

# (A Spiritual Leader) 9. Serving by God's Power

by Zac Poonen

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*A spiritual leader's work must be done in the will of God, by the power of God, and for the glory of God, with the anointing of the Holy Spirit.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 15:12, Matthew 23:3, 1 Corinthians 3:12, 2 Corinthians 3:5, Galatians 1:10

**Topics:** "Spiritual Leadership", "Holy Spirit"

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## Description

Zac Poonen emphasizes the importance of spiritual leaders doing all their work in the will of God, by the power of God, and for the glory of God. He highlights that true servants of the new covenant are equipped and made adequate by God, and therefore cannot take credit for their labors. Poonen stresses the significance of recognizing whether what is being shared is produced by God or by human effort, cautioning against pride in ministry. He warns against relying solely on human abilities and methods in ministry, emphasizing the necessity of the Holy Spirit's power for lasting impact.

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## Transcript

A spiritual leader does all of his work in the will of God, by the power of God, and for the glory of God. Therefore it will come through the final fire of testing as gold, silver and precious stones (1Cor.3:12-15).

In 2 Corinthians 3:5,6, Paul says that we can never become servants of the new covenant unless God equips us and makes us adequate. Since a spiritual leader serves with the adequacy that God gives him, he cannot take any credit for his labors.

If it's really God's life that is flowing through us and blessing others, then we can't take any credit for it ourselves - because we can't take the credit for what we never produced!

For example, if I brought a cake here that someone else had baked, and I pass it around, and all of you appreciate it and say, "Brother Zac, that was a fantastic cake"- I won't even be tempted to be proud, because I didn't bake it! I was only distributing what someone else had baked. But if I had baked it myself, then I could become proud, thinking I'd done a good job. But how can I take credit for what someone else made?

This is one way by which we can know whether what we are passing on to others was what God produced within us, or what we produced ourselves. Are we proud of our ministry (the cake)? Then we must have produced that ministry (the cake) ourselves! God had nothing to do with it. If God had produced it, we

could not possibly be proud of it.

Do you think Jesus' disciples could have taken any credit for the loaves and the fishes that they passed out to the multitude. No. Not even the boy who gave his lunch-packet to Jesus could have taken the credit for that. The disciples only distributed what Jesus produced.

Praise God that we are only in the distribution business and not in the production business. That's why we can be at perfect rest at all times. The strain comes only when we have to produce - not when we have to distribute! It's true that we may get tired in the distribution business. But there is no strain. Our adequacy is from God. We know we can't produce anything worthwhile ourselves. So we don't even try.

Remember that everything that you accomplish without the help of the Holy Spirit is human and has no eternal value. You can preach and accomplish a lot, without prayer, without seeking God's help and without the power of the Holy Spirit. You may have great human abilities and with them you can do a great deal. But one day you'll discover that it was all wood, hay and straw in God's eyes.

You may think you're a great communicator because you can stir people up emotionally. But look at how rock-music stars stir people up. They can stir up people better than any preacher can! But it's all empty emotion.

Or you may be a great intellectual who can tickle people's brains and hold them gripped for hours when you speak. That's human soul-power too. There may be no communication of divine life there.

Whatever you accomplish in your ministry without the help of the Holy Spirit, will perish with this world. You can be absolutely sure of that. I don't know if you believe me. But if you do, you won't waste your time any more, adopting human methods.

I don't want to waste my time building something that is going to perish in eternity. I want to serve with the power that God gives. Our adequacy is from God.

The Pharisees were the great Bible-scholars of Jesus' time. They were fundamental in their doctrine unlike the liberal Sadducees. We know that, because Jesus Himself endorsed the correctness of their doctrines by telling His disciples to do all that the Pharisees taught (Matt.23:3). Those Pharisees were the leading professors in the Bible-seminaries of those days. Gamaliel was the principal of the Bible seminary that Saul of Tarsus attended in Jerusalem. Many of those Pharisees were great mission-leaders too. Jesus spoke of them as men who crossed land and sea to make proselytes (Matt.23:15). That would have involved sacrifice and dedication.

Yet we see that a major part of Jesus' ministry was spent confronting those fundamentalist seminary professors and mission leaders! We must find out why. Because if we don't, we can be like them too. And then the Lord will be confronting us continually!

Those leaders were always questioning Jesus as to why He and His disciples did this or did not do that! They were always quoting their traditions to Jesus and pointing out where He and His disciples had violated them.

I've seen so much of this attitude in the "believers" who criticise me too. They question me about some little expression I used here or some word I used there. They love to "have disputes about words" (1 Tim.6:4) - the very thing Paul told Timothy to avoid. But they don't seem to be bothered about their own

lack of divine life! They remind me of people counting the fingers on a dead man's hand to see that all the fingers are there! And if even one fingernail is missing, they create a big uproar!

I'd rather have a living man with five fingers missing than a dead man who has all his fingers and fingernails intact! A lot of theologians may be dead right in their doctrines, but they are both dead and right! I'd rather work with a brother whose doctrine on baptism is wrong but who is filled with the Holy Spirit than with someone who has been baptized the right way, but who is as dead as a doornail!

Now, don't get me wrong here! I've always been very strong on doctrine all my Christian life. I've left a lot of Christian groups, because they didn't preach the whole counsel of God. So I'm not devaluing doctrine. But what I'm trying to say is that life and spirituality are far more important.

One day after Jesus had rebuked and corrected the Pharisees, His disciples came to Him and told Him, "Do you know that the Pharisees were offended by what You said". Jesus told them not to bother about those Pharisees, because they were blind leaders of the blind and "every plant that God has not planted will be rooted out one day" (Matt. 15:12,13).

I want you to think of that last statement for a moment. Whenever you preach, you're planting a seed. If what you're planting is not from God, it will be pulled out one day.

Our work will remain for eternity if we do it with the adequacy supplied by the Holy Spirit. But if we do our work for God without prayer, without leaning on God in helpless dependence on Him and without His Spirit's help, then it will certainly be rooted out one day.

There are many aspects of Christian work for which we don't need the power of the Holy Spirit, but only plenty of money and a good administrator.

For example, if you're arranging a Christian conference, a lot of work is involved. A hall has to be hired, invitations have to be sent out, accommodation has to be arranged, food-arrangements have to be made etc., etc., But all of this can be done by any good administrator who is not even a Christian. In fact, many worldly conferences are organized in a far better way than most Christian conferences. But the part of a Christian conference that is going to remain for all eternity is the ministry of the Word - and that part must be done under the Spirit's anointing!

I'm not devaluing the necessity of making good arrangements. They're needed for the success of any conference. But remember that what's eternal will only be that which was done in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Let's apply this to our own ministry. Let's ask ourselves what part of our ministry can be explained away as being merely the result of having human training and human resources. We may be surprised to discover the answer - if we are honest with ourselves.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. His conflict even today is with Bible-seminary professors and mission leaders who have knowledge without life and who transmit information without the anointing of the Holy Spirit. The apostles had a conflict with such people in their day and we will also be in conflict with such people in our day, if we walk in Jesus' footsteps.

I'd rather walk with the Lord and be in conflict with such people than please them and displease the Lord. In fact I'm prepared to be in conflict with the whole world if necessary, if that is the price I have to pay to

please God. If we seek to please men we can never be servants of Christ (Gal.1:10).

Let us walk then in helpless dependence on God for our ministry, always longing for the anointing of the Spirit to be upon us.

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