

Somewhere Down the Road

by K.P. Yohannan

K.P. Yohannan's sermon emphasizes the importance of maintaining pure motivations in our service to God, drawing lessons from Paul's missionary journeys and the pitfalls of self-interest.

Scripture: Acts 17:6, Philippians 2:19

Topics: "Selflessness in Service", "Motivation in Ministry"

Description

K.P. Yohannan emphasizes the importance of maintaining pure motivations in ministry, using the examples of Paul, his coworkers, Gehazi, and the church in Ephesus. He highlights how initial zeal can fade into self-interest, leading to a loss of focus on serving Christ above all else. Yohannan warns against the dangers of seeking personal gain or recognition in ministry, which can corrupt one's heart and purpose. He encourages believers to keep their hearts diligent and to serve out of love for Jesus, just as Paul did throughout his life. The sermon serves as a reminder that true service to God requires selflessness and a commitment to His will over personal ambitions.

Transcript

It was an exciting day for the Christians in Antioch. The whole church had gathered together to pray for Paul and to send him off on his second missionary journey.

Everybody was curious to see who would be on his team this time. You see, just a few days before, there had been quite a heated dispute between Paul and Barnabas, who had accompanied Paul on his first trip. Barnabas wanted John Mark to join them again so the young man could have a second chance as a missionary candidate. On the last trip, he had deserted them when things got rough, but Barnabas believed that John Mark had now changed and would do better.

But Paul's list of qualifications to serve on his elite team didn't include such generosity! In fact, if Paul had lived in our days, the advertisement he might have published in Christian magazines would read something like the following:

TEAM MEMBERS WANTED

for Mission Work in Asia Minor and Europe

Job description: Serving, praying, preaching, teaching and church planting. Qualification: Love Jesus more than life itself. Terms and conditions: Hard work; 24-hour shifts; difficult travel; storms; shipwrecks;

nakedness; poverty; hunger; constant danger from Gentiles, false brothers, robbers and wild animals; misunderstanding; loneliness; desertion by coworkers; persecution; beatings; stonings; imprisonment and possible martyrdom. Job does not include the following benefits: Salary, position, title, promotion, securities, health or life insurance, secure future, good health, long life or retirement fund.

Send your application to: Paul of Tarsus, apostle to the Gentiles. I am certain that very few of us would have dared to venture out and join Paul's "death squad" missionary team! In fact, most of our comfort-loving churches would have labeled Paul as crazy, dangerous, and cultish and warned their members not to attend his meetings or read his letters. However, when we read the Gospels, we are surprised to discover that Jesus made the same offer to His disciples when He asked them to follow Him.

He even told them, "You must love Me more than your own life." We read the results in the book of Acts and in Church history: Nearly all of His disciples lost their lives for the sake of the Gospel they preached. On that day when Paul headed out for his second missionary journey, "a few good men" had actually made his team! Everyone in the church knew that these men had to be the cream of the crop, the best of Christianity: men full of faith and the Holy Spirit, mavericks, steadfast, fearless and invincible.

Paul and his team were incredibly successful. Everywhere they went, they drew people's attention with the message they preached and the miracles God performed through them. People were saved, churches were established and together, this team actually turned the known world upside-down (see Acts 17:6). Years later, however, Paul wrote an interesting paragraph in his letter to the Philippian church: "But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, so that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition.

For I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare. For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus. But you know of his proven worth, that he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel like a child serving his father" (Philippians 2:19-22, NASB). And with sorrow, Paul wrote to Timothy at the end of his life: "Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica" (2 Timothy 4:10).

What strange things is Paul writing about in these letters? He's actually talking about his own coworkers! How is that possible? What happened to his elite team, the ones he handpicked and personally trained? In the beginning, it was fantastic how everyone worked hard and gladly sacrificed and suffered together. No one asked for a title or claimed a position. Each one was eager to serve Paul and the other team members. But as time went by, something shifted in their hearts. They became secretly concerned about their own career as Gospel workers.

One after another, each man said to himself: "I love the Lord, the ministry and Paul, but if I go on working for Paul, I'll miss my chance to build my own ministry and make a name for myself." Many left Paul and his team for various reasons. Paul was sad and hurt, not because he didn't want his coworkers to be used by God elsewhere but because he recognized that the motivation of their hearts had changed. The driving factor in their ministry decision was no longer love for Jesus but rather their own interests, dreams and ambitions.

In the Old Testament, we find another example of a man being motivated by his own interests and desires. Gehazi, the servant of the prophet Elisha, had stood with his master through difficult and turbulent times. He had traveled with Elisha, carried his bags, cooked his food and shared all the hardships and persecution Elisha faced in his ministry. It was not an easy life for Gehazi. Surely no one envied him for his

job. I believe Gehazi had originally joined up with Elisha because of his love for the God of Israel and because he truly believed Elisha was a genuine prophet of the Lord.

He saw it as a special privilege and honor to serve such a man and help make his life a little easier. For his part, Elisha might have looked at Gehazi as a gift of God to his ministry. Perhaps he even thought: "Could it be that God has sent Gehazi to live with me because He is preparing him to be the next prophet for Israel after I am gone? After all, Moses' long-time servant Joshua became his successor; and I myself used to be Elijah's servant." Gehazi worked hard and seemed faithful in his service--until Naaman, captain of the Syrian army, showed up and offered Elisha riches out of gratitude for curing his leprosy.

But when Elisha refused to accept the goods and Gehazi watched Naaman and his treasures disappear down the road, he panicked. I imagine he thought something like this: "How could Elisha do this? If he didn't want any gifts, that's his choice. But he could have thought about me just this once, and let me have a little reward. I have nothing to show for all my years of faithful service. Unless I act quickly, I will lose the chance of a lifetime to get something for myself!" So Gehazi ran after Naaman, got some free gold and clothing--and became a leper.

This is a very sad story. We can't help but wonder how Gehazi could make such a fatal mistake after being with Elisha for so long. Surely he must have known that he would never get away with this type of greed. Was Gehazi perhaps always a selfish man and served the prophet only for a chance like this? Or could it be that his heart went from a state of total commitment to seeking his own benefit in just a matter of hours? I believe Gehazi actually started out with the right motivation, but somewhere down the road, his heart was lost, long before he encountered Naaman.

Is it that God doesn't want us to have any blessings as we live for Him and serve Him? No, not at all! On the contrary, He is eager to shower us with His goodness. But He doesn't want us to make the blessings and benefits our goal and reason for service. He knows that if we do, we will lose the purity of our motivation, which should be to serve Him out of love. A third example is found in the church in Ephesus, which Paul himself planted. This church was a model to all of Christianity: genuine love for Jesus, commitment, maturity, sacrifice and hard work.

When Paul wrote them a letter, he didn't have to spend time reteaching them the spiritual ABCs but instead could share deep spiritual truths with them. But years later, another letter reached the Ephesians from the apostle John, with a message he had received from Jesus. The content was very short but extremely serious; in essence, it said: "I know all you do--your work is way above average. However, you have lost your first love, and there is nothing I can accept as a substitute.

Repent, and love Me as you did in the beginning. If not, I will walk out of your church" (see Revelation 2:2-5). It is shocking, but when we study about Paul's coworkers, Gehazi and the church in Ephesus, we find the same problem. The beginning of their ministry was wonderful. Their hearts were right, and their motives were pure. But as time went by and their knowledge of God, their experience in ministry and their ability to lead others all increased, their hearts changed. Their problem--and ours as well--was not the start of the race but that long stretch before the finish line.

Looking at those who have gone before us, we can easily see that this is where we face our greatest battles and where so many fail. Perhaps with time, we become more casual and careless and take much of our walk with the Lord and our ministry for granted. Paul, on the other hand, ran the race and kept his faith and motivation intact until the end of his life. Time did not seem to affect him. What did he do to live

victoriously until the end? I am very sure he applied Proverbs 4:23 literally to his life: "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life."

Paul watched over his heart with the eyes of an eagle, alert and ready to detect any early warning signs that he was losing his pure motivation. If this started to happen, he immediately corrected his course. Above all, Paul never considered himself more than a bondservant or slave of Jesus Christ. As such, he had laid down every right to his own life along with every ambition he ever had. His only remaining desire was to please His Lord and live for Him. He entertained no dreams beyond that.

In the light of all this, seeking recognition, titles, position, a pat on the back, salary or benefits in the Lord's work, whether secretly or openly, must be an alarming warning sign for us. If we choose to pursue these things, it will be only a matter of time before we have lost a pure motivation of the heart. Our enemy is our own self-centeredness.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/kp-yohannan/somewhere-down-the-road/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net