

Your Reasonable Service

by Jim Cymbala

Paul's sermon emphasizes the importance of being driven and compelled to serve the Lord, and the value of humility and sacrifice in our ministry.

Duration: 50:03

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, 1 Corinthians 9:1, 1 Corinthians 9:12-14

Topics: "Service"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of being driven by God's calling and compulsion to do His work. He contrasts this with the mindset of many believers today who seek comfort and convenience in their church experience. The speaker shares a story of a couple from Sweden in the 1920s who felt called by God to go to Africa and share the gospel with a tribe that had not heard it before. He highlights their sacrificial commitment and obedience to God's calling as an example for believers today. The sermon encourages listeners to recognize and respond to the Holy Spirit's prompting in their own lives, understanding that they have a unique role to play in God's kingdom.

Transcript

I want you to open your Bible to 1 Corinthians 9, but I am going to only cover just one point that I want to make, which is the one burning in my heart for some reason. God knows who's here and what we need to hear in each service. Type, the wind blows where it listeth.

1 Corinthians 9, would you read along with me? And we will just, since we're going chapter by chapter in this study, and there's so many good things we've learned, 1 Corinthians 9, Paul is talking about a problem which has arisen concerning him and the church. The church that he founded after 18 months stay in Corinth, a city of considerable influence and economic power, full of idolatry. And now he's talking about the rights of an apostle or a minister.

Chapter 9, verse 1, am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus, our Lord? Are you not the result of my work in the Lord? Look up here for a second. That means they were converted through his hard work in Corinth for 18 months. So the Lord saved them.

But it was his work in the gospel that he's pointing out because people had come in the church after Paul had left and said, Paul's nobody. And he didn't even take money from you when he worked here. He worked with his own hands.

What kind of fancy apostle is that? What kind of fancy man of God is that that doesn't even take money from the people? And then others were saying he doesn't deserve to get money. We're not sure exactly of the background of this problem, but Paul now has to start to defend himself. Even though I may not be an apostle to others, surely I am to you, for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

In other words, their conversion and the church existing as proof that the Lord had gifted him as an apostle. This is my defense to those who sit in judgment on me. Someone obviously was was was sitting in judgment on him in a negative way.

Don't we have the right to food and drink, i.e. support? Don't we have the right to take a believing wife along with us as do the other apostles and the Lord's brothers and Cephas? Look up here at me. After Mary and Joseph, after Mary gave birth to Jesus, Mary and Joseph cohabited and had several children. One was named James, the half brother of our Lord, who became the presiding pastor or bishop in Jerusalem in the church there.

He had a wife and must have traveled at times with her. And when he took his wife about the church, supported he and his wife when they were there at whatever place Mary and Joseph had other children. One was named Joseph or Jose, and another one was named Judas.

And he refers to them and also Cephas, Peter. Peter had a wife. We know in the Gospels Jesus prayed for his mother-in-law.

So Paul is saying, are we the only ones you support them, but you don't want to support us? Look at verse six. Or is it only I and Barnabas who must work for a living? This is a very strange argument. He's now going to make a bunch of rhetorical questions to prove a point, and then he's going to switch totally field and reverse and say everything I've proved I don't want to watch who serves as a soldier at his own expense, who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its grapes, who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk.

Do I say this merely from a human point of view from nature? Doesn't the law of the Old Testament say the same thing for it is written in the law of Moses? Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain. Is it about oxen that God is concerned? Surely he says this for us, doesn't he? Yes, this was written for us because when the plowman plows and the thresher threshes, they ought to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest. If we have sown spiritual seed ministered among you, in other words, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you? If others have this right of support from you, shouldn't we have it all the more? But we did not use this right.

On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ. We didn't even use those rights that he just proved. Don't you know that those who work in the temple, the priests get their food from the temple and those who serve at the altar share in what is offered at the altar on the altar in the same way the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel.

Notice that verse 14 in the same way the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should get their living, receive their living from the gospel. But I have not. Here's his total turnaround.

But I have not used any of these rights and I'm not writing this in hope that you will do such things for me. I would rather die than have anyone deprive me of this boast. Yet when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast,

for I am compelled to preach under compulsion to me.

If I do not preach the gospel, if I preach voluntarily, if I would have just asked, look up here. If I would have asked the Lord, Lord, could I be an apostle? Could I preach? Then he said, if I would have done it voluntarily, I have a reward. If not voluntarily, I am simply to start discharging the trust committed to me.

What then is my reward? Just this that in preaching the gospel, I may offer it free of charge and so not make use of my rights in preaching it. Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone to win as many as possible to the Jews. I become like a Jew to win the Jews, to those under the law, Jewish people, Orthodox.

I become like one under the law, though I am myself. I'm not under the law, the ceremonial law, all those eating and drinking laws in the Old Testament. So as to win those under the law to those not having the law Gentiles, I become like one not having the law, though I am not free from God's law, but I'm under Christ's law, the law of love.

So as to win those not having the law, the Gentiles to the weak, I become weak to win the week. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do this all for the sake of the gospel that I may share in its blessings.

Now we're going to leave the rest of the chapter into chapter 10, God willing, for next week or whenever, because it really belongs to that chapter. Although I covered it earlier today, I feel just that the Lord wants me to talk about something else. So let's look up here.

Paul says in the previous chapter, for those of you who didn't hear that, he was saying, we know that idol food, the food offered to idols in the temple, which in many times was then offered for a meal, he said, we know that that food is been offered to an idol and that an idol is nothing. But he says, not to everybody is an idol nothing. Some people were bound in idolatry and worshiped idols.

And if they see me eating food that was offered to an idol, they're going to stumble and be led into eating something that their conscience forbids them. And thus I will make my brother stumble. That's another message for another time.

But Paul says, so what I'll at the end of chapter eight, he says, so if I, if I'm going to make someone stumble, I'll never eat meat again, even though I can eat meat. And I know that that idol is nothing. So now in talking about giving up rights, he, he now is reminded about this controversy about his, his, his money and how he was supported for those 18 months when he was in Corinth.

So Paul begins by saying, look, I have rights as an, as an apostle, especially to you, since you got converted through my ministry. God used me, he says, not in a boastful way, but boasting in the Lord. I have a right to support with the other apostles.

Is it only Peter and James that they can bring around their wives and you support them? And me and Barnabas, somebody's in the church is begrudging us that when I'm, when we're with you, that we should get any support. And then from nature, he takes examples and he says, when a soldier goes out to fight, doesn't the country that send them out to fight, don't they pay him? Does he go out and have to support himself? When you get drafted, uh, uh, during the Vietnam war, didn't, didn't the government, U S government have to pay you because you're fighting for them in world war one and world war two and the Korean conflict, didn't the soldiers have to get paid by the people who sent them out? He says, when a, a

planter plants something, shouldn't a farmer be able to expect to get something out of his hard work? Shouldn't he get some of the crop to eat himself? Then he goes and he says, if somebody is a shepherd, shouldn't they be able to get some of the wool from the sheep or the milk from the goats? He says, and this is not just in nature. He says, think of the, uh, think of the oxen in the old Testament, the law of Moses said, don't muzzle an oxen when he's treading out the grain.

What did that mean? Well, in the old Testament farming techniques, they would plant the seed in the furrows and then oxen would be brought on the furrows and the oxen with their weight and their huge hooves would knock the seed into the ground. So as the oxen were stepping on the seed, it would drive the seed into the ground. Well, Moses said, when they're doing that, never muzzle them, but let them eat because they're killing themselves to drive the seed in the ground for you.

Let them, let them have a bite to eat. Even if they eat some of the seed, don't muzzle the ox when they're working. So let them eat.

So Paul says, do you think God was concerned about oxen only? He's concerned about people who are working, sowing spiritual things. And he says, even the priests in the temple, when the offering was, uh, came, the offering was put on the, on the altar of sacrifice and some of the offering was burnt up and offered to God in sacrifice. But then if Andrew brought the offering, he got part of the meat back and then some went to the priests.

So Paul says, when the priest is officiating in the temple, doesn't he get some of the food? So he's talking about here's support for the workers in the gospel. And then he says, the Lord has determined in a general sense that those who preach the gospel should earn their living from the gospel. They should be supported by the people who have either sent them out or they're working among.

He says, if I sowed spiritual things among you, if I worked among you spiritually, I can't get some food and clothing and something to drink and some shelter from you. Is that not right? He says someone obviously was causing a lot of trouble in the church and trying to try to cut Paul off. Then Paul makes a total about face, which I want you to notice and says, by the way, now that I've proven I have a right to your support, I want you to know I'll never take it as long as I live.

It's a strange argument. He takes all these rhetorical questions, lays them all out, proves that ministers have a right to their support, but he says, I'll never take it from you. And when I was with you, I didn't take it.

I work with my own hands. I found another way to make a living so that I wouldn't cause the gospel to be hindered and nobody could say I was just doing it for the buck. He said, in fact, I would rather die than to take away this boast.

Well, what was his boast? He said, now I can't boast that I preach the gospel. Now listen closely. I can't boast that I preach the gospel because he said, woe unto me if I don't preach the gospel.

What was he saying there? He was saying no minister like Pastor Symbola can boast. You know what? Four meetings every Sunday, I pour my life out or I preach as much as I can. Look what I did.

He said, nobody can do that because you didn't volunteer for the job. The Lord drafted you for the job. And if the Lord drafted you, you're just doing what he called you to do.

How can you boast in doing your ministry when you didn't volunteer? You didn't say, oh Lord, let me lead a choir. The Lord said, you lead the choir. You sing in the choir.

So he said, I'm under compulsion. I'm driven. I have to preach the gospel.

I can't boast in preaching the gospel because woe unto me and what's going to happen to me if I don't do what God told me to do. What servant after the master tells him to do something comes back and says, look what I did. And the master will say, all you did was what I told you.

What are you boasting about? You're supposed to do it. You're a servant. And Paul says, I'm just a bond slave of Jesus.

I can't boast in preaching the gospel. Now if I would have volunteered, I could have both, but I didn't volunteer. I was, I was drafted.

I was on the road to Damascus and he laid his hand on me and he told me what to do. And I'm just doing what he told me. Woe unto me if I don't preach the gospel.

But let's finish the thought. He says, but I will boast in one thing. Well what will you boast in? He says, here's what I don't want any money from you for, because I don't want anybody to take away from my boast that the rights that I did have, I could have gotten support from you.

I just showed you biblically and from nature that you should have supported me, but I relinquished my rights and that's what I'll boast in. The fact that I did it for nothing. That I will boast in.

Not that I preach, I had to preach, but that I did it in such a way that I worked with my own hands so that I wouldn't be a charge to you. It would be as if, if Carol and I found a way that God made a way, and this is what we're praying He will, that God made a way that I would do something other than preaching here to be able to pay back every dime the church has ever paid us in all the years that we were here. I can't boast that I'm preaching to you.

She can't boast she leads the choir because woe unto her if she doesn't lead the choir. Woe unto me if I don't preach. Now you know, sometimes when you're in the ministry, although that's the general rule, you can't do that.

For example, we sent out Floyd and Joan Johnson to pastor a church and start a church in Coney Island. Well they went out with some people from our church and there's an overhead to the place where they rent, but the people in Coney Island are poor that they've been reaching, so the offerings don't amount to enough that they could take it and live off of it. Angel Mendoza and his wife Rosemary, if they have a good offering down there, I think they get \$15 or \$20 on a Sunday because of the difference in the economies and the poverty of the people.

So how could they then live off of \$20? When my wife and I had our first Sunday in the Brooklyn Tabernacle and there were about 20 people or 18 or whatever in the church, the offering for that Sunday was \$85 total tithes and offerings. So how would we get a salary out of \$85 given the fact that the mortgage was \$232? \$232. So if we averaged \$100 a week, let's say with the Tuesday night offering, sometimes the Tuesday night offering there would be two or three or eight people or five people.

Sometimes the offering would be \$10, \$5. One Tuesday it was \$2 when it snowed. Two people came, they both put in a dollar and I didn't have anything to put in, so it was two bucks.

At least we didn't waste a lot of time counting in those days. So if you got \$100, let's say every week, you multiply that by four weeks, that's \$400 a month. So how in the world could we pay \$232 mortgage, the con ed, the heat, so there was no salary.

So she got a job at a school in the luncheonette of a high school, had a little net on her head. You should have seen those. Those were the days.

I got a job, a second job, and we scrambled and we made \$3,800 our first year. That's what we were able to take from the church. And then the next year, \$5,500 total that we were able to take to support our family, but we earned money other ways.

Because how could we demand? We're preaching the gospel. We want a salary. Well, how can you do that? It's not there.

You can't get blood out of a stone. So obviously Paul was in positions like that where he went to a town, there were no converts made yet. He can't demand salary from anyone, but he's saying something else now.

He's saying even when they were able, he didn't receive it. He said, because that's my boast, that I have rights and that I give them up. I have rights as an apostle, but I gave them up.

That's what I can boast in, not that I preached. I did it for zero. I found another way.

Well, that brings us to just these two points and a story that I want to tell you. The two points are this, that make Paul so unusual in the New Testament and make him such a compelling figure. He's the greatest preacher we know of, the greatest apostle.

He dominates the New Testament after the gospels. Outside of Jesus Christ, more books have been written about the apostle Paul than anybody else in the Bible, more than Moses or David or anyone. The apostle Paul is the one who brought out justification by faith.

His teachings in Roman and Galatians established the church away from legalism, which has always attacked it. His travels, getting beat up, risking his life. In 2 Corinthians, he tells all that he went through for the gospel.

I mean, this guy was in another zone. What about his life could we take today as possibly a challenge to us? Even though it's Marathon Sunday and I left out the part about a race, something just tells me in my heart today and I'm trying to obey the Lord that that's not what I'm supposed to talk about, although I did at nine o'clock this morning. One thing we see here is Paul was driven.

Now in Christianity, we have it that believers come to a church and you better give them the kind of meeting they like or they won't come back. In those days, when somebody met God, God, knowing that the body has to function, look, the fingers can't do what the wrist does. The wrist can't do what the knee does.

The foot does something different. But then the ear is totally different. Then the ear isn't the most important because you got to see.

So every part in the body, the Lord says we all need each other. And Paul was called to be an apostle, but he says that he had a compulsion laid upon him. He said, woe unto me if I don't do it.

Now, I would suggest to you that something's wrong when we have multitudes of believers who are compelled and driven to do nothing for Jesus Christ. Something is wrong when somebody serves the Lord and feels no drivenness. That's the word.

You can't write it off that he was type A or that he was just that way. This was something from the Holy Ghost. He said, I'm compelled to do what I'm doing.

When they tried to stop him from going to Jerusalem and someone prophesied about his girdle or his belt and said, whoever wears this belt is going to be bound in Jerusalem and be turned over to the Gentiles, and they all began to weep in the book of Acts and said, Paul, don't go. Paul said, why do you break my heart? I have to go. Don't you get it? I'm under orders.

I'm under orders. Do you think this is what I chose to do? I'm driven. I've been ordered to do these things.

And it's more than just being an apostle, brothers and sisters. Sometimes at the end of Sunday, when my wife and I've been here four meetings, she's in two meetings. She comes here at 2.15 to direct the choir.

Sometimes they make food for us and we're trying to be hospitable to guests. And as we go through the food line in the chapel that somebody has set up the food, I see choir members that have been here sometimes from nine o'clock in the morning. Others have been here for two meetings.

They've got these gloves on and these little aprons on, and they're serving food at nine o'clock, 9.30 at night. And sometimes I have to look away because I start to cry because we're not giving them a dime. What are they doing killing themselves like this? They got to get up and work.

Some of them have children. They're doing it because, don't you get it, they're driven. They have to do it.

The Lord told them to do it. Pastor Ware is sick today. It's good I can talk about him.

He's not here with his wife. Pastor Ware, you think I can slow him down? You don't think I've approached him? You don't think we see him getting older and he's praying at three in the morning and two in the morning and six in the morning and setting up retreats to the prayer band and telling me we need more prayer and he wants to go here and pray. And he's laying hands on me at quarter to nine in the morning in my office and praying for me that God will help me through the day.

And I know he's a senior citizen. He retired as a male nurse years ago. He's been on staff here for years.

But don't you get it? I can't reason with him. He's driven. He's driven by something from another world.

Don't you get it? Why do you think they're up here? Do you think we give them any money? We don't give you money, do we? Not a dime, right? Someone at dinner last night, we had dinner with Joey and Missy and Missy said to my wife on this album project, what's the part that you like the most in all the parts? So I watch her. She's shy. She's untrained musically.

She doesn't feel comfortable most times around people who are technically trained. She had rheumatic fever as a child. She's not strong physically.

So when she said, none of it really in the natural, I don't like any part of it. That almost, you know, shocked Missy. And what she was meaning was saying, you know, I'm not doing this because I think it's just a nice thing to do every year.

This is my 18th album. We were talking about her 18th album. She's doing this because, don't you get it, woe unto her if she doesn't do it.

So the choir a couple of Wednesdays ago sang from seven at night till 1015 in the morning. And while they're singing their lungs out, my wife is like this, moving her hands and her arms, trying to get them to sing out. So when she came home at 11 o'clock at night, she said, please, would you rub my shoulders and my arms, please? And when I touch part of her arms, she just let out a scream.

Then on Friday night from seven to midnight, they say these people, and she's like this for five hours. Try doing this for five hours. Try doing it.

Then the next day she got home at one o'clock in the morning. The next day they sang from one o'clock till 10 o'clock. And they're working and they have children and they've got problems.

But don't you get it? It's a calling from God. And what my problem here is, is that we have people come into churches around the country by the millions now. What is wrong when they don't feel compelled to do anything for God? I mean, pray a prayer, sing a song, clean a building, teach a child, do something.

But doesn't God have his hand on you for anything? Let's put our hands together and thank God for his compelling calling. And some of you that are here that are visiting, you better find out what God wants you to do because I cannot find any parts of the body that do nothing. Look at your body, find out that everything has something to do.

And when the littlest part goes off, how it affects your whole body. When people can't do what they're supposed to do, or they're discouraged, or they're just backslid, they're so carnal and involved in their comfort zone, they're not compelled to do anything. In other words, you've got to be driven to do God's work.

You can't teach God's work. It's something that's birthed out of a compelling from the Holy Spirit, a compulsion from God. But look at me, some of you, and those of you in the lobby, and those of you standing in the lobby.

Isn't there something God's laid his hand on you? Haven't you ever felt a tug by the Holy Spirit to do something? Pray a prayer, do something. There's something that God wants you to do that nobody else can do. Well, Pastor Simba, my life is complicated.

Wake up, all our lives are complicated. But don't you get it? I just talked to a minister who might be nearing the end of the road in his life not so long ago in another state, and all he's talking about is Jesus. That's all that matters to him now.

What you have in your CDs, your stock portfolio, how nice your apartment is, or your house, do you think when Christ comes or you die, do you think for a tenth of a second you'll be thinking about those things? When you step into eternity, you think you're going to be looking back and saying, oh, I forgot my best clothes. How many know we're not going to need clothes in heaven? He's got a robe waiting for us, a robe of righteousness. So only what's done for Christ will last.

I'm not telling you now, motivate yourselves, because that's not Christianity. I'm telling you, don't some of you need to be in this prayer meeting on Tuesday night and wait before the Lord and say, why did you save me? Why did you save me? Now Paul says, I'm compelled, and he says, as part of that compelling and to be effective, I've given up my rights to take money from you, and I'll never do it, because I want to have a boast, and I can't boast that I preach, because I have to preach. But if I could do it for free, then I could glory in the Lord, because that would be just like Jesus, who emptied himself and gave up his rights.

You know, everybody's into rights. But now he goes further. He said, am I not free? I close with this.

Am I not free? He says, but I make myself a slave to everybody. Now there's a revolutionary thought. Paul says, I make myself a slave to everybody.

Is somebody really Jewish? Even though I'm universal now since I found Christ, but I'll get Jewish with them and just meet them on their common ground so that I could witness to them anything to win some of those Jewish people. Is somebody under the law and is into all the ceremonies of the Old Testament? I'm not into it, but as far as I can go, I'll get into it with them and act like I'm into it just to give me an opening so I could preach the gospel and win some people. Is somebody a Gentile and doesn't have a clue about God? Then as long as I don't sin, I'll act like I don't have a clue about God.

I'll just meet them on their ground. I give up my personality. I give up my culture.

I give up everything I'm used to. I become a slave to everybody. I adapt to anybody.

You like roti? I like roti. What do you like, sister? Whatever you like. What? Steak? Oh, sister, we need to talk.

So Paul says, I don't have a country. I don't have anything anymore because I belong to Jesus. I've given up my rights.

And why is the church been held back? Because in our whiteness and our blackness and in our middle classness, we stand there and say, come on now, come on now, you've got to relate to me. And Paul said, that's foreign. Jesus never did that.

He said, I become a slave to everybody. Somebody from the Caribbean. I'll be in the Caribbean.

Somebody from Scandinavia. I'll try to understand that culture. Somebody is African-American from the South.

Let me try to meet them there and talk to them about Jesus. I'll give up whatever I am. Forget I'm Polish and Ukrainian.

That doesn't matter. I'm not standing on my rights and saying, now you have to understand me. Paul said, I don't care about it.

Anybody understands me. Jesus understands me. So I just want to meet people where they are.

Just think how revolutionary that is now. Not changing the message. No, don't alter the message.

He said, I become all things to all men. I never changed the gospel, but I, he's not talking about preaching now, he's talking about living. He said, I become a slave to everybody that I might win some.

By the way, he doesn't say, I'm going to take this city for God and God's going to move and everyone's going to get converted. Don't ever believe that talk. He says, I will become everything to all men that I might win some.

Not everyone's getting converted. Wide is the road that leads to destruction. Many there be that walk on it.

Narrow is the road. Few there be. But I want to, he said, the sum that I'm supposed to win, I want to win.

Give up, he said. I give up my rights. Because the Lord gave up his rights.

The Lord was in heaven. Imagine what the Lord had to give up to come and be with us. He never knew what it was to be around sin on the earth.

And now we had to just see sin every day. He never knew what it was to be tired. He had to get tired in his body that he was given.

He never knew what it was to cry. Now we had to cry. He never knew what it was to have nails driven through your hand, a thorns going piercing and drawing blood in your tender part of your forehead.

He never knew any of that, but he didn't say, Hey, what's wrong with you guys? Don't you know who I am? He got down and he walked where we walk. He sat where we sat. So Paul says to be the kind of minister God wants you to be, a Christian God wants you to be.

You give up your rights. Now you're really following Jesus. Those of you who are into your, you know, blackness or into your whiteness, aren't you tired of that yet? Don't you want to get a life before it's too late? You meet people that they think their island or their country or their black.

Black is beautiful. You don't understand me because you're the man. I'm black.

You don't understand my blackness. Listen, listen, you were born accidentally black. I was born accidentally white.

Why make a big thing about something you didn't choose? Before you were born, did you say, Lord, I want Jamaica, Jamaica, West Indies. That's where I want to be born. Did anybody say that? No.

You woke up and they were just playing that song and you were there in Jamaica. They were just doing that thing. Gave you a patty and that's where it was.

But why? Why make a big thing about that when if you were born in another country, you'd be making a big thing about that country. If you were born a different color, you'd be making a big thing about being brown. And imagine how foreign that is to Paul, who says, I'm a slave to everybody.

I'm nothing anymore. But isn't that what Jesus became? Didn't he empty himself of all his rights and privileges? Where would you be today if the Lord didn't empty himself of all his rights and privileges? Now brothers and sisters, something happens when you release and you sacrifice. Unless a seed, when it's planted, dies, it cannot bring forth fruit.

I watch a lot of ministers. I've learned some things over 28 years of doing this. My wife and I, we talk sometimes and we notice the people who don't want to get into the ditches.

They don't want to get into the trenches. They like to talk about the work of the Lord, but when it gets in there to just do it and give up your life and let people walk over you and blood and sweat and tears, they just like to talk about it. They don't want to go there.

But I'm telling you, there's something when you release your rights and when you yield yourself to God's purposes, something supernatural begins to happen. It can never happen as long as you're clinging to your comfort zone. That's why, even if you've heard it before behind me, I want to tell you about Aggie Carroll Play, would you please? Who would have ever dreamed that I met this woman's husband? Who could have ever dreamed that he interviewed me in 1964, 65? I was in a church in Brooklyn and someone told this man who was a writer.

They told him, you know, we got a we got a kid in the church, a young man in the church who's the captain of the basketball team at the University of Rhode Island next year. And he's a Christian, if they only knew what kind of Christian I was. You should interview him.

So this guy interviewed me and I never dreamed that his wife, because I just heard the story in the last year, but his wife was Aggie. But let me go back to where it began. It's in the 1920s and a young couple from Sweden feels called by God to go to Africa.

So they go to Africa to minister the gospel. Imagine the sacrifices in the 20s to go anywhere. So they go to an unspoiled part of Africa that hasn't heard much of the gospel and they go to the mission station and they meet up with another young couple and they begin to fast and they begin to pray and say, God, what do we do with our lives? You want to use us? And as they're fasting and praying, they see there seems to be an indication that they should travel like a day and a half, two days to this remote area where they have learned there's a tribe there and a people who have not heard the gospel.

They get permission from the people over them and they take off the two couples. Let me just use the name Nelson as the couple I want to focus on. So brother and sister Nelson get this other couple with them and they take off and they go there.

They finally get there and they approach the tribe and the chief goes off in their face, threatens them and will not let them enter into the village. They're forbidden to come in. So they go outside about three quarters of a mile and they start building a hut.

It's the 20s. They're in Africa. There's all those diseases and everything going on.

So they build a hut and they begin to pray and fast and say, did God not tell us right? Did we not seek the Lord? Why have we gone to a place where they won't let us in? But Mrs. Nelson, the young wife, she just says, you know what? God sent us here. We're going to do what God wants us to do. Let us just fast and pray and wait till God gives an open door.

Days go by. There is no open door. The chief is like just filled with rage against them for some reason.

One of the other couple, the other couple that's with the Nelsons, they began to say, you know what? We made a mistake. We're going back to the mission station because this is dangerous and it's a waste. And her husband, Mrs. Nelson's husband begins to waver, but she says, we can't go anywhere.

But listen, they're sending out this young kid from the tribe, from the village. They're sending out this young kid to bring us milk. Let us start to talk with him and let us try to learn his language and we'll teach

him English and we'll learn and let's spend a couple hours with him every day.

He seems friendly. He brings out the milk. They allow him to come because they're not, they're just a month or a few weeks and they discover that Mrs. Nelson, this young woman is pregnant with her first baby.

She's along now. She finds out she's pregnant. So now for months, they just hold on and minister to this kid.

The tribe is off limits. The other couple splits and says later for you, I'm taking, we're taking off and they go back to the mission station. So now the Nelsons are living alone in this hut that they've made with their own hands.

Well, the boy that keeps coming out to them, he learns enough of English and they learn his language. They lead him to Jesus and he gets saved. He confesses Christ as his savior.

He receives the Lord. They pray with him, but now time is drawing near for her to give birth and she gives birth out in the, out in the wilderness there in the wood, in the brush of Africa. And as the little baby is born, she dies.

The mother, she dies. The one who said stay, the one who did most of the talking and loving and leading of this young man from the tribe to the Lord, she dies as she gives birth. And now the father, Mr. Nelson holds this little baby in his hands, buries his wife with bitter tears coming out of his cheek, down his cheeks and says, what is this about? There's no God.

There's no God. I've lost my wife. I can't get in.

We thought we should come here, that God had something cooked up for us. Nothing's cooked up for us. So in a rage and with a hard heart, he goes back to the mission station and he takes the baby and he gives it to that couple that was with him out there.

And he says, the baby's yours. This little girl is yours. I don't want to know about it and I don't want to know about God.

I'm going back to Sweden. And he goes, so now Aggie, the little baby is in the hands of this other couple within three months, both of them die, possibly by poisoning. So now this little baby is taken and given to another couple from America who are missionaries in and have just arrived from the station there.

So she's raised for a little while while they're doing their tour of duty there as missionaries. Her real mother's dead. Her father's back in Sweden.

The couple that took her first, they're both dead. And now and now she's with this lovely couple. They bring her back to America when she's, I think, four or five years old and they begin to raise her in South Dakota.

And she grows to be one of the most beautiful young ladies that you could imagine. I met an elderly man about a year and a half ago at Elam Bible Institute who was 12 or 13 years old when Aggie was, he's an elderly man, when Aggie was 17 or 18. And he said, everybody in the church looked at her.

She was the most beautiful creature, not only on the outside, beautiful woman, young lady, but beautiful on the inside. Loved God, just had beauty of spirit too. Well, Aggie grows up with these godly parents who have adopted her, who take her in, make her their own.

And she begins to date this man that interviewed me in the 60s. And they begin to date and they fall in love. They met in Bible school or something and they end up getting married and they go into the work of the Lord as a young couple.

Well, they're just in their 20s and late 20s or mid-20s. And they go to a conference, a missionary conference, Dewey Hurst, D.V. Hurst and his wife Aggie. And they go to this missionary conference and, you know, people are giving reports from around the world and she really is not following all of it.

But her ears prick up when a man gets up and begins to give a report about what God is doing in the part of Africa where she was born because she knows her story. So her ears prick up when she hears about churches beginning left and right all over the places and a revival, a spirit of revival. And the man who's giving the story is now sharing how God has raised him up and he's the superintendent or overseer of all these churches.

But so many people are getting saved. They can't stop. They can't start churches fast enough.

So at the end of the meeting, her heart is pounding because she's always had Africa in her heart. She goes up to this man and she says to the man, you know what? I want you to tell me more about this story because I was born in Africa. I want to know what is God really doing there? And he said, well, how do you know about Africa? She says, well, I'm the daughter of of Edith Nelson.

And he steps back in shock and he says, you're who? She says, I'm Aggie. I'm the daughter who was born. My mother died.

He said, no, it's impossible. I'm the boy that she led to the Lord. I would carry milk out there to her when she was carrying you.

And she led me in her simple way to Jesus Christ. But I learned English, too. And when some foreign governments came in to this area of Africa, of all the people in the tribe, they picked me because I spoke English.

Your mother taught me. But she not only taught me English, she taught me about Jesus. So suddenly I got a position of leadership.

But there was a call on my life. So with the influence that God gave me through your mother leading me to the Lord and teaching me English, I am now a superintendent over hundreds of churches. Do you know who your mother is? She's the most famous person in all of that part of Africa, the we Christians.

Her grave is almost like a sacred site. We have a thing there because it was through her she gave birth to us all. All of us belong to her.

So Aggie cannot believe what she hears. Oh, yes, you must come and see her grave site. We come there and we just every time we see it, we thank God that she came.

So Aggie told her husband, the man who interviewed me, we've got to go to Africa. I've got to see where my mother died. And they traveled to Africa and they treat her like some kind of queen.

They treat her like some kind of princess. All the Christians cannot believe that this is the famous Edith Nelson or whatever her name is, that this is their daughter. This is the woman.

This is the baby that was born when she died. The mother died and she weeps as she seeks for joy. And when a seed is planted in the ground and dies, look at the fruit it can give.

She looks at her husband at the grave site and says, I've got to go to Sweden and find my father. Her father had gone to Sweden. He had married.

He had turned totally away from God. Had other children who were her step siblings, stepbrothers, stepsisters. And she tracks him down and eventually gets to Sweden where she finds out where he's living.

He's given himself to such dissipation and hard living that he's now almost bedridden. She comes to the house and she meets her stepbrothers and stepsisters by the second marriage who she had never met, obviously. And they tell they she says, I'm going to I'm going to talk to my father.

And they say, it's nice to meet you. But we want to tell you one thing when you go in to talk to him, do not mention the word G.O.D. Do not say God in front of him. He's passive and he's kind of wasted.

But if you say God, you will get a reaction because he will not permit the word God to be mentioned around him. He's very bitter. She walks in to see her father after all these years.

She's a grown married woman. And she says, Daddy, it's me. It's Aggie.

He says, it can't be. She says, it's me. Oh, I'm sorry I let you go, Aggie.

I'm sorry that I didn't keep you, but I just couldn't. She said, Daddy, it's OK. You don't need to make any apologies.

God was in it. He said, don't say God. Don't say God.

I know I haven't seen you, but if you do, if you if you want to have a peaceful time with me, don't say God. She said, Daddy, listen, God was in it. Don't tell me about God.

God took my wife. We fasted and prayed and went somewhere because we thought God would use us and we got nothing out of it. And I lost my wife and I didn't even have you to raise.

She says, oh, no, something came of it, Daddy. And she began to tell her, tell him about the grave that she had recently been in and all the thousands of believers that had come out of converting just one boy who delivered milk. And God smote that father and broke his heart.

And there with his daughter, he prayed and received Christ back into his life, went on to follow the Lord. Listen, listen. Rights, privileges, comfort zones.

Oh, I go to seminaries now to speak sometimes, and I see these young men coming out of these Baptist seminaries and evangelical seminaries and Methodist seminaries. And some of the God seminaries, any kind of seminary, the same denomination that Aggie was a part of. And you see the you see on the bulletin board wanted youth pastor, what the what the package is on the insurance, what the starting salary is.

And I hear these young guys who haven't done a thing yet for God talking and saying, I can get more money someplace else. I'm not going there. I can get more money someplace else.

And you know what? It gets cold in that part of the winters are tough there. I'm not I'm not going to go. Is that Christianity? Is that the spirit of Paul? Is that the spirit of Aggie's mother? You know, there's some people here today.

If you would just say, God, here I am. You know what God could do for your life? You know what God could do through your life? You know, you have none of us have any idea. The seed has to die.

But when it dies. Fruit. Let's close our eyes.

Everybody praying quietly, very quickly. If you are here today and you feel like pastor symbol, God wants put a compulsion in me. He wants put a calling in me for something.

And I could feel it. Maybe it was just fluttering a little bit. Some something to do in the kingdom.

And I'm afraid I am not as intense as I need to be to receive it. I'm not as open. I'm not as close to the Lord as I need to be.

But I don't care where he wants to send me. I don't care what he wants me to do. I don't care how I'm not trained.

I want my life to go into the ground like Aggie's mother. He might not work it out obviously that way. But I want my life to.

I want to be able to give up something so that somebody else can live. Death works in me, Paul says, so that life can work in you. Brothers and sisters, if it took Jesus dying on the cross to save the world.

Do you think we're going to be making impact in our comfort zone? If it took God, if God had to send his son to die. And if Paul had to go through all that he went through. Do you think there's another alternative? No, God's looking for people who will just come and say, Lord, plant me somewhere.

And let me die so that I can bring forth life. My plans, my will, my goals. I give it to you.

You know, there's some couples here who could make Carol and I look like, like school kids. You could be so effective for God at your age. You're so ahead of my wife and I. You're so ahead of my wife and I, where we were at your age.

If you were just, the secret is in giving up and letting God have everything. If you're here today and you just feel like God's put his hand on something in your life that he wants you to do and you just want to affirm to him, God, I don't know how, I don't know where, I don't know when. But God, here I am.

Plant me, plant me, Lord. Just get out of your seat quickly and come here. And if you're in the choir, come and stand behind me.

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