

# The Secret of New-Covenant Ministry

by Zac Poonen

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*To become a servant of the new covenant, one must go through trials and afflictions to receive a spiritual education and experience God's grace in overcoming them.*

**Scripture:** 2 Corinthians 1:4, 2 Corinthians 7:1, 1 Timothy 4:12, Hebrews 4:15, 1 Peter 5:3, 1 John 3:3

**Topics:** "New Covenant", "Spiritual Leadership"

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## Description

Zac Poonen preaches on the secret of effective ministry, emphasizing the importance of going through afflictions to receive spiritual education and strength from God. He contrasts the anointing under the old covenant with the new covenant, highlighting the need for inner transformation and overcoming personal struggles. Poonen explains that new covenant ministry requires experiencing God's grace in trials and leading by example in purity, faith, and love, rather than just sharing knowledge from a Bible-school.

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## Transcript

Paul reveals the secret of his effective ministry in these words: "God strengthens us in all our afflictions, so that we may be able to strengthen those who are in affliction WITH THE SAME STRENGTH WITH WHICH WE ARE STRENGTHENED BY GOD" (2 Cor.1:4). Paul had to go through many afflictions in order to receive a spiritual education. Only thus could he pass on to others the strength that he himself had received when he went through trials. Without such an education, no one can be a servant of the new covenant. There is a vast difference between an anointed Samson under the old covenant and an anointed Paul under the new covenant. Samson had the Spirit's power to overcome external lions. Paul however had the Spirit's power to overcome the lions that dwelt within his own flesh - which Samson could not overcome.

Under the old covenant, God's servants stood in God's presence, heard what God had to say, and then told others what they had heard. But that is not sufficient in the new covenant. Now, God's servants must go through trials and afflictions and experience God's grace helping them to overcome in all those trials, and then exhort others to follow their own example. That is how new covenant ministry is far higher than old covenant ministry - and it is far costlier too. We cannot become servants of the new covenant by going to a Bible-school. No true apostle or prophet in the Bible ever came out of a Bible-school. We cannot study the Bible like we study chemistry, cooped up in a classroom. The Holy Spirit teaches us the meaning of the Scriptures in the midst of life's situations. That was how the apostles learnt it. And that is how God's servants learn it today as well. Only thus can we lead others to partake of eternal life. It is by following

Jesus that we become servants of the new covenant. Under the old covenant it was not possible for people to press on to perfection. But in the new covenant we can (See Heb.6:1 with 7:19). But we cannot lead others to perfection if we are not pressing on to perfection ourselves. Only if we are "cleansing OURSELVES from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor.7:1), and "purifying OURSELVES even as Jesus is pure" (1 Jn.3:3) can we lead others also to such a life. There is no other way.

We have to be mini-forerunners for the others. That is why God takes us through varied and trying situations - more than all the other believers in our churches have to go through. For only thus can we be true shepherds to them. Otherwise we will be hirelings, seeking our own gain - either money or man's honour. That does not mean that we have to face all the circumstances that others in our church face. That would be impossible. Jesus did not become our Forerunner by facing all our circumstances, but by being tempted with all the temptations that we face (Heb.4:15). Jesus did not have a drunken father or a nagging wife or disobedient children, as some of us may be having. Jesus did not have to wait in long queues outside government offices for a licence as we have to wait today. Yet He was our Forerunner, because He faced all the temptations that we face today, in different circumstances in His day.

God has to take us through all the temptations that our brothers and sisters face. But in all those temptations, we must overcome, if we are to serve them, and lead them to partake of eternal life. That is how we become servants of the new covenant. Peter writes to the elders "to be examples to the flock" (1 Pet.5:3). And Paul writes to Timothy (in 1 Timothy 4:12) that he should be "an example to those who believe - in speech, love, faith and purity". First of all, we must be examples in our speech. Our speech must always be gentle and gracious. We must be totally free from gossiping. If someone shares something with us in confidence, we must be able to keep the matter secret - even from our wives. We must be examples in love. Others must see that no matter what they say or do to us, our love to them never changes. We must be examples in faith. In all the trying circumstances that we face, people must see that we never get into a panic, but always have the perfect confidence that God is able to see us through. We must be examples in purity. We cannot expect purity in the relationships between young brothers and sisters in our churches, if we ourselves are not first class examples in this area.

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