

Foundations of Ministry

by K.P. Yohannan

The sermon emphasizes the importance of discerning our motivation in ministry and prioritizing our love for Jesus, rather than being driven by self-seeking or external validation.

Scripture: Ezekiel 44:10

Topics: "Waiting On God", "Motives in Ministry"

Description

K.P. Yohannan emphasizes the importance of waiting on the Lord and discerning our motives in ministry. He contrasts the busyness of the Levites in the outer court with the stillness of the sons of Zadoc in the inner court, urging believers to prioritize their relationship with God over the desire for recognition and activity. The sermon highlights the need for a heart motivated by love for God rather than self-gratification, and encourages self-reflection on whether our service is truly for Him. Yohannan reminds us that true ministry flows from intimacy with God, and that our actions should be rooted in love rather than the pressures of external demands.

Transcript

It's not always easy to wait. If we are honest, we will admit that we are usually restless when we have nothing to do. We need noises and things happening all the time. We want to be kept busy and have something to do at any given moment of the day. Most of us have difficulty just being quiet and still, waiting before the Lord. Why is it so hard to wait? Oftentimes it can be because our motive in the ministry is wrong. Why Restless? In the past, we have had a couple of families on staff with us who left the ministry because they were dissatisfied, feeling as though they were not doing what they considered "real" ministry.

In one particular situation I remember a wife who said, "I came here to serve the Lord, and I have no ministry." This family had two children to take care of, but for her, raising those children in the fear of the Lord, serving her family and being an intercessor for the lost world was not real ministry. She wanted to do something that appeared more significant. Please understand. It is good to long to serve God in the best way we can. But discontentment, discouragement, frustration and grumbling just because we don't like what the Lord gave us to do is not good.

We must be able to discern between truly desiring to please the Lord and our own restlessness and self-seeking. We must be able to discern what is motivating us in the work of the Lord. A lot of times we can be pulled in many different directions by the needs around us. And we can like it too. The work of the

Lord certainly has its satisfaction for the flesh. There is the crowd of people, the results, the praise, the attention and the "thank-yous"--all of these can really make the flesh feel good.

We definitely enjoy the attention, the limelight and the sense of accomplishment and self-worth that come in ministry. But what we are called to in serving Him must be rooted in pleasing Him and done out of our love for Him--not our own gratification and glory. It must be for His. Two Kinds of Servants In Ezekiel 44, we find two groups of servants of God. One group were the Levites who spent their days busy, busy, busy in the outer court of the temple serving the people who came to worship the Lord.

These men were responsible for preparing the sacrifices and getting them ready for offering. Twenty-four hours a day, they were busy in the outer court, where it was full of people and noises. Many people saw the work the Levites were doing; it was a very visible thing. They were dragging the animals in, sacrificing them and putting them on the altar. These men were in great demand by the multitudes, pulled in all different directions, motivated by the screaming needs around them and all that needed to be done.

But there was also another group--the sons of Zadoc. These were men of the inner court. Where they stood, there was stillness. Unlike the outer court, the inner court was silent. Deadly quiet. The only individual there was God. There was no busyness, no service in front of people, no demand but to come into the holy of holies and minister unto the Lord. Let me ask you--which group are you in? Are you like one of the sons of Zadoc, more concerned with coming into the holy of holies and ministering to the Lord than being busy serving the people?

Or do you just keep going, going, going, moved in every direction with the busyness of the ministry? These are serious questions we must ask ourselves. This reminds me of the story of Martha and Mary in Luke 10:38-42 (NIV). As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made.

She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her." It is clear in this passage, although our flesh would much rather be in the center of attention, that the better thing is to be more concerned with sitting "at the Lord's feet listening," rather than busy with all the ways we are trying to serve God.

It wasn't that Martha's service was wrong. Not at all. What was wrong was that "Martha was distracted" from her first love by all of it. Jesus said Mary "has chosen what is better"--to leave the busy place of the outer courts and come into the inner court and minister to Him. Purify Our Hearts But the truth is, we all have the same problem--wicked hearts. We'd rather be one of the priests who are busy standing before the people, active in what is immediately needed. We want our ministry to look dramatic and effective.

Our flesh wants to glory in the praise of men. Just think about it. If asked to do a job that is below our educational qualifications or beneath our dignity, how glad are we? How eager are we to continue if the results are not what we would like? As humans, we often measure godliness and spirituality by external activities or a certain type of behavior that we see in people. The Pharisees were considered extremely spiritual people by the way they fasted and prayed and put on a humble demeanor.

Yet we know how Jesus spoke of them, identifying them for what they truly were and pronouncing the worst judgment upon them (see Matthew 23:13). Despite how spiritual they looked, they did not know the Father. And without that, all their religious activity meant nothing. The motivation behind all their action was full of self, not love for God. The motive is what makes the work spiritual or unspiritual. We shouldn't worry about how things look, what people might be saying, or whether or not there are the results we thought there would be.

Our number-one concern must be to know Him and His ways and to follow His lead. When we live like this, what happens, whether good or bad in man's sight, whether productive or useless in man's opinion has no bearing. We are not working for human beings. We are doing it because of our love for Him. It is ministry unto Him, and this pleases Him. May we be reminded of the words of Paul, who facing incredible responsibilities, great need and overwhelming difficulties still said, "None of these things move me" (Acts 20:24).

The difficulties and problems, all the blessings and praise, the good and the bad that happened, none of these things changed his course. Issues of personal life or loss did not sway him. All he wanted to do was the ministry the Lord gave him to do. Nothing else and nobody else motivated him. Please, we need to evaluate what our motive has been in serving the Lord. Are we seeking to meet the need around us, or are we seeking to know and please Him? Are we controlled, motivated and energized by our talents and by opportunities that present themselves?

Do needs and others' voices guide our course? Or do we really know, in our innermost being, that we are serving our King? Ask yourself these questions. Whatever we are doing, whoever we are serving, we must be able to do it all with the heart attitude that we are doing this for no one but our God. Fruitful Stillness Please understand. I am not saying that it is better to forsake the work of the ministry to pursue the "deeper life" of just drawing close to God in solitude. There are some who give such great emphasis on this "deeper life," yet so much of the actual work that God has for them goes neglected under the license of "waiting" upon Him.

This can often just be a glorified laziness--and there are plenty of verses throughout Scripture that speak of the downfall of the sluggard (see Proverbs 21:25). If we look at the life of Jesus, we see He was extremely busy--traveling here, walking there, healing her, touching him, speaking from a boat, teaching on a hill. He used His time and opportunities to the maximum. Yet we also read, over and over again, how He would break away from the crowd and all the activity to be with the Father.

His entire ministry, all of the seeming "busyness," flowed out of His intimate relationship with the Father. A.W. Tozer spoke of the need for this today, saying, There is no question but that part of our failure today is religious activity that is not preceded by an aloneness--an inactivity. I mean the art of getting alone with God and waiting in silence and in quietness until we are charged, and then, when we act, our activity really amounts to something, because we have been prepared for it. . . .

We can go to God with an activity that is "inactive." We go to God with a heart that isn't acting in the flesh or in the natural--trying to do something-- but going to God and waiting. It just means that within, our inner spirit is seeing and hearing and mounting up on wings, while the outer, physical person is inactive, and even the mind is to some degree suspended. . . . There is an inactivity which, paradoxically, is the highest possible activity. There can be a suspension of the activity of the body as when our Lord told His disciples to tarry until they were filled with the Holy Spirit--and they did!

They waited on God.¹ My brothers and sisters, first thing must be first. It all comes back to this one priority: our love for Jesus. No matter how hard we try, no matter what methods we try, the service that pleases Him most is the service done out of love.

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