

Avoiding Pitfalls To Effective Ministry In The Church

Congregations loaded with unrepentant people can pour tremendous energies into trying to fix the world. But, such efforts are fruitless without God's power and direction through the Holy Spirit. Individuals need to be *transformed* before seeking God's will to be done here on earth as it is in heaven.

But, even *transformed individuals* are susceptible to ineffective ministry:

- *Task orientation* can lead to ignoring or underestimating the intelligent opposition we face to God's Kingdom. Simply working harder or even smarter will not prevail against "principalities and powers" and the *ruler of this world*. To be effective, we must fix our eyes on Jesus while praying and working together in dependence on the Holy Spirit's guidance and empowerment.
- *Dryness* can quickly afflict any who neglect to meditate day and night on God's word (Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1:2-3), or who fail to wait for the empowerment of the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49).
- *Individualism* can so limit our vision that we can only see needs that we can solve or contribute to independently. Individualism also undermines our witness and makes us much more vulnerable to the enemy's attacks. God's word calls for us to guard and watch out for each other as well as for ourselves.
- *Pleasing others* can lead to overextending ourselves. We must seek to please God alone (Galatians 1:10), otherwise we may squander the resources that God has entrusted to us on needs He intended *someone else* to address.
- *Busyness* can also render us ineffective and increase our vulnerability and blindness to Satan's schemes. The soldier, athlete, and farmer of 2 Timothy 2:4-6 speak of our need to focus, to build our capacity and resources to do what God created us for. Furthermore, God ordains times of reduced activity during which we can build our capacity for what He has called us to accomplish. If we fill such times with activity that He didn't intend, we limit our full life potential to fulfill what God designed us to do.
- *Misalignment* with God's purposes may occur when our decisions are not rooted in a clear understanding of God's priorities in the battle that is taking place against His Kingdom. We must continue prayerfully seeking God's guidance for the most important thing that we can do for His Kingdom that others can't or won't do. But, without a clear understanding of God's Kingdom purposes, we may turn for guidance to circumstances

or to subjective indicators, such as what we are best at or what we want to do.

- *Duty* can, especially when we become chronically busy, substitute for or even replace the heart motivation that God requires – faith expressing itself through love (Galatians 5:6). When this happens, all of our labors become useless (1 Corinthians 13:1-3).

God does not just offer salvation; He enlists participants in spiritual warfare. The Church is not called simply to perpetuate itself but also to pursue God's will on earth as it is done in heaven. This involves prayer (Matthew 6:10, Luke 11:2), proclamation (Matthew 4:17, Mark 1:15) *and* action/battle (Matthew 6:33, Luke 12:31, 1 John 2:14). To free His people to give themselves to the battle, God has promised eternal and abundant life to all who unite themselves with Him in love and in purpose through the Holy Spirit. With alertness to our adversary, we can avoid the pitfalls and aggressively and effectively collaborate to advance His Kingdom and His Church and to complete the missionary task in our day.

--Adapted from an article by Bobby Butler in *Mission Frontiers*, November-December 2008 Read the full article *Three Eras Of Mission History*

"Until a man (person) has found God, and been found by God,
he begins at no beginning, he works to no end.
He may have his friendships, his partial loyalties,
his scraps of honor. But all these things fall
into place, and life falls into place, only with
God."

H. G. WELLS