

God Speaks to Us

by K.P. Yohannan

K.P. Yohannan's sermon highlights the critical need for believers to maintain their love for God while actively serving in ministry, emphasizing prayer and divine guidance.

Scripture: Revelation 2:2

Topics: "Intimacy With God", "First Love in Ministry"

Description

K.P. Yohannan emphasizes the importance of maintaining a deep love for God amidst the busyness of ministry. He recounts a spiritual renewal among leaders in his ministry, where God spoke to them about their fading love for Him despite their diligent work. The message highlighted the need to prioritize prayer and intimacy with God over mere activity, urging leaders to return to their first love. Yohannan warns that ministry can continue without God's presence, leading to actions that may not align with His will. Ultimately, he calls for a heart-centered approach to ministry, rooted in love for God and sensitivity to His guidance.

Transcript

I'm looking for one who will wait and watch For My beckoning hand, My eye-- Who will work in My manner the work I give, And the work I give not pass by. And oh the joy that is brought to Me When one such as this I can find-- A man who will do all My will, Who is set to study his Master's mind.¹ Recently in our ministry, there has been a spiritual renewal taking place in the lives of our leaders on the mission field. As a result, these leaders have called for 90 days of continuous chain-prayer, involving thousands of people, to seek the Lord for greater spiritual reality and renewal among those who serve with us.

It all began when some of our senior leaders met for four days of planning and consultation concerning the ministry and what needed to be done. Because the work is growing so fast, we remain with only one thing that is permanent--change. Every two or three years, new systems need to be deployed to handle the increase. People have to be transferred. Strategies must be reworked. It is often out of sheer necessity and urgency that these meetings are called. Several meetings were scheduled throughout the Indian subcontinent, with the first one taking place in North India with 25 leaders present.

As usual, their time started off with the first few hours of the first day's meeting in a time of worship. The room was filled with worship and prayer, but as time went on, the prayers wouldn't stop. They continued on into the evening, and the Lord's presence became very real in that place. God began to speak through one of the senior leaders in attendance. With a specific word given to him, he spoke what the Lord was

saying to the leaders individually. The Lord knew just what each one was facing in their lives and ministry, and He exhorted them and spoke the exact word needed at that time.

After this, a general message from the Lord was given for everyone in the meeting. The essence of the message was, "You are extremely busy in doing My work and meeting the desperate need of the lost world. You sacrifice and suffer for Me. I am very happy and very pleased with what you are doing for Me. You share My concern, My burden, and I am well pleased. But, at the same time, I am sad because your love for Me is growing thin." There was no judgment, no condemnation in what God spoke to them.

But those words changed the entire agenda for their meeting. Instead of seeking solutions on how to handle the work, their first priority became just to stay in the place of prayer and worship and draw closer to Him. At the next meeting place, a similar incident happened. God began to speak the exact same message through someone else. Discerning that this was a serious matter on the heart of God, the leaders called for everyone throughout our work to take time and personally seek the Lord concerning this message.

When I heard what had happened and all that had taken place, I began to think deeply about what the Lord had said during these meetings. It reminded me of what He spoke to the church of Ephesus. He commended them for all the good work they were doing, but then, just like in our leaders meeting, He said, "I am sad also." I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary.

Nevertheless, I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works (Revelation 2:2-5, emphasis mine). In the midst of intense work and ministry, the Lord was saddened. Why? Because their love for Him was fading away. Nothing about their ministry had changed. The Lord said that He had seen their work, their labor, the patience and endurance that they had in it all. He commended them for their work and the lives they were affecting.

But somehow, in it all, their hearts had changed. My brothers and sisters, we can be in the same danger. The ministry that was first done unto Him and out of their love for Him now began operating under a different intent. If we are not careful, we can become so consumed with serving the ministry God gave us and forget the Lord Himself. This is why He cries out to them (paraphrase), "Repent and return to your first love. Then continue with the ministry I have given you. Minister because you love Me.

Whatever you do, do it as unto Me." A Definition What is doing the Lord's work in the Lord's way? We must properly define it so that we may be able to attain it. In Matthew 25:40 (KJV), Jesus defines true ministry--doing the Lord's work in His way-- in one simple sentence: "Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Christian ministry, by nature, affects and benefits humanity. We serve God by serving people.

The ministry that God has called you to is never isolated from the people He has placed in your life. However, there is a balance that must be kept in Christian service. It is not just a balance of external priorities, what is done first and what is done second, but one that runs much deeper and is the well out of which all ministry springs. It is the attitude of the heart. Doing the Lord's work in His way is living in the awareness that whatever we are doing, whatever ministry the Lord has called us to, forever we maintain the understanding that we do it unto Him.

Our service must be rooted in Him, motivated by our love for Him and done with the desire to exalt His name and His name alone. There will come a time when each of us and the ministry the Lord gave us to do on this earth will be tested by fire (see 1 Corinthians 3:13). Only that ministry which was done in His way will last. It does not matter what it may have looked like on this earth, it does not matter how well-known it may have been or how much fruit it may have seemed to produce.

If it was not done as unto Him, it was not done in His way . . . and it will not stand in eternity. My brothers and sisters, I share this message with you soberly, knowing how easy it is to run about with our own ideas and our own agendas. Everything can look so good and we can seem to be running on the right track. But if our understanding toward ministry has moved from being one of ministry unto Him to getting results, building a name and serving the people, we are dangerously off course.

How All Is Lost How is it that, even in ministry, we can lose our first love? It all begins when we neglect to come into His presence and sit at His feet. It is in His presence that we grow in our understanding of Him and His ways, and are equipped to go and carry out the ministry He gave us to do. Our lives take on the atmosphere of living moment by moment waiting, listening for His voice and being sensitive to Him, seeking to do what He desires. But when we walk away from this, unfortunately it doesn't mean that all ministry screeches to a halt.

In fact, the "ministry" can seem to carry on as usual. The need is still there. The people are still there. Yet when we choose to carry on without waiting before Him, we take the first step off of the right road. We may take well-meaning actions to see the ministry continue, but they are independent actions if not born out of His presence. One of these well-meaning actions, for example, is taking on work that God did not give to us, just because the need is so great, the opportunities seem unlimited, and we are driven by urgency.

I know for our ministry, the need is absolutely huge, mind-boggling. We need to get the Gospel to so many people before they die and are lost for eternity. So it is logical and reasonable to be absolutely committed and fully involved in doing everything we possibly can to reach the lost. But if we do this independent of Him, our love for and intimacy with the Lord begin to fade away and our ministry cannot be pleasing to Him, no matter what kind of fruit it is producing. As a ministry, we have found that the safest thing we can do is to come into the Lord's presence and draw closer to Him, that we may know His ways and follow His lead.

In the beginning of our ministry, we would ask the Lord, "What more can we do?" Now it is different. As one of the fastest-growing movements, we are continually challenged and confronted with so many things we could do. So much so that our major concern has become, "Lord, what should we not do?" Another independent action that results in the loss of intimacy and love for the Lord is when we fail to stop and ask Him how He wants His work to be done. Oftentimes, meeting the current needs becomes more important than how ministry is done.

It is in response to necessity that we often create new structures, new systems, new leaders and new training, and we just keep being pulled in all kinds of directions. It is easy to be so consumed by the immediate that it eventually becomes the focus. We can be spending all our time trying to get the track built for the train to run on, trying to organize and facilitate, yet never stopping to consider that maybe the Lord doesn't need all these structures and plans. Maybe He has all kinds of other ways to do this ministry.

But we are so consumed with our business mind and structure and logic that we just keep on doing things in our own ways. Recently I have been increasingly concerned about this, and God's speaking to us has

strengthened that concern. I wonder, "Lord, is this the way we should be functioning and serving You?" We have often seen how God, in His mercy, steps in, like in our leaders meeting, and changes our plans, setting first thing first. I am so thankful that the Lord had the freedom to come to us in that way even when none of our leaders expected it.

It is a relief to know He is with us, watching over the work. It was like spending a day out in hot, humid summer weather and finally getting a good, cool shower. It is refreshing! "Ah yes!" He is with us and He is leading us. At the same time, I was made aware that we must be careful and concerned about how we proceed in serving the Lord. By no means do I want you to think I am saying we should stop our work and not do what we are doing. That is not how it works. In fact, it seems the more we take the time to wait and hear from the Lord, the more actual work that we do--but rather in His strength, not ours.

This is how the Lord's work is done in His way--by loving Him more than the ministry He gave us to do, by waiting in His presence to hear His voice and by continuing in that sensitivity to Him so that we are always doing His will, in His strength.

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