

Ministry Assignments

by Jim Cymbala

Jim Cymbala emphasizes the importance of recognizing and fulfilling each Christian's unique ministry assignment to grow in faith and serve others.

Duration: 26:11

Scripture: Matthew 5:14-16, Romans 12:4-8, 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, Galatians 6:9, Ephesians 4:11-13, Philippians 2:14-16, Colossians 4:17, 2 Timothy 4:2, Hebrews 10:24-25, 1 Peter 4:10-11

Topics: "Ministry", "Ministry Assignments", "Perseverance in Faith"

Description

Jim Cymbala emphasizes the importance of recognizing and fulfilling our individual ministry assignments as Christians, urging the congregation to understand that every believer has a vital role in the body of Christ. He draws parallels between the responsibilities of Timothy and Archippus, highlighting the need for perseverance in ministry despite challenges and societal pressures to conform to popular beliefs. Cymbala encourages believers to seek their unique calling and to actively engage in the work of the Lord, reminding them that true fulfillment comes from serving others and sharing the gospel. He warns against the temptation to become mere spectators in church, stressing that every Christian is called to contribute to the body of Christ in meaningful ways.

Transcript

I started in January a series called Vital Truth and it's been a revelation to me, a huge revelation to me. Because instead of trying to do exposition of a certain passage, which is the craze today in preaching circles, I've drawn back and said, God, if I only had X number of times with the congregation, what are the most important vital truths? Remember the body has many organs and parts, but not everything's vital. You can lose a finger and live.

You can't lose your heart or your lungs. If you have an injury to your brain, you're in trouble. So the truths of the Bible are all important, but they're concentric circles.

And the innermost circle is vital truth to be a growing, healthy, prosperous Christian who can be a blessing to others. You must know these truths and then be reading on your own, increasing your own understanding. But the ones I've been trying to focus on are absolutely vital.

The name of Elisha's servant in the Old Testament is not a vital truth. Read the story, get what you can out of it, especially try to relate it to the New Testament and the life of Jesus and the new covenant, because

that's where we live. We don't live in the old covenant.

We don't live under Moses. We live under Jesus. And I'm so happy for that.

The law came through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. So here's an important truth. Tell Archippus, see to it that you complete the ministry you have received in the Lord.

That's at the end of the letter to the church in Colossae. Tell Archippus, see to it that you complete the ministry you've received in the Lord. And now Paul's last letter to his spiritual son, Timothy, in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge, preach the word, be prepared in season and out of season.

Notice that, preach the word, be at it, be prepared, be doing it. The word, the Greek word comes from standing firm at your post. It's a military term, be prepared in season, out of season.

That means in the good times and the hard times. Correct, rebuke, and encourage. Notice how hard it is to be a minister, a New Testament minister.

I'm not talking about pastor as life coach. I'm not talking about glad handing people to try to build up attendance numbers. I'm not talking about that stuff.

When I stand before the Lord, he's going to judge me according to his word, whether I was a good minister as he laid it out. Notice what you have to do. Correct, people don't like that, rebuke, that's a stronger term, and encourage with great patience and careful instruction.

Why? For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. There's coming a day, Paul knew, when people are not going to want to know what the Bible says. They're not interested in that.

The center of is not God and his authority. The center of their life is them. And 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.

Timothy, it's going to get hard because people are not going to want to hear the truth. They're going to want to know who can massage my ego and who can make it pleasant for me and not confront me about anything that I feel uncomfortable about. My sin, my immorality, my prejudice, my pride.

They're going to get teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.

So let's look at this and let's start with this second passage. Timothy had been left by Paul and the city of Ephesus where he was pastoring. And at the beginning when he was pastoring, things were looking not so bad.

The church was growing, there was freedom to spread the gospel. It seems historically that as time went on, Nero became emperor in Rome and Nero was insane from the get-go. Nero was one of the very top monsters that ever sat on the throne of the Roman Empire.

And then he was stirred up and started to persecute the Christians everywhere. And since Ephesus, where Timothy was, was a major city, they felt the brunt of that persecution. So people were losing their

jobs, people were sacrificing their lives, and others didn't want to die for the cause of Christ, so they reneged on their commitment.

And now you had to deal with people who then bowed to Caesar, they disowned the Lord, and then maybe they felt bad, and then they came back and said, I lost my head, I just didn't want to die. There was a lot going on. So now Paul is trying to strengthen Timothy, and he says, remember the calling you have, and remember what God called you to do, and stay at your post, and be at it, endure whatever you have to do, but keep at it, stay at it, in season and out of season.

In the good times, do it, and when it's hard, do it. But come on, Timothy, be a soldier. Christ endured the cross, can we do less for him? And it's going to be difficult, not only physically with persecution, it's going to come a time when people are not going to want to hear the truth.

And they're going to say, yeah, get out of here with that stuff, that's old school, that's dinosaur talk. I want something new, I want something that my ear wants to hear. I want you to stroke me and tell me I'm good, you're good, I'm fine, you're fine.

Everybody's good. You can't give into that, Timothy. You got to preach the word, you got to stay at it, and tell people the truth, even though they might not want to hear the truth.

And even though there's persecution, you got to stay at it. Now, when we look back at the other passage, at the end of this letter to church in Colossae, where Paul had never been, he did not found that church, and he is at the end of the letter, out of nowhere, he writes this, as it's being read. Remember, all these letters, these are not books of the Bible, they started as letters.

As the letter is being read like this, at the end of the letter, the reader, maybe the senior pastor, whatever, is reading the letter from the apostle who's esteemed and respected, and he picks out one name in the congregation, and says, tell Archippus, remember, fulfill and finish the ministry assignment you got in the Lord. Imagine the stir of that. You're reading a letter from the apostle Paul, and now one name.

Imagine if we just called John, remember now, tell John, in front of everybody, John, make sure you finish what God called you to do. Woo. Because just like Timothy had a ministry assignment, Archippus, who we know nothing about, he had a work assignment.

He had a ministry assignment. This vital truth is what I want you to know. Every Christian in this building, and in the world, who is a truly born-again Christian, has been saved, his sins washed away, her sins washed away, the Holy Spirit is now living inside of you, and no matter whether you're a doctor, a lawyer, a construction worker, a school teacher, a housewife, or whatever you are, separate from all of that, in those areas, you have to shine like a light.

We're the light of the world. How many say amen? We're also the salt of the earth. So we've got to witness for Christ, shine for him, share Christ with people, all of that.

All of us are called to do that. But each one of us here has a ministry assignment, every one of us. There is nobody who's an appendix that has no use to the body.

No one. Remember the metaphor, the picture that the Bible gives us? We are all members of one body, and this finger has a meaning, and importance, and a wrist. My wife broke her wrist last Thanksgiving, and that changed everything because her wrist wasn't operating.

And you need your knee, and you need every part of your body, and your eye, and your ear. And the Bible teaches us a vital truth that you, ma'am, you, sir, you up in the balcony. The idea that you stop in a church on Sunday, and that's your Christianity, is probably one of the most ridiculous things we could ever think of.

Nowhere does the Bible tell us that Jesus died on the cross, so you would go to First Baptist, or the Brooklyn Tabernacle, or First Assembly of God, or Nazarene, or whatever it is. That's like insane. He saved us, brought us into his body, and now has distributed gifts and ministries to us, and loves us so much that he's counting on us to work with him, and he will help us to represent him, and to do the work of the Lord.

And you don't need to go to seminary, and you don't have to go to Bible school, and you never are going to be called pastor, most likely. And you'll never stand up here, most likely. But you have a ministry calling.

Tell Archippus, remember to finish the calling that God has given him. He gave it to him, he started it seems, maybe he got discouraged, maybe he got distracted, maybe the devil attacked with discouragement, hopelessness, feeling overwhelmed, stuff on the side happening, what am I going to do? No, Archippus, come on, finish the work that God called you to do. He almost assuredly was not a minister and a pastor.

But you see, there we go to the main point. Everyone has a calling, and most Christians, I'm afraid, live with no sense of calling. No, calling is for pastors, and evangelists, and Bible teachers.

I just sit and go to church, and I'm a spectator on Sunday, and I watch what goes on, and if I like it, then I come back the next week. And I want to declare to you, if you want real fulfillment, you want real joy, you want to sleep at night and feel joy unspeakable and full of glory, though the devil will fight you in a thousand ways, and though there will be trouble on every hand, you will be never happier than when you're doing the work of the Lord. Come on, let's put our hands together.

That's not my quote, that's Francis Asbury, the great Methodist circuit preacher from another century in American history. When you give yourself to what God calls you to do, to be a prayer warrior. We're all to pray, but certain people have a ministry in prayer.

In giving, Bible mentions that as a gift. Certain people have the grace, they've been blessed with money, their ministry is to find out how they can give and support Christian causes. I know people like that, and they write checks for 50, 100,000, and a million.

One of them, the million came to us, and that's what they do, like you and I would have coffee, and that's their ministry. Others, it's showing mercy. They have this ability to find people who have been knocked down, and they say, don't give up, come on, don't give up, don't give up, I'll pray with you, I'll call you every day this week, but you're not going under, you're going over, God's going to help you.

You don't know Pastor Cimbala, listen, he's traveling and he's not your answer, Jesus is your answer, and I'm going to help you. I have the ministry of showing mercy, encouragement, teaching, administration, leadership, going on Royal Family Kids Camp, having ministry with children, going to hospitals, going to prisons, getting furniture, like a ministry here in the church, they collect furniture, and then when someone's burnt out or comes out of a shelter, they help furnish their new place where they're going to live. Everybody, everybody, everybody has a ministry, not your job.

Notice, tell Archippus, finish the ministry assignment he got in the Lord. There are unsaved lawyers, and some of them are great, there's unsaved school teachers, some of them are great, there are unsafe airline pilots, then there's Christian pilots. That's our job, we shine, we do the best we can, but what's your ministry assignment in the work of the Lord, and what is the work of the Lord? It's to share the good news of Jesus around the world, through prayer, through sending missionaries, through witnessing here, and then when people get saved, to help them through the hard times, disciple them, teach them, equip them, walk with them, and he's counting on us to do it.

Is this not amazing? The Lord says, I'm not using angels, I'm not using my voice to speak from heaven, I'm counting on you, I'm counting on you, my brother. Sing, speak, whatever the calling is, but do it, and give yourself to it. So let me kind of bring this together here.

Archippus must have begun, but to begin, he had to find out what it was, and I want to, without getting overly confrontational, I want to say to all of you, when was the last time you prayed and said, Lord, what is my ministry assignment? What is my ministry assignment? Why did you save me? Pastor, I want to go to heaven one day. Listen, we're going to heaven, but right now the question is, what are we going to do now until we get to heaven? He gives ministry assignments. Very few people pray for that, and especially with this American Christian church concept of spectators, performers, that you just come, how you doing? I go to Brooklyn Tab.

That doesn't mean anything. How you doing in the Lord? How you functioning in the thing he called you to do? I could name people here in this church who so inspire me, because they give themselves to the work of the Lord. I was here on Monday, I'm leaving, and I'm going home.

I'll leave out the names. One of them is sitting here, and I'm walking down the street, and suddenly I hear someone calling my name. I'm walking toward Livingston on Smith, and I hear, and then here's a prayer band member on Monday.

It's about six, five o'clock, six o'clock, and then right behind her are a deacon couple who live out in Long Island, and I'm walking, and they catch up to me, and they start talking. We're walking toward Atlantic Avenue, and I said, what are you doing here? It's Monday. Oh, this is our prayer band assignment.

We come in and pray for two, three hours. This deacon couple with his wife and this prayer band member, and she lives in Long Island. She's a school teacher.

We came in here to just lock ourselves away and pray for you and pray for the church. They got their work assignment. They're giving themselves to that.

You might say, that ain't nothing. Oh yeah? Wait till you get to heaven. You'll find out what it is.

How many think it's pretty great? Come on. And now look, I charge you today as I close. Can we take some time to talk to God? Don't you want your life to... This is why so many Christians aren't growing, because they're not working.

How would the body, if you lay in bed all the time, how do you stay in shape? No, I want to hear another sermon. I know, but you've heard 4,000. But what are you going to do with the sermons you've heard? I'm all for sermons.

I'm all for Bible teaching. I'm all for Bible studies. I'm all for all those things, but I mean for what? Poor Kay.

For what? Up in the balcony. For what? Possibly some of you have been going to church. What? For decades? And whose life are you affecting? Who are you helping? In other words, what's the point? To feel good? Oh, the Holy Spirit came in that meeting.

Great. For what? Why did he come? Was he sent so we would have good meetings and feel good? Is that what this is about? Oh, I'm getting deeper in the word. I read a new book by my friend Warren Wiersbe.

Oh, I love that book. That's great. Now what are you going to do with it? What are you going to do with that information? So I charge you to do that.

And if any of you are here now, and you know what your calling is, but something distracted you, some demonic strategy has tossed you off the horse you were riding, and you've gone off that track, and you got discouraged, and your church that you were in split, then the split split, and then the devil says, see these Christians are a bunch of hypocrites. Now you got your eyes off the Lord. Now your eyes are on people, and that ain't good.

That's not good. No, but see this preacher, and I read about this one. What does it matter about those preachers? What does it matter about anything but you and the Lord? In other words, get back and do what God called you to do.

I'm speaking to someone now up in that balcony up there. Would you please, for the sake of Christ, and for your own growth, and blessing to who knows how many, God loves you so much He's going to help you. You'll never know what He can do until you do it.

Oh, I want God to come. How would you know God would come unless you do what He called you to do? He doesn't meet you in a church meeting. He meets you when you do it.

That whole concept of just good meetings, and have good meetings. Why? Because we want another good meeting. Why? Because we could have another good meeting.

Listen, what God will do when you step out to do what He called you to do. Even if it's a ministry of with your cell phone. How distracting those things are.

Anybody have a cell phone here? That's you're told to put them away. Very good. There you go.

Oh, look at that cover. Very bougie, right? Like a leopard thing. Get alone in a room, pray, and read the Bible for 15 minutes, and then say, God, who can I call to lead me, God? Help me get three people I can call and just encourage and pray.

And then just dial them. And then say, hi, I was thinking about you. Anything I can pray about.

That's how the kingdom is built up. People need encouragement. So get back at it.

And now for those of you, I close, who are doing your ministry assignment, I want to tell you something. It's not easy today. Not only for Timothy as a pastor.

It's not easy to pastor today. It is not easy to pastor today. It is not.

This is the hardest moment from my understanding of church history and consultation with a lot of pastors, some very, very well known, whose names you would know. Listen, who preach here. This is a very

difficult moment to pastor God's way.

To just be friendly and run a corporation and just tell people what they want to hear. I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about being a pastor who won't be ashamed when Christ sees you.

Very hard, very hard. There's anti-authority feeling everywhere against the word, against any spiritual authority. Very difficult.

We need the grace of God to do it. Always pray for me. Always pray for the pastors.

Pray for every pastor you know. Not easy. And they're leaving at 1800 a month, the ministry.

In America now, pastors are leaving the ministry 1800 of them a month. Okay? Why? Because they don't have maybe a Paul saying to them, stay at your post. Would you please stay there? I know it's hard, but stay there.

God will help you. Stay there. Don't move.

I know, but I can't. You can. You can.

You can do all things through Christ who strengthens you. And that's what I want to say to you in the choir, ushers. There's so many people here who minister.

Clean the building. Help the work of God. Stay at it.

Listen, sometimes it's easy to stay at it. Other times it's not so easy. Be instant, in season and out of season.

In the good times, keep at it. Keep at it. When it's hard, keep at it.

Keep at it. Listen to me today. Keep at it.

Those of you who are doing something for the Lord, keep at it. I know it's not easy. Listen, no matter what happens this week, Royal Family Kids Camp workers, stay at it.

And when everything's unraveling, stay at it. Don't lose your calm. Don't lose your peace.

Stay at it. One day we're going to hear him say, well done, my good and faithful servant. God has sent people into my life sometimes when I've had very hard moments.

And they have visited me and through different spiritual, Holy Spirit led ways, they basically have said, don't quit. And I know what it is to want to quit. In the first year, year and a half that I was in the ministry here at the Brooklyn Tabernacle, I made two separate plans to exit the ministry.

And on both days, God blocked me. I won't go into how he did that, but he blocked me because he had mercy on me. I was weak.

I was discouraged. So I know what that's like. But I want to tell you something.

There's nothing more filled with joy than to do the thing God called you to do. I don't care if no one knows what it is. It brings excitement to life because see, your eyes are on the Lord and are on people.

You know, when life gets yucky, when you're looking at yourself all the time, that's when life is such a drag. Me, myself, my family, how do I look? I need that new phone, this, that, the other. But boy, when you're looking at Jesus, thank you, Lord.

Thank you. I can be a blessing to someone. Come on, let's put our hands together.

Let's close our eyes. Let's close our eyes. Yes, indeed, my brother, a vessel of honor for God.

Lord, I pray for the people in the balcony. I pray for the people downstairs. I pray for the choir.

I pray for everyone here, God. If we're at it and doing what you call, help us to keep doing it. Stay at our post.

Stay at our post. Stay at the thing God gave us to do. If there's someone here, Lord, who started and been called to do short-term mission, they may be a pastor, may be a missionary.

I don't know what you've called them to do, but if they're like archpriests and something got them sidetracked, oh God, please encourage them today. Encourage them today. Put your arms around them and tell them that you've never given up on us.

Just like me, God, you help me, you block me. And now for all of us, Lord, we want to be vessels of honor for you. We just don't want to make a living and live like the world.

No, time is too short. God, help us to be those workers that can go into the harvest and can build up other believers and win others who don't know you. Make our church something that you smile at.

What the world thinks about us is irrelevant. What other Christians think about us is irrelevant. Help us to be pleasing to you.

Please lay your hand upon us. Make your will clear to everyone. Then give us the grace to do it, not just know it, but to do it.

Help us not to be hearers of the word only, but help us to be doers. I thank you for all the people who labor here. God, I am the most blessed pastor in the universe.

You know I feel that because there are so many workers, so many people who give themselves to the work of the Lord. I pray that that number will increase. No one will be discouraged.

No one will quit. No one will give up, but that we'll be strong. We'll represent you and we'll keep our eyes on you, not on people, not on people.

People let us down. Pastors let us down, but Jesus never lets us down. We thank you for that.

Stir up, God, the church attenders who just come to sit, then they go home and they sit someplace else. Make them not sitters, but help them to move and be workers, Lord. I know you'll bless them for it.

Thank you for the privilege of working with you. Thank you for the honor of you trusting us to do your work. Oh God, I thank you for that.

Why would you trust us? Who are we? Yet you say, you are my hand extended. You are members of my body. Make us healthy and strong and active, for we pray this all in Jesus' name.

And everyone said, everybody stand. Give somebody a hug. Give somebody a handshake.

Come on choir, hug each other. Everybody hug.

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