

The Loving Knowledge of Ministry

Philosophy literally means the loving knowledge. *Philo* is the Greek word for *love*, one of its many definitions, yes, and *sophie* is the Greek word for *knowledge*. It is not the love of knowledge that ought to ever define anyone's ministry, although and unfortunately it does, and neither does it define mine. Rather, it is the loving knowledge of ministry, of the *diakonia*, that is to drive the diakonia of the word.

True diakonia is service. True service is uniquely and ultimately sacrificial and invitational in that it invites suffering into the life of the one who has the knowledge of ministry. Sacrifice and suffering are embedded not separated in scripture. That is not the popular message of the church anymore, at least not the American church. Thus, American servants who desire the diakonia of the word are not led on this way even though the way of sacrifice included suffering in the greatest Servant of all, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To sacrifice is to suffer or else it is not a sacrifice. The cross that we are commanded to bear if we are true followers of Christ does not allow for any other interpretation. This is especially meant for anyone bearing the word.

The knowledge of the diakonia is absorbed through experience that involves suffering. Without suffering, there is no diakonia. Peter and Paul's ministries of the word through preaching and teaching affirm and confirm this repeatedly and irrefutably. The word suffering is used 32 times in the New Testament, 22 of which belong to Peter and Paul. Paul of course, bears most of those uses. He could not conceive of his diakonia apart from suffering. To minister was to suffer for him. If he wasn't willing to suffer, he wasn't willing to minister. This is, of course, not the portrait we paint through modern ministries. Today, tragically, to minister is just another way to magnify the self, to demonstrate one's spiritual capacity to others.

But there is no such scriptural possibility or allowance of this approach portrayed or promoted through Paul's life and literature that allows anyone in the diakonia of the word to estimate a life of exaltation from something, in its more purest form, is born in and blossoms through suffering. The duty and service of carrying out the commands of another, to proclaim and promote the religion of God among men as one who prepares and presents food i.e. a table waiter, a food handler or server, is secondarily a service of humility. Do you sense or see humility in the modern expression of the pulpiteer? The visible pastors do not, at all, exude or exhibit this. The invisibles, the ones laboring quietly and unsuccessfully in the fields and farms, in the urban corners and untidy areas of society, in the smallest and seemingly most insignificant of churches, have no choice but to embody suffering and express humility. If either was lacking, they would be contradicting their very reality which would evoke pity and sympathy, neither of which are part of true diakonia. Paul boasted in weakness many times. He did not desire pity, not wanting to be a burden to anyone.

Thus, meal after meal, day after day, week after week, as a hunter gatherer, as a chef or restaurateur, as a cook in the kitchen, as a food delivery driver even, the diakonia of the word is prepared first through the preparer's heart and life, and then outward through the preparer's hands and language. The hearers, the body, are then filled, only to return hungry, not liking the taste at times, then loving the savory sweetness of flavors at others. This is the humanity, the flesh, that the tasters and consumers must crucify as mature disciples. Yes, some meals will be simple and bland, others five star, five course catered cornucopias. However, all will be eaten and accepted if the minister of the diakonia has and continues to embrace the suffering of life that produces the pure, unadulterated loving knowledge of service. *This is how one should regard us, as slaves of Christ* (1 Cor. 4:1).

Anyone still want to sign up?

Authentication, Authorization, Action

“Only speak a word...For I also am a man under authority...When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to those who followed, “Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith!” (Matt. 8:9-10)

The loving knowledge of the ministry can be conveyed in three cogent, contemporary and accessible parts. This is a personal application, of course. Others might have been inspired through another scripture that carries through and allows one to convey the scheme of service.

The service of the word comes as the centurion who says to Jesus, *“Only speak a word...For I also am a man under authority,”* (Mt. 8:9), to which Jesus responded in the next verse, *“I have not found such great faith!”* (Mt. 8:9). The knowledge of my ministry reflects one who is first, primarily, under the authority of God’s infallible and indefatigable word. This is authenticity. Authenticity bears authority, both of which I am under and which I might possess for the equipping, edifying, and establishing the body, the bride, the Beloved’s church in Himself.

Authentication – Only Speak a Word

The word of the Lord must be directly, personally and authentically spoken into my heart and life. The ministry of the word is a transmission of authority, first and foremost evinced in my personal revelation and regeneration in and through the authority of Christ’s atoning work. Said another way, I must authentically be saved, born again, made anew, having received the word of God as it is truth the word of God, in grace and power, and its revelation of Jesus Christ as my Lord, Salvation, and my God! The Resurrected One is now my one and only. Therefore, *I have been crucified with Christ, and the life I now live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me.* The declaration of the word—I am hopeless and depraved sinner who needs the reconciliation of the ministry of Christ on the cross of calvary for the redemption of my soul—is my reality. What it says about me and all things is accurate, true, timeless and eternal.

Authentic regeneration through the revelation that Christ speaks of—Matthew 11:25: *At that time Jesus answered and said, “I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes,* and Matthew 16:17: *Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven,* and Luke 10:22: *All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.”*—must be both a literal and spiritual event and moment in actual time that will be evinced in the temporal world and continue into the eternal if it is authentic.

This event is not climactical; it is seminal. That is, it is the moment that germinates *the life that I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me.* I enter the kingdom of God and heaven through this event and life in this kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

Authorization – I am also a man under authority

As stated, the ministry of the word is a transmission of authority, from the Father to Christ, from Christ to me. From here, secondly and secondarily, I can speak a word, in fact the very word of God, of Christ, the Logos that I might edify, equip and establish the body, the bride, the Beloved’s church in Himself always under the authority of the word myself. I must live under the

authority of that which I presume to admonish others to do. I am calling others to Christ and to abide continuously with Him i.e. to commune with Him and thereby live in community with others. We call this church. True church is true community. Individually and independently, filially and relationally, domestically and professionally, and then collectively and ecclesiastically, we are to live in, under and out the commandments of God.

If we are His body, Col. 1:24, and He is the head (Col. 1:18; Eph. 5:23), then we bear a great, galactic and global, eternal and temporal responsibility. Thus, His authority determines our anatomy. Therefore, our theology—what we think about God, how we learn the scriptures from God, how we live in God—determines His anatomy. Again: His authority must determine and direct our anatomy personally and practically, as well as corporately, collectively and communally. But, the reality is, our theology of which we learn of His authority as Lord and Savior of our eternal and temporal lives, will determine the direction and demonstration of His anatomy of which each of us individually and what we are communally and collectively. That is why the entire scriptures must be expounded and expressed—line upon line, precept upon precept—the sense being given in clarity and accessibility to and for the people, that they might be equipped and edified for every good work. *His authority determines our anatomy; our theology defines His authority.* Or lack therefore. Mt. 18:18 bespeaks every more clearer now: *Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.* This is why we must rightly divide the word of truth as teachers, pastors and leaders. It is heartbreaking and heartwrenching to see and hear, to know what is occurring out there with the false doctrines and teachers, the pretentious prophets and peddling preachers of today. Instead of determining and defining, we have undermining proliferating today.

Action – *Jesus...said to those who followed. "I have not found such great faith!"*

The action is the intentional, sacrificial, communal and continual expression of ourselves as we consciously and actively seek to make disciples while uninterruptedly maintain our lives of loving one another as regularly and easily as families daily, weekly, monthly and yearly returning each day to one another after going out into the world to accomplish, achieve, produce and labor, etc. Let us be clear: the intentional, sacrificial, communal and continual expression of ourselves is a design, a labor, a work in and of itself. The action part is the third tier, the highest level,

As we live out the commandments of God, we are commissioned others to do so, not with pointed fingers, for that does not and never has worked. Each individual has a will and arguing someone into the kingdom is unscriptural, unbiblical, flat out ungodly. Not even God Himself forces anyone in! That would violate authenticity. No. Instead, we, as individuals in sacrificial and sincere community, invite through example and expression. The very expression of our lives in community amidst a crooked and perverse generation, in these present days and current age of evil, are to 1 Peter 2:12 them: *Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.* Our commissioned community of commandment keepers seeks to make disciples of others. Our expressions are anything and everything—in word and deed—that comes from us.

Jesus must declare to His followers a people of faith who take Him at His spoken word through the Holy Spirit to holy men who have written what we know as the word of God, the scriptures, the Bible, the Holy Book, the canon, the standard. It is God who adds to the church. Meaning it is He who fulfills our commission of making disciples through us as we heartily keep His commandments individually, interpersonally, domestically, relationally, societally and, most importantly, in our (New) covenant community.