

# The Priests of the Lord - 1

by Chip Brogden

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of ministering to the Lord, satisfying His heart's desire for companionship and communion, and meeting His Need, which is the foundation of a deep and meaningful relationship with God.*

**Scripture:** 1 Samuel 3:1

**Topics:** "Ministry To God", "Spiritual Communion"

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## Description

Chip Brogden delves into the deeper understanding of ministry to the Lord, emphasizing a rare form of ministry directed solely to the Lord, distinct from the common ministry directed to and for man. He highlights the importance of meeting the Lord's need, rooted in a love relationship, and explores the concept of ministry that satisfies God's heart's desire for communion and fellowship. Chip Brogden challenges the traditional focus on meeting man's needs in ministry, urging a shift towards ministering to the Lord first and foremost.

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## Transcript

What does it mean to be the Lord's minister? What is ministry? According to the popular definition of ministry I have actually been "in the ministry" for many years. I have always been in a state of either preparing for the ministry or performing ministry as I understood it. Of course, that means I have either been pastoring a church, teaching a class, or operating some kind of evangelistic or missionary outreach. This is what comes to mind when most people think of the word "ministry". It is the working definition I operated from for the majority of my life.

Through a series of painful experiences the Lord brought me to a deeper understanding of what ministry to Him is. In this writing I would like to explain this deeper ministry. I have referred to it a number of times in other writings and in my spoken messages, but by the grace of the Lord I would like to take some time here and expound a bit on this perspective of ministry.

This ministry actually existed before anything else came into being, so it is not new at all, but it is certainly rare, so it may be new to us, though it is old. Simply defined, this is ministry that is directed TO THE LORD. Whereas typical ministry is directed TO man and FOR man, the ministry of which I am speaking is directed TO the Lord and FOR the Lord. There is a place for ministry to the saints, yet there are many instances and examples of ministry to the saints, and very few instances of ministry TO THE LORD ALONE. I understand that most people minister to men "for the Lord's sake" and see it as one and the

same; nevertheless, I am speaking of a kind of ministry that is WHOLLY for the Lord, and not for man at all. Ministry to men is commonplace, but ministry to the Lord is on the verge of extinction.

Even as I write these words I realize that not everyone will understand or accept what has to be said. I am not trying to convince anyone to change anything. But I believe the Lord has always reserved for Himself people who will minister TO HIM, especially at this time when the Lord's need is so urgent. With a little light thrown on the subject you may at last hear the confirmation you need to be released into this fullness. So those who are meant to hear this will hear it, and you know who you are. The rest of you may take it as another "interesting study" and go along as before. But it is my prayer that as we consider the Scriptures together the Lord will use this to confirm what He has been saying to many of you already. He is indeed drawing many saints into this ministry. So let us explore it together with open hearts and open minds to see what the Lord is saying to us.

### THE BASIS OF GOD'S NEED: A LOVE RELATIONSHIP

"This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the Church (Ephesians 5:32)."

Before we go any further we need to stop and explain what is meant by "The Lord's Need". Some hear it for the first time and think we are suggesting that the Lord has some kind of a lack that makes Him incomplete, and thus, not all-powerful. That is not what we are saying at all.

We have to think about the Lord's Need, not in terms of His ability or omnipotence, but in terms of His heart's desire. I do not "need" my wife. I can dress myself, feed myself, and take care of myself just fine. I can exist apart from her. But in another sense I do need my wife, and I do not want to exist apart from her. From a relationship standpoint, from a love perspective, I need her. In the same way, God is God with us or without us. But from the point of view of a love relationship, God has a Purpose, a Desire, and yes, a Need. There is something that will satisfy His heart that only we can provide, and that something is beyond description, except to say it has to do with love. It has to do with our response to His overtures towards us. Proverbs tells us that love is too wonderful to understand or explain (Proverbs 30:18,19). In fact, the only reason why God continued beyond the creation of angels and animals, towards something closer to His own image, was to have someone with whom He could love (and be loved) on the same level as Himself, and that is only possible when He is able to fill that person completely. In other words, they must be made in His image, and they must be changed into His likeness.

It is all about relationship! Look at how Eve came forth from Adam. First, there was a need. "It is not good for Adam to be alone." Then, all the animals are brought to Adam, but a suitable help-meet was not found among them. Then, Eve is created out of Adam, and at last the need is met, for "she is bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh" (cf. Genesis 2). Paul says this explains the mystery of Christ and the Church (Ephesians 5:30-32). How so? It is a pattern of the heavenly relationship. First, if we may boldly say, the Lord decided it was not good for Him to be alone anymore! We will have to explain that further as we go along. In any event, the angels and animals are created, but a suitable help-meet was not found among them. If they were suitable then He would have stopped there, but they did not and could not fully meet His Need or satisfy His Desire. Instead, God took something of Himself and created Man in His own image - someone who would be a little below the angels and a little above the animals. Now, we are "members of His Body, of His flesh, and of His bones (Ephesians 5:30)."

Did not Christ, the pre-existent Son, satisfy God's heart? Indeed. But if we look at the language of Genesis, we see, "Let US make man in OUR own image (Genesis 1:26a)." God the Father, God the Son,

and God the Holy Spirit together desired for companionship and communion with someone other than themselves. Hence, it was agreed to proceed with the creation of a being that would have the capacity for giving and receiving love in a way that is quite beyond the reach of animals or angels. And so we have the creation of Man. If we look back over the history of mankind we see the tremendous energy and exertion put forth by the Godhead to create Man, then redeem him after he sinned, in order to restore this rocky relationship. What a tremendous cost was involved! What an awesome price was to be paid! What plausible explanation is there to justify all the time, effort, trouble, and longsuffering God has had to endure in His dealings with Man? How are we to understand the willingness of Christ to die for us? The only thing which makes sense is totally illogical, yet understandable. Only someone IN LOVE would put themselves through such trouble. So in God's case it is LOVE, deeper than we can fathom, that motivates Him. Therefore, to meet the Lord's Need is to satisfy His heart's desire for communion and fellowship on a level that is beyond our own abilities. How then can we do it? Such communion can only truly occur when Christ has the preeminence in us, for He is the only One Who, AS A MAN, has ever completely met the Lord's Need and satisfied His heart. Others have come close.

"You cannot truly love until you know God, for God is love (I John 4:8)."

Imagine, if you can, what it must be like to have so much to give, so much to share, so much love to pour out, but no one around who can receive it, appreciate it, benefit from it, or even know that such love exists. God IS love. Can we imagine what it must be like to BE love, but have no one to love? An omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, eternal God Who is Love is in some unimaginable sense incomplete without someone who can represent the object of His love, adoration, tender mercies, and personal care. We talk about a God-shaped vacuum in every man's heart that only God can fill. Is it too much to imagine that perhaps there is a man-shaped vacuum in God's heart that only man can fill? If this is so, then union with God is as much about meeting GOD's need as it is about meeting MAN'S need.

If this seems far-fetched, consider God's initial reaction to mankind as a whole when it became clear that sin had consumed them all. Scripture says that when God saw that every imagination and thought of man was only towards evil continually, He was grieved in His heart (Genesis 6:6). The Hebrew word "grieved" here is a rich, full word which carries with it many emotions, including worry, anger, grief, and (here is what I want us to see) HURT. God was brokenhearted! From whence comes this flood of emotion? Of course, there is the obvious fact that men have fallen into sin and are killing one another. "God hates sin!" the preachers scream. Everyone knows that God hates sin - but WHY does He hate sin?

Here is a picture of what Sin really is. The Lord comes down to commune with the man in the cool of the day, as usual. But this time the man is nowhere to be found. So the Lord begins to call out, "Where are you?" The man, shaking and trembling in the bushes, is too afraid to come out and commune with God as before (cf. Genesis 3). The man has lost something priceless - but can you not see the Lord has lost just as much? Friends, THAT is what makes sin such a hateful thing to God. It makes people hide from God, so that God is left by Himself, calling out to people who are too afraid to respond. There are billions of people on the earth today, and most of them are hiding in the bushes while God calls out to them. Is this not a pitiful situation? Then what truly grieves God the most? That the ONE BEING in all of creation with whom He may have a close relationship does not have Him in their thoughts at all; indeed, they are running in the opposite direction, quite oblivious to the Lord, quite apathetic to His desire towards them, quite complacent to seeking Him at all, quite afraid to even respond if they knew how.

If there is anything worse than having no one to love, it would have to be loving someone and seeing that love ignored altogether. This brings us to a very important characteristic of love: whenever we love someone, we essentially give them the power to hurt us. If you ask a parent what is their greatest source of pleasure and pain they will say it is their kids. If we dare to love someone, or care for them, or watch over them, or if we dare take responsibility for bringing life into the world, then we are making ourselves vulnerable to being hurt by the very thing we love. This explains why some people swear never to love again once they have been hurt by a relationship. If love is that painful, why love at all? Because love is so great that it is better to love with the chance of being hurt than to not love at all. It underscores just how risky love can be.

"We love Him, because He first loved us (I John 4:19)."

The problems of free moral agency and sin came into being precisely because of this love. In order for man to love God he must have the freedom to choose this relationship. If it is forced upon him in an involuntary way then it is not true love. In other words, I cannot "make" my wife love me. Any attempt on my part to force her to love me will result in something that is not love. When we fall in love with someone we cannot be absolutely sure that they will fall in love with us. So man must be free to love God or to not love God - again, one of the risks that love takes. With this freedom there is the possibility that man will choose to walk his own path away from God and fall into sin. As we all know this is exactly what happened.

So God took a huge risk in wanting us as the object of His affection, and from the very beginning we have failed Him. Of course, He already knew that we would fail, which is why He made provision for our sin before we ever sinned. But why pay such a high price? Why does He continue to love us? Why not just give up? Because unlike our best attempts at love, He is Perfect Love, and this Love eventually wins. This Love never fails. He cannot stop trying. If we would read the Bible, especially the prophetic Scriptures, and treat it as a love letter from a husband to an unfaithful wife, or a frustrated parent to a wayward child, we would begin to understand the Lord's heart. For six thousand years of human history the Lord has spoken, pleaded, argued, grieved, wooed, reprimanded, remonstrated, and reasoned with man in order to have what He has wanted all along - a relationship, a companionship, a camaraderie, a communion with those made in His image.

With all of this background, let us digress a bit now and observe how the gospel is presented to people today. This "gospel" only provides people with half of the story: the half that benefits them. How much effort is made to show people what the Lord has lost, and what the Lord stands to gain, by sinners coming to Christ, and by Christians growing up into the full-knowledge (epignosis) of Him? Very little attention is given to ministering to the Lord or meeting the Lord's Need (most have never heard about the Lord's Need, and those who have are still questioning it; we have a long way to go). Instead, the Gospel as it is presented today is primarily concerned with man and how to meet his needs - how to escape hell, go to heaven, be healed, be blessed, be victorious, be prosperous, be fulfilled, be happy, be anointed, etc. etc. ad infinitum. This has, of course, created a paradigm in which we see God as being there to meet our needs, minister to us, guide us through the difficulties of life, and prepare a place for us to go when we die. It is no wonder that few have ears to hear when we discuss ministering to the Lord. It represents something totally foreign to the Christian experience as they have known it and seen it up until now.

As "advanced" as our Western culture seems to be, this kind of one-way, egocentric, "what can I get out of it" relationship is not too unlike the relationship that pagans and heathens have with their animistic gods

and idols. They keep their gods appeased, not because they love them, but because they have some self-serving need they want met, whether it is health, prosperity, rain, or protection from their enemies. How is this much different than the Gospel according to Churchianity? We pay tithes, apply the Blood, dispatch the angels, pray the Prayer of Jabez, and get the "Anointing" so things will go well with us, too. It falls way, way short of the mark. The model we give to people of "a personal relationship with Christ" is so dysfunctional and self-centered it would not keep a human marriage together for a week; so why do we keep relating to Him this way? "We LOVE Him," the Scriptures declare, "BECAUSE He first loved us." Real communion, real worship, real fellowship, real relationship with God is based upon meeting His Need, i.e., providing Him with heart-satisfaction by responding in kind to His overtures of love towards us. It says in effect, "How can I help but love Him, now that I see how much He loves me? How can I ignore Him any longer?" This is followed by, "You love me so much, You have done so much for me, that I am content with You, and I desire nothing else but You. You have satisfied my heart; now how can I satisfy Your Heart? How can I minister to You? What is Your Desire? Not my will, but Your Will. I love you, Lord!" Thus, we minister to Him, and after an eternity of waiting the Lord has finally broken through and gained the relationship He has for so long sought you out for. How refreshing, how delightful, how wonderful this kind of relationship is! Is there anyone who has ever lived liked this? YES! Let us look at some of them right now.

## SAMUEL

"And the child Samuel ministered to the Lord before Eli. The word of the Lord was rare in those days, and there was no revelation (I Samuel 3:1)."

The third chapter of First Samuel is so rich. If we want to talk about prophetic integrity, prophetic calling, and prophetic formation then there is no better place to go. In the beginning of the chapter we see that a true word from the Lord was rare in those days. We see Samuel ministering to the Lord as a child, and the Lord calling out to Samuel. After some initial confusion Samuel received the word of the Lord. There is the reluctance to give it, and finally the obedience of telling Eli "every whit" of what the Lord had shown him. By the end of the chapter the prophetic calling of Samuel is established, his words never fall to the ground, and the Lord reveals Himself to Samuel completely.

Can you see the progression here? We begin with no revelation, and we end with the Lord revealing Himself. We begin with the Lord closed off from man, and end with the Lord opening Himself up to a man, and by extension, to the rest of the nation through this man. We begin with a child, and end with a prophet. Let us look at the last verse of chapter three and quote it together with the first verse of chapter four: "And the Lord appeared again in Shiloh: for the Lord revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the Lord. And the word of Samuel came to all Israel... (I Samuel 3:21-4:1a)."

Notice the word of the Lord came to Samuel, then the word of Samuel came to Israel. I wonder if we can grasp the significance of this! The Lord has committed Himself to a man, and the man has committed himself to the Lord. Thus, the word of the Lord to Samuel becomes the word of Samuel to Israel. The Lord did not speak to Israel directly, but He spoke to Samuel, who then spoke in the name of the Lord to Israel. My point is this: what is the foundation upon which this close relationship is built? How did it get its start? "The child Samuel ministered to the Lord." Who is the friend of God? Who knows God? Who hears from God? Who speaks for God? The one who ministers to Him, who seeks His face, who is aligned with His desire, who seeks His satisfaction, who meets His need.

In every respect the times in which we live are comparable to I Samuel 3. A genuine word from God is rare, and there is no open vision. In other words, most of the people who see something do not have revelation to really know what they are seeing - hence, it remains closed, or worse, it is misinterpreted and becomes a delusion. There is an abundance of words, dreams, visions, and prophecies today, but I repeat: a GENUINE word from God is rare, and there is little REVELATION. Do you understand my meaning? And the priesthood as represented by Eli is old, fat, and blind: operating as always, still standing in the place of the priest, but already under judgment. What is the problem? No one ministers to the Lord. Everyone is for themselves. Except for one child who ministers to the Lord - and THAT is the one to whom the Lord revealed Himself. There is no revelation apart from relationship. I learned this the hard way.

DAVID

"The Lord has sought for Himself a man after His own heart (I Samuel 13:14ff)."

"And the Lord said to Samuel, 'Why do you keep mourning over Saul? I have rejected him from ruling Israel! Now get up, take your oil, and go. I am sending you to Jesse in Bethlehem, for I have found Me a king among his sons... for the Lord sees not as man sees, for man looks on the outward appearance, but I look upon the heart (I Samuel 16:1,7b)."

Samuel is significant because the Lord uses him to locate and call forth another one who, better than anyone else, represents what it means to minister to the Lord. This man, David, was so determined to minister to the Lord that he invented musical instruments to worship God with. He wrote songs to the Lord on these instruments and was a zealous worshipper, and we still have a record of his writings in the Book of Psalms, revered by the Christian and Jew alike.

What I want us to see here is that the Lord is seeking out David just as much as David is seeking out the Lord. "The Lord has sought for Himself..." The Lord's Need is expressed very succinctly in this phrase. We should not imagine a passive God who sits benignly in the heavens, waiting to see if anyone is going to worship Him or not. This is a proactive God, Who seeks Spirit-and-Truth worshippers, Who seeks people after His own heart, Who draws people to Himself, Who reveals Himself insofar as we will allow Him, Who is ready to speak insofar as we will listen. What a mighty God! What an awesome thing this is: "I have sought for Myself a man, someone who will want Me for Who I am, someone who seeks what I seek, who will obey Me fully, who will love Me unreservedly, who will follow Me wholeheartedly, so that I can give Myself completely to him in return."

And what could be better than this? "I have found Me a king." The Lord has sought for Himself a man, and has found for Himself a king. The Lord has found what He is looking for, and as we follow David's path we find that David, too, has found a King. Look at the sensitivity of David in II Samuel 7. He wants to build a house for God, and God says He will instead build a house for David. As David ponders this we learn from the Psalms that the House is the Church, and the Son Who will reign forever is not Solomon, but Christ. Peter calls David a prophet who saw the resurrection of Christ (Acts 2:29,30). In fact, David clearly saw the incarnation (Psalms 8), the crucifixion (Psalms 22), the death (Psalms 88), the ascension (Psalms 68), the resurrection (Psalms 16), and the reign of Christ (Psalms 2). How deep was his revelation! How vast was his vision! The one who seeks the heart of God will see as God sees. Write it down and underline it: no relationship, no revelation.

ANNA

"And there was one Anna, a prophetess... a widow eighty-four years old, who never left the Temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day (Luke 2:36,37)."

While we have a full account of King David's life, we know very little about Anna. She was the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher, and lived with her husband only seven years before she became a widow. Now she is eighty-four years old. Perhaps the experience of losing her husband after such a brief time together helped forge the character of this prophetess. We have no way of knowing.

We have no record of any prophetic words or visions or dreams. How can you have a prophet who does not prophesy? Quite simply, because the prophetic ministry is something more vast than being able to give out a few "words" from God. The only thing we know about Anna's ministry is that it is primarily devoted to ministering to the Lord with unceasing fastings and prayers. We might consider this monastic, yet the Bible considers this prophetic. We are not suggesting that to minister to the Lord means to neglect people altogether. There is no need to force such an unnecessary dichotomy. But we maintain that there can be no real Spirit-and-Truth ministry to people until and unless we have first ministered to the Lord. For one thing, we cannot be motivated by man's need, but by God's Need, because often the two are in conflict. And, we cannot speak Life except by revelation, and this we can only receive from God. Unless we have invested a great deal of time in our secret ministry to the Lord then the shallowness of our public ministry will be very evident. Today it is abundantly clear that not enough time is spent ministering to the Lord, and way too much time is spent ministering to people; hence, most of what is done in the name of ministry is performed in a fleshly, human way which never bears any lasting fruit.

There in the Temple, Anna ministered to the Lord. She never wrote a book, never had a website, never conducted a meeting that we can tell. All in all it seems to be a very passive existence, the sort of "waste" that makes us want to criticize her for not being more useful. Anna the prophetess should be "doing" something. But how many of us consider prayer and fasting to be serving God? We cannot repeat often enough that for too many people, prayer and fasting is a way to serve THEMSELVES, or to get God involved in THEIR cause. We have a need, so we pray, and if the need is critical and we become desperate, then we will fast. This may be appropriate in some situations, but it is not serving the LORD. It may be done to bring about OUR will, but it is not necessarily motivated by a desire to minister to the Lord, to see His heart satisfied, and to see His Need met.

Now it is no coincidence that, in verse 38, Anna came "in that instant" and met Simeon, Joseph, Mary, and the baby Jesus in the Temple, and recognized Him to be the Christ. In response, she "gave thanks to the Lord and spoke of Him to all that looked for redemption in Jerusalem." Jesus is only a few days old here. There are no angelic choirs singing Hosannas, no shepherds bowing down to worship, no star blazing overhead. All the outward signs have disappeared, and this Baby seems to be no different in outward appearance than the dozens of other Jewish babies being dedicated in the Temple that day. But Anna knew the difference because she devoted her life to ministering to the Lord. What seems like a waste turns out to be the very thing that put her in the right place at the right time, while the more useful busybodies missed the entire event. Again, we find that prophetic things, revelatory things, are inescapably linked to ministering to the Lord. No relationship, no revelation.

## THE TWELVE

"And Jesus ordained twelve, that they should be with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach (Mark 3:14)."

I taught from this passage of Scripture at a minister's retreat once in order to demonstrate to them that whatever they thought their ministry was, be it as an apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor or teacher, their first calling was not to be with people at all, but to be with Jesus. How simple this is. Twelve men are ordained, or set apart, or selected. For what? To preach? Eventually, but not immediately. To save sinners? Eventually, but not immediately. To work miracles? Eventually, but not immediately.

The immediate Need was for those who would just BE WITH THE LORD. They were set apart to be with Him; their being sent forth (apostello) was of secondary concern. It would follow, but it was not the most important thing. The most important thing was that they BE WITH THE LORD. Where has "the ministry" failed? In putting people before the Lord, in making the work of the Lord more important than the Lord of the work, in being so busy with preaching and visitation and building programs and church administration and a thousand and one things that there is no time to BE WITH THE LORD.

I learned many years ago that it does not matter how busy I am for God, or how many things I am doing in the Name of Jesus, or how much I am able to bless other people, if I am not "with Jesus" on a continual basis. How easy it is to be absorbed, obsessed, and consumed with our little ministry, our little work, our little church, and forget that the whole reason we are called in the first place is to minister to the Lord, to be with Him, to love Him. Are we in love with the Lord, or are we in love with the Lord's work? Are we motivated by the Lord's Need, or by man's need? If the Lord told us to come aside for a year, leave our ministry alone, and just be with Him, would it bring us great joy or would we argue that we are engaged in such an important work that we cannot stop?

Is it possible that long ago we became so entrenched in the work of the Lord that He is no longer involved in what we are doing? Could it be that we are now proceeding in our own strength, in our own name, according to flesh and blood? The fruit of our labor (or the lack thereof) tells the whole story. If spiritual fruit is defined by how many people are saved, how many churches are planted, how many sermons are preached, then we can bring forth that kind of fruit and never involve the Lord at all. But if spiritual fruit is love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and self-control, then we must be with Jesus in order to bring forth this fruit, and no amount of WORKING for God can make up for a lack of simply BEING with Him.

#### THE CHURCH AT ANTIOCH

"There were in the church at Antioch certain prophets and teachers... and as they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, "Separate for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work I have called them to do (Acts 13:1a,2)."

There is much to be gleaned from this passage of Scripture. The first thing that strikes us is that the prophets and teachers were gathered together to minister to the Lord. How seldom we see this today! In the first place, prophets and teachers are rarely able to get together regarding anything. The prophet thinks the teacher is too intellectual, and the teacher thinks the prophet is too ethereal. The prophet favors inspiration and revelation, while the teacher favors illumination and study. The two seem to naturally be at odds, and this is probably necessary to keep everyone balanced. The prophet needs the teacher, and the teacher needs the prophet.

But here we see that everyone has come together, not to have a prophets and teachers conference, but to minister to the Lord. They have not lost their first love! Prophetic things have their place, but there is a time when prophetic things must be put on hold. Teaching and instruction have their place, but there is a time

when no one should be teaching or saying anything. There is a time when the saints should gather together for the purpose of ministering to the Lord.

The Greek word for "ministered" here is "leitourgeo", and we get our English word "liturgy" from it. It meant the performance of priestly or ministerial functions. Interestingly enough, it could only be used in connection with the Temple, since that was the only valid place a priest or minister could perform the functions. In Acts 13 we see the word used to describe the Church in Antioch. What does this mean? Simply this: we are the temple of the living God, a house of living stones, offering up ourselves as the sacrifices, ministering to the Lord as a holy nation, as a royal priesthood. Hence, we need no earthly temple or priest to represent us to God. We worship God in Spirit and in Truth.

The fact that the Holy Spirit moved and revealed the Lord's Need while they were ministering to the Lord is significant. How can we know the Lord's Need unless we have ministered to Him? Perhaps there were a dozen or so missions that might be done, and they could have fulfilled any number of needs and been considered good Christians. But the issue is not how many needs can we meet, but is the Lord's Need met? What if we meet everyone's need but the Lord's Need is not satisfied? Let us meet the Lord's Need first, and give Him His portion; then we are fit to stand before people and minister to them. This is the motivation for ministering to the Lord. People with no patience for these things will forge ahead on their own, see a need, and move at once to meet it, just like a good business person will do. But the Kingdom is not based on business principles. Our foremost concern is satisfying the Lord's heart, being with Him, meeting His Need. Ministry to men is founded upon ministry to the Lord.

#### NOTABLE WOMEN

"...Mary Magdalene... Joanna... Susanna, and many others, which ministered to Him of their substance (Luke 8:2,3ff)."

When the saints are gathered together, wherever such gathering may take place, there are two types of people represented. One type is there to receive, and the other type is there to give. Most people attend a meeting to receive something - a prophetic word, some encouragement, fellowship (e.g., social interaction with spiritual overtones), teaching, the laying on of hands, etc. This explains why meetings can be so dead and lifeless. Everyone is there to receive, and few are there to give. Hence, there is little Life.

But we have learned there is an additional thing to be noted when the saints are gathered together, and that is this: most of the receiving, and what little giving is done, is performed on a horizontal level. In other words, most are coming to receive, a handful are coming to give, but it is still, by and large, focused on meeting man's need. There is little vertical expression towards God, and what little vertical expression there is centers mainly around receiving. We may give Him some praise or some worship or make some prayer requests - we might even ask Him to bless our time together - but for the most part we have not penetrated any higher than the top of our heads. Praise, worship, and prayer must be part of the meeting for tradition's sake, but they are largely perfunctory, with no more spiritual import than reading the announcements. The meeting is, generally speaking, all about us. We are not saying man's needs should not be met in a meeting; we are saying that meeting man's needs ought not to be the highest aspiration we have when meeting together.

Without a doubt, Jesus wants to minister to you and to meet your needs. His earthly ministry demonstrates His desire to shepherd the sheep, to heal their diseases, and to bring them joy. We should never minimize that. But we should not overemphasize it either. When it came time to die on the cross, what happened to

all those people who were healed and delivered and filled with joy by His presence? People will run to the altar when they have a need, then will disappear for six months - until they have another need, and there they are again, crying out to God as before. How quickly we fall away when we are trusting in the Lord for things.

It is clear from the Scriptures that there are two kinds of adoration. There is a mass of people waiting for Jesus to come and minister to THEM, and there is a smaller group of people who have devoted themselves to minister to HIM. We are not suggesting that it must be either one or the other, but we are definitely saying it should be both, and of the two, ministry to Him is the more important one. Perhaps it is acceptable to begin by seeking the Lord for what the Lord has, but we will never have a strong foundation if that is the only depth we know, and if we remain there for too long it demonstrates an immaturity in our relationship with God.

#### INTELLIGENT WORSHIP OR THOUGHTLESS HABIT?

"I beg you brothers, by God's mercy, to give up your bodies as a living sacrifice that is holy and well-pleasing to God, for that is your reasonable service (Romans 12:1)."

Since the Lord Jesus has completed His earthly ministry, we cannot minister to Him "of our substance" as Mary, Joanna, and Susanna. It is not money, food, clothing, or shelter that He wants from us. So how do we minister to the Lord today? Paul says as a nation of priests, we are to offer up our own selves as living sacrifices. God does not want our things, and in a very real sense He does not want our works. The Lord wants US. If He has US, does He not possess all our things and all our works? An alternative rendering of the verse above, instead of "reasonable service", is "intelligent worship." This is so important that I believe I must quote from Spiros Zodhiates on the word "reasonable", which is translated from "logikos" (logical):

"In Romans 12:1 the reasonable service or worship is to be understood as the service to God which implies intelligent meditation or reflection without the heathen practices intimated in I Corinthians 12:2 and without the Old Testament cultic worship which had become mere thoughtless habit."

In other words, "Spirit and Truth" worship permeates the Church that Jesus is building and characterizes the relationship that He longs to have with us. "Thoughtless habit" better describes much of what we see in Churchianity. Over 150 years ago, Soren Kierkegaard wrote: "By ceasing to take part in the public worship of God, as it now is (with the claim that it is the Christianity of the New Testament), thou hast constantly one guilt the less, and that a great one: thou dost not take part in treating God as a fool." How much more is this true today?

I seldom quote from others, so I think the point should be made that those who truly see these things have learned them in the crucible of their own experience, and not because they read about it somewhere. We do not need a Greek theologian or a Danish philosopher to tell us what we already know: they simply confirm what has already cut us to the heart. So what do we do about this? Is there anything that can be done? Thankfully, God is raising up more Samuels, Davids, Annas, Marys, and "Acts 13" believers who are determined to minister to the Lord. In addition to the living examples of those who sought to meet the Lord's Need, there is a prophetic and historical precedent for what we are sharing. As we move into part two of the series, we will examine this precedent and demonstrate its applicability to us today. May the Lord quicken this message to all who hunger and thirst for Him.

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