

## Lesson 11

# Embracing Your Ministry

## Introduction

Our previous lesson discussed the need to be ready to be used by God for His work in the kingdom. Whether that be by being a living example, serving others, or sharing the saving message of the gospel, we need to make ourselves available for God's use.

But as those who are alive from the dead, offer yourselves to God, and all the parts of yourselves to God as weapons for righteousness.

– Romans 6.13b

When God places opportunities before us, we don't walk away. We follow through in faith. This is the general principle behind Jesus' teaching in the parable of the talents in Matthew 25. Two of the three men put their talents to work and were blessed. As vessels for God, we should not only be ready for the opportunities God blesses us with, but we also need to be looking for ways to create situations where we can glorify God and bring Him praise. Making these opportunities is our responsibility.

## A Look at Galatians 6.1-10

Christians function in two ways inside the kingdom. One is by being part of the collective body inside the local congregation, which carries out its work through evangelism, edification, and benevolence. How this work is carried out in its specifics is administered by shepherds who oversee the work. Congregations work to spread the gospel locally and help support mission works in other domestic and foreign fields. Elders oversee teaching curriculum and make sure the congregation is fed with proper spiritual food. Part of the teaching work of elders, evangelists, and teachers is to train up the saints for the work of personal ministry, Ephesians 4.11-12. And finally, local congregations help needy brethren with benevolence and provide for Christians in other areas during times of national emergency or disaster. These are good things and should be something that we contribute to through our weekly giving.

There is also another way we function in the church and it is much more personal. The opening half of Galatians 6 shows us how we have an individual responsibility to be involved in the work of the local church:

- Help restore with meekness those who have been overtaken in wrongdoing, 6.1.
- Bear one another's burdens, 6.2.
- Keep your attitude in check, 6.3.
- Examine your own work, 6.4.
- Bear your own burdens, 6.5.
- Share your blessings with those who teach and preach the word, 6.6.
- Don't grow tired of doing good, 6.9.
- Work for the good of all, especially for those who belong to the household of faith, 6.10.

Visualizing what you can do personally in the work of the Lord is important. God's providence not only works in how the church conducts itself corporately, but personally as well. Individually, you will have opportunity to come to the aid of, encourage, and bear someone's burden much quicker and more personally than most corporate or congregational action. God is calling us to be attentive to the needs of others. In essence, we are to be in the business of creating opportunities. In Matthew 5.14-16 Jesus speaks of our being light. He says that we are not to place the light under a basket, but on a lampstand so that it will give *light for all who are in the house*, 5.15. Our light is to illuminate the world and lift up the name of Jesus. *As for me, if I am lifted up from the earth I will draw all people to myself*, John 12.32.

It is not about lifting up and magnifying the local congregation, or the church universal for that matter, as it is lifting up Jesus through our personal interactions with others. And while the church has its role, organization, and purpose, as individuals we have each been called to personal ministry. It is the work of our leaders to equip us for that:

And he himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ,

– Ephesians 4.11-12

Leaders equip. Saints serve. Every member of the local body has been given a talent by God to not only work in the collective action of the body, but equally important is the work of individuals doing things in the world that truly makes a difference. You have been equipped in some way by God for a work of ministry. That ministry is for God's glory and the salvation of the world.

## **Bloom Where You are Planted**

Creating opportunities. It's our personal responsibility. As we examine Scripture we find notable lives of those who made a difference by paying attention, seeing an opportunity, and acting by faith.

### ***Daniel***

Daniel was part of the first wave of exiles to be carried off to Babylon. He, along with many other young nobles were taken into the king's palace and employed in service. They were taught the Chaldean language and educated in Chaldean ways. For the Jew, this would have been a challenging test, especially when Chaldean ways violated the tenets of Jewish religious law. As you examine Daniel's life, he was sure to do all he could to abide in the role he had been given, but he was never fearful to stand up for the ways of God. As he moved with courage, he was creating opportunities for the glory of God. The most powerful leader on the planet, Nebuchadnezzar, was forced to sit in wonder and amazement at the delivering power of Yahweh, the God of the Jews. A notable example where Daniel's initiative and trust in God thrived is seen in chapter 6 with the story of his deliverance from the lion's den.

### ***Esther***

A century after Daniel we read of the story of Esther and Mordecai, who God used providentially to save the Jews from annihilation during the time of the Persian empire. When Mordecai found out about the evil plot he immediately reached out to Esther who resided in the king's palace. He warned her about the pending fate of the Jews and surmised: *who knows, perhaps you have come to your royal position for such a*

*time as this*, 4.14. We know how the story goes from here. Esther took the initiative, personally placing her life on the line in service to her people. Because of her bold action, she saved the Jewish people from certain destruction and saw that the evil Haman received justice for his actions.

### ***Priscilla and Aquila***

We are first introduced to Aquila and Priscilla in Acts 18. They were former citizens of Rome who had been forced to move to Corinth when the Emperor ordered all Jews out of the city. They were tentmakers who shared the same occupation as Paul. Later as Paul decided to leave Corinth, the pair accompanied him to Ephesus they helped in the ministry of the church. Beginning in Acts 18.24 we learn of a man named Apollos who was from Alexandria. Luke describes him an eloquent speaker who was well trained in Scripture. Apollos began teaching in the synagogue. But he only had the baptism of John. What we read next is a great example where two individuals took a personal interest in him and *took him aside to explain the way of God to him more accurately*, 18.26. Aquila and Priscilla made an opportunity and God used them providentially in bringing Apollos to a more effective place in his teaching. From here, he moved to Corinth where he labored for an undetermined amount of time. His work must have been significant however, because 1 Corinthians 1-4 pictures him as having played a significant role in leading many of the Corinthians to the Lord. Some have even attributed the authorship of Hebrews to Apollos.<sup>20</sup> What would have happened had Aquila and Priscilla not acted in order to help Apollos in his understanding of Scripture? What if they had simply written him off as a “false teacher” and treated him as an enemy and not a brother? Will we see things from the realm of possibility and opportunity rather than perceived difficulties and problems? How strong is our faith?

### **Conclusion**

What are some ways God can use you to impact the world? Are you praying for God to put opportunities in front of you? Are you trying to view things as God sees them? You can make a real difference for the kingdom when you trust in God and His providence.

We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.

– Romans 8.28

### **For Thought and Reflection**

1. What is the collective work of the church?

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<sup>20</sup> Mills, Donald W. “Apollos.” Edited by John D. Barry, David Bomar, Derek R. Brown, Rachel Klippenstein, Douglas Mangum, Carrie Sinclair Wolcott, Lazarus Wentz, Elliot Ritzema, and Wendy Widder. *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016.

2. Who is in focus in Galatians 6.1-10, the corporate church or the individual?
  
3. Why is individual work often able to be handled in a quicker and more responsive manner than corporate/congregational action?
  
4. According to Ephesians 4.11-12, what have church leaders been called to do?
  
5. What example of taking the initiative to be used by the Lord can we learn from Daniel?
  
6. How did Esther embrace the opportunity to be an instrument of God's providence?
  
7. How did Aquila and Priscilla make an opportunity to seize a situation that had a multiple year impact on the early church? What if they had refused to do so?
  
8. What are some ways God can use you to impact the world?