpose you desire. The truth of the matter is that God wants us to have things in abundance to be used for His glory."

Tamel defines poverty as holding something in your hand for fear of letting it go. It is living in fear of not receiving. He says, "If you don't open your hand then you can never receive. You see, it is when I open my hand to let go of what is in it, that it is open for God to put something back."

God will not bless us financially if we are careless with finances, withhold it from accomplishing our vision, or hoard it.

Giving generously can break the spirit of poverty. It is through giving that we are able to prove God.

The only time we are told to prove God and to test Him is in the financial area (Malachi 3:10). What better way than to invest finances in a vision that outlasts a lifetime?

- "For the bishop (an overseer) as God's steward must be blameless...he must not be grasping and greedy for filthy lucre (financial gain)" (Titus 1:7, *AMP*).
- "SO THEN, let us [apostles] be looked upon as ministering servants of Christ and stewards (trustees) of the mysteries (the secret purposes) of God. Moreover, it is [essentially] required of stewards that a man should be found faithful [proving himself worthy of trust]" (1 Corinthians 4:1-2, *AMP*).

We can also use spiritual gifts as good stewards of God's grace.

- "As each of you has received a gift (a particular spiritual talent, a gracious divine endowment), employ it for one another as [befits] good trustees of God's many-sided grace [faithful stewards of the extremely diverse powers and gifts granted to Christians by unmerited favor]" (1 Peter 4:10, *AMP*).

Ask yourself these questions taken from the *Daily Walk Study Bible*:

- Are you faithful in little things? Little responsibilities? Little promises? Small amounts of time, or talents? (Luke 16:10)
- Are you faithful with money (Luke 16:11)?
- Are you faithful with the associations of others (Luke 16:12)? Are you as careful of the properties and reputation of others as you are with your own?

Accomplishing a vision will require faithful stewardship of time, talents, and treasures. These are the prices on the road to success. Like the DaVinci Awards ad says, "Honoring those who have a will and have found a way." There is a divine will to be accomplished in the right way, and that requires stewardship.

Sensitivity

God is leading us and expects us to be sensitive to His directives. In order for this to happen we must:

- Know God
- Know His Voice
- Know how to respond
- Know the needs of others

“For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2).

Steadfastness

Consider Daniel when he heard the decree that for thirty days no one could pray to any god or man except the king. What did he do?

- “Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house, and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he got down upon his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously” (Daniel 6:10, *AMP*).

Notice carefully these five words, “as he had done previously.”

Robert K. Hudnut in *Call Waiting* says, “Daniel makes the pages of history because he finds himself on his knees three times a day in good times and bad.”

- “Then the king commanded, and Daniel was brought and cast into the den of lions. The king said to Daniel, May your God, Whom you are serving continually, deliver you! [Psalms 34:7,19; 37:39,40; 50:15.]” (Daniel 6:16, *AMP*).

The king knew Daniel’s steadfastness, and identified his lifestyle these words, “whom you are serving continually.”

Daniel had formed a habit in his life. He adhered firmly and faithfully to what he believed. Once God has given us a vision, we must be firm, resolute, and unchanging. Our eyes are fixed on accomplishing that vision.

The early preachers “continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42). As a result, they turned the world upside down with their doctrine (Acts 17:6).

- “For if we are faithful to the end, trusting God just as firmly as when we first believed, we will share in all that belongs to Christ” (Hebrews 3:14, *NLT*).
- “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58).

The model of each of these side-effects of biblical vision and purpose is our Savior, Jesus Christ. His willingness to submit, surrender, suffer, sacrifice, and serve were according to the Father’s design.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

Jesus was steadfast in fulfilling the reason He was born. He was an exceptional steward and always sensitive to the reason for existence. His motivation was: “Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:12-14, *NIV*). Can we settle for any lesser guiding motivation in life?

Steadfastness requires discipline. It is astonishing how much of the Christian life boils down to discipline.

- “Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it” (Hebrews 12:7-11, *NIV*).

Theodore Roosevelt explained, “The one quality which sets one man apart from another—the key which lifts one to every aspiration while others are caught up in the mire of mediocrity is not talent, education, or educational brightness. It is self-discipline. With self-discipline, all things are possible. Without it, even the simplest goal can seem like the impossible dream.”

Jim Collins in *Good to Great* studies qualities that cause companies and leaders to excel to greatness. He found that one outstanding characteristic is a commitment to discipline.

Discipline involves things we need to do, and is also required to stay away from things we don't need to do.

We must discipline ourselves to:

- Pray.
- Fast.
- Study God's Word.
- Witness.
- Live a holy and righteous life.
- Overcome sin.
- Memorize Bible verses.
- Prioritize.
- Manage our time.
- Exercise properly.
- Walk in the Spirit.
- Read the Bible.

Someone has said there are two types of pain in life:

- The pain of discipline.
- The pain of regret.

There is no gain without pain. The choice is yours. Do you want to achieve your biblical vision? Get ready for the pain of discipline.

Paul Batura in *Gadzooks* says discipline in life is like oil in an engine. It keeps the motor running. It keeps the train on the tracks. It keeps a motorboat moving.

Perhaps, this closing quotation will provide a fitting conclusion. Bobby Knight (as quoted in *The Magic of Team Work*) gave this definition of "self-discipline":

- Doing what needs to be done.
- Doing it when it needs to be done.
- Doing it the best it can be done.
- Doing it that way every time you do it.

Lesson in Review

1. How does Mark's Gospel portray Jesus? _____

2. What is submission? _____

3. What are four areas that God's Word usually connects with submission? _____

4. What is the minister's purpose according to Ephesians 4:12? _____

5. Name four areas where we provide service. _____

6. According to Hesselgrove, stewardship involves three areas. What are they? _____

7. List five of the nine insights on establishing a servant ministry. _____

8. What other types of stewardship does this lesson mention? _____

9. List three of the seven basic principles of stewardship. _____

10. Quote and explain the African proverb given in this lesson. _____

11. What is poverty? _____

12. What does Anthony Tamel suggest we should do in response to poverty? _____

13. What can break the spirit of poverty? _____

14. What four things must we know to be sensitive to others? _____

15. Why does Daniel make the pages of history? _____

16. What words did the King use to identify Daniel's steadfastness? _____

17. What habit did Daniel form in his life? _____

18. Quote Acts 2:42. _____

19. Who is the role model for each of the side effects of ministry? _____

20. According to Theodore Roosevelt, what is the one quality that sets one man apart from another? _____

21. What is the one outstanding quality or characteristic that causes companies and leaders to excel to greatness? _____

22. List five areas where one might discipline himself. _____

23. Provide Bobby Knight's definition of discipline. _____

24. What are the two types of pain mentioned at the close of this lesson? _____

25. Compare discipline to the oil in an engine. _____

The Minister Moving from Good to Great

“For he was a good man (good in himself and also at once for the good and advantage of other people” (Acts 11:24, AMP).

Jim Collins wrote a pivotal book called *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap...and Others Don't*. I loved one of the quotes found on Collins' website: “Greatness is not a function of circumstance. Greatness is largely a matter of conscious choice and discipline.” (It is easy to make the choice. It is harder to take the continuous grueling step to discipline...daily. I would say that is a substantial “leap.”)

Collins wondered if a good company could become a great company. He and his twenty-one man team looked through more than 1,000 companies. Eleven companies were chosen for careful study. Over two thousand pages of interview notes were generated. They studied the heart, mind, and soul of truly great companies. These companies had managed to figure out how to move from good to great.

Chip Ingram came along and wrote *Good to Great in God's Eyes: 10 Practices Great Christians Have in Common*. I read this simple book and it has become one of my all-time favorites and remains on my bookshelf. It shows how Christians honor God with their lives, great faith, and excellent work. Amazon.com gave the following write-up concerning the book: “Believers become great in God's eyes by applying the 10 common characteristics of great Christians: • think great thoughts • read great books • pursue great people • dream great dreams • pray great prayers • take great risks • make great sacrifices • enjoy great moments • empower great people • develop great habits. Using Scripture, personal stories, and examples from Christians who left a lasting legacy, bestselling author Chip Ingram offers practical steps for becoming great in all areas of life, in spiritual growth, family, relationships, and career.”

In this series of ministerial development lessons it is this author's prayer and desire that we all move from good to great in the ministry. Hopefully, these lessons will assist in showing the way and match our theme “Pursuing Ministerial Excellence!”

Our key Scripture above marks Barnabas as a good man. But, it doesn't stop there. He was good in himself. He also worked for the good and advantage of others. I guess you could say he was double-good or doubly-good. He knew the secret of moving from good to great in ministry.

1. Barnabas knew his place in ministry. He knew his gifting would make room for him.

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He didn't boast of being an apostle, prophet, or evangelist. He knew his part in the apostolic ministry and worked in it and didn't bypass its perimeters. It wasn't until Acts 13:1 before Scripture identified him among a list of "certain prophets and teachers." Even then, it doesn't specify Barnabas as one or the other. Care to venture a guess of whether he was a prophet or teacher? The important thing is that he knew his ministry. Others also identified his gifting.

Eastwood Anaba said, "A person's love depends on his ability to know who he is. The church is plagued with identity crisis. Many people don't know who they really are. This handicap makes them vulnerable to offences and the wrongs others do to them....Jesus was not afraid to stoop low enough to serve because He knew who He was."

I have noticed something interesting when it comes to various ministries and gifts. This is not meant to become a doctrine; just an observation. There is a parallel, link or correlation between the ministries and gifts. This refers to the ministry gifts (Ephesians 4:11-12); the motivational gifts (Romans 12:6-8); and the nine gifts of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:8-10).

A few examples are given below:

Ministry	Motivational Gifts	Gifts of the Spirit
Evangelist	"He who exhorts (encourages), to his exhortation" (Romans 12:8).	<p><i>Doing Gifts</i></p> <p>These are also called the Power or Evangelism Gifts. They draw attention to God's power and this attracts, persuades, and evangelizes sinners. It strengthens the evangelism thrust of the church.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faith • Gifts of Healing • Working of Miracles
Pastor/Teacher	"He who teaches, to his teaching..." (Romans 12:8).	<p><i>Thinking Gifts</i></p> <p>These Gifts cause us to know and are designed to help us with overseeing and</p>

		<p>preserving the Church.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word of Wisdom • Word of Knowledge • Discerning of Spirits
Prophet	<p>“Having gifts (faculties, talents, qualities) that differ according to the grace given us, let us use them: (He whose gift is) prophecy, (let him prophesy) according to the proportion of his faith)” (Romans 12:6)</p>	<p>Speaking Gifts</p> <p>They enable the believer when directed by the Spirit to speak like God speaks or speak as God would speak.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prophecy • Divers Kinds of Tongues • Interpretation of Tongues

I am not suggesting that one is restricted to a certain set of the gifts of the Spirit, but it does seem one is more prone to be used in gifts that correspond directly with one’s ministry. Of course, the best gift is the one that is used at the particular time. Then again, the best ministry is the one needed at that particular time in the spiritual formation and development of believers. That is one of the reasons for all ministries, all motivational gifts, and all gifts of the Spirit to be operating in the apostolic church. At any rate, it is important to know the role one plays in the Body of Christ.

2. Barnabas knew that the basis of ministry was always about ministering to and serving others. He was always putting others ahead of himself and understood how to build up the body of Christ. He didn’t care who got the credit or received the honor for the things that were accomplished. All glory should go to God!

“Ministry” is a Greek word *diakoneo* meaning “to serve” or to “serve as a slave.” Effective ministers operate within their calling serve God, His Gospel, and others. Ministry stems from a devotion and love for God (the first greatest commandment) and a love for others (the second greatest commandment). Desiring to make a difference in this world, and in the lives of others, they give everything of themselves expecting little in return. Love is foundational in ministry. Eastwood Anaba in the *Pastor & His Love* stated, “A loveless life is a burdensome life. A pastor’s life and ministry without love is a difficult one. The ministry is becoming increasingly difficult for many ministers because of the lack of love in their hearts....The potential of believers can be maximized when pastors walk in love. We cannot seek the well-being of people we don’t love.”

Warren W. Wiersbe and David W. Wiersbe in their book *10 Power Principles for Christian Service: Ministry Dynamics for a New Century* give ten pivotal, foundational principles or guidelines for ministry.

- The Foundation of ministry is **Character**
- The Nature of ministry is **Service**
- The Motive of ministry is **Love**
- The Measure of ministry is **Sacrifice**
- The Authority of ministry is **Submission**
- The Purpose of ministry is the **Glory of God**
- The Tools for ministry are the **Word of God and Prayer**
- The Privilege of ministry is **Growth**
- The Power of ministry is the **Holy Spirit**
- The Model for ministry is **Jesus Christ**

In another great book, *On Being a Servant of God*, Warren Wiersbe describes and defines “ministry.” “Ministry takes place when divine resources meet human needs through loving channels to the glory of God.”

“The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet” (Frederick Buechner).

“Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord, and not for men. Knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord, Christ” (Colossians 3:23-24).

3. Barnabas knew how to transition properly and effectively.

He starts out being mentioned for his good works in Acts 4:36. It all begins with Barnabas. It moves to Barnabas and Saul, and then to Paul and Barnabas. His name stops short in Acts 15:39 seldom, if ever, to be mentioned again. Too many backslide or leave the organization when they step away from the spotlight of leadership. A real test of a person’s leadership is how he handles things when he voluntarily or forcibly leaves office.

Dale R. Hoge and Jacqueline E. Wenger in their book *Pastors in Transition* studied various reasons why pastors leave the local church. This is worthy of note.

- Pastors who preferred another kind of ministry.
- Pastors who needed to care for children and family.
- Pastors who had a conflict with the local church congregation.
- Pastors who had conflict with the organizational leaders.

- Pastors who were discouraged.
- Pastors who left due to sexual misconduct.
- Pastors who left due to divorce or marital issues.

Each of the above points are worthy of note and consideration. However, none of them adequately deal with transitioning out of an elected or appointed position in an organization. Unfortunately, some who are elected or appointed hold tightly to the identity derived from position(s) rather than ministry. They adopt the attitude that the post is a chieftaincy title (once given, never taken back) or assume that their election is a lifetime commission. Transition, to some extent, is healthy. One must always keep in mind that God is really in charge. It isn't a matter of promoting or demoting, but rather continuing to place a person where he is most needed at that particular point of his life and ministry. The needs of the organization must also be considered.

W. T. Witherspoon, just a few hours before died, said: "It is not the messenger that is important, it is the message that he carries. The messenger must perish, but the message will go on."

Barnabas knew that it is not necessary to be elected or appointed into an office in order to significantly impact an organization. Position is not necessarily required to fulfill one's vision. However, the organization may need you to help accomplish their organizational vision. Barnabas was not position-minded.

4. Barnabas was willing to risk all, give all, surrender all and sacrifice all to advance the kingdom.

There are "givers" and "takers" in life. Barnabas was determined to be more of a giver than a taker.

"Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need. And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, the son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet" (Acts 4:34-37).

"And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23).

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“I die daily” (1 Corinthians 15:31). We are called upon to present ourselves as living sacrifices. Give up your life as you continue living it; “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Romans 12:1-2). Daily we pull ourselves onto the altar of sacrifice. I admit, sometimes I do slip or fall off. However, I don’t stay on the ground for long. I pull myself, yes, sometimes drag myself, back onto the altar.

Billy Cole preached a message called “The Reward of Sacrifice” and it has made it into his book *Teachings by Billy Cole*. His text was 1 Samuel 6: 7 – 14. Two cows were tied to a cart, to carry the Ark of the Covenant. Their calves were kept at home. The two cows lowed as they went on their way. That was their initial sacrifice. Reaching their destination, the cart was destroyed, and the cows paid the ultimate sacrifice—their lives as a burnt offering. I remember Brother Cole saying, “The reward for sacrifice is another, bigger sacrifice!”

How much is biblically expected when it comes to contributing to the kingdom of heaven; making a kingdom investment? The answer contains three simple letters: ALL.” “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he...selleth **all** that he hath, and buyeth that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold **all** that he had, and bought it” (Matthew 13:44-46).”

Barnabas knew how to pay the cost! He knew how to move from good to great in ministry and in advancing God’s kingdom.

Lesson in Review

1. What did Jim Collins say about “greatness” in this lesson? _____

2. List and briefly explain any three characteristics of great Christians. _____

3. According to Eastwood Anaba what happens when people (in the church body) recognize their true ministerial identity? _____

4. What does the word “ministry” mean? _____

5. What does “ministry” stem from? _____

6. According to Anaba, why is love so important in ministry? _____

7. Explain any three of the fundamental principles found in *10 Power Principles for Christian Service*. _____

8. How does Warren Wiersbe define “ministry” in this lesson? _____

9. Provide three reasons why pastors leave the ministry. _____

10. According to this lesson, what is a real test of a person’s leadership tenure in an office? _____

11. List three points that should be remembered or practiced by outgoing leaders. _____

12. What was the reward for sacrifice found in 1 Samuel 6:7-14? _____

13. How much is biblically expected when it comes to contributing to the kingdom of heaven? _____

The Minister and Time Management

“What is the main thing?” That question serves as a good place to start this lesson. Your “main thing” is your area of specialization; your unique God-given ability. Jesus described it this way, “For this is what I came for” (Mark 1:38).

H. Dale Burke in “How to Overcome Overload” says that our “main thing” includes three characteristics.

1. My main thing is “mission critical.” It is essential to the growth of the ministry. Done well it moves the organization forward.
2. My main thing is “top priority.”
3. My main thing grows out of my unique abilities.

Organizing the Work Week

H. Dale Burke in *Less is More Leadership* groups activities into four major categories, and sets time aside for each in order to keep his work balanced. This requires planning your week in large blocks of time, either full or half days. Focus on one objective at a time.



Rest time

Focus on your health, spirituality, and marriage.

“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates” (Exodus 20:8-10, *NIV*).

“Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly” (The Message).

“Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest” (Mark 6:31, *NIV*).

Mary Southerland in “How to deal with stress” tells the story of a tourist taking a safari in the jungles of Africa. He hired locals to carry his supplies and to serve as guides. On the first day they walked rapidly and went far. The tourist was thrilled with the progress, rose the second day, eager to get on the journey again. The locals refused to budge. They insisted that they needed to sit and rest. They explained to the tourist that they had gone too fast the first day. Now they were waiting for their souls to catch up. She concludes, “The more responsibility we carry and the busier we are, the more we need regular solitude!” A Greek proverb says, “You will break the bow if you keep it always bent.”

God is willing to help us if we will obey His Word, rest, and spend time in His presence.

Renews

“But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint” (Isaiah 40:31).

Restores

“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake” (Psalms 23:1-3).

Refreshes

“The times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:19).

Cecil Murphey in *Live Ten Years Longer* encourages pastors to do three things.

1. Find a regular exercise you will enjoy.
2. Change the way you eat and drink. He doesn't recommend a diet (which implies taking things away) but suggests a balanced diet. He also urges pastors to drink more water. During the night bodies lose the equivalent of two glasses of water in moisture.
3. Get more rest. Getting plenty of sleep is essential to the body. The body repairs the wear and tear of the day through sleeping. When you don't take time to sleep your immune system suffers. He also encourages pastors to rest their mind by laying aside the stress you carry within.

“Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body” (1 Corinthians 6:18-20, *NIV*).



Results Time

Focus on the “main things” that advance the mission. Time needs to be spent focusing on the unique role God has for you personally. Use the portion of the day or week when you do your best work. Structure your schedule around the “main things.” Tackle priorities one at a time and in order of their importance. It may help to break a project down into chunks and approach the work one chunk at a time.

Burke finds that when he tries to fit more than one of these needs into a block of time he experiences frustration and defeat rather than fulfillment.



Response Time

Focus on things that result from your result time or main thing. These are things not critical to the mission but still important. This is usually focused on others, processing things that flow out of your main thing, including administration and follow-up.



Refocus Time

Focusing on how you adjust what and how you undertake projects. This is when we work on the mission, reflect, assess, adjust, and innovate for the future. Retreat to refocus. Refocus weekly, monthly, and yearly. An ancient Chinese proverb says, “Muddy water let stand will clear.”

Rick Warren in “Seven secrets of stress management” says that “Preparation prevents pressure but procrastination produces it. You work by either priorities or pressures.” The

old cliché “don’t put off until tomorrow what can be done today” goes a long way to prevent overload.

When involved in emotionally draining activities take time to prepare, and then to recover. Richard A. Swenson in *Margin* said, “Calendar congestion and time urgency have robbed us of the pleasure of anticipation. Without warning, the activity is upon us. We rush to meet it; then we rush to the next; and the next.” He advises that when the activity is over take time to reflect, evaluate, and remember.

Reading the Gauges

Bill Hybels in a *Leadership Journal* article entitled “Reading Your Gauges” talks of three gauges that we need to routinely check in our lives.



Spiritual Gauge—How am I doing spiritually? The spiritual disciplines of prayer, fasting, Bible reading, meditation, sacrifice and others pump high-octane fuel into our lives providing strength for ministry.



Physical Gauge—How am I doing physically? Exercise, proper diet, and rest are important.



Emotional Gauge—How am I doing emotionally? Certain activities drain our emotional petrol tank. Bill Hybels calls these “Intensive Ministry Activities” which include confrontations, counseling sessions, exhausting ministry sessions, board meetings (to name a few). Refilling your emotional tank takes time.

To maintain emotional resources use your spiritual gifts or unique abilities. Many times you will feel more energized after using them. Serving outside your gift areas tend to drain you. Remember Jesus at the well talking to the Samaritan women? When His disciples returned bringing food, Jesus said, “My food...is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work” (John 4:34, *NIV*)

Doing what He was called to do was fulfilling, and energizing, rather than draining. You will receive strength from doing your main thing, and the church will be thrust forward.

Peter Brain in *Going the Distance: How to Stay Fit for a Lifetime of Ministry* explains Christmas Evans, a British evangelist, once made the comment, “I’d rather burn out than rust out in the service of the Lord.” Many pastors operate on a similar principle. James Berkeley gives this alternative: “I admire the bravado. It sounds dedicated, bold, and stirring. However, when I view the burn-outs and the almost burn-outs who lie by the

ecclesiastical road, the glory fails to reach me. I see pain and waste and unfinished service. Is there not a third alternative to either burning out or rusting out? In Acts 20:24, Paul stated, "I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me." Herein lies the model I choose to follow. I want neither to burn out or rust out. I want to finish out the race."

Lesson in Review

1. What are three characteristics of "our main thing"? _____

2. We should group activities into four categories. What are they? Briefly explain each.

3. What are three things Cecil Murphy encourages pastors to do? _____

4. How can one best focus on the main things that advance the mission? _____

5. Identify and briefly explain the three gauges mentioned by Bill Hybels. _____

6. Explain how doing the main thing provides strength. _____

The Minister and Overcoming Temptation

“For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry” (Acts 1:17).

Why should a teacher be concerned with overcoming temptation? Another lesson in this series told of a faculty education program where participants identified a teacher as a man of truth, a man of influence, and a man of example. When a teacher fails to set an example, it hinders his influence on others, and can eventually disqualify him from teaching the truth.

This lesson knows no boundaries, breaks all barriers, and poses no difficulties in application. It pertains to everyone. It is valid for the teacher in the classroom and the pastor in the pulpit. It relates to the student behind the desk and the member on the pew. It is suitable for the senior leader in the organization and the janitor sweeping the floors of the church. It is for people everywhere, in every walk of life, regardless of gender or age.

You never outgrow the need for what you are about to read, study and put into practice. Temptation is man’s oldest problem. It is inevitable! It comes in many varieties, each one tailor made and designed by Satan to bring you down, destroy you, and ruin your ministry. It will play havoc on your relationships with God, spouse, family and others. It is not a question of whether temptation will come, but rather what shall be your response when it does come. There is only one answer for temptation. Run! Overcome it before it overcomes you. Temptation is a persistent companion; but one that cannot be entertained.

This lesson focuses specifically on those in the ministry and is fundamental in passing on this knowledge to members. There are three major areas of temptation common to ministers. They are:

Area of Temptation	Another Version
Money	Gold
Sex	Girls
Power	Glory

Surprised by the Battle

Don Whitney in his commencement address entitled “The Almost Inevitable Ruin of Every Minister” explained everyone knows someone who used to be in the ministry and someone who shouldn’t be in the ministry. Everyone also knows another minister—perhaps several—he doesn’t want to be like. Whitney cited a statistic from James T. Draper, Jr. that said for every twenty men who enter the ministry by the time those men reach retirement

age, only one will still be in the ministry. Take a moment and consider those who graduated from Bible school with you, or those that entered ministry at the same time you did. How many of them are no longer in the ministry; and for what reasons?

Whitney told a testimony of a Bible school principal in South Africa who confessed that his fall from ministry resulted from becoming so busy in the Lord's work he simply neglected to read His Bible and pray. The long-term effect of this neglect led to adultery.

"How are the mighty fallen" (1 Samuel 1:19, 25, 27).

Warren Wiersbe in *The Bumps are What You Climb On* advised, "The most dangerous time—the time that requires the most vigilance—is when we have won the victory. For some reason, after the victory, we let down our guard, we get overconfident, and this gives the enemy a chance to get in and defeat us." This happened to Elijah after the Mount Carmel triumph.

"If you think you are standing strong, be careful not to fall. The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure" (1 Corinthians 10:12-13, *NLT*).

Some imagine sexual temptation is something one would grow out of. Sorry, that doesn't happen. Others hope that marriage will handle the problem. Wrong again. David was about fifty years of age, and had been king for about twenty years, when he fell into adultery. The question is not, "Will I be tempted?" but rather, "What will I do when tempted?"

Mr. A. D. Hart is quoted as saying the following in a book entitled *Sins of the Body: Ministry in a Sexual Society* by Terry Muck: "A minister's vulnerability has nothing to do with his marital happiness. For many centuries, Scripture has warned us to be on guard when we feel most safe! Sexual attraction can occur as easily when one is happily married as when one is not. You may more deliberately seek out an affair when you are not happy, but you are not necessarily safe when all is bliss at home." Steve Arterburn said, "Sexual sins are the termites in the walls and foundations of today's marriage."

Locating the Battle Grounds

Many things come our way that are hazardous. We need to be aware of these dangers so we will avoid them (Romans 13:14). Satan has tactics and we do not need to be ignorant of his devices (2 Corinthians 2:11), nor give him a foothold in our lives or ministries (Ephesians 4:26-28). Satan attacks in the areas of our greatest weakness. What happens when we do not overcome? We lose control, and become a servant to our opponent. We cannot function

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in our ministry properly and become ineffective in the kingdom of God. As a teacher it is tragic to gain the world, but lose one’s own soul. Judas was instructed to teach and preach. He had his assigned place and shared in the ministry. What happened? He failed to overcome enticement. He could have learned, but didn’t. The bitter consequence was he lost his position.

“I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified” (1 Corinthians 9:27, *NLT*).

Our senses serve us well, if used for our advantage rather than disadvantage. Temptation comes through:

Eyes	What I see.
Ears	What I hear.
Mouth	What I taste.
Hand	What I touch.
Nose	What I smell.

Senses are servants. However, if we do not control them, they end up controlling us. “We capture every thought and make it give up and obey Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5, *NCV*). Arrest and imprison every sense. With God’s help, pull down every stronghold.

Biblically, temptation normally falls into one of three areas:

1. Lust of the flesh
2. Lust of the eyes
3. Pride of Life

“For all that is in the world--the lust of the flesh [craving for sensual gratification] and the lust of the eyes [greedy longings of the mind] and the pride of life [assurance in one's own resources or in the stability of earthly things]--these do not come from the Father but are from the world [itself]” (1 John 2:16, *AMP*).

Check it out. See that it is true. Look at Adam and Eve in the Garden (Genesis 3), or the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness (Luke 4). As you read these biblical accounts, quickly identify these three components. And it is no different with temptation today. Jesus overcame temptation and empowers others to do the same.

Understanding the Battle Plan

Rick Warren in his classic book *Purpose Driven Life* believes temptation is an opportunity to do right. He outlines four steps of how temptation works. In his lesson “How to Win Over

Temptation” he explains the difference between trials and temptations. Both are types of testing. Trials “are situations designed by God in order to help us grow.” Temptations “are designed by the devil in order to cause us to sin.”

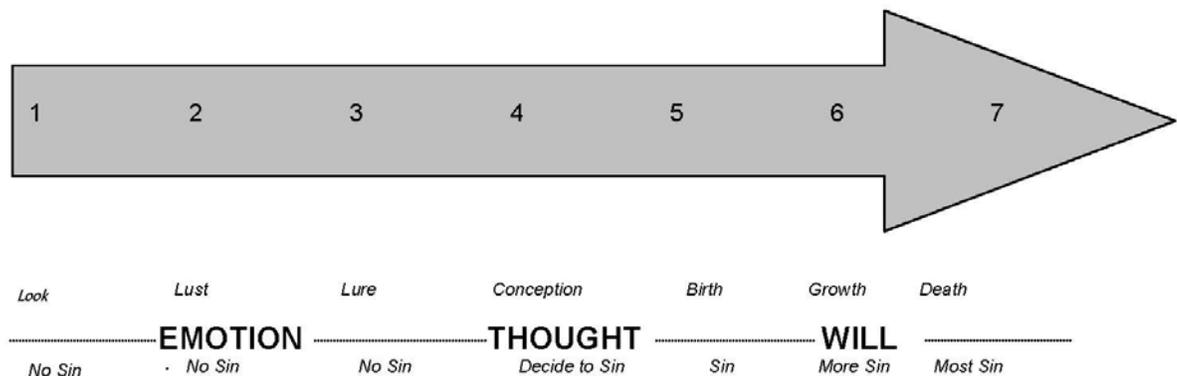
Step One	Desire	Temptation begins in the mind. Satan identifies a desire within you and takes advantage of it.
Step Two	Doubt	Satan endeavors to get you to doubt what God has said about the sin. You ask, “Is it really wrong?”
Step Three	Deception	Satan doesn’t tell the truth. He is the father of lies (John 8:44). Sin is sin. A little sin is like a little pregnant. It will eventually show itself. Sin is like a detective. It will find you out.
Step Four	Disobedience	You act on thoughts you’ve played in your mind. What began as an idea is birthed as a behavior.

James 1 could effectively be called the “Temptation Chapter.” Chip Ingram in his lesson “Understanding and Overcoming Temptation” reveals the seven stages of every temptation adapted from *Personal Holiness in Times of Temptation* by Bruce H. Wilkinson. These have been modified in the table that follows and is based on James 1:14-15.

Stage Number	The Scripture	The Stage		Action Step
1	“When he is drawn away	The Look	No Sin	
2	By his own desires	The Lust	No Sin	Recognize that every temptation can only tempt because of my personal desire.
3	And enticed. Then	The Lure	No Sin	Quench improper desire by stopping all enticements.
4	When desire has conceived	The Conception	Decide to Sin	Decide ahead of time not to sin.
5	It gives birth to sin;	The Birth	Sin	If you are en route to sin, stop, and submit to the conviction of the Holy Spirit. Abort

				sin before it is too late.
6	And sin, when it is full-grown	The Growth	More Sin	We willfully sin.
7	Brings forth death.”	The Death	Most Sin	Cry out to Jesus to set you free from bondage.

The following diagram (by Chip Ingram) shows the process explained above, and as it involves one's emotion, thought, and will.



Winning the Battle

Rick Warren provides four keys to defeating temptation.

1. Refocus your attention on something else. If you try to resist temptation it only increases. Trying to block the thoughts only drive them deeper. Don't fight the thought. Turn your attention to something else. Keep your mind occupied with God's Word. Quote Scriptures. Pray. Sing praises to God.
2. Reveal your struggle to a godly friend. Everyone needs someone to honestly share your struggles with. We all fight temptations. We are all human.
3. Resist the devil (James 4:7). Put on your spiritual armor (Ephesians 6). Develop a warrior's mindset.
4. Realize your vulnerability. Don't place yourself in tempting situations. Recognize your pattern of temptation. Be prepared for it. There are certain circumstances that make you more vulnerable to temptation. Identify them. Stay away from these trap doors. Why go there? Ask, "Where am I most tempted?" "What do I feel?" Ask, "Who is with me when I'm most tempted?" Temptation increases when one is bored and/or lonely. Work out ways to deal with the circumstances.

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“No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it” (1 Corinthians 10:13).

According to Peter Brain in his excellent book *Going the Distance* the Apostle Paul outlines eight reasons for sexual purity. Surely these can be applied to other areas of purity as well. These are outlined in the table below.

Reason	Reference
Jesus commanded it.	1 Thessalonians 4:2
It is God’s will.	1 Thessalonians 4:3
Self-control.	1 Thessalonians 4:4
It shows a witness to those who do not know the Lord.	1 Thessalonians 4:5
For the sake of others so that we will not wrong them.	1 Thessalonians 4:6
To escape the judgment of God.	1 Thessalonians 4:6
God calls us to holiness.	1 Thessalonians 4:7
The Holy Spirit lives within believers.	1 Thessalonians 4:8

He further explains that sexual integrity is one of the many ways Christian leaders (and this certainly applies to Bible school faculty) “direct, teach and demonstrate real discipleship. Being an example (1 Peter 5:3) and a model (Philippians 4:9) go with the job.”

Scripture abounds with men and women who led overcoming lives. Yes, there were occasional casualties and failures but let’s focus on the overcomers. Joseph was tempted by his boss’ wife. She chased him. He ran. His relationship with God was more important to him than satisfying physical and sexual urges. Joseph nurtured that relationship and kept it alive. He could have taken advantage of the moment. He could have assumed or rationalized it was one of the privileges or benefits of position. The mind has a strange way of justifying wrong things as right. He said, “No one here has more authority than I do. He has held back nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How could I do such a wicked thing? It would be a great sin against God” (Genesis 39:9).

Daniel was another Old Testament patriarch and example of a steadfast conqueror. “Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself” (Daniel 1:8). Daniel made it his daily objective or target to guard his relationship with God. That is a great idea. “Lord, I purpose in my heart not to defile myself or hinder my relationship with you!”

Please Note: This lesson was originally written for the *Advance Educators Series*, by James Poitras, and is adapted here.

Lesson in Review

1. Why should a teacher be concerned with overcoming temptation? _____

2. What are three areas of temptation common to ministers? _____

3. What is the difference between trials and temptations? _____

4. How did Steve Arterburn describe sexual sins? _____

5. Why (or how) did Judas lose his assigned place in the ministry? _____

6. Biblically, temptation usually falls in three areas. What are they? _____

7. Briefly outline the four steps of how temptation works. _____

8. What are the four keys to overcoming temptation? _____

9. What was Joseph's response when he encountered temptation? _____

10. What did Daniel say in Daniel 1:8? _____

The Minister and Blameless Life

“I will be careful to lead a blameless life....I will walk in my house with blameless heart”
(Psalms 101:1-2, NIV).

Prince’s Psalm	It is an affirmation of a ruler’s correct conduct. Therefore, it is an appropriate guide for those that rule, lead, or minister in the church. One commentary, the Africa Bible Commentary refers to this psalm as the “Guide to Governors.”
Homebuilder’s Psalm Householder’s Psalm	Here, David expresses his commitment to building a godly home. He pledges to guard his home from unholy, hostile intruders that steal the hearts of his children and family. He wanted to be an example in his personal life, family life, and to his household. Living and leading a blameless life begins at home. Your family knows the real you. They see you in private and calculate the differences of what they see in the public. “I will lead a life of integrity in my own home” (Psalms 101:2, NLT).
Purity Psalm	This psalm can be seen as a pledge for safeguarding purity.

Notice the “I wills” of this chapter.

1. I will sing of mercy and judgment (vs. 1). Singing of the qualities of God’s rule motivates us to want them in our lives.
2. I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way (vs. 2).
3. I will walk within my house in a perfect heart (vs. 2).
4. I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes (vs. 3).
5. I will not know a wicked person (vs. 4).
6. I will cut off those that slander his neighbors (vs. 5).

The reference to “every morning” seems to indicate this was/is a daily kind of psalm. It was also the time that cases were heard in courts.

David would not allow in his home:

1. Those that sin with their tongues.
2. Those that sin with their eyes. “My eyes will be on the faithful in the land, that they may dwell with me; *he whose walk is blameless will minister to me*” (Psalms 101:6, NIV, Emphasis mine). David didn’t want anything he looked at to corrupt his thoughts, words, or actions. Charles Spurgeon said, “I will not gaze upon it with pleasure. Not only shall it not dwell in his heart, but not even before his eyes, for what fascinates the eye is very apt to gain admission into the heart.”
3. Those that sin with their hearts (Psalms 101:4-5, 7).

He didn’t want to associate with the:

- A. Unfaithful
- B. Slanderers (vs. 5)
- C. Haughty and proud (vs. 5)
- D. Deceitful (vs. 7)
- E. Liars (vs. 7)

David faltered in the matter of taking a census. He floundered in adultery with Bathsheba. He fell in the matter of Uriah. The Bible sadly records, “Because David did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, and turned not aside from any thing that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite” (1 Kings 15:5).

It is easy to fumble and throw up our hands in defeat. “I messed up! Guilty as blamed!” Being “blameless” is a daily struggle and a lifetime pursuit. When we fall—if we fall—we should:

1. Ask for forgiveness. It has been said that the “blameless man is the forgiven man.” If one is to blame it calls for repentance, confession, and forsaking sin. See 1 John 1:7-9.
2. Maintain a heart right with God. “Those who lead blameless lives and do what is right, speaking the truth from sincere hearts” (Psalms 15:2, NLT). See 1 Samuel 13:14; 16:7; Proverbs 4:23; Psalms 51:10.
3. Avoid sin. “I am blameless before God; I have kept myself from sin” (2 Samuel 22:24, NLT). “I am blameless before God; I have kept myself from sin” (Psalms 18:23, NLT). See also Psalms 119:11.

“Blameless” carries the impression of being “without blemish.” This is a reference to the required standard of perfection for animal sacrifices in the Old Testament. “Blameless” means to be guiltless and innocent. Warren Wiersbe in his *Wiersbe’s Expository Outlines on the New Testament* explains that “blameless” doesn’t mean “sinless.” It literally means “that

cannot be laid hold of.” He says, “there is nothing in his life that the enemy can lay hold of to hinder the work or ruin the witness.”

Had David heeded the words of Psalms 15 he would have never needed the repentant words of confession found in Psalms 51. Elizabeth Moreau asked, “How was David blameless before God?” It was not because he was sinless. She feels he was blameless because:

1. He did not hide from God (Psalms 51:4).
2. He confessed his wrongs (Psalms 51:3; 2 Samuel 12:13).
3. He mourned his weakness (Psalms 51:8-9; 2 Samuel 12:16-17).
4. He pleaded for forgiveness (Psalms 51:2, 7, 9-11; 2 Samuel 12:13).

Humility, holiness, and honesty are needed to live a blameless life.

Psalm 15 presents guidelines for living the blameless life. It describes the way of life that pleases God and that He expects us to follow. Some of these are repeated or are paralleled in Psalms 24. Both chapters wonder who can draw near to God and live in the place where His presence rests? The acceptable person is one whose walk is blameless and whose actions are righteous. The *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, “A blameless person lives in obedience to God and maintains a life of integrity. His activities are in harmony with God’s standards, that is, they are righteous....The wicked and hypocritical did not belong in the sanctuary.”

“Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully” (Psalms 24:3-4).

The blameless person is he that:

- Has clean hands (vs. 4; 15:1-5). This refers to right actions.
- Has a pure heart (vs. 4; 51:7; Matthew 5:8). This refers to a right attitude or motives.
- Has not sinned (vs. 4; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Hebrews 12:14).
- Is truthful (vs. 4; Revelation 21:8).

The results and rewards of such a lifestyle is “he shall receive the blessing of the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation” (Psalms 24:5).

Being blameless isn’t easy. Francis Chan in *Crazy Love* said, ‘If life is a river, then pursuing Christ requires swimming upstream. When we stop swimming, or actively following him,

we automatically begin to be swept downstream.” May I be bold enough to ask, “When it comes to living the blameless life, are you swimming upstream, floating downstream, or are you sinking under water?”

One preacher, on his deathbed, addressed his brother, Robertson, who was on his way to preach. He whispered, “Put all the Bible you can into it!” So, let me pump as many Scriptures as possible into this lesson.

Patriarchs were Blameless

“When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, “I am El-Shaddai—'God Almighty.' Serve me faithfully and live a blameless life” (Genesis 17:1, NLT).

“Noah was a righteous man, the only blameless person living on earth at the time, and he walked in close fellowship with God” (Genesis 6:9, NLT).

“There once was a man named Job who lived in the land of Uz. He was blameless—a man of complete integrity. He feared God and stayed away from evil” (Job 1:1, NLT).

“Then the Lord asked Satan, “Have you noticed my servant Job? He is the finest man in all the earth. He is blameless—a man of complete integrity. He fears God and stays away from evil” (Job 1:8, NLT).

Apostolic Leadership is Blameless

Deacons: “And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless” (1 Timothy 3:10).

Elders/Pastors/Overseers: “For an elder must live a blameless life. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered; he must not be a heavy drinker, violent, or dishonest with money” (Titus 1:7, NLT).

Bishops/Senior Leaders: “A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach....“Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil” (1 Timothy 3:2, 7). We should never give “grounds for accusation” (AMP) and never “fall into the devil’s trap” (AMP).

“For the bishop (an overseer) as God’s steward must be blameless...” (Titus 1:7, AMP).

Benefits of the Blameless

Faultless Lives	“Yet now he has reconciled you to himself through the death of Christ in his physical body. As a result, he has brought you into his own presence, and you are holy and blameless as you stand before him without a single fault” (Colossians 1:22, NLT).
Peaceful Lives	“And so, dear friends, while you are waiting for these things to happen, make every effort to be found living peaceful lives that are pure and blameless in his sight” (2 Peter 3:14, NLT).
Victorious Lives	“He holds victory in store for the upright, he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless, for he guards the course of the just and protects the way of his faithful ones” (Proverbs 2:7-8, NIV).
Significant Lives	“For I want you to understand what really matters, so that you may live pure and blameless lives until the day of Christ’s return” (Philippians 1:10, NLT).
Blessed Lives	“The righteous man leads a blameless life; blessed are his children after him” (Proverbs 20:7).
Shining Lives	“That you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world” (Philippians 2:15, ESV).
Remaining Lives	“For the upright will live in the land, and the blameless will remain in it; but the wicked will be cut off from the land and the unfaithful will be torn from it” (Proverbs 2:21-22, NIV).
Delighted Lives	“The Lord detests men of a perverse heart but he delights in those whose ways are blameless” (Proverbs 11:20, NIV).

“But you must be blameless before the Lord your God” (Deuteronomy 18:13, NLT). What is one thing that seeks to keep you from having a blameless life? If unchecked and unstopped it could lead to ruining your ministry and to being exposed. It must be arrested and assassinated now. Destroy it before it destroys you!

Lesson in Review

1. According to Psalms 101:1 what was David careful to do? _____

2. Why is Psalms 101 considered the Householder’s Psalm? _____

3. State three of David’s “I wills” found in Psalms 101. _____

4. What did Charles Spurgeon say about what fascinates the eyes? _____

5. List three types of people David did not want to closely associate with. _____

6. What should we do if or when we falter or fall into sin? _____

7. What does “blameless” mean? _____

8. What does Psalms 15 describe? _____

9. Describe the blameless person according to Psalms 24. _____

10. What are the rewards and results of living a blameless life according to Psalms 24:5?

11. Give three examples of Old Testament patriarchs that led a blameless life. _____

12. Prove that apostolic leadership is required to be blameless. _____

13. List and briefly explain three benefits of the blameless life. _____

14. Think of how living a blameless life will be a blessing to the children of the righteous.

15. Select words or phrases that are indicators or descriptive of the blameless life. These are found by looking closely at the table of benefits. _____

The Minister and Finishing Strong

“However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace”
(Acts 20:24, *NIV*)

Paul relates the Christian life and ministry to a boxer, soldier, runner, workman (laborer), and farmer. This lesson will look at the Christian as a runner.

Let's start by putting on our thinking hats. Imagine you have completed life on this earth.

1. What would be your last words to your family and loved ones?
2. What would be the last message that you would preach in the church?
3. What would be the words that you would have on your gravestone?
4. What would be the scripture you would want to be remembered for?

“For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing” (2 Timothy 4:6-8).

Finish the Race

The Olympics feature the world's best athletes—men and women dedicated to excellence. One of the events, the marathon, is a test of perseverance and speed. The man that first ran the race was a soldier, Philippides. He ran two hundred kilometers in two days to get military help. He returned in time to join the fighting. Someone was needed to run to Athens to warn them that the Persian army was going to attack the city. Philippides ran twenty-six hilly miles, fully armed, from Marathon to Athens, to deliver the news. He was exhausted and managed only to say, “Nike!” before he collapsed and died. “Nike” stands for “Victory is ours!” As Christians we are assured victory. The Lord will see us through!

The slogan of the Olympic Games is “Citius, altius, fortius.” It is a Latin phrase that means, “Swifter, higher, stronger.” It also represents what our Christian calling embodies. These games began in Greece nearly three thousand years ago. In ancient times, special people were charged with protecting the Olympic flame and making sure it never extinguished. Torches were lit at Marathon and would be passed, like a baton, from one relay runner to another. The flame represents “the light of spirit, knowledge, and life.” By passing the flame from one person to another, the torch relay signifies the handing down of the fire from generation to generation. As Christians, we must pass the torch of truth to a new generation.

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The year—1968; the occasion—Olympics; the place—Mexico City; the event—the twenty-six mile Marathon. The favorite was a runner from Ethiopia. A sustained fracture forced him to drop out of the race. Another Ethiopian, Mamo Wolde went on to win the gold medal. An hour later, as remaining spectators were leaving, they heard sirens. All eyes turned to see a lonely runner, wearing Tanzania colors, make his final lap around the track. The crowd exploded into applause. The newspaper reported, “Today, we have seen a young African runner who symbolized the finest in the human spirit, a performance that gives meaning to the word courage.”

The runner was asked, “Why did you continue to run when you were alone, wounded, and knew that someone else had won the race? Why didn’t you quit?”

He responded, “My country did not send me 7,000 miles to start the race. They sent me 7,000 miles to finish it.”

That is the way it is with us. God did not send us to begin the race (only) but to finish the race. It is important to do our best for God.

We often remember how a person finishes the race and not how he starts. Moses was not permitted to lead God’s people into the Promised Land. He was disobedient. He struck the rock when he was told to speak to it. He messed up!

Falling down does not mean that you are out of the race. Get up again! “For a righteous man falls seven times, and rises again, But the wicked stumble in time of calamity” (Proverbs 24:16, *NASU*).

We cannot quit. “And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:62).

“If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small” (Proverbs 24:10).

“No, dear brothers and sisters, I am still not all I should be, but I am focusing all my energies on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I strain to reach the end of the race and receive the prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us up to heaven” (Philippians 3:13-14, *NLT*).

The course has hills—obstacles. Obstacles are something we see when we take our eyes off our goal. Paul overcame many obstacles. The word “race” comes from the English word “agony.”

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Christianity is a test of endurance. Paul tells us to “endure hardness” (2 Timothy 2:3); “endure afflictions” (2 Timothy 4:5); “endure grief” (1 Peter 2:19); and to “endure unto the end” (Matthew 24:13).

We may get tired on the race course but need to keep running the race. We shall win the prize if we faint not (Galatians 6:9).

You think you’ve got problems. Take a glance at Paul’s troubles: “They say they serve Christ? I know I sound like a madman, but I have served him far more! I have worked harder, been put in jail more often, been whipped times without number, and faced death again and again. Five different times the Jews gave me thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. Once I spent a whole night and a day adrift at sea. I have traveled many weary miles. I have faced danger from flooded rivers and from robbers. I have faced danger from my own people, the Jews, as well as from the Gentiles. I have faced danger in the cities, in the deserts, and on the stormy seas. And I have faced danger from men who claim to be Christians but are not. I have lived with weariness and pain and sleepless nights. Often I have been hungry and thirsty and have gone without food. Often I have shivered with cold, without enough clothing to keep me warm. Then, besides all this, I have the daily burden of how the churches are getting along” (2 Corinthians 11:23-28. *NLT*).

“We have been beaten, been put in jail, faced angry mobs, worked to exhaustion, endured sleepless nights, and gone without food. We have proved ourselves by our purity, our understanding, our patience, our kindness, our sincere love, and the power of the Holy Spirit. We have faithfully preached the truth. God's power has been working in us. We have righteousness as our weapon, both to attack and to defend ourselves. We serve God whether people honor us or despise us, whether they slander us or praise us. We are honest, but they call us impostors. We are well known, but we are treated as unknown. We live close to death, but here we are, still alive. We have been beaten within an inch of our lives. Our hearts ache, but we always have joy. We are poor, but we give spiritual riches to others. We own nothing, and yet we have everything” (2 Corinthians 6:5-10, *NLT*).

That does not sound much like the prosperity message that we often hear.

“That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death” (Philippians 3:10).

Steve Farrar in *Finishing Strong* quotes research that only about one of ten who start the Christian ministry race will cross the finish line.

“Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump” (Galatians 5:7-9).

Farrar asks us what measures we are taking to ensure that we will be one of the ten. He encourages us to practice Psalm 101:2-3.

“Keep a close watch on yourself and on your teaching. Stay true to what is right, and God will save you and those who hear you” (1 Timothy 4:16, *NLT*).

Keeping the faith is a daily decision. It requires discipline. Paul said, “I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway” (1 Corinthians 9:26-27). Preserving truth is a daily choice too.

“Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding” (Proverbs 23:23).

“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3).

I want to remain conservative enough to stay with the old truths and liberal enough to use new methods. Someone has advised that we should never remove a fence unless you check to see why it was there in the first place.

“Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set” (Proverbs 22:28).

Erosion is not obvious. It happens over time. We need to conserve the truth. This word means that we should safeguard or preserve something.

“Stay on the path. Take no shortcuts. It causes erosion.”
(Sign on Mountain Trail)

It is always sad to hear of this declaration: “For truth is fallen in the street” (Isaiah 59:14). We must do all possible to prevent truth-erosion.

We cannot put confidence in tradition for the Bible warns, “Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye”

(Mark 7:13). It has been said, "What is popular is not always right; what is right is not always popular."

Carlton L. Coon, Sr. in his Bible study series *Take Root* states, "What men are taught determines what they believe. What they believe determines what they do. What they do determines their destiny."

Ed Cole once said, "A person's beliefs hold the greatest potential for good or harm in life." What we believe about our salvation matters much when we consider our future destiny. We need to adjust to the truth of God's Word. If someone says something that is wrong, and then a thousand people say that it is correct, it is still wrong.

Please Note: This lesson is originally part of the *Acts: God's Training Manual for Today's Church* (Level S) material written by James Poitras.

Lesson in Review

1. How does Paul picture or relate the Christian life and ministry? _____

2. What is the slogan or motto for the Olympics and what does it mean? _____

3. What could the Olympic torch and flame symbolize for the Christian? _____

4. From a Scriptural standpoint, comment on the importance of finishing the race. ____

5. The Christian race is popularly viewed as one of prosperity and ease. What does the word "race" actually mean? _____

6. Compare the popular view in question five above with what Paul experienced in 2 Corinthians 11:23-28. What similarities or differences do you find? _____

7. What was Paul's desire as expressed in Philippians 3:10? _____

8. According to Steve Farrar out of ten that begin the Christian race, how many will finish? _____

9. What are you doing to ensure that you finish the race? _____

10. Quote Proverbs 23:23. _____

The Minister and Passing the Baton

"For when David had served God's purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep; he was buried with his fathers and his body decayed" (Acts 13:36, *NIV*).

A relay race is run by a team of four runners. The first runner carries a baton. After running a specified distance, called a "leg" the runner hands the baton to the next team member. The exchange must occur within a zone a few meters long. Timing is crucial. If the runners do not exchange the baton within this zone, the team is disqualified. The length of the race varies from four hundred to six thousand meters. In some relays each team member runs an equal distance, but in others run different distances.

The relay race is not necessarily won by the team that runs the fastest, but by successfully passing the baton in the exchange zone. That's right; races are won or lost in the passing of the baton. Teams can be disqualified by a bad pass. Passing the baton is essential to win the race.

Tony Wang in an article entitled "Passing the Baton" states the following is needed to qualify for a good pass:

1. Both runners must be running so that they do not lose time.
2. There must be trust and confidence that the team member will hand it over properly.
3. A runner receiving the baton cannot look back or swerve out of his lane.
4. It requires knowledge of each other's ability.
5. The runner passing the baton has to tell the other runner when to go. If he says, "Go!" too early, he won't have time to catch him and give him the baton.
6. It also requires strict obedience to the rules.

A lesson to be learned throughout the Bible is the importance of passing the baton from one generation to another. This is clearly seen (to give a few examples) in Moses passing the baton to Joshua, David to Solomon, Elijah to Elisha, Jesus to His disciples, and Paul to Timothy.

It is not enough to run the race. We also pass our mission to the next generation. We must hand off the baton, at the right time, and must do it well.

Jesus handed the baton to His disciples. They ran a good race and passed the baton to the next generation. Timothy received the baton from Paul, and was instructed to pass it on to others (2 Timothy 2:2).

George Bernard Shaw said, “Life is no brief candle to me. It is a sort of splendid torch which I’ve got ahold of for the moment, and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations.”

Dale Burke in *Less is More Leadership* said, “Nothing feels better than seeing a vision that you helped birth be passed on into the capable hands of others.” As a leader you must be willing to let go.

As leaders we should always be on the lookout for the next prospective relay runner. We need three men in our lives:

1. Paul—someone to whom we can be accountable. Every one needs a pastor.
2. Barnabas—someone to encourage us.
3. Timothy—someone that we can mentor; to whom we can pass the baton.

The challenge for every Christian father is to successfully pass on His faith to their children.

Rowland Forman, Jeff Jones, and Bruce Miller in the *Leadership Baton* wrote, “Christianity is always just one generation away from extinction...Jesus’ mission has always depended on one generation of leaders handing the mission to the next. Where they have done so effectively, their churches and ministries have continued to thrive. Now the mission is in your grasp.”

Let us look closely at a man that successfully passed a baton to the next generation. This is the Old Testament story of King David and Solomon.

Dream

David had a dream to build a house for the Lord. Despite his good intentions, ample preparations, it remained an unfulfilled dream.

“King David rose to his feet and said: “Listen to me, my brothers and my people. I had it in my heart to build a house as a place of rest for the ark of the covenant of the LORD, for the footstool of our God, and I made plans to build it” (1 Chronicles 28:2, *NIV*).

Destiny

David passed the baton to Solomon. David’s dream became Solomon’s destiny.

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“And you, my son Solomon, acknowledge the God of your father, and serve him with wholehearted devotion and with a willing mind, for the LORD searches every heart and understands every motive behind the thoughts. If you seek him, he will be found by you; but if you forsake him, he will reject you forever. Consider now, for the LORD has chosen you to build a temple as a sanctuary. Be strong and do the work” (1 Chronicles 28:9-10, *NIV*).

All that David had without Solomon was a dream.

Design

God provides the design for our vision. David without Solomon was a dream. Solomon without David was a destiny unfulfilled.

“Then David gave his son Solomon the plans for the portico of the temple, its buildings, its storerooms, its upper parts, its inner rooms and the place of atonement. He gave him the plans of all that the Spirit had put in his mind for the courts of the temple of the LORD and all the surrounding rooms, for the treasuries of the temple of God and for the treasuries for the dedicated things. "All this," David said, "I have in writing from the hand of the LORD upon me, and he gave me understanding in all the details of the plan” (1 Chronicles 28:11-12, *NIV*).

David had the dream. Solomon had the destiny. Both were committed to God’s design.

Daniel Deck provided the seed thoughts for this lesson. In his sermon “Generation to Generation” he said, “When the younger full of strength and energy joins forces with the elder full of experience and wisdom the results can be powerful and long-term.”

No generation stands independent of its predecessors or those that follow. Generations overlap. Each generation is equipped with men and women created for that generation.

Every generation stands on the shoulders of those that went on before. We build, not destroy, the foundation that is laid for us. The church’s success is determined by its ability to survive and excel from generation to generation.

This takes us away from our relay race comparison but have you ever noticed farmers in the field? Daniel Deck explains that the success of their harvest is vital to survival. When it is time to plant or harvest everyone is involved. Sometimes school is even dismissed and the field becomes the focus of everyone. It is not uncommon to see three generations working in the field together, side-by-side, because success, survival, and the season

demands it. Generations should learn how to run together; work together; know when to receive the baton, and how to continue the race.

Many times the mission, vision, purpose, or plan of God outlives a person. To see it fulfilled it must be successfully passed to the next generation. We often think of generations in terms of age but it could mean much more than this. Instead of experiencing generational friction and misunderstanding we need to strive for unity and continuity.

Generations could also include, and still not be limited to: differences in culture (the way we do things around here); differences in languages; relationships between missionaries and nationals or pastors and members; methods in accomplishing the task; variation of ministries; tension of which Bible school one attended; differences between males and females; types of thinking; loyalties to certain leaders; educational backgrounds. Often tensions develop between these groups or generations. It need not be like that. We have strength in our diversity. We run the race together, as a team, and pass the baton from one to another.

David's lifelong dream and heart's desire became Solomon's intense passion.

"My father David had it in his heart to build a temple for the Name of the LORD, the God of Israel" (1 Kings 8:17, *NIV*).

"I intend, therefore, to build a temple for the Name of the LORD my God, as the LORD told my father David, when he said, 'Your son whom I will put on the throne in your place will build the temple for my Name'" (1 Kings 5:5, *NIV*).

The temple took seven years to build, was a wonder of the world, and was built according to David's dream and God's design. God has planted a piece of eternity in the hearts of men. We do our part and then successfully pass the baton to the next generation. Thus, we keep the mission alive, and the church marches on!

Please Note: This lesson is originally part of the *Acts: God's Training Manual for Today's Church* (Level S) material written by James Poitras.

Lesson in Review

1. What spiritual significance can we find in the passing of the baton in the relay race?

2. What three types of men do we need in our lives? _____

3. It is not enough to merely run the Christian race. What else should be done? _____

4. What is generation equipped with? _____

5. Explain what is meant by "Christianity is always just one generation away from extinction." _____

6. What is one of the major factors that determine success? _____

7. What valuable lesson or principle does Daniel Deck give us in this lesson? _____

8. What is the specific application or meant attached to "generation" in this lesson?

9. Explain what is meant by dream, destiny, and design in this lesson. _____
